

In Korea, a Resort by Richard Meier

Description

A South Korean culture dedicated to sunrises over the East Sea has driven the design of Richard Meier Partners' (RMP) first project in that nation.

The HH Hotel Resort and Spa is 35,000 square meters on 15 floors, with 150 rooms, a banquet hall, restaurant and spa. At the client's request, almost all rooms face east to the sea, though a few do look west to the mountains. It's sited on a hilltop in Gangneung, on the highest elevation in a town that's basically flat everywhere else.

"The scenery is beautiful – people go just to see the sun rise, as part of the Korean cultural experience," says Guillermo Murcia, a senior associate at RMP. "It's one of highlights of the area."

Another will be the 2018 Olympics, to be held in a nearby town just 20 minutes away. Some events will be held in Gangneung, so the new resort, scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2015, is on an "aggressive" construction schedule.

Clad in self-cleaning, precast concrete panels outside, its interiors reflect the colors of its site.

"We wanted to get a building that has a lot of respect for its surroundings and a good sense of scale within the environment and nature," he says. "The area is so beautiful, so it's about nature and the relationship with the site."

The palettes for rooms facing the ocean and those facing the mountains reflect the differences in the environments they overlook. Deciding against the austerity of an all-white building, inside and out, the architects employed a warm, rich palette for the interiors.

"A lot of the ocean rooms have a cooler palette that brings in the colors of ocean, sand and sky," says RMP senior associate Vivian Lee. "There's a light veneer of limestone to emulate the sand, and a warm, orange glow of sunrise."

The mountain-facing rooms reflect the rocky views covered in lush green vegetation. The stone inside is limestone that's a little darker, as are the wood finishes. The palette is a darker orange and bright red to reflect leaves turning in the fall, with dark greens too.

Topping it all off though, is the presidential suite atop the 15th floor. The entire suite is surrounded by a wraparound terrace. Also included: a courtyard garden, fireplace and outdoor Jacuzzi.

"It's quite spectacular," says Murcia.

And it's just the place to watch the sunrise over the ocean – or, 12 hours later, the sunset over the mountains.

For more information, go to www.richardmeier.com.

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