



## Keith Hunter Qatar Duty free

# Opening up a land of opportunity

The current Doha International Airport in Qatar has seen phenomenal growth in passenger traffic and retail sales in the last decade, but space has been rapidly outgrown. At the end of 2012 a vast new airport will spring into life, opening up Qatar as a premium business destination, and allowing Qatar Duty Free to enter a new era of growth. Keith Hunter, Senior Vice President is busy preparing for the change.

UK-born Keith Hunter has spent most of his life in the Gulf region, and has been working at Doha International Airport for Qatar Duty Free for almost three years. In his current role as Senior Vice President of the fast-growing retail operation he is rightly enthusiastic about what the future holds. In just over a year's time his retail empire – already a business with over \$200 million turnover – will be moved from the existing 14 million passenger capacity Doha International, to a spanking new 50 million passenger capacity New Doha International Airport.

"That will be a complete step change for us," he says. "We have achieved so much in the limited space available in the existing site, and the shopping on offer now is truly world class, with great brands, and as much choice for customers as we can physically fit in. For instance we have added a new promotional area, and squeezed in new retail areas where we can. But moving to a substantially larger building will allow us to deliver to our full potential. Our retail area will grow from 2,500 sq m today to 25,000 sq m in the new airport.



The New Doha International Airport will be one of the biggest airports in the world." Today successful brands for Qatar Duty Free include Hugo Boss, Escada, Givenchy, Dior, Bulgari, Swarovski, Mont Blanc and Rolex to just name a few. Alongside fashion, beauty, watches, liquor and tobacco, the retail offer at Qatar Duty Free includes extensive electronics ranges, cameras, toys, souvenirs and a Gold Shop. In terms of new names coming in, it's too early for Hunter to disclose, but he says new partners are being lined up, negotiations are in full swing, and space is being allocated. "By the middle of next year we'll be able to reveal the full line-up," he promises.

Qatar, which recently won the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, is on a mission to attract ever-more business travellers and leisure-seekers with state of the art facilities. Capital is being ploughed into lavish hotel developments, golf courses, leisure and shopping facilities, and major event venues. Like Dubai's 'The Palm' development, Qatar has 'The Pearl', a luxury complex on reclaimed coastal land that will offer stunning homes and the promise of sunshine and glamour for the wealthy international jet-set. Already major international events are being hosted in the country, including the Asian Cup 2011 football

tournament earlier this year, so Qatar is building its global reputation.

"At the moment around 70% of passengers coming into Doha International are in transit, but looking ahead we envisage Qatar to be far more of a destination in its own right," says Hunter. "The new airport itself will be a destination hub, with hotels and a huge breadth of leisure facilities and shopping attached." Hunter says the airport retail space will offer a "happy mix" of both open plan shopping, and an outer circle of boutiques. "We're working hard to create a really good blend of multiple-brand areas, and stand-alone concessions for the brands that want them." The retail offer will delight UK travellers – a major destination for Qatar Duty Free – and Hunter says high-spending Russians and Chinese visitors are also being targeted.

In 2003, Qatar Airways carried about 3.3 million passengers, compared to 14 million in 2010, and expects the number to reach 16 million this year. By adding Stuttgart as a destination, Qatar Airways will be operating to 25 major European cities, representing 25% of its international network. Hunter calculates Qatar Duty Free should see between 20 and 24% growth in sales this year. **DM**

## PERSONAL FILE

**Born** Derby, UK, 1970

**Lives today** Doha, Qatar

**Family** Married with 3 children

**Drives** Toyota Prado

**Gadget of choice** iTouch

**Favourite film** Groundhog Day

**Best part of the job** The people

**Ambition for 2011** Not to go bald