

TRAUTALK

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Sharjah sparkles at ITB Berlin

Sharjah Tourism marked its presence at ITB Berlin 2015 for the 18th consecutive time, by organising several meetings, holding special interactive activities with visitors at the emirate's stand, highlighting Sharjah's tourism portfolio and its rich heritage and culture to the European travellers.



SUSMITA GHOSH

H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA), expressed, “Sharjah has emerged as a leading cultural and family tourism destination in the Middle East. Its distinct achievement in the tourism sector has brought the Emirate accolades such as the Arab Tourism Capital Award for 2015, recognition from the Arab Tourism Organisation. Hence, it strengthened the Emirate’s position on the regional and international tourism map.”

"This is an honour that underlines Sharjah's success in attracting nearly 2 million visitors in 2014," added Al Midfa.

"We, at SCTDA, are proud to be in long association with ITB Berlin. We are



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Director General
Sharjah Commerce and Tourism
Development Authority (SCTDA)

Our long association with ITB Berlin has brought Sharjah closer to the European tourism market, particularly to the visitors from Germany

delighted to present Sharjah as the Arab Tourism Capital at this 18th consecutive year of our participation



H.E. Mohamed Ali Al Noman
Chairman
Sharjah Commerce and Tourism
Development Authority

During 2014, as many as 23,637 tourists from Germany visited Sharjah, highlighting the Emirate's growing popularity in Germany as a cultural destination

in ITB Berlin. ITB Berlin offers the perfect international platform for Sharjah to showcase the diversity of

our tourism portfolio and the vibrancy of our rich heritage and culture before the world," further informed Al Midfa.

The SCTDA Director General pointed out that to celebrate the honour of the Arab Tourism Capital for 2015, the Emirate has lined up year-round activities and festivals to showcase the best of its Arab culture and heritage that will certainly appeal the interest of visitors from Germany and the wider European market.

Lauding Sharjah's association with the ITB Berlin all these years, Al Midfa feels that as a major driving force in the global travel industry, ITB Berlin has contributed to the remarkable growth story of Sharjah. "Our long association and partnership with this exhibition has brought Sharjah closer to the

European tourism market, particularly to the visitors from Germany," he concluded.

This year, the Sharjah pavilion had featured live

at top events, national ceremonies and weddings in the UAE but the visitors to the Sharjah pavilion got an exclusive opportunity to enjoy this spectacle.

Europe looks Middle East

- ▶ In early 2014, Sharjah's hotel establishments received 409,585 European guests, registering an increase of 17%
- ▶ During 2014, as many as 23,637 German tourists visited Sharjah
- ▶ Emirate is set to witness the opening of a number of new luxury hotels in 2015
- ▶ European tourists@ITB Berlin experienced perfume making, Arabic henna art, calligraphy, and witnessed the Ayala band performing the 'stick dance'

performances and activities celebrating the best of UAE's culture, traditions, cuisine and arts, offering a glimpse of what tourists can experience during their visit to Sharjah. The stand also hosted a traditional Ayala band performing the 'stick dance'. Ayala bands usually perform

Visitors tried out Arabic Henna designs, enjoyed traditional Arabic cuisine, and took souvenirs of their names in beautiful Arabic calligraphy. A new addition to the stand this year was an 'edutainment' area that explained the process of perfume making in Shari'ah. Visitors got an

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Sharjah offers distinct tourism experience

► Contd. from page 1

opportunity to create their own perfumes and take away a sample from the stand. They also got to savour the true flavours of traditional Arabic style with coffee, dates and freshly made Luqaimat, an Emirati preparation featuring small dumplings.

H.E. Mohamed Ali Al Noman, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority underlined that the Authority's keenness to showcase its presence at the ITB Berlin this year is all the more special in view of the emirate being crowned as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2015. Sharjah richly deserved the title because of its historical cultural heritage and contemporary tourism product.

Al Noman informed, "Sharjah remains a favourite holiday destination for European tourists, as revealed by the latest hotel industry statistics. Our long association and partnership has brought Sharjah closer to visitors from Germany. During 2014, as many as 23,637 tourists from Germany visited Sharjah, highlighting the Emirate's

growing popularity in Germany as a cultural destination."

"In the first half of 2014, Sharjah's hotel establishments received 409,585 European guests against

Sharjah offers a distinct tourism experience to the European tourists that include authentic culture and heritage, world-class museums and cultural centres. The Emirate boasts interna-

attracting more visitors from Europe to Sharjah this year following the Emirate's success in winning the Arab Tourism Capital 2015 Award. The recognition is significant for Sharjah as it participated in ITB Berlin, 2015, showcasing the Emirates' rich portfolio of traditional and contemporary offerings to a vast international audience.

The ITB Berlin this year was headed by the SCTDA that included Sharjah Airport Authority, Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA), Shurooq (Sharjah Investment and Development Authority), Sharjah Environment & Protected Areas Authority (EPAA), Sharjah Museums Department, Sharjah National Hotels, Coral Beach Resort, Golden Tulip Sharjah, Ramada Sharjah, Radisson Blu Resort, Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort & Spa, Sharjah Premier Group, Al Shaab Village and Spark Hotel & Deluxe Apartments and so on.

Sharjah won the prestigious honour from the Arab Tourism Organisation at the 15th session of the Arab Council of Tourism Ministers held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2012 after meeting all the criteria for



349,670 guests in the same period in 2013, registering an increase of 17 per cent," he further stated.

The number of hotel establishments in the Emirate has touched 106, including 50 hotels and 56 hotel apartments. The number of hotel rooms in the Emirate has risen to 10,000, said the SCTDA Chairman, stressing that the Emirate is set to witness the opening of a number of new luxury hotels in 2015.

tionally acclaimed educational centres equipped with the latest technology on the one hand and world-class tourism infrastructure and a diverse natural landscape that includes golden beaches and rugged mountains bordering majestic desert on the other.

More visitors attracted from Europe

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority is upbeat about



the Arab Tourism Capital Award in terms of tourism diversity, culture, leisure, the environment, culture, family, educational activities and opportunities.

Commenting on the title, Al Midfa, said, "The recognition of Sharjah as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2015 reflects the Emirate's status as a major global family

tourist destination. This achievement made our participation at the ITB Berlin this year all the more special. As the Arab Tourism Capital, Sharjah has lined up year-round activities and festivals to showcase the best of Arabic culture and heritage that will certainly appeal to the interest of visitors from Germany as well as the wider European market."

Sharjah mesmerises ITB Berlin



'Sharjah, the most-visited destination'

Led by the strategic vision of Sharjah's leadership to establish Sharjah as a distinct global tourism destination, the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority has been pursuing a long-term strategy to strengthen the tourism sector in the emirate, says H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General, SCTDA.

 SUSMITA GHOSH

Q What's the role and mandate of the SCTDA?

The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) is dedicated to promoting and showcasing Sharjah and its tourism and hospitality sector at home and around the world. With its relentless year-long promotional campaigns, participation in international tourism and trade exhibitions and roadshows in the region and around the world and with its world-class festivals and events, the Authority constantly explores ways and means of attracting international visitors and investors to Sharjah and supporting the Emirate's economy.

Q What have been the trends in annual visitor numbers to Sharjah?

The truly global destination that Sharjah is, it attracts a very diverse population of international visitors.



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA)

Our strongest tourism markets right now are Middle East, Europe, Russia, CIS region and Asia. Europe happens to be very special for us in terms of visitor trends and numbers. Last year, we received more than 2 million hotel guests out of which 649,527 came from Europe. The GCC visitors stood at 688,973. We received 502,329 guests from Russia-CIS-Baltic nations whereas Asian guests stood at 312,518.

Q What is the significance of Sharjah's selection as the 2015 Arab Capital of Tourism

Sharjah's selection as the 2015 Arab Capital of Tourism is a huge and well deserved honour for Sharjah. These titles and accolades only underscore Sharjah's pride of place as the cultural, intellectual and tourism hub of the region. We hope it will help the emirate attract more international visitors and investors generating greater opportunities for everyone.

Q Opportunities for foreign investment in Sharjah's tourism sector

Sharjah offers immense opportunities and growth potential for international investors, especially in the emirate's booming tourism and hospitality sectors. Already, we have seen international investments pour in hospitality sector with several major

Our strongest tourism markets right now are Middle East, Europe, Russia, CIS region and Asia. Europe happens to be very special for us in terms of visitor trends


global hotel chains set to open The emirate is already home to major European, American and Asian companies. Nearly half of the UAE's manufacturing sector is based in Sharjah.

Q SCTDA's strategic initiatives to achieve long term growth for tourism in Sharjah?

Led by the strategic vision of Sharjah's leadership that seeks to establish Sharjah as a distinct global tourism destination with authentic Arab and Islamic heritage, the Authority has been pursuing a long-term strategy to develop and strengthen the tourism sector in the emirate.

As part of its strategy, the Authority has been showcasing Sharjah in local, regional and international exhibitions, focusing on the factors of distinction and exclusivity. Thanks to these efforts of the past two decades, Sharjah has emerged as a favourite holiday destination for visitors from around the world. In the past few years, the Authority has been able to reach out to new and emerging tourism markets in Asia, Europe and America. As a result, the emirate's share and profile in global tourism market has significantly and perceptibly grown.

Q His Excellency's five year vision for the tourism sector in Sharjah?

Five years from now, we would like to see Sharjah emerge as the most popular and most visited tourism and investment destination in the region, attaining its full and immense potential as the Tourism Capital of the Arab World and Cultural Capital of the Arab and Islamic world. 

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

High hopes on travel season 2015

The travel industry has high expectations as the 2015 travel season beckons. Despite international crises and the risk of political conflict around the world, the economic prospects for the global travel industry could be better for the months to come.

In Germany, in particular, consumers are keen to travel. Accordingly, this year's ITB Berlin went very well and once again proved to be an indispensable platform for tourism professionals from around the world. ITB Berlin, which concluded recently, was able to cement its position as the world's largest travel trade show.

Trends at ITB Berlin 2015 included the rise in the use of mobile devices to book trips, a phenomenon that has now become the norm. Travel apps are developing rapidly and becoming ever more widespread with the use of latest-generation smartphones.

The share of trade visitors from abroad increased to 43 per cent (2014: 40 per cent). These visitors also remained longer at ITB Berlin because they did good business with the average duration of a stay rising to 2.4 days (2014: 2.1 days). According to estimates by Messe Berlin the volume of sales at the world's leading travel trade show increased from around 6.5 billion Euros in 2014 to 6.7 billion Euros.

Now in its seventh year, the annual event of Riyadh Travel Fair will be held from April 14 to 17, 2015 with over 200 exhibitors participating from 50 different countries. 2015 will witness the largest Riyadh Travel Fair till date thereby extending the prominence as the leading travel and tourism exhibition in the kingdom. The 2014 edition of the RTF saw 13,678 recorded number of visitors and 20,000 visitors are targeted in 2015.

The Arabian Gulf region will have a strong presence at the fair including stands by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority as strategic partner, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority as gold partner and Fujairah Tourism and Antiques Authority as silver partner to name a few. Turkey Tourism will have the biggest presence and delegation attending the show.

'New markets, high potential'

2014 was a successful year for Ramada Plaza Jumeirah Beach Residence. Though the last part of the year showed a drop in terms of visitors from CIS, it was filled with guests from the GCC and also from upcoming markets like India, China, Australia and Latin America.

Dubai offers a variety of choices for guests, hence we are trying to adjust to the trends and demands of the market that we are targeting. What may work with some guests may not work with other guests so overall, diversity is the key. We brainstorm on ideas and strategies to convey the right message to the right market but without compromising on our services, value for money and hospitality.

We capitalize on our 5 superb F&B offerings like Fogueira, Dubai's 1st authentic Brazilian Churrascaria offering 15 different unlimited meat cuts served straight to your table while enjoying the live entertainment and the Samba dance shows. Sama Lounge, the Arabic Terrace offers Arabic mezzes, mixed grills and delights, shisha lounge with a view of the Palm Jumeirah and live oud player performance Speakeasy Bar & Restaurant is our American themed bar. It has been

awarded as the "Best New Pub 2013" with full of entertainment like daily theme nights, DJ performance, daily happy hour. Not to forget Shores our all-day-dining restaurant that offers an international buffet and a la carte services all day long and different theme nights twice a week for our guests experience Asian and

12 people each, offer the same advanced audio-visual and communications systems with complimentary wireless internet.

Our rooms offer guests a unique experience of Dubai. Sitting within the comforts of their rooms, our guests can enjoy great views of the amazing Palm Jumeirah or the

we can adjust and meet their demands. Travelers have started to vary a lot more. The hospitality sector here has developed to cater not only to the high end tourist but it has adjusted to accommodate a much wider variety of travelers.

Thus packages are always updated, to keep up with the needs of our valued guests and present the exciting theme-based offers in our restaurants. We take the human and personal approach as we are in the service industry. So this is the key of our success. The personal touch can be felt in the service we offer to our clients. Dubai has high standards and the competition in the hospitality sector is very high. But the joy of the hotel industry is just to exceed guests' expectations in the best possible way that one can.

JBR is one of the hot spots in Dubai offering a variety of shopping choices, dining outlets, the beach and family-friendly activities so guests staying in this area have a wide range of choices for their holiday experience

Mediterranean cuisines. The Lounge is the perfect venue for your casual meetings and serves a wide selection of snacks and beverages.

To cater to our business travelers and corporate events, we provide meeting and conference facilities in our spacious meeting room on the 35th floor. It is bathed in natural light and flanked by an open terrace with stunning views of the Palm Jumeirah. With a capacity for 60 people theater style, built-in state-of-the-art audio-visual systems and complimentary wireless internet, it is the venue of choice for larger corporate events. We also offer fully equipped 2 executive boardrooms with a capacity of 10-

Dubai Marina. JBR is one of the hot spots in Dubai offering a variety of shopping choices, dining outlets, the beach and family-friendly activities so guests staying in this area have a wide range of choices for their holiday experience.

The outlook for the rest of 2015 remains positive, though we will see an increase in the supply of rooms leading to the World Expo 2020. Due to high supply, tourists expect better rates with competitive costs. Guests too are becoming more knowledgeable on what they should get at hotels, what rates, what services to expect etc. On our part we try to listen to our guests, access their needs and comments so that

Ramada's ME feast

- ◆ Additional markets of China, India, Australia and Latin America are being developed to ensure that high expectations for 2015 are met
- ◆ JBR guests can enjoy great views of the Palm Jumeirah or Dubai Marina from their rooms



Alper Can Bulcum
Cluster General Manager
Ramada Plaza JBR & Ramada Sharjah

Carlson Rezidor unveils 2 new Saudi hotels

Carlson Rezidor, has announced the opening of two hotels in Saudi Arabia, increasing its presence in the Kingdom to 25 hotels and more than 4900 rooms in operation and under development. Portfolio additions in

Saudi Arabia include, Radisson BluResort Jizan (150 rooms) and Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Dammam (90 rooms). Situated along the Red Sea coastline, the Radisson Blu Resort Jizan's tranquil beachfront location

is conveniently close to urban attractions. The 151 room resort includes suites designed for guests with specific accessibility needs. The 90-room Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Dammam is centrally located on the city's

Corniche Road and comprises two meeting rooms, an all-day dining restaurant, a lounge, as well as a wellness centre with spa and gym., this conversion will be a typically styled Park Inn by Radisson hotel.



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Manila-Doha connected via Cebu

The Philippines' largest airline, Cebu Pacific Air (PSE:CEB) will start twice weekly direct flights between Manila, Philippines and Doha, Qatar, from June 4, 2015. The maiden Doha-Manila flight will take off on June 5, 2015.

TT BUREAU

CEBU will be the only Philippines carrier flying between these two cities, to serve more Filipino expats in the Middle East. Its introductory fares start at QAR88, for sale until March 22, 2015 or until seats last. These seat sale fares, which are up to 95% lower than other airlines, are for travel from June 4 to December 31, 2015. After the seat sale, CEB's lowest year-round fares between Manila and Doha start at QAR688, which is approximately 50% lower than other airlines.

The non-stop service departs Doha every Tuesday and Friday at



We are excited to offer Cebu Pacific's trademark low fares to travelers in Doha. With our expanding network, Qatar becomes more accessible from the Philippines

Alex Reyes
CEB General Manager, Long-Haul Division

4:15 am, arriving in Manila at 6:35 pm. The return flight departs Manila every Monday and Thursday at 9:35 pm, arriving in Doha at 2:45 am the next day. "We are excited to offer Cebu Pacific's trademark low fares to travelers in Doha, especially since we are the only low-cost carrier operating this route. With our expanding network, Qatar becomes

more accessible from the Philippines, and the Filipino community can reunite with their families more often," said **Alex Reyes**, CEB General Manager for Long-Haul Division.

The route will serve over 260,000 Filipinos in Qatar, based on Philippine Overseas Employment Administration 2009 stock estimates.

Qatar has the third-largest Filipino community in the Middle East. CEB already serves the other two key markets for Filipino expats: United Arab Emirates via direct flights to Dubai, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia via Riyadh. CEB is also the only airline flying direct between Manila and Kuwait. Reyes added, "It is CEB's priority to maintain a strong presence in the region, where we are able to reach and serve large Filipino communities."

Quick Facts

- ◆ CEB's 55-strong fleet comprises 10 Airbus A319, 31 Airbus A320, 6 Airbus A330 and 8 ATR-72 500 aircraft
- ◆ Between 2015 and 2021, Cebu Pacific will take delivery of 7 more brand-new Airbus A320 and 30 Airbus A321neo aircraft

Starwood pushes for 'Khibrati' programme

Starwood Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi has collaborated with Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA) on the "Khibrati" programme. It is aimed at nationalisation of careers in the hotel sector by providing undergraduate students opportunities within the tourism industry through training and part-time positions as they continue their university studies. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two organisations in this regard.

Stuart Thomson, Regional Director of Human Resources - Middle East at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., said, "We look forward to our collabora-


tion with Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority on the "Khibrati" nationalisation programme. We will be working alongside TCA to put together a programme plan that would best suit undergraduate students during their full-time studies.

Specially tailored part time jobs are being developed aimed at yielding rich experiences for the participants with one of the leading hospitality brands in the world, as well as motivating and educating them about the hospitality industry." The programme commenced on March 12, 2015 and will go on for a year, where it is up for renewal.


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Once again, ITB Berlin: All-round success

ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show closes its doors after thought-provoking discussion rounds and informative papers by familiar speakers from the international travel industry. Halls were fully booked, with an increase in trade visitors and business.



IAPCO trains the MICE world

Qatar Tourism Authority recently hosted a Regional Seminar of International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) on 'Delivering Professional Congress Organisation: Engaging All,' to provide specialised training for all those involved in the MICE industry.

TT BUREAU

Professional conference organisers (PCOs), destination management companies (DMCs), convention and visitor bureaus, venue

including 20 regional and national seminars and 40 editions of the IAPCO annual seminar in Switzerland.

"QTA hosts the IAPCO Regional Seminar as it

QTA hosts the IAPCO Regional Seminar as it believes the seminar will allow stakeholders from the private and public sector to exchange views and discussions with decision-makers and event organizers

Hamad Al Abdan
Director of Exhibitions, QTA

operators and exhibition management companies were a part of the two day seminar held from March 10-11, 2015. IAPCO has been providing education and training for decades,

believes the seminar will allow stakeholders from the private and public sector to exchange views and discussions with decision-makers and event organizers, thus providing them with tips and information

about the latest trends and current planning. That is the vital detailed organisational and operational elements to manage international association meetings," commented **Hamad Al Abdan**, Director of Exhibitions at QTA. "The seminar is significantly useful to all those who are involved in the organisation of MICE events, which eventually helps in building a successful and sustainable tourism industry," he added.

The event gathered professional conference organisers, destination management companies and travel agencies, tourism entities, venue operators, special venues and hotels, international associations, exhibition management companies, association management companies, and event management compa-

nies from the tourism and hospitality sector in Qatar.

The 2015 IAPCO Regional Seminar in Qatar highlighted the organisation's commitment to be present in different regions around the world conveying a message on professionalism of the MICE world. The seminar was specifically structured to suit Qatari participants' desire for knowledge, training and best practices.

Training MICE

- ◆ The seminar helped in building successful and sustainable tourism industry
- ◆ Provides stakeholders with tips and information about the latest trends and current planning

New Eurowings set to take off to Dubai World Central

■ With the official sales launch at this year's International Tourism Exchange (ITB) in Berlin, short and long-haul routes can now be booked with new Eurowings to fly from October 25, 2015 onwards. Eurowings intercontinental flights depart from Cologne/Bonn Airport. The cheapest tickets on the long-haul routes are already on offer from EUR 99.99 per route. The first flight will take off to Dubai, the Caribbean and Thailand. The new Eurowings is building on the successful German wings concept, which is positioned as a 'low-cost' brand and innovative quality low-cost

airline in Germany and Europe. Based on this, the product portfolio is to expand this successful concept, especially in the segment of point-to-point connections on continental and intercontinental routes oriented for private and business travel. Under the umbrella of the Eurowings sales brand, the range of European and domestic routes will be expanded with intercontinental city and holiday destinations. From the winter flight plan 2015-16 onwards, the new route network will include Dubai, the Thai cities of Bangkok and Phuket, as well as the Caribbean destinations of Varadero, Bridgetown and Punta Cana.



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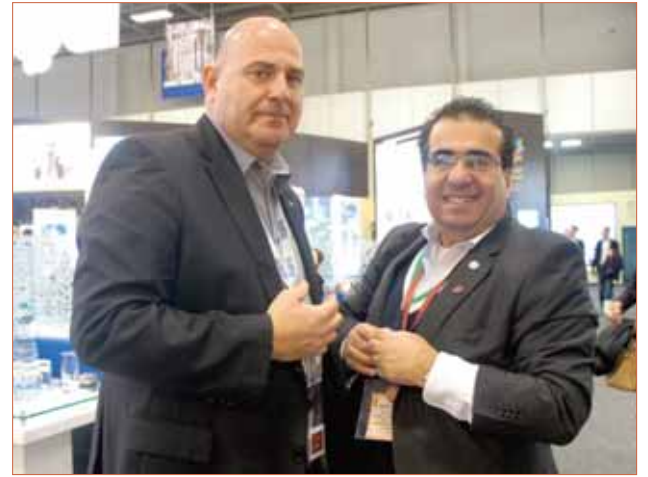
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ITB Berlin: Indispensable podium for tourism

► Contd. from page 6



Now, MENA Leisure & Attractions Council

The leisure and attractions industry in the region has come together to form a council for the MENA region called Middle East & North Africa Leisure and Attractions Council (MENALAC) to promote best practices in the amusement and leisure business.

TT BUREAU

Members of this council have nominated **Ahmad Hussain Bin Essa**, COO of Global Village to be the Executive Director of MENALAC. The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)

The initiative aims to promote such parameters by creating awareness, education and formulating the best practices to be followed

Prakash Vivekanand
Managing Director
ASI Group and founder
member of MENALAC



Delegates at the launching platform of MENALAC

has agreed to provide support for the new council.

Leading companies from the leisure, amusement and entertainment industry, which include representatives from Dubai Parks & Resorts, The Global Village, Ilyas & Mustafa Galadari Group, The Al Futtaim Group,

Amusement Services International (ASI) Group, Atlantis The Palm, UAE, Emaar Retail & Leisure LLC, Landmark Leisure, MAF Leisure & Entertainment LLC, Wild Wadi of the Jumeirah Group from the UAE, Abdul Mohsen Al Hokair & Sons Group and Al Othaim Leisure & Tourism Co., Saudi Arabia;

Seef Properties, Bahrain, and Tamdeen Entertainment, Kuwait have come together to form MENALAC to promote best practices in the amusement and leisure business within the MENA Region.

IAAPA held its board of directors meeting from the March 7- 11 along

with the IAAPA Leadership Conference 2015 in Dubai, to get a first-hand experience of some of the attractions in Dubai and to learn more about the dramatic growth and development of the

try and therefore there is a global interest in how this industry will take shape in coming years. The potential of the industry depends on how the players in the region share their best practices as well as

The potential of the industry depends on how the players in the region share their best practices as well as emerging trends in the interest of consumers by offering competitive solutions

Ahmad Hussain Bin Essa
COO, Global Village and nominated Executive Director MENALAC

leisure and attractions industry in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahmad Hussain said, "There are many new developments happening in the leisure and attractions indus-

emerging trends in the interest of consumers by offering competitive solutions. This will allow us with an opportunity of not only developing new themes but also to contribute

Contd. on page 14 ►

A smart urban hub@Vida Town Square

Sprawling across 750 acres, Nshama, a private developer of lifestyle communities, has joined hands with Vida Hotels and Resorts to operate a lifestyle boutique Vida Hotel and Serviced Residences in Town Square, Dubai.



TT BUREAU

To make this project a reality, an agreement was signed between **Fred Durie**, Chief Executive Officer of Nshama and **Philippe Zuber**, Chief Operating Officer of Emaar Hospitality Group.

Vida Town Square Dubai will serve as a smart urban hub with 180 hotel rooms and serviced resi-



(L-R): Philippe Zuber, Chief Operating Officer of Emaar Hospitality Group and Fred Durie, Chief Executive Officer of Nshama

Vida Town Square Dubai will serve as a lively hub where new experiences are created. It also underlines the expansion of the brand, building its credentials as the 'go-to' hospitality offering for the young and trendy

Philippe Zuber

Chief Operating Officer, Emaar Hospitality Group

dences. It will be defined by its location overlooking the central park, the size of 16 football

fields and in easy access to a retail precinct spread over 2.5 million sq ft with over 600

retail outlets and a dedicated Reel Cinemas Cineplex, educational institutions, health-care facilities, cycling tracks and green walkways.

Fred Durie commented, "Vida Hotels and Resorts shares the same values as Nshama in providing an unmatched lifestyle choice that meets the requirements of the new generation of tech-savvy youth and entrepre-

neurs. As the first hospitality project in Town Square, our suburban downtown residential destination Vida will bring positive energy that complements the aspirations of our residents to live life at their price. Through the partnership, we are focused on creating a dynamic 'town square' that celebrates life and offers value across all touch points."

Philippe Zuber added, "In a short span of time, Vida Hotels and Resorts has differentiated its credentials in the hospitality sector by creating a new niche that challenges all industry norms. Vida is

approachable, the traits that the new generation values. Vida Town Square Dubai will

credentials as the 'go-to' hospitality offering for the young and trendy."

As the first hospitality project in Town Square, our suburban downtown residential destination Vida will bring positive energy that complement the aspirations of our residents to live life at their price

Fred Durie

Chief Executive Officer of Nshama

serve as a lively hub where new experiences are created. It also underlines the expansion of the brand, building its

Going beyond traditional hospitality, Vida Town Square Dubai will offer a remarkable food and beverage choices. Vida Town Square Dubai will include a swimming pool, modern fitness facilities and a dedicated spa. Vida Hotels and Resorts has two properties in its portfolio - Vida Downtown Dubai offering 156 rooms and Manzil Downtown Dubai, an upscale lifestyle boutique hotel. 🏨

Luxury lifestyles

- ♦ Vida Town Square Dubai will overlook the central park, the size of 16 football fields and in easy access to retail precinct spread over 2.5 million sq ft with over 600 retail outlets and a dedicated Reel Cinemas Cineplex, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, cycling tracks and green walkways.
- ♦ Vida Town Square Dubai will include a swimming pool, modern fitness facilities and a dedicated spa



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Azerbaijan: Incredible diversity to offer

Sharing a few insights on the tourism potential of Azerbaijan, Dayana Persan, the representative of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan in UAE, highlighted the reasons that make the country, a great tourism destination for the Gulf region...



TT BUREAU

A strategically important nation in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan has imbibed the cultural ethos of ancient historical empires including Russian, Turkish and Persian. Located on the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is a land of rich cultural and historical heritage. Azerbaijan has incredible diversity to offer, as on one hand, its capital Baku is a dynamic town with all trappings of a cosmopolitan lifestyle, on the other, there is a picturesque countryside where one finds undisturbed, vast lands of Azeri culture and one of Eurasia's best-kept scenery secrets.

With high-end tourism infrastructure, unique tourism attractions like Gobustan, mud volcanoes, burning mountain and proximity and flight connectivity from GCC countries, Azerbaijan is a great destination for tourism.

Azerbaijan has become one of the most important destinations for conferences in Central Asia. How has this

facilitated tourism in the region?

Azerbaijan's unique location at the crossroads of East and West and its rich historical and cultural heritage combined with modern infrastructure and heartfelt hospitality all positively contribute to its appeal as a destination. Along with excellent air accessibility, world class conference facilities and high quality hotels to accommodate events of different size and scale, unique dining venues and authentic on-site activities Azerbaijan has become an ideal destination for conferences in Central Asia.

What are the most prominent conferences and events organised in Azerbaijan? What's their annual growth rate?

Azerbaijan welcomes a large number of exhibitors every year and event organisers have forecast 15 per cent growth of their exhibitions in the region. We are proud to host The First European Olympic Games this summer from June 12 to 28 in Baku, involving more than 6,000 athletes from the National Olympic

Committees of Europe. This event is expected to be the largest sporting event in Azerbaijan's history. Baku has also been elected as the host city of The Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017.

What are the main tourist destinations in Azerbaijan? Please share some insights regarding hotel, leisure and business centers options available in the major cities?

The capital of Azerbaijan – Baku, is the largest city of Azerbaijan, as well as the largest city on the Caspian Sea and of the Caucasus region. A walking tour of the Old Town 'Icheri Shekher' shows the traditions of Azerbaijan. Many ancient architectural treasures still stand tall such as the Maiden Tower and Palace of the Shirvanshahs in the walled City of Baku. Gabala, which is also called the "Azerbaijani Switzerland", is considered a popular tourist destination as it combines good climate, natural beauty and modern infrastructure. The other famous cities of Azerbaijan include



Old and New City Baku

Coastal cities. Preferred Mode of transport is air travel. Travellers from GCC could arrive Baku in less than 2 hours 30 minutes. Azerbaijan Airline, flydubai and Qatar Airways have direct flights to Baku from Dubai and Doha. Etihad Airways will be commencing their flight to Baku from mid of this year.

Please share the approximate number of tourists who visited Azerbaijan in 2014.

With the support of Government of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Azerbaijan Tourism Association, every year the expected number of tourists is growing by 8 per cent. We expect 3 million tourists in 2015.

Are the promotional initiatives undertaken by Azerbaijan government, to promote tourism conferences, targeted directly at businessmen from UAE and Gulf region?

Azerbaijan Government recently started a bureau called Azerbaijan Conventional Bureau which intends to promote business related activities. Azerbaijan is a country with a wide range of investment opportunities and is undoubtedly one of the most attractive destinations for foreign direct investments (FDI) in the region. Within the past 15 years, more than USD 100 billion were invested in the Azerbaijani economy, of which more than a half was invested by foreign businesses. We believe there are a number of key positive

Sports Destination

- ◆ Azerbaijan welcomes a large number of exhibitors every year
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- ◆ This event is expected to be the largest sporting event in Azerbaijan's history. Baku has also been elected as the host city of The Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017

factors behind our success in attracting FDI including political stability, rapid economic development, presence of abundant resources and a favorable location on the crossroads of Eurasia.

Do the tourism programs suit the requirements of the residents of the UAE and Gulf region?

Yes, the representation office of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan for GCC Countries designs packages and campaigns to promote Azerbaijan Tourism. Atlantis Holidays, a prominent Travel management company in UAE, is the appointed representation office for the region. We welcome and support every initiative to make Azerbaijan destination a preferable tourism spot for GCC travellers. 🌟

With the support of Government of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Azerbaijan Tourism Association, every year the expected number of tourists is growing by 8 per cent. We expect 3 million tourists in 2015

Nakhchivan, Lankaran, Ganja, Naftalan, and Sheki.

What is the preferred mode of transport to Baku for the majority of tourists?

Improved connectivity gives Azerbaijani-based businesses greater access to foreign markets, encouraging exports, and at the same time increases competition and choice in the home market from for-



Dayana Persan, the representative of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan in UAE

Jumeirah's second hotel to open in Turkey on May 1

Jumeirah Group has signed a management agreement with Targets Investment Turizm Isletmeleri AS to operate a luxury hotel in Bodrum on Turkey's Aegean coast.

Following the signing of the agreement, the hotel, formerly known as the Golden Savoy will be operated under the Jumeirah brand as Jumeirah Bodrum Palace Hotel, Turkey with

an official opening scheduled for May 1, 2015. The hotel is situated approximately 10 minutes from Bodrum city centre, nestled in the natural beauty of Zeytinlikahve Cove, and 20

minutes from Bodrum International Airport. Tourist arrivals in Turkey during 2014 exceeded 40 million, of which 4.3 million visited Bodrum. After the opening of this hotel,

the Jumeirah Group portfolio will consist of 23 hotels ranging from the flagship Burj Al Arab in Dubai to iconic properties in London, Frankfurt, Mallorca, Rome, Istanbul,

Baku, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, the Maldives and Shanghai. The company has a further 26 hotels under contract or in development in the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

Egypt's new projects@ATM

Egypt's resurgent tourism sector registered 23.6% increase in revenues in 2014. Allied with its unrivaled heritage, ancient tombs and pyramids, Egypt will showcase its new tourism projects worth US\$ 5.3 at ATM 2015.



SUSMITA GHOSH

Egyptian exhibitors showcasing their products at ATM 2015 include Egypt Express Travel, Al-Tayyar Travel Group, Dana Tours and Standard Tours Online, supported by international hotel chains.

"The country registered a 4.5 per cent increase in inbound tourist numbers in 2014, with 10 million arrivals compared to 9.55 million in 2013. Tourism revenues also rose year-on-year by 23.6 per cent, an increase of US\$7.5 billion, up from US\$5.9 billion in 2013," informed **Hisham Zaazou**, Tourism Minister, Egypt.

Tourism spend is also on the increase with Zaazou confirming that the average amount spent per tourist per night rose from US\$72 to



Hisham Zaazou
Tourism Minister
Egypt

Egypt registered a 4.5% increase in inbound tourist numbers in 2014, with 10 million arrivals compared to 9.55 million in 2013

US\$80.1 during H2 2014, and this is good news for tourism development, with MEED

Intelligence noting US\$5,268 million-worth of investment in the country's current top 10 list of projects.

This is led by the US\$1,653 million Emaar Misr Marassi Beach Resort project. Emaar Misr is also developing the US\$820 million Cairo Gate Mall Outside Cairo, Luxor will have a US\$120 million Four Seasons Hotel while Marsa Alam will be home to Tabarak Holding's US\$150 million Fantasia Resort. According to the MEED data, the line-up of projects planned or underway in Egypt includes a total of nine hotels and resorts and

seven malls/shopping centres. Nevertheless the transition to online is already happening with 41 per cent of Egypt's leisure travellers booking more than half their trips online over the last 12 months, as per YouGov findings.

Egypt also has a well-established all-inclusive leisure tourism product and this is proving to have high appeal to Egyptian travellers with 76 per cent likely to consider booking an all-inclusive luxury package, a figure even higher than that of respondents in the UAE and Kuwait.

Tourism spending increase

- ◆ Tourism spend is also on the increase with Zaazou confirming that the average amount spent per tourist per night rose from US\$72 to US\$80.1 during H2 2014
- ◆ This is good news for tourism development, with MEED Intelligence noting US\$5,268 million-worth of investment in the country's current top 10 list of projects

Hilton's Garden Inn Al Ahsa to open in 2016

Hilton Worldwide has announced the signing of three new Hilton Garden Inn hotels for Dubai and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) adding to the mid-market brand's portfolio of more than ten hotels. Hilton Garden Inn Dubai Al Jadaf is expected to open in early 2017, following the signing of a management agreement with AIG Investments. Strategically located for ease of access to Downtown Dubai, as well as Dubai International Airport (DXB), Al Jadaf is

emerging as a major growth area in the Emirate. Hilton Garden Inn Dubai Al Jadaf will feature 336 guest rooms; two F&B outlets; flexible meeting space; as well as business and fitness centers. Hilton Garden Inn Al Ahsa is expected to open in 2016 as part of a management agreement with Al Jazeera Group. Featuring 166 guest rooms, the hotel is located within the downtown area of the city, with easy connections to Riyadh and Damman.

Destinia.com starts Pay@Home service for ME

Destinia.com the online travel agency has announced that Pay@Home service, an innovative payment making system, to be available for users in the Middle East. The agency has introduced a home payment collection service to the Middle East market as part of their commitment to providing bespoke services to

Middle East travellers. The pay-at home allows users to make their flight and hotel reservations from the comfort of their homes through Destinia.com, after which a courier will visit their registered location. This service is now available in the UAE and KSA for payments in local currencies.



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Greece welcomes GCC residents

The 2nd Greek Deluxe Travel Roadshow aimed at increasing the awareness of Greece as a deluxe travel destination in the UAE, by educating local trade professionals. It provided the basis for business to business cooperation between participating Greek and UAE tourism companies.



Dadabhai Travel & Sabre together

Dadabhai Travel has renewed its contract with Sabre Travel Network Middle East (STNME). **TRAVALTALK** gives more details on renewed agreement...



TT BUREAU

The renewal provides Dadabhai Travel with continued access to Sabre's portfolio of innovative technology across the region, including its industry-leading Sabre Red Workspace agency solution: Sabre Red App Centre, the world's first B2B online travel

faster in the region. It also fulfills its commitment to enrich the customer experience through unrivalled service levels.

Daniel M. Naoumovitch, CEO, STNME informed, "Dadabhai Travel, one of Sabre's most valued customers, is rapidly growing and branching out from being a Bahrain-based travel agency to a strong regional player. As their long-standing technology partner, we understand their needs, opportunities and challenges and we will provide the latest technology and consultation to help them scale and expand their business. It's an exciting collaboration and we look forward to helping them shape the future of travel in the Middle East."



Daniel M. Naoumovitch
CEO
STNME

It's an exciting collaboration and we look forward to helping them shape the future of travel in the Middle East

According to Dadabhai Travel, Sabre listens to their needs, understands challenges, and designs products

that help do their job efficiently. Sabre is an innovative, trusted and vital supplier for Dadabhai Travel and they have become more competitive in the market with their support. Their leadership in emerging technologies like mobile, personalisation and data will play a critical role in helping Dadabhai Travel, achieve expansion plans.

2 for Tango

- ◆ Sabre is an innovative, trusted and vital supplier for Dadabhai Travel and they have become more competitive in the market with their support
- ◆ Their leadership in emerging technologies like mobile, personalisation and data will play a critical role in helping Dadabhai Travel, achieve expansion plans

Abu Dhabi Festival 2015 begins from March 3

■ The 12th edition of Abu Dhabi Festival, organised by the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), commenced on March 3, 2015. The largest cultural festival in the Arabian Gulf brings to the UAE a spectacular month-long program of concerts, performances and workshops. Based on this year's theme "Idea: The Seed of Invention" and in celebration of Italy as the 2015 Country of Honor, the festi-

val is designed to create an atmosphere of enquiry, exchange and cultural appreciation. The festival, concluding on April 2, 2015, brings together the largest representation of Emirati artists, musicians, filmmakers, poets and creative minds in the history of the Abu Dhabi Festival with over 100 participating citizens set to take to the stages, screens, platforms and exhibition spaces across the UAE.

Guest numbers up by 5.6% in Dubai hotels

■ Dubai's hotel establishments welcomed 11,629,578 guests in 2014, registering a 5.6 per cent increase on 2013's total. Figures released today by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) show steady year-on-year growth and significant increases across key indicators including hotel establishment rev-

enues and guest nights. The figures for 2014 indicate that Dubai is continuing to maintain growth at a sustainable level, while also growing its portfolio of hotels and hotel apartment establishments, thus taking another step closer to achieving its Tourism Vision for 2020, which aims to welcome 20 million visitors a year by 2020.

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Building bridges with Dubai Week in Beijing

Dubai Week in China from May 8-15, 2015 will celebrate growing ties and showcase the opportunities Dubai presents China across business, tourism, culture and lifestyle.



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Ties between China and the UAE continue to grow, driven partly by Dubai's flourishing 200,000-strong Chinese community as well as the surge in China-Dubai trade, which in the first nine months of 2014 rose 27 per cent to US\$34.3 billion, moving China ahead of India to become the emirate's number one trade partner.

To be held from May 8-15, 2015, the exhibition, a Falcon and Associates initiative in partnership with Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) of Dubai, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Dubai Expo 2020, Emirates Airline, Jebel



His Excellency Tang Weibin, Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Dubai with Hongbin Cong, MD, Invest Dubai, Falcon and Associates

Ali Free Zone (Jafza), Jumeirah Group and Dubai's

Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), will bring to life Dubai's remarkable transformation from a humble fishing village just over 40 years ago into a global city of opportunity.

Staged at The Orange in Sanlitun Village, the event - also in cooperation with the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) - will provide Chinese government officials, and thought leaders, an immersive experience of Dubai, highlighting the pioneering spirit of the emirate and the unprecedented opportunities it presents



China across business, tourism, culture and lifestyle.

"The relationship between the UAE and China is going from strength to strength, our collective efforts playing an ever-increasing role in each nation's economic development, illustrated in part by China becoming the

UAE's leading trade partner," says **Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy**, UAE Minister of State and Honorary President of Falcon and Associates. "The UAE serves as a gateway of opportunity for China into the Middle East, Africa, Europe and beyond. It is our goal that Dubai Week in China will provide a platform to dis-

cuss new opportunities, as well as stimulate greater levels of mutual understanding, and cultural and economic exchange, bringing us even closer together."

"It is a great pleasure for CPAFFC to work with Falcon and jointly hold Dubai Week in China this May in Beijing," says **JiYongjun**, Deputy Director-General of the Department of American and Oceanian Affairs, of CPAFFC. "It will present the splendid history and culture of Dubai to Chinese people and deepen mutual understanding. We sincerely hope that our cooperation with Dubai will be sustainable and enable us to share the same goals and achieve better success." 🇦🇪

Platform for leisure & adventure sector

▶ Contd. from page 8

to the development of the economy."

According to the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA Index 2013), Asia has led the pack at 7.5 per cent growth annually. **Ahmad Hussain** added, "We also feel privileged that IAAPA has taken keen interest in promoting this platform for mutual benefits of all interested parties and I am certain that this council will provide us tremendous opportunity for networking and in providing insights to take the industry to the next league of growth together."

"With several new projects due for completion in the coming years, the Leisure & Entertainment landscape will change phenomenally. With such a growth, we have to emphasize on the need to maintain the highest safety and operating standards within these developments. The MENALAC initiative aims to promote such parameters by creating awareness, education and formulating the best practices to be followed. The response we have received so far towards the MENALAC ini-

tiative from various Leisure Operations across the MENA region has been very encouraging. I am indeed very pleased to be a founding member of this wonderful industry initiative," said Mr. **Prakash Vivekanand**, the Managing Director of ASI Group and a founder member of MENALAC.

IAAPA President and CEO **Paul Noland** added, "IAAPA has provided professional training and development programs for our members in the Middle East since 2008. We are impressed by what we have seen and heard here this week and we are committed to supporting the region's leaders in MENALAC as they establish their organisation."

Aiming High

- ◆ The MENALAC initiative aims to promote the need to maintain the highest safety and operating standards by creating awareness, education and formulating the best practices to be followed

Etihad daily to Abu Dhabi-Tehran

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will increase its flights between Abu Dhabi and Tehran, the capital of Iran, from three flights a week to a daily service, beginning April 15, 2015.



TT BUREAU

The Airbus A320 Tehran service, which started in December 2006, provides 136 seats each way in a two cabin configuration, with 16 Business Class seats and 120 Economy Class seats. Adding 1,088 new seats per week to the route, the additional Tehran flights will enable Etihad Airways to provide its guests with more choice and greater flexibility when travelling between Abu Dhabi and Tehran. Daily Tehran flight operations will allow the Iranian capital to gain two-way connectivity to almost 50 markets on Etihad Airways' global network.



Kevin Knight
Chief Strategy and Planning Officer
Etihad Airways

New York, Washington DC, Dallas/Fort Worth, and Los Angeles, which is home to the world's largest Iranian diaspora. In addition to the US cities, the Tehran flights will connect

with destinations on the airline's network across the Gulf region, Africa, Asia and Australia. The increase to daily is the first step in Etihad Airways' phased network expansion to Iran. **Kevin Knight**, Etihad Airways' Chief Strategy and Planning Officer, said, "We have been keen to increase the Tehran service to daily operations for some time and we're delighted to make that move now ahead of the summer season."

"The expanded schedule will increase travel options for Iranian passengers visiting the UAE, as well as those wishing to access Etihad

Airways' global flight network, particularly cities like Los Angeles and others in the United States."

Passengers on all Etihad Airways flights to the US, which includes Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York JFK, and Washington DC, are processed through US pre-clearance at Abu Dhabi airport. This means those passengers flying from Tehran pass through all required checks including US customs, immigration and security conveniently while in Abu Dhabi before they board their flight, enabling them to avoid queues on arrival in the US and arrive as domestic passengers.

The self-service APC kiosks expedite the US entry process for American, Canadian, and eligible visa waiver program international travellers, by providing an automated process through US pre-clearance's primary inspection area. 🇦🇪

The new schedule will establish important daily connections to key markets in the United States, including

Daily Tehran flight operations will allow the Iranian capital to gain two-way connectivity to almost 50 markets on Etihad Airways' global network



Amadeus Gulf hosts Technology Show 2015

The event launched a solution 'Amadeus Travel Wizard' and the portfolio of Amadeus cutting-edge technology solutions was also displayed during the event.



Good days for Saudi Tourism

Riyadh planned and underway projects tally rises to 55 with top ten developments valued at almost US\$11.6 billion; Saudi businesses to showcase wares on 1,400 sq m of exhibition floor space.

TT BUREAU

Saudi Arabia's US\$11.6 billion worth of tourism projects currently underway in the country will underscore the strength of the industry as the country looks to build



on domestic and religious tourism totaling an estimated US\$ 45.3 billion at this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2015.

Saudi Arabia's presence at this year's show will be spread across more than 1,400 sq m of exhibition floor space with 15 participating companies already confirmed including Unique Choice, Al



Nadege Noblet
Exhibition Manager
Arabian Travel Market, WTM Portfolio

Almost US\$11.6 billion is being invested into supporting the kingdom's economic diversification plans

Khozama Management Co., Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, E Travel Gate, Saudi Commission for Tourism &

Antiquities, Flynas, Al Hokair Group and Yrbooking.com.

"If we look just at the Kingdom's list of top 10 tourism and hospitality projects, almost US\$11.6 billion is being invested into supporting the country's economic diversification plans, and our partners on the ground are eager to discuss how this year's ATM can showcase sector growth to more than 33,000 expected participants," says **Nadege Noblet**, Exhibition Manager of Arabian Travel Market, WTM Portfolio, Reed Travel Exhibitions


According to new MEED intelligence data, Saudi Arabia is capitalising on both new business and leisure tourism opportunities with 55 planned or under-develop-




Contd. on page 19 ►

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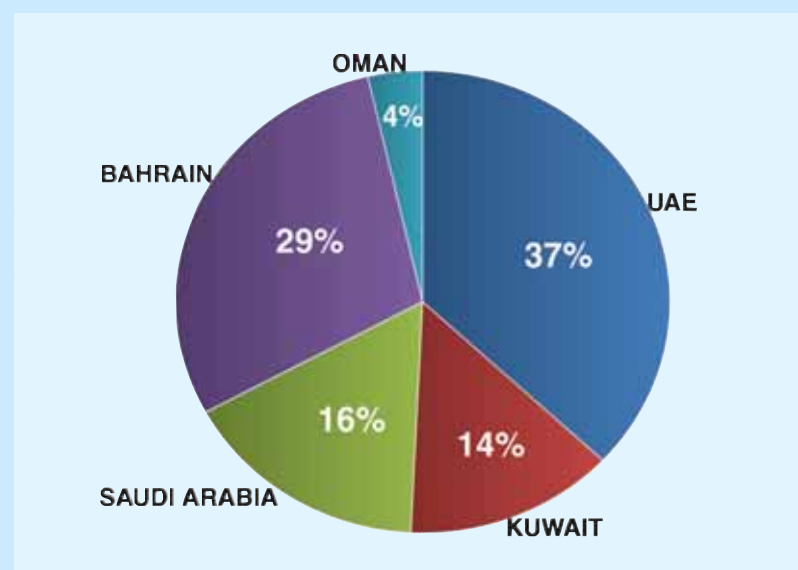
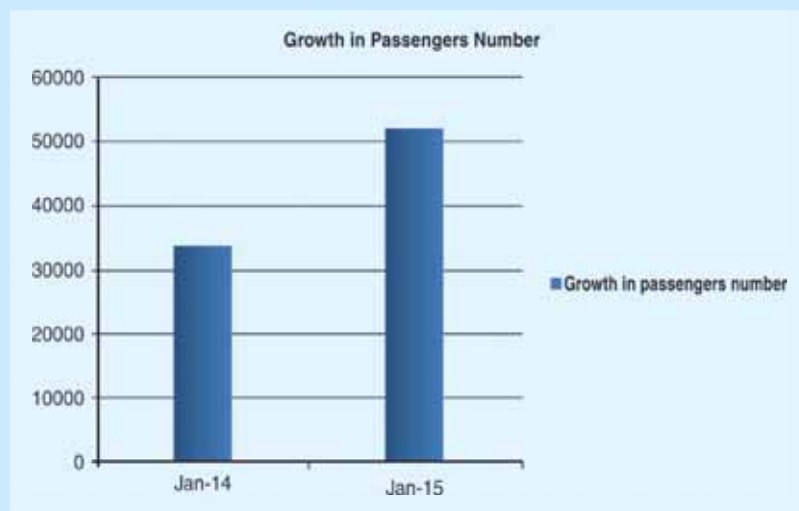
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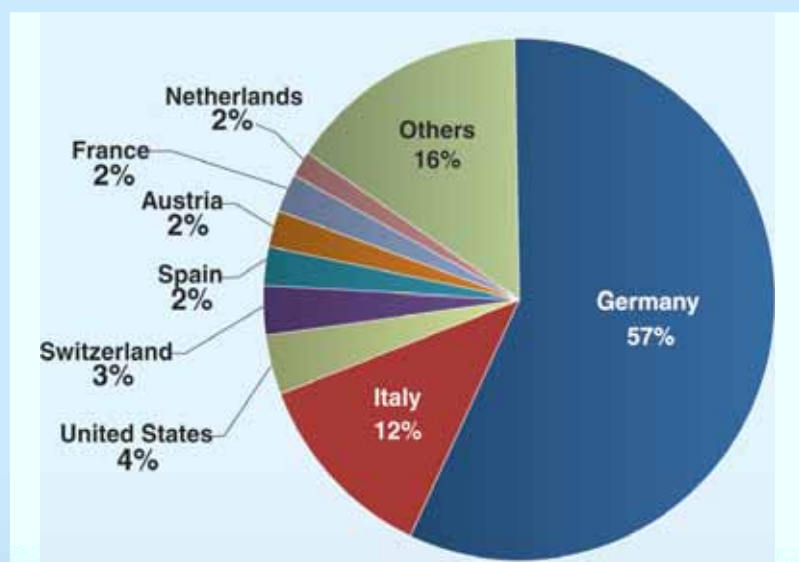
Abu Dhabi's cruise business plays a crucial part in the development of the Emirate's tourism industry. It establishes to be one of the main pillars of Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030.

► **53% Growth in passengers number January 2015 on January 2014**

► **GCC Pax till Jan 2015 from September**



► **Nationality Breakdown Q4 2014**



► **Cruise Capacity**

Cruise Liners	Passenger Capacity	Length overall/Meter
 Costa Serena	3,700	290
 MSC Orchestra	3,200	295
 Queen Mary 2	2,600	345

Abu Dhabi

Aviation for socio-economic progress

Global Airport Leaders' Forum (GALF) will be held in Dubai on May 11 and 12. The third edition of GALF will be collocated with the 15th edition of Airport Show at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC).



SUSMITA GHOSH

The two events will be held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA), Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group.

The Middle East region is one of the foremost contributors to the global passenger and cargo air traffic. 'Aviation can rise when governments fully support the industry and understand its potential as a powerful driver of social and economic progress,' remarked the chief of global airports operators' body. The industry veteran said the progress that Dubai has made over the years to become the world-class centre of aviation was 'truly remarkable' and 'exemplary'.



Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum
President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA)

In Dubai, the massive airport expansions are needed to accommodate the growth in air traffic and airport development continues to play a strategic role in our future growth agenda

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed informed, "The importance of airports as global travel hubs has been growing. In Dubai, the massive airport expansions are needed to accommodate the growth in air traffic and airport development continues to play a strategic role in our future growth agenda. The huge and consistent aviation investments will have a positive impact not just for Dubai alone but for the UAE, Gulf region and the world."

"Preliminary statistics for 2014 indicate total worldwide passenger traffic of 6.6 billion, so we're talking about nearly doubling worldwide traffic over the next decade and a half. The airports handled 100 million metric tonnes of cargo and 83 million aircraft movements," informed Angela Gittens, Director General of Airports Council International

(ACI) which has 591 members operating more than 1861 airports in 177 countries. "The annual passenger

number balloons to 58.1 million jobs worldwide. Aviation is a strong enabler of the global economy, repre-

lines and most active airports. The fact that Middle East aviation supported, directly and indirectly - nearly two million jobs and contributed US\$116 billion in terms of GDP in 2012, is a fair indicator of the industry's forward march in our region.

The UAE airports handled over 101 million passengers in 2014 with Dubai taking the major share of about 71 million passengers followed by Abu Dhabi with 20 million passengers.

Preliminary statistics for 2014 indicate total worldwide passenger traffic of 6.6 billion, so we're talking about nearly doubling worldwide traffic over the next decade and a half

Angela Gittens

Director General, Airports Council International (ACI)

traffic growth globally was expected to average 4.1 per cent annually to 2031 to reach 12 billion," she further stated.

"The Air Transport Action Group's (ATAG) latest figures indicate that airports support over five million jobs worldwide, making them vital elements of their local economies. When we consider aviation in general, this

senting 3.4 per cent of global GDP," she added.

Khalifa Al Zaffin, Executive Chairman of Dubai Aviation City Corporation which is developing the Dubai World Central (DWC), said the Middle East, particularly the GCC, enjoys a natural affinity to the aviation industry. The region owns some of the world's fastest growing air-

Hall of fame

- ◆ The UAE airports handled over 101 million passengers in 2014
- ◆ Dubai takes the major share of about 71 million passengers followed by Abu Dhabi with 20 million passengers

South Caucasus on Air Arabia!

Air Arabia has recently introduced a new destination to its growing network, Tbilisi, at the heart of the South Caucasus country of Georgia from the carrier's primary hub in Sharjah, UAE.



TT BUREAU

With this introduction Air Arabia now connects the passengers from Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calicut, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kochi, Mumbai, Nagpur and Thiruvananthapuram to Tbilisi, Georgia. Air

Arabia offers bi-weekly flights to Tbilisi. These flights will depart Sharjah International Airport every Tuesday and Friday at 1 PM and will arrive at Tbilisi (Tbilisi International Airport- TBS) at 4:30 PM. Return flights will depart Tbilisi at 5:15 PM arriving at Sharjah at 8:20 PM (local time). This new flight destination is undoubtedly going to add

value to all Air Arabia passengers traveling to and from India. Situated on the swift Mtkvaririver and being the largest city of Georgia, Tbilisi brims with culture and history. It is also a modern city that is strategically located on important east-west trade routes positioning itself as an integral transit route in south-east Europe.

Quick Facts

- ◆ Air Arabia (PJSC), is the MENA region's leading low-cost carrier (LCC).
- ◆ Air Arabia commenced operations in October 2003
- ◆ Currently operates a total fleet of 40 new Airbus A320 aircraft, serving some 100 routes from four hubs in the UAE, Morocco and Egypt.



RIYADH 2015 TRAVEL FAIR
14 - 17 APRIL

دعوة لحضور معرض الرياض للسفر

٢٥ - ٢٨ جمادى الآخرة
الموافق
١٤ - ١٧ أبريل

قاعة المملكة
فندق الفورسيزون برج المملكة

مواعيد المعرض
10:00 - 04:00 مساءً

ORGANIZERS
شركة أمسي
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arab news TRAVELTALK

Dnata to purchase majority stake in Imagine Cruising

■ Dnata has announced that it has signed an agreement to purchase a majority stake in Imagine Cruising, one of the UK's leading cruises and stay holiday distributors with expertise in both the tour operating and retailing of cruise. "Imagine Cruising is a key distributor of cruise products around the world. The addition of the company to the dnata portfolio adds expertise in the growing cruise sector, strengthening our position as an international leader in travel services," said **Iain Andrew**, Divisional Senior Vice President of dnata's travel business.



Iain Andrew
Divisional Senior Vice President
dnata's travel business

The addition of the company to the dnata portfolio adds expertise in the growing cruise sector

"The partnership between Imagine Cruising and dnata will support the development of both businesses," said **Robin Deller**, Managing Director, Imagine Cruising. "Dnata's recent international growth highlights its commitment to the travel industry around the world. Each business and its customers will benefit from enhanced products and services, and the expertise each organization brings." Based in

Swindon, UK, with offices also in Cape Town, South Africa, Imagine Cruising provides passengers with a range of cruise options around the world. Globally, the cruise sector is one of the fastest growing within the travel industry. This year, more than 23 million travellers worldwide will choose cruising.

Cruise tourism hits new heights

The cruise terminals in Mina Rashid greeted over 30 ship calls, bringing over 150,000 cruise tourists to the Emirate in just one month, including 26 hub ship calls from four cruise lines.



TT BUREAU

The busiest week was January 25-31, 2015 with ten ships in port. For the first time in its history, Mina Rashid twice catered to five cruise ships at the same time, on Jan 10 and 31 representing approximately 50,000 cruise tourists.

In 2014, Dubai received 358,000 passengers from 94 cruise ship calls and the forecast for 2015 stands at 425,000 cruise tourists from 115 ship calls

The Cruise Tourism Department arranged for a grand ceremony to welcome these international tourists with live band performances as well as entertainment events for all ages.

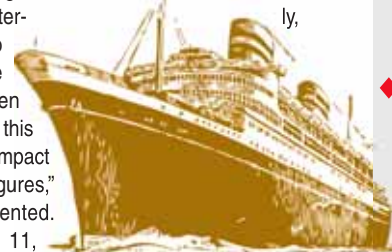
Hamad bin Mejren, Executive Director, Dubai Tourism, informed, "January was a busy month for Dubai's

cruise industry and we've reached some real milestones and made significant progress towards our targets. In 2014, Dubai received 358,000 passengers from 94 cruise ship calls and the forecast for 2015 stands at 425,000 cruise tourists from 115 ship calls. With the total figure for



Hamad bin Mejren
Executive Director
Dubai Tourism

2014, The Hamdan bin Mohammed Cruise Terminal, is the world's largest and most modern covered cruise facility. It enables Mina Rashid to handle complete passenger turnaround of five cruise vessels simultaneously,



accounting for more than 25,000 passengers.

Dubai's cruise offering features regular sailings out of the emirate, including five-, seven- and 14-night itineraries in the Gulf, while international cruise itineraries also set off from Dubai. Cruises from Dubai can be booked via the cruise line websites or through numerous leading travel agents in UAE.

Cruising Glory

- ◆ Inaugurated on Dec 11, 2014, The Hamdan bin Mohammed Cruise Terminal, is the world's largest and most modern covered cruise facility
- ◆ It enables Mina Rashid to handle complete passenger turnaround of five cruise vessels simultaneously, accounting for more than 25,000 passengers

Promising future for Abu Dhabi's cruise biz

The development of tourism in the emirate is one of the main objectives of the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030. Abu Dhabi's cruise business plays a crucial part in this development. To support this growth, in 2014, Abu Dhabi Ports commissioned a new permanent cruise terminal building.



SUSMITA GHOSH

The new building will be officially launched and operational at the end of 2015, in time for the next exciting cruise season. Abu Dhabi Ports is also developing another infrastructure project to support the growing cruise industry. The new beach stopover for cruise tourists on Sir Bani Yas Island will be the very first of its kind in the region.

"Abu Dhabi's cruise business has been growing continu-

ously ever since the first cruise vessels called at Zayed Port. With the new cruise terminal building and the new island stopover on Sir Bani Yas Island, we will significantly enhance the visitor experience and boost Abu Dhabi's status as a world-class cruise line destination

With the building and the new island stopover, we will significantly enhance the visitor experience and boost Abu Dhabi's status as a world-class cruise line destination

Capt. Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi
CEO, Abu Dhabi Ports

tion," informed **Capt. Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi**, CEO, Abu Dhabi Ports.

With the Costa Serena, AIDAaura, MSC Orchestra and MS Balmoral, Zayed Port saw four new vessels visiting the Emirate for the first time. The four "maiden callers" arrived in November, December and January and added to the increasing

number of cruise ships visiting the Emirate as part of a tour through the Middle East, linking Abu Dhabi with places like Dubai,

Bahrain, Muscat, Khorfakkan and Khasab.

The biggest cruise liners of the season in terms of passenger capacity were the Costa Serena which has a capacity for 3,700 passengers, MSC Orchestra which can carry up to 3,200 passengers and Queen Mary 2 which can accommodate a total of 2,600 passengers.

"This is also supported by the fact that cruise line operators have been sending newer, bigger and more advanced vessels to the Middle East, including Abu Dhabi, over the past years. Next season, we are expecting the AIDAprima, one of the next generations of 3,250 passenger 'club ships' for AIDA Cruises. The AIDAprima is the

newest and largest ship ever built for the German cruise line," added Al Shamisi.

"The response from cruise line operators to our enhanced service offerings is phenomenal and we look forward, taking Abu Dhabi's cruise business to the next level. We have received potential feedback from cruise passengers and are very confident about Abu Dhabi's future as the next big cruise hub in the region," further commented Al Shamisi. The growing attraction of the Middle East to cruise tourists is especially visible in Europe and the United Kingdom.

While the cruise season 2013/2014 saw around 125,000 passengers and 75 vessels visiting Abu Dhabi,

the current season has been the busiest ever with around 185,000 expected passengers with an increase of 48 per cent and 94 confirmed vessels calls. This season, 15 cruise ships from ten cruise liners will have called at Zayed Port, most of them on a weekly basis. The list of recurrent visits is headed by Mein Schiff 2 and AIDAdiva, followed by Costa NeoRiviera and Costa Serena.

Ports & more...

- ◆ With the Costa Serena, AIDAaura, MSC Orchestra and MS Balmoral, Zayed Port saw four new vessels visiting the Emirate for the first time
- ◆ In terms of capacity the Costa Serena scored big with 3,700 passengers



Kids-Fly-Free promotion launched

The luxury seaplane tour operator, Seawings in the UAE has launched a special 'Kids Fly Free' promotion where children can join their parents and experience the inspirational aerial tours that Dubai has to offer...

TT BUREAU

The 'Kids Fly Free' promotion is valid from March 15-April 15, 2015 for one month only and provides every adult who purchases a Seawings Silver Creek or

hotel, the world's tallest building, The Burj Khalifa, the manmade marvels of the Palm Jebel Ali and Jumeirah, The World islands, and charms old Dubai's creek and surrounds, both residents and visitors to Dubai

The 'Kids Fly Free' promotion is valid from March 15-April 15, 2015 for one month only and provides every adult who purchases a Seawings Silver Creek or Silver World package flight ticket with one additional complimentary ticket

Silver World package flight ticket with one additional complimentary ticket for a child 11 years and below to fly with them on the same flight for free," informed **Colin Darmanin**, General Manager, Seawings. With panoramic aerial views of Burj Al Arab

are able to experience the best that Dubai has to offer as never before.

The Silver Creek package includes round trips that take off and land on the Dubai Creek before taking a scenic flight over iconic landmarks



Colin Darmanin
General Manager
Seawings

like Port Rashid, Burj Khalifa, Deira Clock Tower, Downtown Dubai, Palm Jumeirah, World Islands, Burj Al Arab and

more, costs AED 1,595 per person.

The World Journey package costs AED 1,895 per person and offers not only the most comprehensive aerial tour of Dubai's landmarks, but also the opportunity to take off or land by the World Islands. The package includes a 40-minute (dock to dock) seaplane tour, 25-minute air-conditioned boat journey and road transfer to Dubai Mall or back to departure location.

World journey package

- ◆ The World Journey package costs AED 1,895 per person and offers not only the most comprehensive aerial tour of Dubai's landmarks, but also the opportunity to take off or land by the World Islands
- ◆ The package includes a 40-minute (dock to dock) seaplane tour, 25-minute air-conditioned boat journey and road transfer to Dubai Mall or back to departure location

Potential for growth of tourism sector

► Contd. from page 15

ment projects including four museums/libraries, 39 hotels and resorts, one mall, seven sports stadia/leisure complexes, two theme parks and two convention centres.

The country's top 10 projects currently under development are valued at just under US\$ 11.6 billion, cover a wide range of tourism-related activities from US\$ 4400 million investment by Saudi Aramco into 11 stadiums to the next three phases of the Jabal Omar mega development in Makkah.

Other high profile projects include the US\$ 533 million MKEC Visitor complex, the US\$ 450 million Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Resort and US\$500 million Millennium Jeddah. Industry experts put the estimated value of the Saudi tourism and travel market at US\$45.3 billion (SAR170 billion) in 2014, of which US\$18.7 billion (SAR70 billion) was generated from

domestic tourism and almost US\$27 billion (SAR100 billion) from religious and other tourism.

"The country has a number of important historical sites and places of natural beauty that could be a magnet for tourists from around the world, such as the ruins of Madain Saleh, a Unesco World Heritage site, the stunning Farasan Islands, the mountain city of Taif and Jeddah's restored old quarter," said Noblet. New research released by YouGov in Travel Oracle - KSA Highlights report, highlights the preferences of travellers from the Kingdom, who list good weather (39%), reasonable cost (38%) and family destination attraction (34%) as the top three criteria when selecting a vacation destination. Popular travel destinations currently include the UAE, visited by one in five Saudi Arabian residents (19%) during their last leisure trip, as well as Turkey, Egypt and Jordan.

flydubai connects Dubai-Sylhet

Adding 3rd destination in Bangladesh, flydubai has announced to commence direct flights between Dubai and Sylhet from April 1. The service will begin with five flights a week and will increase to daily starting May 4, 2015.

TT BUREAU

Commenting on the new announcement, **Ghaith Al Ghaith**, Chief Executive Officer, flydubai, expressed, "We are happy to welcome Sylhet, another previously underserved point, to our growing network of more than 90 destinations. This announcement sees our weekly service to Bangladesh



Ghaith Al Ghaith
Chief Executive Officer
flydubai

on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Starting May 04, 2015, flydubai will operate daily between the two cities.

The Subcontinent remains an important market for flydubai. In 2014, the airlines launched four routes in India, more than doubling its network in the country. Chennai will also welcome flydubai's first flight at the end of March, 2015.

We are happy to welcome Sylhet, another previously underserved point, to our growing network of more than 90 destinations

grow to 34 flights, hence welcome the people of Sylhet onboard flydubai."

The Sylhet operation is in joint partnership with Regent Airways, Bangladesh.

Flights between Sylhet and Dubai start on April 01, 2015 with five flights a week. flydubai's FZ 595/596 operates between Dubai International Terminal 2 and Sylhet's Osmani International Airport

Flying high

- ◆ In 2014, the airlines launched four routes in India, more than doubling its network in the country
- ◆ Chennai will also welcome flydubai's first flight at the end of March, 2015

ITB Berlin sets new records

ITB Berlin 2015 cemented its position as the world's leading travel trade show. Around 175,000 visitors during the five day showed an increase in trade visitors from abroad. The convention attracted more visitors – trade visitors and exhibitors remain longer at the show. The exhibitors report higher turnover, falling energy prices and good economic prospects signified people's keenness to travel.



TT BUREAU

Despite international crises and the risk of political conflict around the world, as the 2015 holiday season begins the economic prospects for the global travel industry could not be better for the months to come.

As ITB Berlin, the world's largest travel trade show, closes its doors, the conclusion is as follows: boosted by falling energy prices, reduced interest rates, low inflation and positive economic forecasts for the eurozone and North America, the travel industry has high expectations as the 2015 travel season beckons.

Dr. Christian Göke, CEO of Messe Berlin informed, "More than ever, ITB Berlin fulfils the function of the world's leading think tank and a shop window for the travel industry. This is where the opportunities and risks are debated and the potential impact of the sharing economy on the international travel industry is analysed. Over the past few days, ITB Berlin has provided fur-



Taleb Rifai
Secretary-General
UNWTO

We, at UNWTO, are very happy to have ITB Berlin as a strong partner and trust our cooperation will go from strength to strength

ther evidence of how important personal exchanges and meetings between people are for an industry that is increasingly dominated by the digital transition."

ITB Berlin 2015 went very well and once again proved itself to be an indispensable platform for tourism professionals from around the world

Norbert Fiebig
President, German Travel Association (DRV)

Trends at ITB Berlin 2015 included the massive rise in the use of mobile

devices to book trips, a phenomenon that has now become the norm. Improved software means that travel websites are becoming more attractive and easier to use. Hotels are also witnessing the impact of digital trends. Smartphone functions are increasingly taking over from room keys. Travel apps are developing rapidly and becoming ever more widespread with the use of latest-generation smart phones.

According to Messe Berlin, all the main travel destinations will benefit

As the official partner country of ITB this year, we succeeded in showcasing Mongolia's unique tourism products, destinations and nomadic lifestyle to the world

Oyunkhorol Dulamsuren
Minister, Environment
Green Development and Tourism, Mongolia

from the prevailing positive mood: big European cities, Mediterranean countries and

tionation, continues to break all records. Other popular destinations include Egypt and

More than ever, ITB Berlin fulfils the function of the world's leading think tank and a shop window for the travel industry. This is where the opportunities and risks are debated and the potential impact of the sharing economy on the international travel industry is analysed.

Dr. Christian Göke
CEO of Messe Berlin

Greece. Whereas Egypt's economic revival has been

you that Mongolia is an enigmatic, dynamic country with

many natural and cultural resources."

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, UNWTO explained, "ITB Berlin is an increasingly important meeting point for the tourism sector. It is an occasion to foster business connections and learn about the changes shaping our sector and exchange knowledge

We are therefore confident that the 2014 record of 1.6 billion days of private holidays undertaken by Germans will be surpassed this year

Dr. Michael Frenzel
President, Federal Association of the German Tourism Industry

Oyunkhorol Dulamsuren, Minister of the Environment, Green Development and Tourism of Mongolia commented, "As the official partner country of ITB this year, we succeeded in showcasing Mongolia's unique tourism products, destinations and nomadic lifestyle to the world. Also we showed

and experiences on how to adapt to such changes. We, at UNWTO, are very happy to have ITB Berlin as a strong partner and trust our cooperation will go from strength to strength."

Dr. Michael Frenzel, President of the Federal

Association of the German Tourism Industry (BTW) elucidated, "Once again, ITB Berlin was an all-round success and fills us with optimism for the coming months. For German citizens, travel is and remains a favourite pastime and, if the surveys are to be believed, many will have already packed their bags and be waiting to go. We are therefore confident that the 2014 record of 1.6 billion days of private holidays undertaken by Germans will be surpassed this year."

Norbert Fiebig, President of the German Travel Association (DRV) narrated, "The tourism industry got off to a good start in 2015. Accordingly, this year's ITB Berlin went very well and once again proved itself to be an indispensable platform for tourism professionals from around the world. From the tourism industry's

point of view ITB 2015 went according to plan."

"Everything was perfect: the exhibitors present at the show, the quality of trade visitors, and the exceptionally high attendance by exhibitors and visitors from abroad," he concluded. 📺

What's Trending

- ◆ Trends at ITB Berlin 2015 included the massive rise in the use of mobile devices to book trips, a phenomenon that has now become the norm

Qatar Airways' A350 Xwb starts services to Frankfurt

■ The five-star airline now provides a double-daily service to Frankfurt with world's newest aircraft. Qatar Airways, the Global Launch Customer of the A350 XWB commenced flights to Frankfurt on March 7, 2015 and will be flying to Frankfurt double-daily exclusively with the A350 XWB. The airline's launch of the first commercial

A350 XWB flight took place in January 2015 when the airline began inaugural A350 services to Frankfurt. Following the introduction of the second A350 XWB, the airline is now scheduled to accept delivery of three more A350 XWB aircraft in June, July and August of this year, all of which will be deployed on the Doha-

Singapore route. Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, said, "We are thrilled to have taken delivery of our second A350 XWB less than two months after the historic delivery of our first aircraft. The A350 XWB has proven to be a wonderful aircraft, both technologically and from a passenger

perspective, and we are confident, that this will continue as we introduce more and more A350 XWBs into our fleet. As the A350 is setting new benchmarks in terms of both comfort and passenger experience, we look forward to welcoming our passengers on board our A350 XWBs, to enjoy our renowned five-star service."

The A350 XWB service between Doha and Frankfurt, a major traffic hub in Europe, has provided a substantial capacity increase on the route. The aircraft is comprised of a two-class configuration with 36 Business Class seats in a 1-2-1 configuration, featuring an 80" fully flat bed and 17" HD in-flight entertainment screen.



Akbar Al Baker
Chief Executive
Qatar Airways Group

RTF is the biggest exhibition this year

With an increase of 20 per cent in the number of exhibitors compared to that held in 2014, ASAS Exhibitions, the organiser of the annual Riyadh Travel Fair (RTF), has confirmed that the 2015 edition of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's biggest travel and tourism exhibition will be the largest till date.



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Now in its seventh year, the annual event will be held from April 14 - 17, 2015 with over 200 exhibitors participating from 50 different countries.

The Riyadh Travel Fair will be held in the Four

public, keen to discover more about exotic travel destinations.

Bander' Algryni, General Manager ASAS Exhibitions informed, "2015 will be the largest Riyadh Travel Fair till date thereby extending our prominence as the leading travel and tourism exhibition in the kingdom. A



Bander' Algryni
General Manager
ASAS Exhibitions

countries will be present in the exhibition. It's been a year of growth not only for the tourism and hospitality industry in the Kingdom, but for RTF as well. With Saudi Nationals increasingly travelling overseas at a greater number year on year, the opportunities that the RTF provides has never been more significant for domestic and overseas destinations, hospitality serv-

ice providers and other tourism related businesses, to directly meet with the kingdom's leading travel professionals and travellers."

The 2014 edition of the Riyadh Travel Fair saw 13,678 number of visitors. Total visitor numbers for the 2015 edition are expected to increase with a projected number of 20,000 visitors targeted.

Visitors to the 2015 edition will be able to interact directly with various tourism authorities, hotels, airlines and travel agents from around the world. The Arabian Gulf region will have a strong presence at the fair including stands by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority as strategic partner, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority as

gold partner and Fujairah Tourism and Antiques Authority as silver partner to name a few. Turkey Tourism will have the biggest presence and delegation attending the show. Exhibitors from Asia, Oceania, Europe and North Africa will also be present, along with the representatives of the travel agency and online booking site.

Numbers Talk

- ◆ The 2014 edition of the Riyadh Travel Fair saw 13,678 recorded number of visitors
- ◆ Total visitor numbers for the 2015 edition are expected to increase with a projected number of 20,000 visitors targeted.

'Chinese arrivals to Abu Dhabi up by 300%'

■ A new research study released by InterContinental Hotels Group, one of the world's leading hotel companies, reveals Abu Dhabi is expected to welcome more than 177,000 Chinese travellers by 2023, a phenomenal increase of more than 300 per cent from just over 44,000 in 2013. The research also highlights that Dubai, currently the most popular destination in the Middle East and Africa region amongst Chinese travellers, is set to benefit from the 90 million Chinese households who will be travelling overseas by 2023. The report projects a 97 per cent increase in arrivals expected, totalling more than 540,000 travellers in ten years. Findings also showed that Chinese travellers to the Middle East tend to stay longer than the average long-haul destination.

Season Hotel Riyadh, open to travel and tourism professionals and also for the general

total of 200 exhibitors from Tourism Boards, Airlines, Tour Operators and Hotels from 50

opened in Barsha Mall

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Email : kwality1@emirates.net.ae

BIN MAJID

Bin Majid Hotels & Resorts is a growing chain of hotels in the UAE with 26 years of experience in the tourism industry.

The new deluxe Tower Hotel Apartment, opened in December 2014 is the second project of Bin Majid Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi. It comprises of 230 rooms and suites, tastefully furnished and equipped to international standards, offering excellent service and facilities," informed **Samer Alkabalani**, General Manager, Nehal Hotel and Bin Majid Tower, Abu Dhabi. Presently, the brand has six hotels under its

wings – Beach Resort, Beach Hotel, Acacia and Mangrove, all located in Ras Al Khaimah, Nehal and Bin Majid Tower – Hotel Apartments are in Abu Dhabi. Santorini a 5-star Beach resort, located at Marjan Island in Ras Al Khaimah, is scheduled to open by September 2015.

"Bin Majid Hotels & Resorts are participating in all travel and tourism exhibitions and trade

shows targeting Europeans and CIS market. The newly-added charter flights will be landing



Samer Alkabalani, GM, Nehal Hotel and Bin Majid Tower, Abu Dhabi

Newly-added charter flights will be landing in Abu Dhabi airport soon, hence, we are expecting more share of occupancy, with business volume increase in 2015-2016

in Abu Dhabi airport soon, hence, we are expecting more share of occupancy, with business volume increase in 2015-2016. Our successful participation in

ITB Berlin, 2015 had given us new leads to escalate the German and European market share in general for the upcoming period," he added.



Bin Majid Beach Hotel



Acacia Hotel



Bin Majid Tower



Mangrove Hotel



Santorini Hotel



Nehal Hotel



Bin Majid Beach Resort

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Hong Kong

Aiman Roujouleh has been appointed by the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group as Regional Director of Sales for the Middle East. In his new role, Roujouleh will oversee the Middle East region including Turkey, where he will focus on building and developing a strong Sales team of six people based in both Riyadh and Dubai. He first joined Mandarin Oriental in April 2012 as Regional Director of Sales, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain based in Riyadh. He has a wealth of sales and hospitality experience from a number of prior appointments at luxury hotel groups and properties.



The Ascott Limited

United Arab Emirates

Shashi Shetty has been selected by The Ascott Limited (Ascott) as the Director of Sales & Marketing for the GCC region. Shashi's appointment stems from her qualified 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry across the GCC region. Her previous roles include, Group Sales & Operations Manager at the Ramee Group of Hotels and Resorts Dubai, Group Director Sales & Marketing, Grand Midwest Hotel Apartments Dubai and Sales & Marketing Director, Fraser Suites Dubai.



Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi

Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi has appointed **Urs Solenthaler** as their new Deputy General Manager. Hailing from Switzerland, Solenthaler spent last three years working for the Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts Group, most recently in Manila, Philippines as Resident Manager, and prior to that as Executive Assistant Manager Food and Beverage at the Shangri-La Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia. Prior to his positions as Executive Assistant Manager F&B he was Director F&B at the Four Seasons Hotel in Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Park Inn by Radisson Dammam

Dammam

The Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed **Fadi Mheisen** as the hotel manager of the newly opened Park Inn by Radisson Dammam. Fadi moves to this new role from the Radisson Blu Hotel, Jeddah where he was the executive assistant manager in charge of rooms, engineering and training, deputising for the general manager in his absence. A 12-year veteran of the group, Fadi's responsibilities will focus on the day to day management of the Park Inn by Radisson Dammam. He will be solely responsible for driving business to the hotel, developing relationships with key industry partners, and ensuring the smooth operation.



Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Apartments

Al Barsha

The Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed **Michael Kuhn** as hotel manager of its newest Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Apartments, located in Dubai's Al Barsha neighbourhood. Kuhn assumes this role in Dubai's first Park Inn by Radisson's 90-room residential property. Kuhn brings with him over 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He began his career with the Rezidor Hotel Group in Germany, and since then, he has built a strong knowledge base of sales, marketing and operations in diverse markets.



Etihad Airways

Abu Dhabi

Etihad Airways has appointed **Ulf Huttmeier** as Senior Vice President Finance Equity Partners, effective from April 1, 2015. 41-year-old Huttmeier joins the Abu Dhabi-based airline from Air Berlin where he previously held the position of Chief Financial Officer for nine years. In his new role, Huttmeier will work closely with Etihad Airways' equity partner airlines, and lead the profitability analysis in Etihad Airways and build key relationships with global suppliers.



Ajman's classification systems

The Ajman Tourism Development Department has launched three tourism classification systems for travel agencies, tourist restaurants and tourist transportation.



Yamina Aoucher, Director, Tourism Licensing and Standards, ATDD informed, "The three systems are the results of the second stage of a major project on classification of tourism installations in Ajman."

"In the second stage of the project, a comprehensive survey was conducted with representatives of the new sectors, along with local and international benchmarking, noting that a mechanism was followed to get the feedback from Ajman visitors," she added.

New standards were developed following reviewing, current licensing and classification processes, legislations and rules and regulations, in line with requirements of ISO 9001/2008 Certificate, recently won by ATDD. An



Yamina Aoucher
Director, Tourism Licensing
and Standards, ATDD

Ajman tourism revenues reached nearly AED 300 million in 2014

action mechanism was adopted for each sector. "Field operations, interviews with stakeholders and surveys were also part of the second stage of the project, at the end of which a report of recommendations was submitted to

decision-makers," Aoucher further stated. The first stage of the project: Ajman hotel classification was named the Best Tourism Project in the Middle East and North Africa as part of MENA Travel Awards 2014. It was also named the best government project in Ajman.

According to ATDD Research and Development, 'Ajman tourism revenues reached nearly AED 300 million in 2014, compared to AED 220 million in 2013. The number of hotel and hotel apartments' guests in 2014 increased to 850,000, compared to about 600,000 in 2013. In 2014, average hotel occupancy rates have reached 65%. The number of hotel establishments in Ajman reached 31 in 2014, compared to 29 in 2013 and the total number of rooms and units became 2992 in 2014, from 2610 in 2013. 🌟

Thailand steady on growth in Q1

Following strong growth in January owing to several factors, Thailand expects a steady increase in international visitors and revenue in Q1 of this year.



Thailand welcomed 2.65 million foreign tourists in January 2015 and generated about 120 billion Baht in revenue. It represents a year-on-year increase of 15.9 per cent and 12.7 per cent, respectively.

Thailand is home to the world's largest Chinatown (in Yaowarat, Bangkok), which is

We expect to continue a steady increase in the first quarter, especially in February due to the high demand from the China market during the Lunar New Year

also the location for the nation's biggest Chinese New Year celebrations. Travellers are also invited to enjoy a rich and diverse cultural mix of festivities that take place in key destinations up and down the kingdom.



H.E. Kobkarn Wattanavrakul
Minister of Tourism and Sports
Thailand

H.E. Kobkarn Wattanavrakul, Minister of Tourism and Sports informed, "The strong performance in January can be attributed to the significant growth in tourist arrivals at international airports throughout the kingdom,

with China being the largest market. We expect to continue a steady increase in the first quarter, especially in February due to the high demand from the China market during the Lunar New Year."

To ensure a steady growth for Thailand's tourism, the Thai government is working on a number of policies and strategies to attract international visitors to visit the kingdom and to encourage Thai people to take more trips within the country. "Thailand will also continue to enhance co-operation across the spectrum of tourism to promote intra-ASEAN tourism as well as position the region as a single tourist destination," she added. In January 2015, H.E. Kobkarn led Thai tourism delegations to attend the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in Myanmar and FITUR in Spain to invite travel partners. 🌟

Magic touch for travel management

Arman Sarang, Director Products & Marketing, Amadeus Gulf tells **TRAVELTALK** about the need for travel management by agents and how Amadeus e-Travel Management can help in managing travellers through a simplified process.



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Q What is the aim of the Amadeus e-Travel Management?

Amadeus e-Travel Management is a comprehensive travel management solution that serves every aspect of corporations' needs through a single entry point. It is a flexible, one-stop, online booking solution for managed corporate travel programs of every size and scope. When employees use e-Travel Management, they can easily plan, book and purchase complete travel itineraries within their company's guidelines.

Q How do you believe it will assist in the daily work management of a travel agent?

There is a clear need for managed travel by the travel agents to prove their added value in areas such as travel planning (including shopping and booking, providing relevant and selected content), offering unique deals and seamless customer service.

With Amadeus e-Travel Management, travel agents can integrate all the elements of corporate's global travel programs, including travel policies, preferred suppliers and negotiated rates, into one easy-to-use website. This will result in quick & easy management of travelers through simplified process giving peace of mind to the agent.

Q How is the user interface?

Amadeus e-Travel Management is extremely easy to use and has single interface to manage booking flow. All travel related requests

can be handled from the tool without having to switch to other screen or website. Clearly structured and consistent displays make for a natural and straightforward contact with novice users, all the while allowing regular users to be more efficient. Amadeus e-Travel Management's design, functioning and interaction were aligned with what is commonly seen in today's major websites, providing business travelers with an interface with which they are instantly familiar and comfortable.

Q What for you is the key feature of the tool?

Key feature of this tool is to define and review policies easily with the generation of comprehensive reports. It also simplifies overall travel processes with the seamless integration between

HR, finance, expense and other travel management platforms.

Q What makes the e-Travel Management tool stand out from similar platforms?

Amadeus e-Travel Management has some of the unique features such as rapid deployment & efficient integration with usual IT systems, quick & easy management of travelers, multi-language capabilities, ability to easily add local content, offline trip request based on rules, ability to integrate multi-proposals from agency, mobile devices supported - iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Phone, Android for itinerary and approval and iPhone and Android for bookings, and local support.

Q Policy implementation appears to be a key aspect in the tool's functionality, how does this work?

The solution allows you to quickly and easily implement and manage policies within your corporation's travel

Key Facts

- ◆ Enforcing policy compliance allows corporations to save up to 23% of their direct travel costs
- ◆ Used by over 6,600 corporations worldwide
- ◆ AeTM is available in 13 languages and supports 162 currencies

programme – for both individuals and groups or departments, at a local level or worldwide. Amadeus e-Travel Management has different type of policies like upgrade lowest fare, preferred carrier etc. It works by displaying the itineraries which only matches those defined by corporate policies reducing time spent on searching for best alternatives.

Q What is Amadeus' vision for the future of corporate travel management in the Middle East?

Amadeus's vision is to provide state of the art travel technology for all stakeholders within the corporate travel industry through dedicated local support in shaping the future of travel.



Arman Sarang, Director Products & Marketing, Amadeus Gulf

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Amadeus e-Travel Management

Travel smarter. Spend less.

A comprehensive travel management solution, which serves every aspect of corporations' travel needs through a single entry point.

Corporate travel policy compliance:
Defining travel policies including preferred suppliers and negotiated rates becomes easy. Built-in with the traveller in mind, as well as straightforward rules and processes, the tool facilitates online adoption, key to drive direct costs down.

Empower your corporate travellers:
Corporate travellers can plan and book their business trip anytime, anywhere, including car rentals and destination services such as Taxis. With easy comparison between flights, web fares, and rail in a single view, choosing the cheapest policy compliant route is smooth.

Improve Efficiency:
Amadeus e-Travel Management integrates smoothly with your existing IT systems guaranteeing data accuracy via seamless workflow services.

Find out more

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