

## **Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa On track for October 1<sup>st</sup> Opening**

The construction of Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, Australia's first conservation-based resort in the heart of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, is reaching completion.

"We are well on schedule for our October 1<sup>st</sup> soft opening," said Joost Heymeijer, General Manager, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa. "We have reached that very satisfying point in the development when the hard construction work is behind us and the focus shifts onto detail, quality finishing and preparation for operations."

With the resort's electrical and water systems completed, the emphasis is now on each suite's fit-out and interior design. Half of the one-bedroom suites are already fully furnished, and the remainder will be completed by the end of August. Work is well under way on the Main Homestead, which will be the social centre of the resort. The main pool area and gymnasium, as well as the resort's luxury Timeless Spa, will be completed by the end of July.

Built on the same principles as Emirates' acclaimed Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa in Dubai, the resort is fully integrated into its environment. It incorporates as many Ecologically Sustainable Design principles as possible, including rainwater collection, full recycling of all domestic water, heat exchange technology to reduce electricity consumption and the use of solar panels for all hot water systems. The resort has over 100 solar-energy units, significantly reducing its energy consumption and resources footprint.

Additional measures aimed at reducing the resort's carbon footprint include efficient room orientation to reduce heating and cooling requirements, modern insulation envelopes and wide traditional verandas, which increase airflow around and through the buildings. The resort even makes use of traditional windmills instead of electrical pumps.

From an architectural perspective, the resort was built with respect to the Australian identity and local rural history. The timeless design, inspired by original Federation style, is reminiscent of traditional rural Australian homesteads. However, it incorporates contemporary practices to include some of the world's best environmentally protective building materials and technologies.

Wherever possible, natural and recycled materials such as sandstone and timber were sourced locally within a 100-km radius around the property. Most of the tradesmen, craftsmen and sub-contractors were employed locally. This approach not only assisted the growth in the local economy at a time when this was most needed, but it also significantly reduced the construction's carbon footprint.

Emirates' Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa has been fully committed to supporting regional artisans, and most of the furniture and artwork were commissioned and sourced locally. Bespoke timber furniture pieces were manufactured in regional New South Wales, using superb Australian hardwoods, much of it recycled.

Local carpenters were commissioned to create The Wolgan Range, the resort's signature furniture collection. Fallen 'oldwood' eucalyptus trees on the reserve were milled to create unique furniture pieces, while local ironsmiths created the resort's lamp fittings and chandeliers.

From an environment and conservation perspective, landscaping efforts in and around the resort have also been in place from the start of the resort development. A two-year programme for the removal of all invasive and damaging noxious plants from the property was undertaken. Grass has been seeded and 25,000 trees are being planted, using seeds from native species collected onsite and grown at a local nursery in Lithgow.

This ambitious tree-planting programme has been made possible by the support of local volunteers and an international student volunteer organisation, with over 60 students volunteering time in June and July to assist with the resort's conservation efforts. Planting is well on target, with over 20,000 trees planted since the beginning of June.

For the second consecutive year, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa will also be a planting site for National Tree Day (2 August 2009) and another 3,000 trees are expected to be planted.

With 4,000 acres of land dedicated as a wildlife reserve and bordered by two of Australia's most prominent National Parks, the Wolgan conservancy project re-establishes and secures a future for many of the region's indigenous and endangered species, which have been under critical pressure from introduced flora and feral predators.

Almost 40 km of barbed wired fencing were removed from the property to reduce wildlife being fatally snared while attempting to jump or pass under the fence. Wildlife corridors are now being established in partnership with local conservation organisations to support native wildlife movements around the property and into adjoining World Heritage Areas. A 50 hectare feral-free area has been secured to protect the smaller, more vulnerable species.

During the construction phase, Emirates worked with local and state conservation organisations to address their concerns on the creation of feral-free areas. Enormous efforts have been made in the area of conservation, ensuring that all contractors on site received extensive training on how to prevent environmental damage and protect the local fauna and flora. Not a single tree was destroyed by the construction of the resort.

"In terms of wildlife diversity, we're already starting to see the results of our efforts, with increases in the density and movement of wallabies and wallaroo populations into the valley," Joost Heymeijer commented.

"The possibility to discover rare Australian wildlife, free-roaming in its natural habitat, will be a major drawcard for Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, especially with overseas visitors," he added. "Local and international guests and their families will be able to immerse themselves into an authentic and meaningful experience – all within the comfort and understated luxury of world-class facilities."

Set next to the Wollemi National Park and Gardens of Stone National Park, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is the only Australian resort in recent history to receive permission to be built adjacent to a World Heritage Area. Following some of the most rigorous legislation and environmental controls in the world, this project is of extraordinary significance, not just within Australia but on a global level as well.

The resort adheres to World Heritage Committee standards and has exceeded the minimum requirements of construction controls imposed by both State and Federal Agencies – positioning Emirates as the only foreign investor carrier with such level of commitment to Australia.

Visit [www.wolganvalley.com](http://www.wolganvalley.com).

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### **About Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa**

Scheduled for soft opening in October 2009, the exclusive conservation-based Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa has already received its first bookings, including individual, family and small group reservations.

Nestled between two national parks bordering the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and a scenic three-hour drive from Sydney, Wolgan Valley forms the centrepiece for unique experiences and insights into Australia's wildlife, history and cultural heritage. Occupying just two per cent of a 4,000-acre conservancy reserve, the resort offers the ultimate in seclusion, comfort and guest-focused services, all within conservation-based luxury. Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is the only Australian resort in recent history to receive permission to be built adjacent to a World Heritage Area.

This secluded resort will feature 40 free-standing suites surrounded by private decks, each having its own indoor/outdoor swimming pool. Its architecture is designed to be reminiscent of traditional rural Australian homesteads.

As Emirates Hotels & Resorts' first hospitality development outside Dubai, the Au\$125 million project is being built on the same principles as Emirates' acclaimed Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa, fully integrated into its environment and supporting wide-ranging conservation practices. These will focus on endangered species protection and the planting of thousands of native trees indigenous to the area, including one of the world's rarest trees, the Wollemi Pine.

"The Wolgan Valley's combination of luxury, iconic location and outstanding conservation values, truly cannot be paralleled," said Tony Williams, Senior Vice President, Resorts & Projects, Emirates Hotels & Resorts. "It provides the essential Australian experience which exposes the visitor to an understanding of the amazing continent and its heritage."

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### **About Emirates Hotels & Resorts:**

Emirates Hotels & Resorts is Emirates Airline's premier hospitality management division comprising a growing portfolio of award-winning luxury conservation-based resorts, five-star hotels and lifestyle Spas.

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year, Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa has showcased the success of Emirates Hotels & Resorts' conservation-based philosophy. The same philosophy is followed at the other two Emirates Hotels & Resorts conservation-based properties; the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa in Australia's Blue Mountains, scheduled for 'soft' opening in October, and at the Cap Ternay Resort & Spa in the Seychelles, which is now under planning.

The Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve and the Wolgan Valley Wildlife Conservancy, where Al Maha and Wolgan Valley are respectively located, are sponsored by Emirates and under the management of Emirates Hotels & Resorts.

For further information, visit [www.emirateshotelsresorts.com](http://www.emirateshotelsresorts.com).