

ALCOHOL-FREE HOTELS FOR MUSLIMS?



There is a new class of hotels coming to existence - without bars and pubs but with many curtains and an extra pool for women.

Once upon a time, there was a Sheikh Abdulasis al-Brahim, who was the owner of Grand Hyatt Hotel in Cairo. The Sheikh came to his hotel one day and ordered the surprised staff to get rid of all the alcohol in the building. In a moment, the contents of 2,500 bottles of luxury French wines, champagne, whiskey and grappa were flowing through Cairo's sewers towards the sea.

The owner of the hotel who comes from Saudi-Arabia and belongs to the relatives of its king Abdullah wanted to relieve his conscience as muslim. Since then, the waiters' answer to an order of any alcoholic beverages is: "I am sorry but we do not serve any alcohol at the moment."

The management of Hyatt International company was astonished and definitely not delighted by Sheikh's decision and the actions that followed. The government of Egypt is now considering lowering the hotels class by decreasing the number of its stars from five to four or even three.

Despite all these inconveniences, the hotels that base their reputation on the fact that they are in concord with the Islamic shariah right are nowadays on the rise. Not only in the Arabic world.

Some hotel chains with Arabic owners are considering offering this new "Islamic" concept also in Europe and the USA. The traditional European chain of luxury hotels, Kempinsky, wants to build 30 shariah-corresponding hotels (the hotel net will be called "Shaza") in Europe and Africa in the next ten years, all this in cooperation with the Arabic Guidance Financial Group.

Hanl Laschin, the marketing director of the puritanical Jawhara Hotels in Dubai says: "Here in Dubai, the share of this segment of hotels on the market is now about 5%. However, I believe that we will control at least 25% until 2015."

Not only strictly religious women wear headscarves in the Jawhara Hotel in Dubai. You will also find no bars or pubs here. On the other hand, there is a separated pool for women and all meat used for cooking here comes exclusively from shariah-butchered animals. Still there are some exceptions for the tourists from Europe or America. They can, unlike the locals, for example go to the swimming pool in their swimsuit or play table-tennis in mixed pairs.

Special facilities and services for muslims are nothing new under the sun in Asia and this trend is now heading towards the West. A few years ago, muslims in Malaysia requested women to have a special line to the cash desks in supermarkets, separated swimming pools or a special row and above all separated toilets on the airplanes.

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