



With a fiercely loyal tribe of repeat guests – affectionately known as ‘Amanjunkies’ – and a very distinct brand concept, Aman has managed to carve a niche for itself in a market where unique and extraordinary is part and parcel of the deal. Here, **Vladislav Doronin**, the group’s chairman and CEO, explains how

Aman has a very specific brand identity and reputation that infiltrates every project you undertake. Can you outline or define the Aman brand and what makes it unique in a sea of luxury hotel groups?

The Aman ethos welcomes guests as if to the home of an old friend. The service is intuitive; guests feel peace, complete privacy and as though they are part of an exclusive club.

Aman is a collection of unique resorts and hotels that all offer consistency of experience, yet also reflect the natural beauty and the cultures of the destinations they are located at through their individual design. The Aman aesthetic is minimal but striking, and each destination blends organically into its surroundings and instills a sense of peace and belonging.

Your development pipeline is relatively slow in comparison to some other high-end luxury hotel groups. What goes into development decisions at Aman and how do you select your unique and distinctive locations?

We have never compromised on the location of our properties and we never will. Nine of our destinations are located in UNESCO heritage sites.

Even more Aman resorts are located next to or within protected parks. We have been granted permission by local authorities to build an Aman

in these unique locations because they understand the brand and know that we will respect the local cultures and the surrounding nature. If the best location is not available or does not fit our criteria, we would rather wait for the right opportunity.

Last year we announced a pipeline of 11 new hotels and resorts, each with a residential component, and in March this year, we revealed the name and location of our first destination in Mexico: Amanvari on the East Cape of the Baja Peninsula, on the calm shores of the Sea of Cortes. We are also developing further resorts in South East Asia, the US, Europe and Japan. Our uncompromising attitude to selecting a destination is the same approach we are taking with our urban development. We plan to replicate what we have done with Aman Tokyo elsewhere. Aman New York will open in 2020

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At Aman we have seen an increase in a younger generation of guests becoming Amanjunkies. In 2017, over 55 percent of our guests were under 44 years old. With today's frantic pace of life, even the younger market is in search of a tranquil destination to restore and reset.

With 30-years in the industry under its belt, Aman has never been shy of innovating. How are the changing needs of today's luxury traveller influencing the brand's evolution strategy?

Wellness has become a key focus of the luxury hospitality industry and is worth in excess of \$770 billion globally. Aman has become synonymous with a holistic approach to health and wellness. We have expanded our offering to reflect the needs of our guests, with immersive wellness experiences in several destinations. This month, we launched a new brand: Aman Skincare. This was a natural evolution from the growth of our wellness offering and a reflection of the demands of our clients. Our clients were always keen to find ways of experiencing Aman when they returned from their adventures. Now they can enjoy a little piece of Aman in their own homes.

F&B is also of utmost importance to our clients. Recently we developed and unveiled two new culinary concepts in several global destinations. Nama, serving uncomplicated and elegant dishes celebrating the tradition of Washoku, the UNESCO-celebrated 'food of Japan', and Arva, our second culinary concept which celebrates bold, heart-warming dishes, alive with flavour and inspired by the warmth of Italy. F&B continues to be a key focus for us and we will continue to enhance our offering globally.

Many of our clients wanted a way to travel to multiple Aman destinations over a short period of time. In response to this demand, we now offer Aman Private Jet Expeditions, including a Pan-Asia tour or a round-the-world journey. The 22-day-long, round-the-world journey is the perfect combination of exploration and relaxation, visiting Aman destinations in Europe and Asia.

Today, Aman is synonymous with discretion and the highest exclusivity. How have you maintained this leading position on the luxury hospitality scene and what are your plans and goals for the brand moving into the future?

Thanks to our loyal following and our high staff-to-guest ratio, we are able to understand and anticipate the needs of our guests. This is how we have managed to maintain exclusivity, discretion and privacy in our 30-year history. As for the future, along with our organic evolution, we will continue to offer residences to those wishing to own a piece of Aman themselves. The Villas at Amanpuri set the bar for luxury residences worldwide, and we anticipate the arrival of Aman New York in 2020, which, along with its 83 suites, will bring to the market 20 one-of-a-kind one- to five-bedroom private residences. With the opening of Amanvari, our first destination in Mexico, we will offer 24 whole-ownership Aman Residences. All of our future destinations will include a residential component.

We also look forward to launching future urban Amans and are developing proposals in London, Paris, Hong Kong and Singapore. We will replicate the success we have had with Aman Tokyo, and in urban destinations will take the approach we have had in our 'horizontal' resorts translating it into a 'vertical' setting.

and will represent our first urban hotel to also have Aman residences for sale.

Luxury means so many different things to so many different people. What does luxury mean to the 'Amanjunkie' and how do you keep them consistently coming back for more?

Amanjunkies feel as though they are part of an exclusive club. They appreciate the feeling of peace and total privacy. They are adventurers and are enthusiastic to tick every Aman destination off their list. Whenever I meet an Amanjunkie, they excitedly name every Aman they have been to and which destination is next on their hitlist.

In the past, Aman has been vocal about the significance of preserving the brand and not becoming too commercial. Why is this important and what actions are being taking for the continued realisation of this goal?

Our uncompromising attitude to selecting future destinations and the fierce respect of the Aman ethos will never change. Even though we must adapt to the needs of our clients, we will always stay true to the foundations on which the Aman brand was built.

When Aman first launched in 1988 with Amanpuri in Phuket, the small ultra-luxurious boutique hotel concept was still relatively unprecedented. What do you think catalysed the growth in popularity of this genre?

The luxury travel industry changed when travellers stopped being tourists and began to want to experience a destination authentically. It became more about experiencing a culture first hand and feeling immersed in the surrounding nature.

How is Aman keeping up with the digital revolution and the popularity of social media, and how are you attracting the emerging Millennial and Millennial-minded audiences?

Although technology has its place in luxury hospitality, we ensure it does not replace the fundamental USPs of the Aman brand; feeling as though you are in the home of a dear friend, unparalleled service, human interaction and personal touch are of utmost importance. All of this enhances the connection between our guests and the brand.

Because of the Aman ethos of providing a peaceful sanctuary, and thanks to our staff to guest ratio of 6:1, we are able to offer incomparable service, unmatched by any other high-end hospitality brand. As a result, we have one of the highest rates of repeat guests in the hospitality industry; Amanjunkies have been bringing their children to Aman destinations for decades.