

# 40 Memories from 40 unforgettable years.

Zurich (Switzerland), 20 June 2013

1. When soul legend James Brown stayed at the Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul he took over the shoe-shine stand from Ismail Girtten and demonstrated his own polishing skills. The reason for this nifty footwork? Brown was once a shoe boy himself and claimed he could do a better job than Ismail. He couldn't.

2. When Ueli Prager was strolling the shore of Lake Zurich more than 60 years ago, he watched a seagull (or Möwe in German) swoop down to skillfully pick up food mid-flight. Inspired, Prager started Mövenpick. Today Mövenpick Hotel Izmir's most unusual repeat guest is a seagull that visits the rooftop bar Mistral every day. How did she know?

3. A massive search was launched when a mother staying at the Mövenpick Resort Taba in Egypt disappeared after going for swim in the sea. Three days later the hotel got a call from Hafr El Batten city police in Saudi Arabia – 14km away – to say a woman had come out of a 24-hour coma and was claiming to be a resort guest. It was the missing swimmer and she was quickly reunited with her family.

4. Mövenpick Hotel Cairo Pyramids, the first Mövenpick to open in Egypt in 1976, has 15 employees with a record combined working experience at Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts of 452 years. That's just one hotel! Sabreen Hakeem Basili from housekeeping and restaurant manager Gamal A. Allah El Welaili have been with the hotel from the first day it opened.

5. Mövenpick Hotel Essen's manager was once alerted to a strange nighttime sport after hearing trumpets. Guests were honking the instruments as they raced their bicycles through the hotel in a unique 'tour de floor'.

6. A clearly eccentric professor returned late to Mövenpick Hotel Essen and was too impatient to wait for his key. He undressed and put himself to bed on a lobby couch.

7. The Mövenpick Hotel Beirut arranged a truly Olympic-sized wedding proposal for a guest to pop the big question. After finishing a romantic dinner at the VIP Lounge of the Rooftop Lounge overlooking the Mediterranean, fireworks suddenly illuminated the Olympic-size pool and there in huge floating Styrofoam letters were the words carefully carved by hotel staff: "Will you marry me?" She did.

8. Fourteen-year-old Malonga Dieuveil fled to Germany with his sister to escape the Congo war after the death of his parents. He hated German food, so decided to cook his own. Three years later he started his professional cheffing career with the Mövenpick Hotel Münster and now works in a French Michelin-starred restaurant.

9. Rami is renowned for anticipating what his restaurant guests would like before they order at the Mövenpick Resort & Residence Aqaba. Profoundly deaf, Rami is a fluent multi-lingual lip-reader.

10. Hasan of the Mövenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea is one of the few people who can dive under the sea's famously buoyant salty waters. His specialty? Retrieving lost guest jewellery.

11. A wedding is usually the best day of anyone's life, but not if the bride leaves her dress in a hotel room. Fortunately, the Mövenpick Hotel Stuttgart acted quickly to make sure her big day was not ruined by a little forgetfulness and delivered the precious gown to the back door of the church.

12. Unable to pay promised bonuses in cash due to problems caused by the 1970s oil crisis, Ueli Prager, founder of Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, rewarded key staff with shares. At the time Norbert Fontana, the Executive Chef at the Mövenpick Zurich-Airport worried about what he would tell his new wife and financially challenged young family. Years later, the company flourished, stock price soared and Norbert became the General Manager of the Mövenpick Hotel Zurich-Regensdorf.

13. What would you do if you found US\$10,000 in a hotel room? Supervisor Yusri at the Mövenpick Resort & Residence Aqaba didn't think twice. The forgetful guest was immediately reunited with his

cash.

14. Egypt's Mövenpick Resort El Quseir is famous for its olive trees. Why? Every time a guest stays 10 times, a tree is planted and named in their honour. There are now more than 160 trees flourishing around the resort.

15. Mr and Mrs Junker have spent three years on holiday at the Mövenpick Resort Hurghada in Egypt. They have visited 40 times in 15 years staying a staggering 1,211 days.

16. At the Mövenpick Hotel Stuttgart employees are passionate about their job as well as their lives outside the hotel. Two staff members are volunteers for the fire brigade, one is a model and another is an archaeologist.

17. At a new Swiss watch launch at the Mövenpick Cairo Pyramids the company decided to underline its Swiss credentials by having an Alpine cow parade at the pyramids. When farmers refused to bring their animals into the desert heat a hotel employee was sent to farms to pay them cash for their trouble. Soon, the hotel was inundated with animals – particularly buffalo – all keen to receive a bovine guest appearance fee.

18. While in Zurich during the 1980s Ueli Prager, founder of Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, would regularly ask hotel trainee Markus Marti to drive him to the airport in his prized Jaguar car. Now Markus organises his own airport pick-ups as General Manager of the Mövenpick Hotel Al Khobar.

19. Three members of staff at the Mövenpick Resort & Spa Karon Beach Phuket are performance artists and are well-known participants at the Phuket October Vegetarian Festival where activities include fire-walking and body piercing with knives or skewers. Guests would never know, only tiny cheek scars give their secret away.

20. When reception at the Mövenpick Hotel Essen heard from a guest that there was no bed in his room, they found it hard to believe. It was true - the guest's friends had moved it next door.

21. Guests and staff at the Mövenpick Hotel Beirut anxiously awoke one morning to the sound of gunfire, soldiers' landing boats and helicopters hovering. Fortunately, the army was simply on military maneuvers on the green coastal plot next to the hotel and had forgotten to inform the hotel.

22. Since 1993 a little yellow rubber duck welcomes guests in the bathroom of all Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts in Europe. The fun idea was, erm, first floated by Jürgen Köhler, general manager of Mövenpick Hotel Stuttgart Airport & Messe. It proved to be a big hit with guests and now 80,000 ducks are replaced every year.

23. Staying at the Mövenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate in Dubai is an illuminating experience, just look up. Each of those 88 giant lanterns weighs 140kg each. And while you're in the lobby don't forget to sample a delicious date or two. You won't be alone. Dates are regarded as a symbol of local hospitality and more than 100,000 are enjoyed every year at the hotel. Mövenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate is used to big numbers - equally impressive are the 150 individual dishes on offer at the weekend brunch every Saturday.

24. Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts celebrates its 40th anniversary this summer. As far as the Mövenpick Hotel Beirut was concerned it was the perfect excuse to invite 40 beauty queens from around the world for the "World Top Models" contest in June.

25. Waiter Hamad knows Wadi Rum like no other employee at the Mövenpick Resort & Residence Aqaba. So, when a guest asked for advice about the famous natural wonder, he took two days off work to prepare a detailed itinerary just for them to explore the 720 square kilometres of dramatic desert wilderness.

26. At her job interview to join Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, when Laura Perez told the interviewer that she was seven months pregnant, she was offered not just congratulations but also a new job as Director of Communication in the Middle East. That was three years, 55 press releases and two children ago.

27. On his first day Chef Sasha of Mövenpick Resort Bangtao Beach Phuket was asked to organize lunch and dinner for 240 members of the Canadian navy with just 24 hours notice. The hotel had never done anything like it before. Sasha thought it was a 'first day' joke. It wasn't – and it turned out to be a huge success.

28. To see a flock of 10,000 white storks gliding across the sky is an unforgettable experience. The Mövenpick Resort & Residence Aqaba and the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature offers guests the chance to enjoy this natural wonder at the Aqaba Bird Observatory. More than 1.5 million birds migrate across the region twice a year, offering a unique opportunity to see exceptionally rare species.

29. Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts prides itself on a reputation for culinary excellence, but you don't need to tell that to the famous Swiss sports coach who has visited the Mövenpick Hotel Zurich-Regensdorf every day for breakfast and dinner for 20 years. Naturally, he's become part of the Mövenpick family and even became patron of the imposing conifer tree he helped to rejuvenate in the hotel's courtyard.

30. Roller-skating pool staff at the Mövenpick Ambassador Accra is a hotel highlight, but learning to balance a tray of food and drink while skating is not easy. During training sessions, bottles and plates are the usual casualties, but on a couple of occasions skaters have splash-landed in the children's pool. We can't comment on whether the trays stayed together.

31. CEO and President of Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Jean Gabriel Pérès, had to check out a hotel anonymously for a potential takeover. He reserved his room under a false name but when he arrived he was welcomed by name and upgraded with VIP amenities – exactly what he did not want. The woman who checked him in was one of his former employees. The hotel is now the Mövenpick Hotel Paris Neuilly.

32. Mövenpick Resort & Residence Aqaba played cupid and reunited a quarrelling couple. Both were arrested by the police following a noisy row, but later released without charge with support from hotel employees who collected the sheepish guests from the police station. Are they still together? Let's hope so.

33. Bigger can be better. The arch of the Mövenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate in Dubai is a staggering 60 metres high, taller than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

34. The Netherlands' new queen makes a splash - it took a mere 15 days from her coronation at Amsterdam's Royal Palace for Queen Máxima to make the short journey to the city's harbourside Mövenpick Amsterdam hotel for her first official public appearance as monarch. She appeared as the keynote speaker at the Annual International Meeting of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor being held at the hotel.

35. The Mövenpick Hotel Berlin is the proud recipient of the 'Tempo Best Toilet Award', a recognition that was promoted by Germany's premium toilet paper manufacturer for overall restroom design, friendliness and cleanliness and selected via a Facebook competition. Social Media has a habit of flushing out winners.

36. Crowded lifts can be annoying, as can noisy passengers, but it's not often lifts become a mobile gambling parlour. Technicians at the Mövenpick Hotel Essen were surprised by the loud and unusual sounds coming from one of their lifts and discovered a group of guests playing cards, comfortably seated at a high table and bar chairs.

37. Mövenpick Hotel Stuttgart employees by numbers: 22 – the number of letters of the employee with the longest name; 2 – the number of letters of the employee with the shortest name and 36 – the number of years of the longest serving staff members.

38. When Mövenpick Hotel Munich Airport opened in 1990 it was the only "airport hotel" in the world without an airport. The new airport in the Bavarian capital opened two years later.

39. In 1996 the world famous Tour de France started in the Netherlands. The new Mövenpick hotel located in 's-Hertogenbosch hosted the three top teams with Rabobank, Banesto and Motorola. Banesto's Miguel Indurain was the super star, and Motorola brought a then unknown competitor

called Lance Armstrong. But the real star of the day was one of Motorola's chefs who was accompanying the group – he'd worked formerly in a Mövenpick Restaurant in Zurich.

40. If Jim Martin doesn't turn up for his daily glass of wine at the Mövenpick Hotel Zurich-Airport, staff want to know why. He's visited the hotel every day for his favourite drink since 1973. Arab version: If Jim Martin doesn't turn up for his daily refreshment at the Mövenpick Hotel Zurich-Airport, staff want to know why. He's visited the hotel every day for since 1973.



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