

LOUIS LI WINS MAJOR TOURISM AWARD WITH FIRST AUSTRALIAN HOTEL

30-year old entrepreneur, Louis Li, has made an impressive foray into the Australia hotel industry by winning one of the country's top tourism awards with his debut hotel on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

Jackalope Hotel, which opened to guests in April 2017, was awarded 'Australia's Hotel of the Year' at the 2017 Gourmet Traveller Australian Hotel Guide Awards. The property was also named 'New Hotel of the Year' and 'Regional Hotel of the Year'.

The \$40 million five-star boutique hotel, located among the 11-hectare Willow Creek Vineyard, is described as 'daring and avant-garde'. Developed in collaboration with a roll-call of Melbourne creatives, the hotel features 45 rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows and private terraces overlooking the vineyard.

Jackalope also offers immersive food and wine experiences delivered through its two restaurants, cocktail bar, winery and cellar door. The hotel's headline dining act, Doot Doot Doot, received a One Chef's Hat rating in its first year.

Other hotel highlights include a striking, black 30-metre infinity pool lapping over the vines and an array of inhabitable art installations like Doot Doot Doot's arresting canopy of a slowly twinkling 10,000-globe chandelier.

Now entering its second year of operation, the hotel has added more than 150 jobs to the region and raised the Mornington



A Jackalope is a mythical half jackrabbit/half antelope in North American legend. The hotel reflects Louis Li's passion for art, design, food and storytelling.

Peninsula's profile as an international tourist destination.

Australia calling

In 2008, Louis Li moved to Melbourne as a 20-year-old to study Screen and Media at RMIT University. While studying in Melbourne – completing his undergraduate degree and more recently a Master of Business Administration – Li established a strong connection with this cosmopolitan city - its cultural undercurrents resonating with his artistic tastes.

Coming from a family with a wealth of experience in luxury hotel development – his family's company, KCC, has developed an impressive portfolio of resort properties in south-west China's Yunnan province, partnering with US-based Hyatt Hotels, Singapore's Banyan

Tree Hotels and Resorts and Pullman, owned by French hotel group Accor on recent developments – Li enjoyed international exposure to the industry.

With a growing awareness of the connection between the elements of a luxury hotel and of his passions: design, art, food, and storytelling, Li set about conceiving a new hotel brand to act as his creative outlet.

When the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) and Tourism Australia began working to identify potential tourism infrastructure investors in China, they saw Li, with backing from KCC, as a standout thanks to the parent company's existing hotel investments.

Austrade and Tourism Australia assisted Li and with initial site inspections in early 2013, followed by detailed discussions with potential sellers.



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Tourism Australia strengthens its relationship with Jackalope

Launched in 2013, the Ultimate Winery Experiences Australia (UWEA) initiative backed by Tourism Australia aims to raise the profile of Australia as one of the world’s leading wine tourism destinations.

UWEA has announced the inclusion of Jackalope at Willow Creek Vineyard to its collection. In collaboration with existing UWEA member, Montalto Vineyard and Olive Grove, Jackalope will offer four new experiences combining winery tours and tastings, fine dining, luxury accommodation and spa treatments.

On 18 July 2013, Li’s Australian investment arm, Cloud Investment Operations, signed the sales contract to acquire Willow Creek Vineyard for A\$9.5 million and paid a deposit to the vendor, Knowles Group.

Three months later, Cloud Investment Operations officially took ownership of Willow Creek Vineyard.

Li appointed a range of leading Australian consultants to collaborate on the project: Carr Design Group (architects and interior design), Taylor Cullity Lethlean (landscape architects), Medley Property Group (project managers), Fabio Ongarato Design (branding and design), Projects of Imagination (restaurant fit out and branding) and Zuster (custom-made furnishings) led this roll call of creatives.

Li also commissioned artworks from prominent Australian artists like Emily Floyd, Andrew Hazewinkel, and Kate Robertson.

Seizing an opportunity

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growth of Chinese visitors dispersing to destinations beyond capital cities. KCC’s previous relationship with Austrade also meant it had an existing partner in this important process.

Ties between KCC and Austrade go as far back as 2001 when Austrade introduced an Australian firm, PTW Architects, to KCC for its Lakeside Dreams residential development in China. KCC selected PWT as the project’s master planner.

Beyond Jackalope Mornington Peninsula, Li has already invested further in Australia’s tourism infrastructure sector. In 2015 Cloud Investment Operations purchased the heritage-listed Maria George building in Melbourne’s CBD, the site set to be Jackalope’s second hotel. Scheduled to open in 2020, Jackalope Flinders Lane will comprise 36 rooms, two restaurants, and a two-story rooftop bar.

Cloud Investments also purchased the freehold to St Kilda’s iconic Prince of Wales Hotel in 2015. The landmark Fitzroy Street property presently includes a large band room, a pub, a 39-room boutique hotel, a two-hat restaurant, several additional dining venues, a rooftop event space, and a day spa.

ABOUT TOURISM AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRADE

Tourism Australia and Austrade formed an investment promotion partnership in response to the national long-term tourism strategy, Tourism 2020, which involves the Australian and state and territory governments working with industry to double overnight visitor expenditure to over A\$115 billion by 2020. The partnership demonstrates the Australian Government’s commitment to making the process of investment easier by removing barriers and making information and insight on Australian tourism opportunities more readily available to interested investors.

Disclaimer

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