

# WORLD

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## Beijing Watercube

Magic makeover for Olympic venue

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# Happy Magic Watercube

## Waterpark makeover for Beijing Olympic venue

Beijing's famous Olympic swimming venue is about to be transformed into a world-class indoor waterpark. This summer the National Aquatic Center will reopen as the Happy Magic Watercube. *Park World* takes a closer look at this exciting project

“This promises to be one of the leading indoor waterparks in the world, offering two very different but memorable experiences by day and night”

**Anthony Van Dam, Forrec**

The National Aquatic Center, affectionately known as the “Watercube,” is an internationally renowned architectural wonder. In summer 2008, television viewers around the world watched as 25 swimming and diving world records were broken inside its three pools.

Yet from the very beginning, the venue was designed with both sport and recreational use in mind. While the immediate purpose was as a competitive swimming venue, over one-third of the 32,000 square metre structure was earmarked for conversion to an undercover waterpark.

Some of the best suppliers and consultants in the industry are participating on the project. The makeover will follow a blueprint prepared by Forrec, and work is now well underway. Based on its initial design concept, Forrec was retained to design and oversee all aspects of the project, from conception through to opening day.

### Underwater Sensation

“The Watercube is a dynamic space,” highlights Forrec vice-president Anthony Van Dam. “The brief from the client was simply to develop a world class concept, in keeping with the stature of the building and drawing from the ethereal quality of the interior environment. Every detail has been considered, from theatrical lighting and glass mosaic tiles to custom props and some ‘first-ever’ attractions.”

The Watercube’s enormous volume serves both its uses well. The building’s shell and structure consists of a double-skin external space frame, strengthened by a lattice. The random polygons of the lattice resemble soap bubbles, whose translucent membranes draw light deeply into the space, creating an “underwater” sensation.

Thanks to the bubble lattice membranes, the interior space already has a “watery” quality, and the

idea of creating an “underwater” environment seemed natural. To create the right atmosphere, tropical reef forms have been abstracted, enlarged and suspended within the space, as though they are floating. These floating objects – coral, jellyfish, bubbles and sea grasses – act not only as thematic elements but also serve to punctuate the space with a sense of animation and colour, in contrast with the white geometry of the building itself.

### Night Light

Light plays a special role in creating the Happy Magic Watercube’s mood. During the day, natural light filters through the building’s outer and inner skin, in the same way that the ocean depths filter sunlight. At night, the outer shell will glow with an evening light show, as special effects inside the cube create a dramatic, changing underwater world.

In these colourful surroundings, guests will be able to enjoy some of the industry’s most contemporary attractions. The large RideHouse play structure, for example, will be the first of its kind by ProSlide Technology, featuring a high volume water dump and



The Watercube structure sits next to the “Bird’s Nest” stadium



## Making Magic

This eagerly-awaited new facility is being developed by Forrec and its partners for Beijing Happy Watercube Waterpark Ltd. This successful private enterprise is in the early stages of making a name for itself in the waterpark, theme park and resort development business in China. It already has plans for several more projects in the coming years.

"The client has been wonderful to work with," confirms Forrec vice-president Anthony Van Dam. "They have very high expectations and are focused on quality and innovation. Although the company and its leadership are humble and have made an effort to remain anonymous, I expect you will be hearing much more of them in the coming years."

sections intertwined with other rides.

The waterpark will also be home to China's first AquaLoop looping waterslide courtesy of WhiteWater West, a Tornado, Bullet Bowl, tube slides, body slides, a lazy river, wave pool and other water play features.

Unlike most indoor facilities though, the towers and slides must be fully contained within the building, requiring strategic placement of all attractions and thematic elements. The finished product will provide capacity for up to 2,700 guests at a time.

The Happy Magic Watercube will be marketed primarily at local families. However, the National Aquatic Center is currently the third most visited attraction in Beijing, after the Great Wall and the neighbouring Bird's Nest stadium. Around 20,000 people a day come to the marvel at the building's structure, so tourists from all over China and beyond are expected to enjoy the waterpark once it is open.

"Surprisingly there is little competition locally,"

notes Van Dam. "There are some smaller facilities, but the quality and design of these are sub-par. I expect that the Watercube will raise the bar for waterparks in China."

"The industry in China is growing quickly as the Chinese public demands quality waterparks with international operations," observes Alan Mahony. The Australian waterpark veteran has been contracted to oversee construction on site, as well as providing operations expertise as the park prepares to open this coming June.

"This promises to be one of the leading indoor waterparks in the world," concludes Van Dam. "It will provide enjoyment for many families and, thanks to the unique design, offer two very different but memorable experiences by day and night. We can't wait to see it open."



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HAPPY MAGIC WATERCUBE



# Here's what we're doing for one of our visionary clients:



Watercube - Happy Magic Water Park Beijing, China

## What can we do for you?

FORREC's unique approach begins with master planning, whether it's a theme park, a water park, an entertainment centre, a mixed-use development or a destination resort. Big Picture thinking combined with meticulous attention to detail allows us to identify and explore every creative opportunity in every project. We work with the best suppliers and consultants around the globe. With over forty years of international experience, this creative approach makes us the clear choice to help realize your vision.

Talk to us. See what we can do for you.

**FORREC**

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