

TRAVTALK

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Ajman Tourism sees robust growth

Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) recorded AED 90 million in revenue in the first quarter of 2015, and unveiled the results during Arabian Travel Market 2015 in Dubai. Faisal Al Nuaimi, General Manager, ATDD, shares some of his views with **TRAVTALK**.

 **SUSMITA GHOSH**

For the fourth consecutive year, Ajman Tourism Development Department took part in the Arabian Travel Market 2015, held in Dubai recently. **Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi**, Chairman, ATDD, inaugurated its stand, got posted on the activities and followed up the promotional campaign with the ATDD team.

QHow was the revenue graph for the tourism board in Q1 2015 as compared to 2014?

The number of visitors to Ajman in Q1 2015 reached 120,000. The hotel occupancy rate increased to 70 per cent, compared to only 56 per cent in the same period in 2014. Around 1.1 million visitors are expected in Ajman in 2015. The number of hotel establishments (hotels and hotel apartments) in Ajman reached 35 in the first quarter of 2015, compared to 30 in the same period in 2014.

Revenues of Q1 were AED 90 million, compared to AED 77 million



Faisal Al Nuaimi
General Manager
Ajman Tourism Development Department

The number of visitors to Ajman in Q1 2015 reached 120,000. The hotel occupancy rate increased to 70%. Around 1.1 million visitors are expected in Ajman in 2015

in the same period in 2014. The number of hotel nights was doubled to

440,000 nights in Q1 of 2015, compared to only 240,000 nights in Q1 of 2014. The Asian and African nationalities were high on the list of guest nights, followed by GCC nationals and then other Arab citizens.

QAre there any new launches/ schemes during summer?

First roadshow will be conducted by Ajman Tourism in three cities in China: Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. Our aim is to recover the industry from loss and for that reason China will be our choice of destination. We will have almost eight companies coming with us like Kempinski, Fairmont, Ajman Saray, Ajman Palace, and Ramada Ajman in addition to a number of travel agencies. The Tourism Board will meet around 240 tour operators, DMCs of each city in China.

QWhen will Ajman Airport come up?

The developmental process of the project that started six months now is expected to be operational by end of 2017 aiming to target 2.5 million travellers.

QDo you think ATM 2015 will bring good business?

We expect to see the number of deals and the awareness of Ajman as destination worldwide and not only in GCC or Middle East.

We have been able to promote Ajman as a destination since 2012 and still continuing and such awareness is highly valued by our clients here as we are aiming to increase the awareness by 15 per cent. 1.1 million visitors we are expecting by the end of 2015.

QYour plans for the rest of the year?

This year we have other roadshows in Central Europe by the middle of September and WTM London by November, besides China.



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Showcasing Ajman@ATM 2015

ATDD Chairman inaugurated ATDD stand at ATM 2015, its participation for the 4th year. The delegation included representatives of the hospitality and travel trade sectors in Ajman and Ajman Stud. The tourism statistics' of Q1 2015 was announced along with the Emirate's tourism classification project.



New markets to explore, target to achieve

Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi, Chairman, Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD), approved the department's plan for a roadshow promoting tourism in the Emirate of Ajman to a number of Chinese cities.

TT BUREAU

During a meeting with members of ATDD's representation committee, **Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Humaid** highlighted the importance of opening and exploring new markets with the aim of achieving the target of five million visitors to Ajman annually by 2021, in accordance with Ajman Vision 2021 and ATDD's strategic plan.

"Not all markets are the same, that's why you have to adopt the proper promotional tool for each market," Bin Humaid said, highlighting the necessity to establish new contact channels with stakeholders in every market

For his part, **Faisal Al Nuaimi**, General Manager, ATDD, said China's roadshow plan would include trips to



ATDD's representation committee during a meeting

Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing, while the delegation would include representatives for a number of hotels, including Ajman Saray, Kempinski Ajman, the Ajman Palace, Fairmont Ajman, Ramada Beach, Ramada Hotel and Suites and the Crown Palace, in addition to a number of travel agencies.

At the meeting, Bin Humaid also reviewed results of Ajman Tourism Development Department's recent participation in ATM 2015 exhibition in Dubai, and issued directives for the department to seek new markets in India and Central Europe, according to the ATDD general manager.

By the end of the meeting, the ATDD chairman hosted an open session with representatives of hotel and hotel apartment establishments, travel agencies and tourism restaurants in Ajman to follow up their work progress and listen to their suggestions regarding the development of every tourism-related sector.

Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) hosted the 13th meeting of Ajman Executive Council's Economic Committee, led by Abdullah Al Muweijie, Chairman of Ajman Chamber and Head of the Economic Committee.

During the meeting, also attended by the Economic Committee members and a number of senior Ajman Government officials, Al Nuaimi reviewed a number of issues, including the results of Ajman tourism statistics for the first quarter of 2015, results of ATDD's participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2015 exhibition in Dubai and the outcome of a memorandum of understanding earlier signed by ATDD and Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shorooq).

ATDD received many tourism investment offers during its participation in ATM 2015, according to Al Nuaimi. The Economic Committee discussed ways to deal with these offers in accordance with rules and regulations adopted in Ajman, he clarified.

The meeting also featured ATDD's MoU with Shurooq, Al Nuaimi said, adding that it would help increase the number of visitors to Ajman via allowing Sharjah's tourist Big Bus to tour a number of tourism attractions in Ajman.

Numbers in Sight

◆ The number of visitors to Ajman in 2014 was 850,000 visitors and ATDD aims to achieve the target of five million visitors by 2021



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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Summer tourism poised for take-off

Summer invariably turns out to be an exciting time for the tourism industry in the Gulf and going by the enthusiastic trends, this year too is not expected to be different.

With packed stands and enthusiastic participants, the largest travel trade event in the Middle East, Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2015 kept its promise to be bigger and better, welcoming an estimated 23,000 visitors.

YouGov unveiled the results of its Family Travel study at the mega event. The findings show that 64% of the 2,000-plus MENA based survey respondents travelled with their children in the last 12 months, and almost two-thirds (62%) preferred online booking channels.

Already, excitement is in the air at the UAE capital where the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority has lined up a series of events as part of the Summer Season Program for 2015.

This three-month-long event will have a keen focus on families and will feature headline theatre shows, an illusionist, live international children's shows, Arab and European comedy acts and live concerts. The season will run from June 11 to Sept 5 2015. It may be recalled that 2014's summer saw 786,376 guest arrivals, an increase of 20% during June, July and August with the corresponding period the previous year. A huge marketing and promotional campaign to promote the summer season is already under way across GCC and India.

The Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central has been making news too. Cargo volumes at the airport continued to rise sharply in the first three months of 2015, propelling the airport into the world's 20 busiest international cargo hubs for the first time.

Adding another feather to the UAE's cap is the declaration by the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2015 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index report that the UAE is the most tourism-friendly destination in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

It is not just that. The WEF study has forecast that the sector will be generating approximately 1.8 per cent or 5,250 new jobs.

Way to go, UAE!

Thomas Cook, TravTips ties strong

Our operations were launched in December 2013, with TravTips, the travel and tourism Management Company, which is the Gold Circle Partner of Thomas Cook India (TCI). The partnership is on its way to complete two years of operation in the UAE market.

Today, TravTips is one of the fastest growing travel and tourism company in Dubai in the leisure segment where **Suraj Mainat**, its Managing Director, has used market expertise, innovative tactics and leadership skills to stay ahead in the competitive market place.

Escorted Group Tours is a niche segment market which is popular among the Asian community living in the Gulf. TCI, a hassle free guided group tour, includes accommodation, meals, transfers, sightseeing in one price. The unique offering is choice of vegetarian meal in all scheduled group tours.

Escorted Group Tours market is growing year on year and the travellers prefer to travel with internationally recognised brands like Thomas Cook India which has expertise in handling the business. Today, travel partners and customers started relating TravTips Travel in Dubai where they could reach the dedicated team.

TravTips have won a good share of the wallet in group tour market segments. Soon entering into B2B online space, it will allow the travel

agents to search, compare and book flights and hotels in one platform.

Ensuring the packages commissionable to the travel partners, TravTips had launched 'All Inclusive Budget Mini Europe' packages for Summer 2015 within the price bracket of AED 7000.

As the market is booming and the market share is

TravTips have won a good share of the wallet in group tour market segments. Soon entering into B2B online space, it will allow the travel agents to search, compare and book flights and hotels on one platform

also increasing, we have been able to put across product like AED 6999 for Paris and Switzerland and also the requirement of the common people have taken into account.

Our products are loaded with value for money. Lots of research has been done for the itineraries so that we could draft in such a way which consumes minimal time and cover must-to-see sights of the places. Dubai as a market

is very productive and progressive and ever since for last two or three years it's booming. In 2014, we had done good number of business and in 2015 we are seeing increased, encouraging graph by now.

Our partner TravTips has brought creativity to product by offering All Inclusive departures to Europe and Far East Ex - Dubai/Abu Dhabi

provide Halal food and give opportunities of performing five times Namaz. The sight-seeing itinerary is picked up keeping their taste in mind. So far we have seen huge demand in this aspect and now we are looking beyond Indian markets.

We have been operating as group city departures where Europe is the biggest taker and after Europe we have seen people picking up destinations like the US, China and Asia. The best facet which we have seen in this market is that it's not a seasonal market but a year-round. People keep travelling as honeymooners or on customised travel or city departures.



Jatinder Paul Singh
Sr. Vice President & Head Leisure Travel
(Outbound)
Thomas Cook India

Air Arabia soars through 2015 Q1

■ Air Arabia's financial results for the first quarter of 2015, for the three months ending March 31, 2015, show a net profit of AED 85 million, an increase of 13 per cent on the corresponding 2014 figure of AED 75 million. During the same period, the airline's turnover reached AED 886 million, an increase of 7 per cent compared to AED 827 million in the first quarter of last year.

1.8 million passengers flew with Air Arabia between January and March 2015, which is 10 per cent higher than the number of 1.6 million for the corresponding period of 2014. The airline's average seat load factor during the first three months of 2015 stood at an 81 per cent. In January, 2015 the airline announced the opening of its fifth global

fixed-based operation, located at Amman Queen Alia International Airport in Jordan, reinforcing its market leading position within the Levant region. Later in the quarter, Air Arabia became the first low-cost airline from the Middle East and Africa to enter the Chinese market with regular non-stop services to Urumqi in Western China.

Another industry milestone was achieved by Air Arabia in March 2015 with the launch of the first loyalty program from a regional low-cost carrier. Airwards offers simple, transparent and value-packed experience that customers associate with Air Arabia, with points based on money spent rather than distance flown.



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Offices:
DELHI: 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Ph.: +91-11-23710793, 23716318
Fax: +91-11-23351503
E-mail: travtalk@ddppl.com
MUMBAI: 504, Marine Chambers, 43, New Marine Lines, Opp. SNDT College, Mumbai - 400 020, India
Ph.: +91-22-22070129, 22070130, Fax: +91-22-22070131, E-mail: mumbai@ddppl.com
UAE: Z1-02, P.O. Box 9348, Saif Zone, Sharjah, UAE
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Fax: +971 6 5528956
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Expanding travel experience

Serving in the Gulf region for many years now and growing with an exceptional customer loyalty, SWISS International Airlines is causing rapid shifts in the tourism industry.

 SUSMITA GHOSH

With daily flights from Zurich to Dubai, UAE, and onwards to Muscat in Oman, the airline is on with online services for several years now.

Mark Pey, Head of Gulf and Pakistan, SWISS International Airlines, informs, "We have had little drop from transferring passengers in the first quarter of 2015 when compared with the same tenure in 2014, but we continued to increase our yields maintaining very good market share especially in Business and First Class. We have seen a huge number of loyal customers travelling with us since many years including the local Europeans and Indians, mainly focused on travel to Switzerland and Europe."



Mark Pey
Head of Gulf and Pakistan
SWISS International Airlines

We don't have the financial power to incentivise as the Gulf carriers, but we are trying in every possible way

To ensure high response and rigorous promotion with the approaching summer, SWISS International Airlines is in continuous con-

tact with travel agents on B2B channels. "We don't have the financial power to incentivise as the Gulf carriers, but we are trying in every possible personalised way. We also focus on having more interaction with the travel trade offering unique events as we are launching throughout the year to maintain stronger relations," Pey further states. The airline has launched its entire fare restructured and published on a very competitive and promotional level. This is their strategy for targeting next couple of months as regards to summer travels.

Looking at customers' demands and to get hold of the complete target audience, they have extended their European network by adding 22 destinations in March this year: especially catering to the destinations where the Gulf carriers do not operate, which

is a competitive advantage for SWISS International Airlines.

Taking part in Arabian Travel Market 2015, Pey shares his experience as a very happy and fruitful one. "Being our strategic partners and having our colleagues here from Switzerland, it's a fantastic exposure again. We have seen very good interest from the customers, and it continued throughout the event," he says.

European Import

- ◆ SWISS Intl Airlines has extended its European network by adding 22 destinations in March this year
- ◆ The Airline has floated a restructured fare which is both competitive and promotional

ATM 2015 sees 15% visitor growth

■ Reed Travel Exhibitions, the organiser of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2015, which took place May 4-7, 2015, has shared initial post-event numbers for the



22nd edition of the annual travel trade showcase, with in excess of 26,000 influential visitors recorded, representing a 15 per cent increase on 2014 figures.

The record-breaking show, which is the largest travel trade exhibitor showcase in the Middle East, also welcomed several new initiatives this year including the Captains of Industry lunch, the TravelTech Show at ATM with over 50 travel tech-specific exhibitors (up 24 per cent on 2014 floor space), the RateGain Travel Technology Theatre and Visa Exhibitor Showcase Theatre; as well as the return of the high profile UNWTO Ministerial Forum Hosted by National Council

of Tourism & Antiquities and the all-new ATM Best Stand Awards. Exhibitor numbers across the nine halls totalled 412 confirmed participants including 113 first-timers, with over 2,800 exhibiting companies representing 86 countries, 64 national pavilions and over 50 seminar and tech theatre sessions.

"The preliminary figures for this year's show yet again underscore Arabian Travel Market's relevance to the regional travel and tourism sector, and reflect general industry confidence," said **Nadege Noblet-Segers**, Exhibition Manager, ATM. "The mood on the show floor across the four days was incredibly dynamic and buoyant, we have already had 68% of ATM 2015 exhibitors rebook space for next year – such was the enthusiasm on the show floor, 20% of 2015 exhibitors are already contracted for 2016, a great achievement given that this is the first time that contracting has ever taken place at the event."



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\$1.2 bn investment to revamp airport

Dubai Airports is investing \$1.2 billion in upgraded facilities for over 110 international airlines that operate from its international Terminals 1 and 2.

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Concourse D, expected to open later this year, will become the new \$517 million (AED 1.9 billion) home to nearly 100 airlines that currently occupy Concourse C. It will feature 21 contact



Paul Griffiths
CEO
Dubai Airports

stands, four of which will accommodate Airbus A380 or Boeing 747 aircraft and 11 remote stands.

The importance in Concourse D, designed around a central atrium, is to create a more efficient and

operational areas surrounding it and Concourse D. On the northern side of the airport, a further \$163 million (AED 600 million) has been invested to upgrade Terminal 2.

On the expansion of Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central's existing passenger terminal, Dubai Airports confirms that construction is expected to begin later 2015. It will boost the present capacity of 6 million passengers a year to 26 million.

Dubai International experienced solid growth across all major markets in March 2015, lifting passenger traffic 7.2 per cent from March 2014, according to the latest traffic report issued by operator Dubai Airports.

Passenger traffic in March 2015 totalled 6,736,932 compared to the 6,285,868 passengers recorded in March 2014, up 7.2 per cent. This boosted traffic in the

We are investing heavily to ensure that the 110 plus international airlines that fly to and from Dubai and their customers who use our airport facilities, experience an enhanced product, reflective of the high service standards Dubai has set

intuitive customer experience with short walks to connect passengers with their aircraft.

"With traffic growth continuing at a rapid pace, we are investing heavily to ensure that the 110 plus international passenger airlines that fly to and from Dubai and their customers who use our airport facilities, experience an enhanced product, reflective of the high service standards Dubai has set," informs **Paul Griffiths**, CEO, Dubai Airports.

A total of \$490 million (AED 1.8 billion) is being invested in a phased refurbishment and modernisation process of Terminal 1 and

first three months of the year to 19,606,327, up 6.8 per cent from the 18,361,820 achieved in Q1 of 2014. The growth in passengers continued mainly by Emirates Airline and flydubai, particularly to Eastern European destinations. India remained Dubai International's biggest market, with passenger traffic growing 14.9 per cent to 863,046 passengers in March 2015.

"The growth in the first quarter puts us on track to meet our forecast of more than 79 million passengers in 2015 and cement our position as the world's busiest airport for international passengers," concludes Griffiths. 🌟

Shuttle service by Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways' newest offering, the Doha-Dubai Shuttle, will offer flights from Doha's Hamad International Airport to Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai.

TT BUREAU

This first-of-its-kind service flying between the two cities brings a number of enhanced services that will reduce overall travel time and increase convenience for passengers. The shuttle service, along with its many perks, will be offered on each of the 18 daily flights between the two cities, with 14 flights to and from Dubai International Airport and four to and from Al Maktoum International Airport.

Passengers on the Doha-Dubai Shuttle will also enjoy the newly unveiled

Qatar Airways in-flight entertainment system. The new brand "Oryx One - Explore. Play. Share." embraces Qatar Airways' corporate colours.

His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, Group Chief Executive, Qatar Airways, announced the launch of the Doha-Dubai Shuttle and unveiled the airline's new in-flight entertainment during a press conference on the opening day of Arabian Travel Market 2015. Al Baker commented, "The Doha-Dubai Shuttle caters to the needs of both business and leisure travellers, and provides them with a more convenient and



Akbar Al Baker
Group Chief Executive
Qatar Airways

time-saving option when travelling between the two cities."

Especially dedicated check-in counters located at Row 5 at Hamad International Airport will be available for all passengers travelling from Doha to Dubai on the Doha-Dubai Shuttle. Passengers who plan on checking in baggage must check in no later than one hour before their scheduled departure time. Return flights from Dubai to Doha also require check-in of

a minimum of one hour before the scheduled departure time for all passengers, including those with only hand baggage.

Travellers flying on the Qatar Airways Doha-Dubai Shuttle will also be able to enjoy fast-track immigration in Doha, allowing them to clear passport control in minimum amount of time. Passengers buying the Doha-Dubai Shuttle tickets will have the opportunity to amend their ticket once free of charge.

Emphasizing on Qatar Airways' commitment to the UAE market, Al Baker announced the daily flights to Ras Al Khaimah, starting Oct 1, 2015. He said, "We have had a well-established operation in the UAE for many years and with the launch of flights to Ras Al Khaimah, travellers will have even greater options with 196 weekly flights to the UAE." 🌟

The Doha-Dubai Shuttle caters to the needs of both business and leisure travellers, and provides them with a more convenient and time-saving option when travelling between the two cities

Double digit growth for RezLive

RezLive.com, the global B2B travel wholesaler, has anticipated growth in excess of 40 per cent on its Global Sales for the fiscal year 2015.

TT BUREAU

With an online inventory of over 125,000+ hotel and apartment rooms worldwide, 45,000+ sightseeing items and over 500 tours in 500 cities and 5,000+ transfer options in over 900 airport and city locations, the company plans to reach above \$1.2 billion sales (Total Transaction Value) in this fiscal year surpassing their previous year figures. The company additionally expects to deliver double-digit growth across all its regions in 2015.

RezLive.com presented sixth year in a row at the Arabian Travel Market. The trade show was held in Dubai from May 4-7, 2015.

The company has been strengthening its proposition in the Middle East with a new and bigger office in Dubai (JLT) and with a large team of dedicated multilingual professionals to



Manas Ranjan Pattanaik, Director - India Tourism (Ministry of Tourism Govt. of India) with Jaal Shah, Group MD, RezLive.com, and IRV Rao, Assistant Director - India Tourism, Dubai

ensure that it delivers a customized service to the Middle East market clients.

Jaal Shah, Group MD, RezLive.com, commented, "These figures clearly show that our efforts towards innovation and diversified inventory, are allowing us to maintain solid growth in all our regions and penetrate emerging markets. Our aim is to continue to consolidate our expansion into

international markets, especially in Africa and Europe, while maintaining growth in our home markets of Middle East and Asia. We will also continue working to give our valued partners extra ordinary support service and diversified inventory." The wonderfully crafted Designer Indya Brochure was launched during ATM by **Manas Ranjan Pattanaik**, Director - India Tourism (Ministry of Tourism

Govt. Of India) and **IRV Rao**, Assistant Director - India Tourism. Both the dignitaries applauded the team on the concept of the brochure.

Shah further highlighted, "The key importance of product like Designer Indya in UAE market and how the local travel agents can utilize the services offered. At Designer Indya, we promote Luxury Inbound Indian Holidays to the international markets. With a dedicated team, Designer Indya is catering to the needs of travel partners all across the globe and also empowers RezLive.com with 1600+ Indian hotel allocations and extends the facility to book Indian hotels online. Our detailed itineraries and package module allows International travel partners to send their booking requests online and customise their packages and inclusions through 'book your own tour.'" 🌟

e-Permit, e-Ticketing for smart cities

Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) has introduced e-Permit and e-Ticketing platforms in line with the objectives of Dubai Smart City initiative, launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum in early March 2014.



TT BUREAU

DTCM's e-Permit and e-Ticketing platforms were first introduced in September 2013, with DTCM taking responsibility for the development and management of both the facilities. The e-

e-Ticketing is a centralised platform for the sale and distribution of tickets for all events in Dubai. Implementation of both the systems aims at developing Dubai's growing events sector, a key pillar of the strategy behind the Emirate's Tourism Vision for

The e-Permit and e-Ticketing platforms are just two examples of our efforts to deliver targeted initiatives across the city to provide streamlined services to our partners and stakeholders, which ultimately enhance the visitor experience

Ahmad Khalifa Al-Falasi
CEO, Support Services, DTCM

Permit facility is an online system through which all procedures related to the application, processing and licensing of event permits are operated.

2020 to welcome 20 million visitors every year. The systems speed up and simplify the events application, licensing and ticketing



process, providing an electronic ticket distribution system that is more convenient for those attending events.

Dubai's events and destination offering.

Ahmad Khalifa Al-Falasi, CEO, Support Services, DTCM, says, "DTCM is committed to the Smart City strategy. The e-Permit and e-Ticketing platforms are just two examples of our efforts to deliver targeted initiatives across the city to

provide streamlined services to our partners and stakeholders, which ultimately enhance the visitor experience. With Dubai's events sector growing

"The e-Ticketing system allows us to issue tickets more efficiently, enabling us to build an information database that benefits not only Department

Smart Moves

- ▶ The e-Ticketing system allows to issue tickets more efficiently, enabling to build a information database that benefits not only DTCM but also event organisers and venues
- ▶ It speeds up and simplifies the entire events application, licensing and ticketing process by using an electronic ticket distribution system
- ▶ It collects big data and statistics that allow DTCM to optimise the events calendar and improve its events and destination offering

at an impressive rate, playing such a vital role in growing our tourism numbers, the new e-Permit system was introduced to streamline the management and co-ordination of event licensing activities, provide greater operational efficiency."

of Tourism and Commerce Marketing but also event organisers and venues. We have already seen positive results since both the systems' implementation. We look forward to announce further developments in the near future," he adds.



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Record-breaking show@ATM 2015

The largest travel trade event in Middle East showcased 2,700 exhibitors, 64 national pavilions, over 35 seminar and technology theatre sessions. The show has grown by seven per cent since 2014, a total of 113 new exhibitors set to make their ATM debut.



Easing travel into Jordan

Jordan is run on what may be termed as an 'upper middle economy,' much of which thrives on the up and coming tourism industry in the Arab Kingdom.

 SUSMITA GHOSH

While recent political instability in the region left its mark on the tourism and hospitality industry, Jordan is ready to bounce back with an assortment of new schemes.

With a plethora of world heritage sites, Jordan has much to offer to those on a lookout for historical tourism. "This comes in the light of a now approved proposal which is aimed at easing visa regulation and making travel to Jordan easier and more affordable. The approval will waive taxes for clientele making use of Jordanian and affiliated tour operators. Those visiting via land routes would pay a reduced tax of 10 Jordanian dinar [down from 40] on the condition that they spend a minimum of three consecutive nights in the king-



Nayef Hmeidi Al-Fayez
Minister of Tourism and Antiquities,
Kingdom of Jordan

An approved proposal aims at easing visa regulation and making travel to Jordan easier and more affordable

dom. In addition, low cost and economy flights leaving King Hussein International Airport will see a waiving of departure and entry visa tax," informs

His Excellency Nayef Hmeidi Al-Fayez, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Kingdom of Jordan. "The measures approved by the government aim to encourage travellers to add Jordan to their next itinerary."

Elucidating on Jordan's plan to capitalize on summer tourism in regard to neighbouring GCC nations, His Excellency explains, "We have a lot of opportunities for the GCC market. Jordan is within 2½ flight from most of the GCC countries with a big difference in climate." A new and convenient mobile App introduced by Royal Jordanian Airlines is available on both Apple Store and Google Play Store. It allows potential travellers the convenience of important travel information and guidelines alongside airline services like flight booking status and online check in. 

SCTDA unveils Vision 2021

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) unveils Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, on the event of the UAE's 50th anniversary.

 TT BUREAU

The announcement was made at a press conference by **HE Mohammed Ali Al Noman**, Chairman of SCTDA, and **HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Director General, SCTDA. The Authority stated on the occasion that it studied the factors that affect tourism at the local, regional and international levels.

Al Noman says, "There is no doubt that Sharjah has established a leading position on the global tourism map as one of the favourite destinations for millions of visitors from all over the world. Hence, we are focused on maintaining the uniqueness of our tourism sector and expand its market share in the economy."

Al Noman clarified that the main goal of the vision is to build a platform to unite all the




HE Mohammed Ali Al Noman
Chairman
SCTDA

We are focused on maintaining the uniqueness of our tourism sector and expand the share of tourism in the economy

efforts, initiatives and tourism programs under one umbrella. "This is a goal that cannot be achieved by any particular sector on its own. To achieve this,

we need the active partnership of all public and private sector companies and institutions in the aviation, tourism and hospitality sectors. Everyone must support this vision in a collaborative framework to achieve the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021," he states. Al Midfa gave a presentation on the plans to achieve Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, during which he explained that SCTDA will adopt, in collaboration with partners in the tourism sector, four strategic pillars working in parallel to achieve the aim.

Guided by the wisdom and skills of **H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qasimi**, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, the Emirate of Sharjah has not only emerged as the Cultural Capital of the UAE but has also been crowned as the Cultural Capital of the Arab World. 

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22 successful years of ATM

► Contd. from page 8



Contd. on page 12 ►

Amadeus upgrades businesses

Amadeus Gulf presented HTM, an independent UAE-based travel management company, a technology Innovation Award for implementing a range of best-in-class products.

TT BUREAU

Using the Amadeus technology, HTM has transformed and up-scaled their business processes from front-office to mid and back office. It empowered its travel consultants to work efficiently to deliver superior customer service and attain higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Graham Nichols, Managing Director, Amadeus Gulf, says, "We are pleased with the long and fruitful collaboration with HTM. They chose to implement our wide range of innovative solutions for the front-office, as well as our renowned back-office solution, Traacs, which is now interfaced with their Oracle ERP system. This will help transform their business processes and drive efficiencies."



Graham Nichols, Managing Director, Amadeus Gulf and Brian Murphy, Managing Director, HTM

"HTM has also become a reseller of our corporate suite, Amadeus e-Travel Manager [AeTM]. This will create opportunities to scale up by winning new corporate business, demonstrating competitive advantage in the market. In fact they have already won two significant new accounts who will adopt AeTM," he adds.

Brian Murphy, Managing Director, HTM, mentions, "We are striving and seeking to build the best Travel Management Company in the Middle East. What it would mean is to provide customers with cutting-edge technology to drive outstanding services coupled with significant savings."

"Our strategic partnership with Amadeus has helped us move a step ahead in this direction."

"We have also worked hard to overlay our global experience to offer something that is truly unique in relation to our back office. This has proved a decisive element in several of HTM's recent prestigious new business wins as customers can clearly see lines of differentiation between HTM and competitors and the benefits it will realize for them."

Upgrade Tools

- ◆ HTM has implemented Amadeus' back-office solution, Traacs
- ◆ HTM also resells Amadeus e-Travel Manager corporate suite

Carfare and Lama Tours at Arabian Travel Market

Carfare and Lama Tours attended ATM held from May 4-7, 2015 at WTC, Dubai and exhibited insights and knowledge about the range of products and services they offer. As a complete mobility solution group, their products range includes: Worldwide Hotel Reservations, Airline Ticketing and Outbound Tours, Meet and Assist, UAE Visa Arrangements, Incentive Tours, Desert Safaris, City Tours, Dhow Cruises, Transfers, Conferences, Tailor made packages, Special Interest Groups, range of car rental services, chauffeur driven cars, lastest range of technical and mechanical workshop.



Kulwant Singh, MD/CEO, Lama Tours, in conversation with H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai; His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive Emirates Airline & Group



H.E. Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri, Director General - Directorate of Residency & Foreigners Affairs, Dubai with Kulwant Singh, MD/CEO, Lama Tours

Surge in core net income

Cebu Pacific participated in ATM 2015 along with the Philippines Department of Tourism. The PDOT actively promotes its culture, tropical islands and family destinations.

TT BUREAU

There is now a wider range of consumer choices in the Middle East, as more low-cost carriers operate to varied destinations. Hence, Cebu Pacific launched four out of five long-haul routes in 2014.

"We have seen steadily improving loads and look ahead, launching Doha and other new routes to serve the expatriate community in the region. The Middle East remains a key part of our long-haul network, given the large traffic flows to and from the Philippines," comments **Alex Reyes**, General Manager- Long Haul Division, CEB.

Cebu Pacific has reported core net income of P3.3 billion, up by 77 per cent compared to 2014, on the back of notable improvement in both revenues and operating



Alex Reyes
General Manager- Long Haul Division
CEB

expenses. Total revenues grew 27 per cent to P52 billion, driven by sustained demand for air travel and entry into new markets like Japan, the Middle East and Australia. CEB carried 16.9 million passengers in 2014, 17.5 per cent more than the 14.4 million passengers flown in 2013. Ancillary revenue likewise grew 29 per cent to P8.7 billion, while cargo revenues grew 20 per cent to P3.1 billion.

"We will continue exploring the growth of the network, so we can provide more passengers with safe, affordable flights. We have long wanted to add the US and more Australia routes to the list of destinations we fly to. We will also work towards building an internationally recognized airline brand and empower more travelers to use Manila as a hub to get their onward destinations," informs Reyes. "We expect the arrival of 30 Airbus A321neo aircraft from 2017 to 2021, and that will allow us to expand our short to mid-haul range."

In 2014, Cebu Pacific has launched flights to Narita, Nagoya, Sydney, Riyadh and Kuwait. This year, it has already launched Hong Kong-Kalibo (Boracay) and Cebu-Narita, and will launch Manila-Doha on June 4, 2015.

Global full content deal

Travelport and Nile Air announced the signing of a multi-year, global full-content agreement. Travelport also announced a similar agreement with Air Go Egypt.

TT BUREAU

In addition, Nile Air has committed to Travelport Rich Content and Branding, a key component of the Travelport Travel Commerce Platform. It allows airlines to market and retail their products more effectively by controlling how their product is visually presented and described to travel agents.

Will Owen Hughes, Senior Director Airline Services, Travelport Africa, Middle East and South Asia, says, "We are thrilled to announce this new global full content agreement with Nile Air. By utilizing Travelport's innovative merchandising solution, Nile Air can present its products in a more visual way and deliver additional customized content to travel agencies globally."

The solution is designed to enable travel content suppliers



Will Owen Hughes
Senior Director Airline Services, Travelport
Africa, Middle East and South Asia

By utilizing Travelport's innovative merchandising solution, Nile Air can deliver additional customized content to agencies globally

to drive sales of core products and ancillaries. Travel agents using the Travelport Smartpoint sale solution can access unrivalled airline con-

tent in addition to comprehensive descriptions, enabling them to increase revenue and speed up the booking process. According to Nile Air, by distributing flights via Travelport, it aims to increase customer choice to both travel agents and its guest passengers.

As part of the new agreement with Air Go Egypt, it will now offer 67,000 Travelport-connected agencies worldwide access to its fares and inventory, including web fares and ancillary offerings. The carrier has committed to Travelport Rich Content and Branding. "We are pleased that Air Go Egypt has recognized Travelport's commitment to delivering unrivalled service to its customers. We are fully dedicated to support Air Go Egypt in generating more bookings via our industry-leading merchandising solution," Hughes adds.

Extra hall added for ATM 2015

► Contd. from page 10



An Xclusive growth story

Being a young group actively looking for expansions, Xclusive Group of Hotels, based in Dubai, have seen growth and are looking to surpass guests' expectations.

TT BUREAU

Looking closely at business from the GCC countries there is an increase of 20 per cent, mainly from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman. There is also a rise from parts of North Africa like Morocco and

from the UK," mentions **Nishchay Dheer**, Group General Manager, Xclusive Group of Hotels, also co-founder of Xclusives since 2008.

Travel trade plays a major role in bringing in business to Xclusive Group of



Nishchay Dheer
Group General Manager
Xclusive Group of Hotels

On the business prospects and participation at Arabian Travel Market, the group general manager inferred that there has been again a growth this year as a lot of hotels have emerged and exhibited. "So far as us, it has been a prominent and fruitful business coming through. ATM 2015 saw a lot of growth in terms of visitors to our stand and new participants, in comparison to ATM 2014."

Great promotional offers are being introduced, which focuses on families, for CIS market and India, most prominently Asians coming in from the UK

Algeria and stopover going to and from Saudi Arabia.

"With summers approaching and Dubai being a hot spot for tourism, great promotional offers are being introduced. These offers are focusing on families, for CIS market and India, most prominently Asians coming in

Hotels. "We, at Xclusive, have developed a portfolio in terms of our clients. People who have been supporting and bringing in business especially the travel agents have always played a major role. I have seen a growth in them and many new agencies emerged and working with us," informs Dheer.

R Hotels and Accor ink deal

R Hotels' recent tie and franchise agreement with Accor Hotel Services Middle East to open an ibis Styles hotel in Jumeirah will expand past its niche of luxury brand.

SUSMITA GHOSH

Commenting on the new franchise acquisition, Sumair Tariq, Managing Director, R Hotels, informs, "The group is delighted to sign up with an esteemed group like Accor, and we are positive that this partnership will bear fruitful results for both the parties. This is an exciting time for the UAE hospitality industry and R Hotels is poised to establish our mark by teaming up with notable brands, expanding our portfolio in key locations and offering suitable products to the right market."

Furthermore, the hotel chain has released its own schemes to capitalise on summer tourism with offers for a free night stay to top off a two night stay or tie-ups with several tourist locations and facilitators for sightseeing tours organised by the R Hotels.



Sumair Tariq
Managing Director
R Hotels

R Hotels is delighted to sign up with a group like Accor and we are positive that this partnership will bear fruitful results

Now with the development periods for the properties near the end and the World Expo 2020 drawing closer, Tariq explicates on the

hotel chain's experience with Arabian Travel Market and plans for the summer and moving forward.

It's the inaugural participation of the R Hotels in ATM 2015. The hotel chain showcased 4 of its regional properties, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman, Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman, Ramada Downtown Dubai and Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham in Jumeirah Beach Residence.

ATM aside 2015 has been a fruitful year for the group even with a drop in the CIS market, occupancy rates have been on the rise as compared to 2014 albeit a more mellow rise than previously expected though the hotel chain expects Q2 to post better occupancy rates with the opening of their 3rd property in Dubai.

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Dusk ramps up presence

For Dusk Tourism, Dubai, a soon-to-launch online system and plans to participate in all travel exhibitions in Eastern Europe related to MICE sectors are on the cards.

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To promote MICE is our first priority, to provide exceptional customer service, going above and beyond in meeting clients' demands. Our MICE team works in Dubai and across other Emirates. We arrange VIP delegation receptions, international conferences, large-scale incentive events and many others," informs **Aksana Mashera**, Assistant Managing Director, Dusk Tours, Dubai.

The UAE is one of the five most popular business tourism destinations in the world and is the first choice in the Middle East, ranking very highly across all criteria. The UAE draws much attention from corporate tourism as the possibilities for businesses and individuals are unlimited. The UAE's geographical location is almost the same dis-

tance from all the major European economic capitals, which contributes to the exponential business tourism development. Dubai Airport is the most frequented international hub welcoming passen-

which is related to MICE industry," she adds.

The organisers that arrange corporate events, leading exhibitions, congresses and summits in the UAE,

To promote MICE is our first priority, to provide exceptional customer service, going above and beyond in meeting clients' demands

Aksana Mashera
Assistant Managing Director, Dusk Tours, Dubai

gers from 160 destinations and its service is beyond compare.

"Dubai has lot of opportunities to grow in and preferably from any as far as MICE groups are concerned be it conferences, incentive group events or any events of your life. Dubai is perfect to provide any kind of opportunities

benefit not only from an optimal working environment, but also have opportunities for recreational activities. Dusk Tours' main concern was CIS market, but since last two years it has been trying for new markets like Eastern Europe or other European countries and some Asian markets like India, Pakistan to get new opportunities. 🌟

Opportune access offered

Asia Pacific Travels and Tourism embraces the growing competition in the region after the entry of European players as seen at Arabian Travel Market 2015.

TT BUREAU

With the closing of yet another edition of Arabian Travel Market, the inevitable question for each tour operator was what has been different in 2015.

Ishrat Ali Khan, Group Managing Director, Asia Pacific Travels and Tourism, asserts that this particular edition of the world renowned travel market has bought more competition to the Gulf region particularly from seasoned European players eager to invest in a fast growing market.

The competition has in no way dulled the excitement in preparation for the World Expo with occupancy rates climbing steadily each year in approach to 2020. Business for the Asia Pacific group has seen a rise of 80 to 85 per cent particularly for beach-front



Ishrat Ali Khan
Group Managing Director
Asia Pacific Travels and Tourism

Around 35% of our clientele are repeat customers through referral business from the corporates and local markets

properties which are very much in season even with a slight decline in the CIS market which has been well compensated by a rise in the Indian and Chinese market.

As for their customer base, expected to rise even more during the remaining of 2015, Khan says, "We promote our products to travel agents, corporate and to the expatriates. Around 35 per cent of our clientele are repeat customers through referral business from the corporates and local markets."

Just in time for summer is a rise in demand for yacht cruises and charters of various capacities. Besides the latest addition to the growing fleet, 42-foot luxury yacht Al Shujaat 2 houses up to 14 guests, there is a demand well covered by the groups' various holdings boasting nine luxury yachts with plans to add three more by 2016. In October next the group is planning to launch the largest dhow cruise in Dubai with a seating capacity of 160. 🌟

Cozmo Travel: GSA for Royal Brunei Airlines

To celebrate 40 years of flying, Royal Brunei Airlines launched its rebranded office in Dubai, introducing Cozmo Travel as their new GSA for entire UAE.



Hyatt Hotels

Dubai

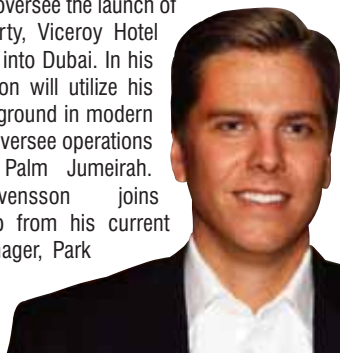
Shaji Thomas has been appointed as Area Director, Sales & Marketing by Hyatt Hotels Dubai. In his new role, Thomas will be managing the Dubai Sales and Marketing portfolio of Hyatt Hotels including Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Regency, Park Hyatt and Hyatt Place. He joins Grand Hyatt Dubai from his most recent post as the Director, Sales and Marketing, Grand Hyatt Mumbai and Area Director, Sales and Marketing, Mumbai, Pune and Goa (total of 6 operational Hyatt Hotels in Western India).



Viceroy Hotel Group

Dubai

Mikael Svensson has been appointed as General Manager by Viceroy Dubai Palm Jumeirah, ahead of the property's opening in 2016. Svensson will oversee the launch of the \$1 billion property, Viceroy Hotel Group's first venture into Dubai. In his role as GM, Svensson will utilize his experience and background in modern luxury hospitality to oversee operations of Viceroy Dubai Palm Jumeirah. Swedish-born Svensson joins Viceroy Hotel Group from his current role as General Manager, Park Hyatt Canberra.



Air Seychelles

Abu Dhabi

Abdulmohsen Al Sayegh has been appointed as Air Seychelles' Chief Financial Officer. Al Sayegh, who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Financial Services from the UAE's Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), has extensive experience working for Etihad Airways in the UAE and across the world. He joined Etihad Airways as Senior Financial Controller in 2008 and moved to the Sydney office three years later, following a promotion to Senior Finance Manager, Australia.



Al Raha Beach Hotel

Abu Dhabi

Lydia Palisok takes up the role of Training Manager at Al Raha Beach Hotel. Palisok has over seven years of experience in hospitality field from rooms division to quality, human resources and training department. Palisok was a member of the pre-opening team of Sofitel The Palace which is now under The Address Hotels and Resort. Before joining Al Raha Beach Resort, Palisok worked both local and international brands such as Movenpick Hotels and Resort and Meydan Hotels and Hospitality.



Radisson Blu Resort, Jizan

Saudi Arabia

John Fanous has been appointed as the General Manager for the newly opened Radisson Blu Resort, Jizan. Fanous has over 36 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He began his hospitality career in the US with Holiday Inn Bedford Texas working in the front office. He then went on to manage properties in different destinations including the US, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iraq. In his new role, Fanous will be responsible for the overall operation of the hotel leading the management team.



Etihad Airways

Sydney

The airline has appointed **Sarah Built** as its new General Manager for Australia and New Zealand. Built has 25 years of aviation experience which includes sales and senior management roles for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, American Airlines, Swiss, Kingfisher Airlines and Jet Airways. She joined Etihad Airways in August 2011 as its London-based Manager Global Industry Sales, responsible for some of the airline's major commercial partnerships.



Growing from a group to a chain

Ayla Hotels and Resorts Management Company is gearing up for its third property in Al Ain – the Ayla Grand Hotel, to open by Q1 2016. In addition, international expansion planning is in process for the years to come.



Mohamed Soussan, Group General Manager, Ayla Hotels and Resorts, says, "It is not easy to achieve great success that we did in the initial operating years, but it is even harder to maintain it and raise the bar higher."

For the second year in the row, Ayla Hotel in Al Ain



Mohamed Soussan
Group General Manager
Ayla Hotels and Resorts

We have grown from one property to two, and the main focus [at ATM] was promoting our latest project, Ayla Bawadi Hotel. Opened in December 2014 we have managed to achieve impressive results in terms of occupancy and guests' feedback

has managed to achieve highest performance in the city. Amongst tough competition in Al Ain, Ayla Hotel succeeded all budgets and targeted plans.

When asked about the experience and aftermath at Arabian Travel Market 2015, Soussan shares, "Ayla Hotels and Resorts participated in the ATM as part of

the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority stand, in the separate Al Ain section. We had an opportunity to showcase not only our properties but Al Ain as a destination as well, which was very appealing to the visitors. This year was the first time for us to attend as a chain."

"We have grown from one property to two, and the main focus was promoting our latest project, Ayla Bawadi Hotel. Opened in December 2014 we have managed to achieve impressive results in terms of occupancy and guests' feedback. We managed to promote Al Ain as a destination with various activities for the entire family," he further informs.

Looking at their developmental plans undertaken recently and the ones in the pipeline, Soussan says that Al Ain has been added as an additional destination for the

UAE and a stopover for UAE-Oman tours. Ayla Bawadi is particularly interesting for Oman market due to its proximity to the Oman border and vicinity to one of the last camel markets in the UAE: Bawadi Camel Market.

Ayla Hotels and Resorts have come up with two new attractive packages that was presented and distributed during the ATM.

- Camel Market Packages, a uniquely Arabian experience in the city of Al-Ain, a journey starting from the traditional camel market through to the Majlis and Souk, ending with a lunch buffet at Ayla Bawadi Hotel.

- Shop and Stay Packages offer a unique opportunity to combine a quick getaway at Ayla Bawadi Hotel and enjoy retail therapy at the largest mall in Al-Ain.

1st Air Arabia Jordan flight takes off for Kuwait

The first Air Arabia Jordan flight departed its base at Queen Alia International Airport in Amman on May 18. The airline's flight to Kuwait City was marked by a ceremony attended by senior executives from the airline, the Jordanian aviation industry and member of the press. Air Arabia Jordan also launched its services to Jeddah, Erbil and Sharm El Sheikh on May 19, 20 and 21 respectively. The new airline will offer customers comfort, reliability, and value for money air travel from and into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.





COMING SOON

For more information please contact:

Crisna De Guzman: crisna.deguzman@ddppl.com, Mobile: +971-55-4704200 • Devika Jeet: devika@ddppl.com