

L'Escale Resort Marina & Spa

SEYCHELLES

Winch Design brings its superyacht expertise to the hospitality sector, creating an authentic Seychellois resort on the island of Mahé.

Words: Catherine Martin • Photography: © Elsa Young

Recent years have seen something of a blurring of lines in the hospitality design world in that studios best known for their land-based projects have ventured to the seas, transferring the skills and strategies employed in their hotel projects to ocean-faring vessels, giving rise to the boutique cruise ship. Now, the same is happening in the opposite direction, with cruise and yacht specialists being asked to design residences and hotels.

For Winch Design, the London-based studio behind a number of luxury yachts and private jets, the move into hospitality has been organic. “We have worked with ultra-high net-worth clients for the past 35 years and initially the studio specialised in bespoke sailing and superyacht designs,” explains Simon Tomlinson, Director of Architecture. “As we developed meaningful relationships and gained a deep understanding of their lifestyles, clients started to ask us to design projects on land and in the air.”

For their first hotel project, Winch were tasked with creating an exclusive destination with dining and spa facilities, as well as a private marina where guests could step directly from their yachts onto the resort. “The client initially approached Winch Design for a bespoke yacht, but then realised he wanted something more,” Tomlinson continues. “As conversations progressed, it transpired there was the opportunity for not only an exclusive residence, but a commercial endeavour catering to the touring elite.”

And so L'Escale Resort Marina & Spa was born. Occupying a prime spot on the water's edge, with mountain views to one side and the Indian Ocean to the other, the resort has been designed by Winch to harmonise with its surroundings. “A central philosophy underpinning the masterplan was the symbiotic relationship between ocean and mountain, and this is illustrated perfectly by the decision to create a clear visual line from the ocean directly through the centre of the resort to the spa area, set to the backdrop of the mountain-scape,” says Tomlinson. The structure – part existing hotel, part newbuild – is sympathetic to the traditional Seychellois vernacular with a double-hip roof like those seen in nearby villages. The landscaping – developed by Landmark Studios – centres around water, with pools across multiple levels, boardwalks and plenty of tropical plantlife.

Guestrooms are spread across multiple buildings and include entry-level options with balcony, villas with additional living space, and the sprawling 375m² Royal Suite, which comes with its own swimming pool and Jacuzzi. The materials used, both inside and out, foster a connection with the island and were thoughtfully selected for their tactility. “The structures were made from a local tropical hardwood called Nayatoh, meaning that not only the colour and texture of the timber is authentically Seychellois, but also that the DNA of the resort is laced with the spirit of the island,” Tomlinson explains, adding that the team rejected a slate





roof in favour of timber, which will gradually change from exposure to the elements. “These choices helped create an authentic sense of place, which was the guiding design ethos throughout the build.”

The spirit of Mahé also finds its way inside, with the colours, textures and materials of the island woven into the concept. Local granite and lava stone join sea grass and cork panelling, while raffia veneers, drift oak joinery and rope-wrapped columns bring a soft warmth to the spaces. Inspiration from the ocean is seen in the turquoise and deep-sea blues of the soft furnishings, and in a shoal of ceramic fish swimming around the light fixtures in the public spaces, their sculptural form brought to life by Scabetti. Most of the furniture across the resort is designed bespoke by the Winch team and handcrafted in sustainable teak by artisans in Bali and the Philippines. Other pieces, including artwork and accessories, have been sourced from local markets or made from coco shell, mahogany and petrified wood.

The materials and finishes across the resort have been specified with the tropical climate in mind, and in contrast to projects for private clients, the furniture is selected to appeal to a wide range of guest profiles. The team have relished in the new challenge, as well the opportunity to apply their design expertise in a different way. “As space is restricted on a yacht, it is second nature to us to consider its full possibility and practicality,” explains Tomlinson. “Every inch is considered, and nothing is superfluous.” The architect also believes that the attention to detail required on yacht projects – which he refers to as “yacht quality” – has translated to a high standard of finish across the resort. And the successful completion of L’Escale is already paying dividends. Although they remain tight-lipped on the details, Winch Design have revealed that their second hotel project – a large undertaking in a European capital city – is in the works.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Architecture: Winch Design,
ADD Locus Architects

Interior Design: Winch Design

Lighting Design: Bo Steiber

Landscaping: Landmark Studios

Main Contractor: Laxmanbhai

Project Manager: ADD Locus
Architects

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