

Arabic Elegance, Genuine Hospitality

An Interview with Willy Ribbe,
Area General Manager, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha



Willy Ribbe

EDITORS' NOTE Willy Ribbe has been in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years, working for a variety of properties from boutique hotels to larger operations with capacities of up to 1,900 rooms. Ribbe joined The Ritz-Carlton Company in Qatar in 2007, where he oversees The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, and the Sharq Village & Spa and is responsible for all future developments of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., in the country. Prior to this role, he was promoted to Cluster General Manager of the Marriott properties in Prague in 2003. Before this, Ribbe acted as General Manager at the Budapest Marriott Hotel and Millennium Court Executive Apartments.

COMPANY BRIEF The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, sits 115 meters above Qatar's sea and desert landscape, overlooking the Arabian Gulf. The 374-room five-star resort, located on its own exclusive island in the West Bay Lagoon district, fuses contemporary styling with classic Arabic and European design. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., of Chevy Chase, Maryland, operates 66 hotels in the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. More than 30 projects are under development around the globe, with future openings in Sanya, Dubai, Kowloon, Dallas, and Denver.

As The Ritz-Carlton, Doha's new Area General Manager, and from the vantage point of someone who has been in the

hospitality industry for more than 30 years, what are you finding especially unique about The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, and what it has to offer guests?

The Arabic elegance exuded by our ladies and gentlemen in the hotel and the genuine hospitality of the region is rich and is infused into the personal service provided to each of our guests. This generates a genuine warmth and sense of belonging that you don't typically find at other destinations.

For those traveling to Qatar on business, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, advertises its three Club Level floors as a "hotel within a hotel." Can you elaborate on the amenities that the Club Level offers?

We have five food and beverage presentations on a daily basis. They include a breakfast with a live cooking station; a midday presentation; an afternoon tea; evening hors d'oeuvres and canapés with a live cooking station featuring rotating nights of Middle Eastern-, Asian-, and Mediterranean-themed cuisines; and late night chocolate and liquors. We have a dynamic team who create a personalized experience for our guests. The Club floors have their own check-in and check-out, a business center, and concierge services. The Club Lounge is a unique concept that is very popular with our frequent travelers. Other Club Level rooms benefits include complimentary Internet, a daily selection of international newspapers, exclusive Bvlgari amenities, three complimentary laundry items, and special in-room food and beverage amenities.

With a total of nine different restaurants, bars, and lounges – including its signature restaurant La Mer, which offers spectacular views of the Arabian Gulf from its perch on the 23rd floor of the hotel – in what ways are The Ritz-Carlton, Doha's, dining options similar and distinctive?

All of our restaurants and bars have a common alignment, which is the uncompromising level of food quality and personalized service. Our guests have various dining options including French fine dining, authentic Italian, casual dining, and an array of international flavors showcased in theme nights, which change daily. The views vary from the ever-changing city skyline to a birds-eye view of The Pearl, to the lush green gardens prominent within the property.

Our award-winning Habanos Bar is known for its live entertainment and the largest cigar

selection in Doha and includes your own personal cigar butler who can assist in recommendations and the proper storage of your own cigars.

The Lobby Lounge, with its live entertainment throughout the day, invites our guests to relax in a refined setting while enjoying the finest selection of teas and sweets during our signature The Ritz-Carlton Afternoon Tea.

The Ritz-Carlton, Doha's, spa and fitness facilities have been rated among the finest in the Middle East. Can you provide our readers with an overview?

This incredible facility includes a 25-meter Junior Olympic indoor swimming pool, two indoor tennis courts, a squash court, and a state-of-the-art fitness center. Our sport and recreational programs allow us to maintain a competitive edge. Our extensive programs including various types of fitness classes (BTS and Body Pump), circuit courses, a dedicated spinning room, yoga, pilates, tennis, and swimming lessons. In addition, our beauty services are extremely popular and include facials, body treatments, signature massage packages, and many other unique spa experiences.

We work exclusively with Natura Bissé, Sundāri, and Lillian Terry products, which have proved very popular with our spa members and our in-house guests. Our service professionals within our spa team truly make all the difference with their willingness to create an individualized experience.

Why should companies interested in holding executive meetings or conferences in Qatar choose The Ritz-Carlton, Doha?

Qatar is a country with a rich history and such explosive growth, and it provides so many attractions for the business and leisure traveler to enjoy. The local Qataris are warm, friendly, and hospitable, which makes the destination immediately feel like home. We offer the finest facilities, the latest technologies, and a destination that is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is very easy to get around and to do business. With the support of Qatar Airways, the destination is easily accessible via one of the most modern air fleets in the sky. Coupled with the hotel's unique business facilities, Club floors, business center and services, oversized bedrooms, and personal service of more than 550 ladies and gentlemen, this is a truly easy and delightful venue for any business or meeting dealings. ●