

Jean-Pierre Heim renovates a 30-year-old Club Med resort in Senegal, bringing the property up to date

without compromising its original aesthetic vision.

It Takes a Village

INEVITABLY EXHAUSTED AFTER long flights, Club Med guests, upon arrival in Senegal, should relax, have a drink, and immediately feel as if they were within an African village, not a stylized version of Adventureland. So goes the thinking of international architect Jean-Pierre Heim. Tackling an extensive—and exhaustive—renovation of the middle-aged, seaside resort just outside of Dakar, Heim earns kudos for the authenticity of his

work. To create a valid African experience, he based his entire project on the use of native materials, art, and craftsmanship. He also relied almost exclusively on the talents of the local populace to execute his plan.

Heim's project is part of a worldwide rejuvenation program on the part of Club Med, the 50-year-old organization that, with a current count of 70 facilities, revolutionized vacations. The logical choice to renovate this West African resort, Heim has not only hotel experience in France, but also a history with Club Med; he's previously designed two sites in Morocco.

In Senegal, where the landscape is lush with tropical greenery and the seaside resplendent with white sand and black volcanic rock, work focused on a complete overhaul of the 30-year-old hotel. This included its 450 rooms and public spaces encompassing circulation, lobby, bars, four restaurants, and a new shop created for African artifacts. But that wasn't all. Heim's commission entailed site analysis, surveying, and program preparation in collaboration with the client. As a result, the French-born architect, who maintains offices in New York and Paris, reconfigured exterior zones, too: a theater, poolside bars and restaurants, plus a dramatic new pool that was dug and built virtually by hand. "It was like building the pyramids in six months," he comments. He also enhanced the site with two new constructions, one a single-story restaurant with seating for 900 people, the other a hut-like structure or →

Opposite: Despite its seaside location, Club Med's guests prefer the pool to the ocean, which is often rough and cold. Both the 100-ft.-long pool and main bar, resembling an oversized hut, are new constructions on the site.

Left: View of the 30-year-old hotel constructed of brick and concrete with decorative tile detailing.

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