

HILTON TO OPEN IN GOLDEN SANDS

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The Doubletree by Hilton Varna will be the first property of the world-class hotel brand Hilton on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

At a news conference yesterday in the Golden Sands resorts Hilton Worldwide announced that they have signed a franchise agreement with Helios Hotels EAD, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tetrareal AD, for a new Doubletree by Hilton hotel in Varna.

It is the first Doubletree hotel in Bulgaria and the first Hilton-brand property in the country outside of Sofia. The famous Doubletree chocolate chip cookie, an icon of the hospitality of the brand, has been introduced for the first time in Bulgaria during a special ceremony.

The new Doubletree by Hilton, Varna is the fully refurbished luxury part of the former Helios Spa & Resort. We have undergone an extensive property improvement for the rebranding, by investing, among other features, in guest safety and sprinkler systems, top of the range entertainment technology and the Suite Dreams proprietary Doubletree mattresses, which are unique for Bulgaria in our property – a significant investment in an operating luxury hotel, which had already had a 5-star category, to achieve a product that is second to none in Golden Sands and on the Bulgarian seaside. We are very excited to pioneer yet again a world-class brand and service in Golden Sands. Hilton is consistently voted the strongest hotel brand by awareness in Europe and worldwide, and I am convinced that, with Bulgaria continuing to offer the best value for money in the European holiday destinations, this will be an instant success,” commented Dr. George Veltchev, chairman of the board of Tetrareal AD.

While bound by the Hilton franchising contract not to disclose the exact amount of the investment in the new Doubletree hotel, Veltchev said that the money invested to re-brand the hotel was about 35% of the original construction investment. The converted Doubletree by Hilton Varna is located in Golden Sands resort near Varna. It overlooks the greenery of the Golden Sands nature park and the Black Sea.

Doubletree by Hilton Varna offers 196 guest rooms, family rooms and suites, two restaurants, and three bars. The hotel will also have a fitness centre by Precor, sauna and steam bath, direct access to the award-winning Aphrodite Beauty Spa & Health Clinic with its variety of beauty and health treatments, a unique facility for the Bulgarian Black Sea coast which is combination of a spa and medical center located on an area of 2,300 square meters.

“The 2010 opening of Doubletree by Hilton Varna reaffirms the stable development of the Doubletree brand in Europe. The European presence of the world hotel brand Doubletree by Hilton has seen considerable growth in the last few years,” said Claudio Sturm, the General Manager of the new Doubletree by Hilton Varna hotel in the Golden Sands resort.

In his words, the first Bulgarian Doubletree hotel hopes to benefit from the loyalty of Hilton clients, as well as from the upcoming opening of a number of new Doubletree hotels around Europe – four in Russia, three in Turkey, and one in each Greece, Romania, and Norway. Sturm has prior experience at senior management positions in leading hotel chains in Germany and Austria, and has also served as the Sales and Marketing Director of the Hilton Sofia.

Doubletree is one of Hilton Worldwide’s ten market-leading brands. With a growing collection of accommodations in more than 230 gateway cities, metropolitan areas and vacation destinations worldwide, Doubletree by Hilton hotels and resorts are designed to cater for business and leisure travelers.

Veltchev said he expected that the opening of the Doubletree by Hotel Varna will break the trend of relying on tour operators to find customers which is currently prevalent among the Bulgarian Black Sea hotels and resorts. In his words, over 90% of the foreign tourists using Bulgarian Black Sea hotels are recruited through tour operators. In contrast, he expects that the specific features of the Doubletree brand will allow the new hotel to bring this number down to 20%-30%.

Veltchev further announced his company plans to open another Hilton brand facility - the Hilton Varna.