

PROMONTORIO

ALGIERS FALAISES D'ORAN

ORAN, ALGERIA

2011–2009

Commissioned by the Emirates International Investment Company (eiic) in collaboration with the Municipality, Promontorio is masterplanning the waterfront of Canastel, in Oran. Located on the northwest coast of Algeria, it is the country's 2nd largest city (pop. 2 million) and a major industrial, cultural and educational centre of the region. This stunning city was the home to Nobel Prize winner Albert Camus, who used it as the setting for both of his famous novels *La Peste* and *L'Étranger*. French fashion guru Yves Henri Donat Mathieu-Saint-Laurent, another celebrated Oran-native, often claimed the influence of his Algerian upbringing in the spirit of his creations.

The easy going and liberal atmosphere that pervades Oran has much to do with its multicultural history. It was founded by Moorish Andalusian traders around AD 937, and due to its strategic location on the coast it quickly developed into a thriving trade and industrial centre with strong commercial links to Spain. Ultimately the Spanish occupied Oran, and although it was later provisionally taken over by Ottoman forces, they only abandoned it completely following the earthquake of 1790. In fact, much of the progress evident in contemporary Oran is largely due to the French, who occupied the city in the 19th-century. The city has a busy working port, servicing cargo ships, fishing boats and ferries that make regular runs to Casablanca and Marseille.

Oran features some of Algeria's most breathtaking coastline, from the rocky cliffs of Canastel to the nearby sandy beaches of Ain el Turck. The falaises d'oran project occupies a 5 km stretch of coastline, east of the city centre, and aspires to become Oran's key tourism destination. It comprises a large resort community including a shopping centre, hotels, marina, mosque and an aquarium. Across its nearly 300 hectares, the site of *falaises d'oran* has a varied topography that starts on the summit as a flat plateau, and then the land drops 160 metres in a series of steep cliffs until it comes to the shore. Large reefs and soaring bays outline the deep cobalt-blue sea. The plot is flat and narrow at the summit and widens towards the base, but on the slopes the soil composition becomes rough and rocky, forming a typical terraced landscape with Mediterranean vegetation along the stony banks.

Taking into account the complexity of the topography, the *falaises d'oran* project has a vast real estate component, both in terms of uses, property sizes, numbers of bedrooms and living rooms per unit and lifestyles. The programme is more focused on providing housing to be held freehold, but it has nevertheless been designed to also offer retail and offices. On the summit plateau, the only sizable flat area of the available plot, there is a mixed-use complex, which includes a shopping and entertainment centre with a hypermarket and other attractive anchors. At the same time it links the existing urban structure and the new expansion area. This concentration has also been devised in order to create an effective hub of services and bustling commerce and to avoid cargo and heavy transportation downhill. For pedestrians an aerial cable car system conveniently leads people from the shopping centre main plaza to the entrance of the aquarium, at the base of the cliffs.

The villas, townhouses and terraces are organized in small cascading clusters evocative of vernacular tradition in villages and small towns. Echoing these picturesque whitewashed communities, the ensembles aim to generate a friendly and intimate lifestyle, combined with a design-oriented and refined atmosphere. Also in the spaces generated by these generous and informal clusters there are areas where children can play and neighbours can meet. This idea of cultural and social sustainability, which helps create a spirit of community, is at the forefront of *falaises d'oran*.

Even though the main occupants of *falaises d'oran* will most likely be permanent residents living in their first-home, the programme is nevertheless conceived to offer a diversity of amenities, services and products that allows residents to have an active and full life. With 400 moorings, including hoist, dry docks and gas station, the marina is an important attraction in *falaises d'oran*.

With a series of broken down volumes surrounding the bay and forming small *piazzetas* and patios, the marina's public space generates a sophisticated atmosphere inspired by the highly successful examples of outstanding Mediterranean marinas such as Portofino, Cala di Volpe and Port Grimaud.

Close to the waterfront, and next to the Marina Hotel & Conference Centre, the Yacht Club stands as an exceptional icon, offering visitors unobstructed vistas onto both the marina and the sea. Cascading downhill in a series of gentle terraces until reaching the plateau immediately above the beach, the 250-bdr Hotel & Beach Resort has been conceived as a condo-hotel, while the Marina Hotel & Conference Centre, with 420-bdr, will offer conference facilities for 1,000 people. For a master plan with the size of *falaises d'oran*, certain amenities and public services not only enrich and enliven the place, but also bring it consistency and quality of life. Thus an Aquarium, a Waterfront Promenade and a Mosque, complete the proposed facilities.



Location: Canastel (Oran), Algeria

Developer: EIC (Emirates International Investment Company)/ The National Holding of Abu Dhabi

Plot size: 300 ha (5 Km of waterfront)

Programme: Integrated resort master plan comprising shopping centre, marina with hotel and conference centre, beach resort and Spa, villas, townhouses, semi-detached houses and apartments, mosque and aquarium in addition to a waterfront corniche serviced by elevated tramway

Gross built area: 1,120,000 sq. m

Project status: 2009 (master plan) – 2011 (presentation)

