

FOR ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS, INVESTORS & DEVELOPERS

## Manuelle Gautrand

ON THE POWER  
OF CULTURE

*Molitor designer*

## JEAN- PHILIPPE NUEL

*‘Historic projects  
can be more creative’*

Designing for  
**extreme  
climates**

Why are  
people with  
disabilities  
still being let  
down by poor  
design?

## ELORA HARDY

*Celebrated for her pioneering designs*

# mountain MAGIC

Italian wellness hotel brand Lefay has unveiled its second location – a luxury eco-resort in the Dolomites. Jane Kitchen reports

**A**t the newly opened Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti in Italy, the family-owned spa hotel brand has sought to create a location that's focused on wellness holistically – both wellness of the body and mind, through the massive 5,000sq m spa, and environmental wellness, with a sustainable design that blends into the landscape.

"At Lefay Properties, wellness embraces the entire holiday experience and can be found everywhere: wide spaces, architectural integration, the natural materials used, the Vital Mediterranean cuisine, and above all the treatments by Lefay Spa, blending together classical Chinese medicine and Western scientific research," says Alcide Leali, managing director of Lefay.

Alcide is the second generation of the Leali family, who made their fortune when they sold regional airline Air Dolomiti to Lufthansa in 2003. They founded Lefay Resorts in 2006, and opened the first location two years later; since then, the original Lefay Resort has become well-known and respected for its unique spa programming and enviable location on the shore of Lake Garda. Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of the

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”



Alcide Leali Jr.

Lefay brand that the spectacular natural settings are an integral part of the wellness experience, and this is carefully reflected throughout the architecture and design.

The brand's second location in the Dolomites – the Italian side of the Alpine Mountains – nicely complements the Lake Garda location, with outdoor wellness activities focused around skiing and hiking. Plans are also underway for a third Lefay Resort in Tuscany. "We've always said we want three properties

A photograph of a modern A-frame house with a dark grey tiled roof and a large glass window. The house is set against a backdrop of lush green mountains and a clear blue sky with some clouds. The glass window reflects the surrounding forest and mountains. The house has a dark grey stone or concrete base. The overall scene is a beautiful mountain landscape.

Architecture is by Hugo Demetz, who designed the property to try and integrate it into its natural surroundings



Local, natural materials have been used to create an organic, calming feel. Views of the surroundings take centre stage

The design celebrates Lefay's key signature elements: light, space, silence and nature

in Italy: lake, mountains and countryside," says Leali. The Dolomiti property is also home to the first Lefay-branded serviced wellness residences – 22 on-site apartments, starting at €1 million – designed to give guests the privacy of being at home along with access to all of the resort's services, including direct access to the spa.

### Mountain landscape

The 88-bedroom Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti has been built according to the principles of bio-architecture by Italian architect Hugo Demetz, who worked on the original Lefay resort in Lake Garda as well as other well-known wellness properties in Italy, including the five Adler properties, the Hotel Seeleiten, and the Hotel Terme Merano.

"Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti has not been designed as a single huge building, but as a property divided into three units: the resort's main services are located within the central body, which strongly characterises the entire project and represents the iconographic 'diamond' element of the Dolomites; from here the suites spread out towards the side wings, completely coated in fir and larch wood," says Liliانا Leali, CEO of Lefay.



## Apostoli emphasises natural materials local to the Dolomites and used for generations

"This design peculiarity has involved a considerable effort in the construction phase, rewarded by a final result consistent with the group's philosophy: the resort is integrated into the surrounding landscape and, thanks to the inclusion in the morphology of the land with southern exposure, it enjoys solar radiation throughout the day. It's inspired by local construction and materials, reinterpreted in a contemporary key."

### Inspiration from nature

That emphasis on locality is also key to the interior design, which was carried out by Italian designer Alberto Apostoli, also a specialist in wellness design. Apostoli emphasises natural materials local to the Dolomites and used for generations, including Italian woods, such as oak for the parquet flooring and chestnut for the furnishings; local stones, including tonalite, a granite-like stone historically used for fountains in the mountain pastures; and Italian natural leathers and wools. All the textiles, including the bed linen, are made from natural cotton fibre with no chemical treatment.

Apostoli worked closely with the Leali family and the Lefay Resorts project team on the vision for the look and feel of



Spa and wellness specialist  
Alberto Apostoli was  
responsible for the interiors





The spa has been designed to blend into the surroundings and reflect Lefay's philosophy of healing through nature



The restaurants serve traditional, regional dishes in contemporary surroundings

## Floor-to-ceiling glass takes advantage of the mountain views throughout the resort

the hotel suites, restaurants, common areas, the 5,000sq m spa, and the new Lefay residences. "For each space, a great deal of work has been done to create completely personalised environments, including the design of the furnishings," he says. "The design concept is focused on specific values, including a sense of Italian lifestyle, contemporary luxury, and environmental and energy sustainability."

Both the property's 22 Wellness Residences and the 88 hotel suites feature Lefay's signature elements of light, nature, silence and open spaces, and have been designed to reflect the beauty of the Dolomites within the room, with wide spaces, a neutral palette, natural fabrics and local materials.

The resort features two restaurants and a central cocktail bar and lounge, all of which boast floor-to-ceiling glass and dramatic views that make you feel more like you're standing at the edge of a mountain than sitting in a hotel lounge. Indeed, floor-to-ceiling glass takes advantage of the mountain views throughout the resort, from the spa's relaxation area to the restaurants and even one of the saunas. This is part of Lefay's philosophy of healing through nature – taking advantage of the spectacular natural surroundings and integrating the resort into the landscape.

At the newly opened Gruel restaurant – named for the mountain that provides the backdrop to the property – locally sourced organic cuisine is served, and the menu takes an 'altimetric' approach to dining, with ingredients and dishes divided into three categories according to their altitude: Valley

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The 5,000sq m spa is spread  
across four levels. The design  
and treatments fuse Eastern  
and Western influences



The Royal Pool and Spa Suite has a private bio-sauna, steam sauna and jacuzzi

Floor, Mountain Pasture and High Mountain. Apostoli took inspiration for the restaurant's design from the idea of an enchanted forest, creating metal leaves which hang from the ceiling and trees used as a frame for the room.

### Sustainable design

Lefay has positioned itself as a sustainable brand, and the new Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti takes advantage of the latest in renewable energy sources. ClimaHotel certified, the resort has been conceived following two guidelines: the containment of energy need, through a high level of insulation of all surfaces, and the use of renewable energy sources with high production systems, such as a biomass furnace and a co-generation plant. Consistent with Lefay Resort & Spa Lake Garda, which has been offsetting its CO2 emissions for the past five years, Lefay Resort & Spa Dolomiti also plans to neutralise its CO2 emissions. Social and environmental responsibility are key in the company's guidelines, and using local suppliers and materials, such as the tonalite stone, does the double-duty of giving the hotel an authentic Alpine feel, employing local workers, and at the same time helping reduce the carbon footprint of the hotel's construction.

"Lefay is extremely forward-thinking and attentive to even the smallest detail," says Apostoli. "The brand has been able to establish itself in a particularly competitive marketplace, giving shape to an idea of contemporary and environmentally



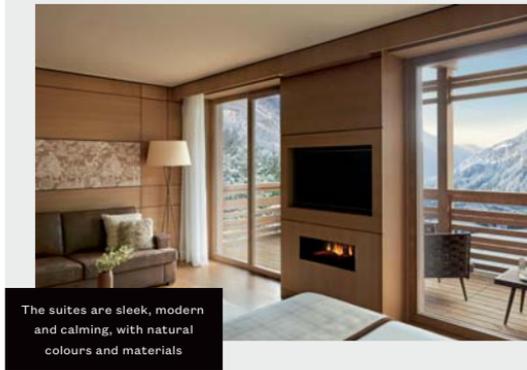
Renewable energy sources include a biomass furnace and co-generation plant

We believe in investing  
in the future, creating  
something for a select few  
that benefits everyone





The architecture features clean lines and a diamond shape designed to represent the Dolomite mountains



The suites are sleek, modern and calming, with natural colours and materials

friendly luxury. This work represents the perfect example of our studio's operating philosophy – that is, extending the idea of wellness to all aspects of the project."

#### Five zones of wellness

Wellness is central to the ethos of Lefay, and as such, the 5,000sq m spa has been placed at the centre of the resort – both literally and figuratively – and is spread over four levels. A vast 1,700sq m (18,300sq ft) thermal area known as the Energy Therapeutic World includes nine thermal experiences set in five zones, each based on the classical Chinese concept that energy, or Qi, cyclically moves through five phases between the poles of yin and yang, depending on the season or time of day. Five areas – The Green Dragon, The Red Phoenix, The White Tiger, The Black Tortoise and the Centre, which connects all of the zones – are each devoted to a particular season and linked to an organ in the body. Each of the areas – which feature different colours and scent as well as different levels of temperature and humidity – can be reached from the Centre, which is designed as a place of connection and transition between the zones, and includes a hydrotherapy pool with a domed skylight, and relaxation areas with commanding views of the mountains.

In addition to the Energy Therapeutic World, the spa features a floor for treatments and rituals with more than 20 treatment rooms, as well as a level dedicated to fitness. The indoor sports pool uses the local tonalite stone, and has been inspired by mountain streams, while the indoor-outdoor pool includes hydrotherapy circuits, and boasts stunning views.

"Innovation, nature and a unique wellness method are the principles of the Lefay wellness philosophy, blending together East and West to recover inner harmony," says Alcide Leali. "We believe that exclusivity means doing what no one else has yet thought of, investing in the present and in the future, creating something for a select few that benefits everyone." ●