



The new Gold Coast Hilton, which opened this week, offers luxurious surroundings for guests

Photo: INGA WILLIAMS

Lap up the luxury in \$700m Hilton

HENRY TUTTIETT

tuttieth@goldcoast.com.au

BEING a "stickybeak" more than 35 years ago paid off for Emerald Lakes man Ray Louis and it paid dividends again yesterday when he was the first official guest at Hilton Surfers Paradise.

Wandering around Sydney in 1975, Mr Louis decided to enter the new Hilton Hotel to have a look at its hospitality set-up.

The hotel happened to be looking for a candidate as its first guest and the rest, as they say, is history.

"I was being a stickybeak. I walked in, because my background is in hospitality, and they grabbed me," Mr Louis said.

"I was the first-ever guest in 1975, I was the last guest to leave the premises when they closed it down for the refurbishment, and then they kindly asked me to be the first official guest at the reopening of it (in 2008)."

Mr Louis, who with his wife Laurel



Joseph Smart checks in longtime Hilton guests Ray and Laurel Louis

More photos and video at goldcoast.com.au

has stayed in more than a dozen Hiltons across the world, checked in to check out the new Gold Coast Hilton, saying the new venture was very important for the Coast. "Up until now I think the other hotels on the Coast, with the exception of a couple, are lacking a little," he said.

As these pictures show, the Surfers Paradise Hilton lacks little in the way of luxury refinements.

The \$700 million hotel, which welcomed its first guests yesterday, has a boutique ballroom, four pools, a spa, a sauna, a delicatessen, day spa, movie theatre, two gyms, an executive lounge and a restaurant which is being run by renowned chef Luke Mangan.

The twin towers that make up the complex also include 169 hotel-style guest rooms and 250 one, two and

three-bedroom self-contained apartments, the first of Hilton's eight Australian hotels to offer different accommodation options.

Hilton Surfers Paradise general manager David Kelly said that it was a deliberate design to capitalise on the Gold Coast tourism market.

"It is a very large domestic destination but also a very large (destination) for families, groups and couples, who want to come for a weekend and enjoy it," he said.

"We have really tried to cater also for the local community to draw locals back into Surfers Paradise. That was our aim."

Mr Mangan said he was excited to introduce his restaurant Salt Grill to the Gold Coast.

"We have a partnership (with Hilton) in Sydney and this partnership will make it stronger," he said.

Hilton Hotels and Resorts boss David Horton said other parts of the tourism industry on the Coast would also benefit from the opening.