

Company history

Seventy years of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way

Baar (Switzerland), October 2018 – Mövenpick's story is one of inspired thinking, which in the 1940s when the brand was conceived, revolutionised the European restaurant industry and introduced a new style of modern hospitality that was truly ahead of its time.

For the company's late founder, Ueli Prager, the secret to running a business was uncomplicated and unpretentious: "We don't do anything that's really extraordinary," the legendary Swiss hotelier was fond of saying. "We are successful because we simply do normal things in an extraordinary way."

This marked the start of an unparalleled success story for Mövenpick, a brand that has been synonymous with culinary and hospitality excellence for more than seven decades.

Today, Prager's words resonate more than ever before as Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts embarks on an exciting period of growth as part of AccorHotels, a world-leading travel and lifestyle group with more than 4,500 hotels, resorts and residences operating in 100 countries.

Supported by one of the industry's largest and most respected operators, Mövenpick is growing its portfolio across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and is firmly on track to meeting its goal of operating 125 properties globally by 2020. Its market reach is also stronger than ever, thanks to Accor's vast global sales channels and world-renowned customer loyalty programme.

As it expands, the brand remains committed to honouring Prager's passion for delivering high service standards and creating a memorable guest experience through personalisation and small gestures, with Mövenpick's *we make moments* business philosophy encapsulating this spirit wholeheartedly.

The brand continues to honour its Swiss roots, culinary heritage and Prager's guiding vision, building on his legacy as a company defined by authenticity, exceptional service, genuine care and human warmth.

The Birth of Modern Hospitality

Mövenpick's astonishing journey began when Prager was strolling along the shores of Lake Zurich with a friend. He had been searching for a name for his new restaurant concept – a 'dining bar' where guests could relax and eat high-quality food at affordable prices.

As he considered the possibilities, a seagull (or Möwe in German), swooped down to skilfully pick up food mid-flight. That one elegant movement encapsulated Prager's vision and so 'Mövenpick' (Möwe pick) - and Europe's first casual dining experience - was born.

Prager's first restaurant, Claridenhof, opened in Zurich in July 1948, offering simple dishes that could be ordered à la carte - a refreshing alternative to set menus. It was considered unconventional for Swiss restaurants and was the first of many Mövenpick innovations.

New dishes such as the curry-based 'Riz Casimir' were created – another first in that spicy food was new to Switzerland; fine wine was served by the glass (rather than by the bottle as tradition dictated); and emphasis was placed on employee training (a concept unheard of outside of America at the time).



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Prager's appetite for innovation was legendary. In 1957 he visited the United States for the first time and was impressed by the efficient service at many New York restaurants. While their menus were limited, their commitment to a high turnover of quality food served by highly-trained staff proved inspirational, and when he returned to Europe in 1962, Prager launched his own Swiss version, the Silberkugel snack outlets.

In another inspired move, Prager opened the doors to the first Mövenpick Wein (Mövenpick Wine) store that same year. Multiple Mövenpick Wine shops can now be found across Switzerland and Germany.

More food for thought came in 1963 when Prager introduced Mövenpick's first branded product, 'Himmlische' (heavenly) coffee. It marked the start of the Mövenpick Fine Foods business, which today sells Swiss gourmet products that include chocolate, yoghurts, spreads and much more.

A year later, as Prager's workforce continued to expand, he realised that a formal management structure was now vital to growing the business. Once again, he returned to the US for inspiration, attending a modern management course at the American Management Association. He was one of the first European entrepreneurs to embrace this new way of running a business.

By 1965, Prager expanded outside of Switzerland for the first time, opening his first restaurant in Germany. Incredibly, he had already made his mark in the country two years earlier when the managing director of food and beverage at the Bavarian TV Network insisted Mövenpick manage his company's restaurant - a place exclusively reserved for staff, visiting journalists and well-known actors.

By 1968, Prager was also taking advantage of Switzerland's new motorway network by serving fast food to a new generation of hungry motorists. He launched the first Silberkugel motorway snack restaurant in Deitingen (Solothurn) and it was so successful, two more were launched a year later.

That same year, Prager's passion for producing high-quality gourmet food products saw him introduce a new branded food item – Mövenpick Ice Cream – a product that has been synonymous with the brand ever since.

In 1973, Prager took his ambitions to new heights. He decided to capitalise on Mövenpick's reputation for good quality affordable food, staff training standards and innovation by opening the company's first two hotels, both in Zurich – one at the airport and the other in Regensdorf. At the time, airport hotels were considered unnecessary, but for Prager, they were an overlooked opportunity. As an innovator, he was light years ahead of the competition, which was reluctant to break with tradition.

His favourite quote, from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, was: "I'd rather be the first man here than the second man in Rome." It was a mantra that continued to define his approach to business and paved the way for Mövenpick's foray into Egypt a few years later.

Here, Prager met the country's Minister for Tourism and was invited to open a hotel near the Giza Pyramids. He seized the opportunity and the Mövenpick Hotel Jolie Ville in Cairo was unveiled in 1976. It was the entrepreneur's first hotel outside Europe, and was soon followed by others in Luxor, Heliopolis and the Red Sea – destinations previously ignored by other hoteliers.

At this time, Prager became one of the first hospitality pioneers to test the concept of hotel management contracts. It proved a resounding success and enabled him to grow Mövenpick's global reach significantly.

European expansion came first and in 1980, the brand opened its first hotel in Ulm/Neu-Ulm, Germany. A second property opened in Lübeck a year later and a third in Braunschweig in 1983.

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Over the next decade he opened restaurants in North America and Canada and by 1986, Prager had opened a property in China - the Mövenpick Hotel Beijing.

Having established a presence in Egypt, the expansion of the company into luxury cruisers on the Nile was a natural development and in 1991, the HS Radamis set off on her maiden voyage under the Mövenpick flag, travelling between Aswan and Luxor. Today there are eight Mövenpick cruisers operating on the Nile and Lake Nasser.

In 1992, Prager sold his majority holding in Mövenpick to Baron August von Finck, but his commitment to innovation has been honoured ever since.

1996 saw the company debut in Jordan with the opening of Mövenpick Resort Petra and it now operates five hotels in the country.

Two years later, in 1998, the firm was divided into four separate business units to allow for greater flexibility and growth: Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Mövenpick Gastronomy, Mövenpick Wine and Mövenpick Fine Foods were established as companies in their own right.

By 2001, Mövenpick had identified an opportunity for growth in North Africa and opened two properties – one in Tunisia and another in Morocco - while the launch of Mövenpick Hotel Madinah in Saudi Arabia marked the introduction of a new hotel concept designed to cater to the growing number of religious tourists visiting the Holy City.

In 2003, the company's first hotels in the UAE, Turkey and Kuwait opened for business and at London's World Travel Market, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts was recognised as the 'fastest growing hotel chain in the Middle East'.

By 2006 the company had expanded its reach to Asia, opening its first hotel in Phuket, Thailand.

As development plans gained momentum, the hospitality firm received more international recognition, and in 2010, for the second consecutive year, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts achieved the highest ranking in the 'upscale' segment of the European Hotel Guest Satisfaction Study by J.D. Power and Associates.

The same year, Mövenpick made its commitment to sustainable practices and development official, establishing a global partnership with Green Globe - an international independent non-profit organisation that audits sustainability in the tourism and travel industry.

As the company's development plans gathered pace, it was also receiving notoriety for its global 'Natural Enjoyment' programme, which outlined its brand vision and approach to nurturing the career progression of its employees, and that same year, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts won 'Best Initiative in People and Talent Management' at the 2013 Worldwide Hospitality Awards.

Another accolade came in 2014 when the hospitality firm was named 'Hotel Chain of the Year' by the Swiss Travel Awards jury.

2016 marked many major milestones including o unveiled its new logo and corporate identity.

In 2017, Green Globe named Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts the world's most sustainable hotel group, recognising it had more certified properties than any other hospitality firm globally. The Green Globe Report 2017 hailed the company a "global sustainability leader" acknowledging that more than 50% of the

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company's certified properties had achieved the entity's prestigious 'Gold' status – an accolade bestowed on hotels that have achieved Green Globe certification for five years or more.

Mövenpick remains dedicated to expanding its footprint in a sustainable and responsible fashion and its successful global sustainability programme, SHINE, aims to give back to the communities where the company operates its properties. SHINE focuses on three pillars - Environment, Employer and Social Sustainability - with Education the most important thread, common to each.

The brand also continues to honour Prager's pursuit of innovation and in 2017, launched a number of game-changing initiatives designed to take the guest experience to new heights. They included the highly-successful 'Sleep' concept, characterised by customised rooms for an enhanced sleep experience and the hugely-popular Mövenpick Family programme, introducing a wide range of services and facilities at hotels globally to cater to this important market segment, from the Power Bites menu of healthy kids' meals to signature activities designed to help families make lasting memories together.

The company's ongoing successful Middle East expansion campaign was recognised in 2017 too, with Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts named the leading five-star hotel brand in the Arab world by global media company Forbes. This accolade acknowledged the firm's brand presence in the region with 47 highly-regarded five-star properties across 10 Arab countries, with many more to come.

The same year, Mövenpick also breathed new life into Prager's original vision of 'doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way', by actively promoting its *we make moments* business philosophy – a recognition that small gestures and the human touch make a big difference to its guests, its people and its business partners.

In 2018, Mövenpick marked 70 years since the brand was conceived and Prager's legacy lives on. The company remains committed to his simple business premise and his desire to push the boundaries to achieve success in the unique Mövenpick way.

The brand is also pursuing rapid global expansion with a focus on key strategic markets in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Mövenpick now benefits from access to Accor's world-renowned customer loyalty programme, vast sales channels and its operational efficiencies as one of the world's largest hotel groups.

As the brand enters a new exciting phase in its history, it remains focused on serving its loyal guests, who value Mövenpick's Swiss heritage and personalised approach to hospitality.

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