

Pre-Opening Checklist

For Resorts & Hotels

This checklist distills 15+ years of pre-opening experience across luxury resorts in East Africa and the Indian Ocean region, including Marriott Autograph Collection properties. Use it as a roadmap for the critical 12 months before your opening day.

12-MONTH PRE-OPENING TIMELINE

■ 12-9 MONTHS: FOUNDATION

- Define brand positioning and target market segments
- Finalize organizational structure and key leadership roles
- Develop preliminary operating budget and cash flow projections
- Establish owner/operator communication protocols
- Begin recruitment for General Manager and Department Heads
- Engage legal counsel for licensing, permits, and labor compliance
- Select and contract Property Management System (PMS)
- Initiate brand partnership discussions (if applicable)

■ 9-6 MONTHS: INFRASTRUCTURE

- Finalize all department SOPs and service standards
- Complete recruitment of Department Heads
- Implement PMS, POS, and channel manager systems
- Establish vendor relationships (food, beverage, supplies)
- Develop pre-opening marketing and PR strategy
- Create rate structure and revenue management strategy
- Design training curriculum for all departments
- Finalize uniform designs and place orders
- Establish banking relationships and payment systems
- Complete health & safety certifications and inspections

■ 6-3 MONTHS: TEAM BUILDING

- Begin mass recruitment for line staff
- Launch pre-opening training program
- Conduct service culture workshops
- Finalize F&B; menus and pricing
- Complete OTA onboarding (Booking.com, Expedia, etc.)
- Launch website and booking engine
- Begin soft marketing to travel agents and partners
- Conduct FF&E; installation and quality checks
- Test all technical systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing)
- Establish emergency procedures and evacuation plans

■ 3-1 MONTHS: SIMULATION

- Conduct department-by-department operational dry runs
- Run full hotel simulation with mock guests
- Fine-tune service sequences and timing
- Complete all staff certifications (food safety, first aid)
- Finalize pre-opening PR and media invites
- Conduct soft opening with friends & family
- Gather feedback and make operational adjustments
- Verify all licenses and permits are displayed
- Test reservation and check-in/check-out processes
- Confirm vendor delivery schedules for opening week

■ FINAL WEEK: LAUNCH

- Final walkthrough of all guest rooms and public areas
- Brief entire team on opening day procedures
- Confirm VIP and media guest arrangements
- Stock all outlets and minibars
- Test all communication systems
- Prepare welcome amenities and personalized touches
- Hold team rally and opening ceremony
- OPEN YOUR DOORS

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- 1. Owner Alignment** — Establish clear communication rhythms and decision-making authority early.
- 2. Team Culture** — Invest heavily in training before opening. Your team's confidence = guest confidence.
- 3. Systems First** — Never open without fully tested PMS, POS, and reservation systems.
- 4. Soft Opening** — Always run a soft opening period to identify gaps before public launch.
- 5. Guest Focus** — Every decision should answer: "How does this improve the guest experience?"

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For advisory conversations on your pre-opening project, reach out via email or LinkedIn.