

# TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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# Spirits soar as tourism booms

The aviation industry's importance will grow significantly in the run up to 'Expo 2020' as the UAE continues with its expansion plans to cater to the growth of the industry. Also, hotels in the Emirates held on strong during the first half of 2015 despite various market challenges. They were on par with and often out-performed the competition.



SUSMITA GHOSH

During June to August, dnata, an air travel service provider, expects to handle over 50,000 flights, 20 million passengers and 30 million bags from around the world. This volume means that dnata teams at the airport will handle a flight every 80 seconds, on an average. It is ensuring that it has the capacity to meet demand, given that Dubai International overtook London's Heathrow Airport as the world's busiest airport in terms of international passengers last year.

Jon Conway, Divisional Senior Vice President, dnata, says that in Dubai, they can turnaround a fully loaded aircraft in as little as 60 minutes.

"The aviation industry in the UAE has been recording an impressive growth over the years. The first half of



**H.H. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum**  
President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) and Chairman, Dubai Airports

**We are developing Al Maktoum International Airport into the world's biggest airport with an annual capacity of over 220 mn passengers**

2015 was no different," informs **His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum**, President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority



**Steen Jakobsen**  
Director  
Dubai Business Events (DBE)

**Dubai's status as a destination for both business and leisure continues to rise in the UK, thanks to the emirate's superior service level**

(DCAA) and Chairman, Dubai Airports.

"The UAE has an outstanding aviation infrastruc-



**Laurent A. Voivenel**  
CEO, HHM  
(Hospitality Management Holdings)

**Our 2015 H1 results demonstrate our capacity to deliver on our objectives with determination and discipline despite a slow summer**

ture and is globally recognised for seamless travel facilitation. We are developing Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai World Central (DWC)

into the world's biggest airport with an annual capacity of over 220 million passengers. Alongside, we continue to develop the Dubai International Airport which will handle 100 million passengers when the expansion plans get over. Emirates and flydubai have remained in expansion mode," Al Maktoum says.

"Quality is the strong factor for ensuring a safe, orderly and sustainable air transport infrastructure. The UAE has been continuing with its commitment in air transport infrastructure development to adequately meet the needs of the industry, now and in the future," he adds.

The UAE rivals major global tourist attractions for 2020. **Phil Taylor**, Director, Team Leisure LLC, previously Chief Executive, Ski-Dubai, and Executive Director, London Eye, says that Dubai is now considered as an inter-

national city on the same stage as New York, London, Paris and Tokyo, and is leading the development of the UAE leisure market together with Abu Dhabi.

Unique concepts include the world's first Bollywood theme park, part of the Dubai Parks and Resorts development, and the new Warner Bros. resort on Yas Island, while some of the best attractions and tourist destinations in the world are being reimagined.

Dubai's popularity as a destination for UK business and leisure travellers is growing at the rate of 10 per cent per year, thanks to a regularly evolving destination offer comprised of new hotels, meetings venues and leisure attractions.

Statistics released by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce  
Contd. on page 3 ►



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## World's first resort airport in Philippines

Philippines' Department of Transportation and Communications breaks ground for the world's first resort airport, the first airport PPP project, on June 29.

TT BUREAU

Announced under the presidency of Benigno 'Noy' Aquino, the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) is touted to be the start of Philippine airports matching the best in the world.



Joseph Emilio Aguinaldo Abaya  
Secretary, Department of Transportation  
and Communications (DOTC), Philippines

**It will not only cement our place on the global map as a major tourist and business destination, but will boost the local economy as its projected to generate jobs especially in Cebu**

"The kick-off ceremony for the construction of the new international terminal for the country's second-biggest gateway, the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) is publicised to be the establishment of Philippine airports matching the best in the world," informs **Joseph Emilio Aguinaldo Abaya**, Secretary, Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

"It will not only cement our place on the global map as

a major tourist and business destination, but will boost the local economy as its projected to generate jobs especially in Cebu," he adds.

The project is envisioned by concessionaire GMR-Megawide Cebu Airport Corporation (GMCAC), to be regarded as the first resort airport in the world. It covers the construction of a new world-class international passenger terminal building (PTB), as well as the renovation of the existing PTB and its conversion into an exclusively-domestic facility.

Construction of the new terminal will be completed by 2018, while the renovation of the existing terminal is slated to be completed in 2019. The airport's passenger capacity will surge from 4.5 million to 12.5 million per year.

"It is clear to us that GMCAC brings international expertise in running an airport, without delay it has made substantial improvements without making structural works yet. What it will do now that we are breaking ground is exciting for us and especially for travellers to and from Cebu," Abaya remarks.

Immediately upon assuming O&M responsibility, GMCAC began implementing "soft improvements" to the existing terminal, those improvements which did not require major civil works to enhance passenger experience at the gateway. To further reduce passenger queues, GMCAC also opened additional immigration counters and self-service kiosks where in passengers can pre-check-in.

### Aiming for the stars

- Construction of the new terminal will be completed by 2018, while the renovation of the existing terminal is slated to be completed in 2019
- The airport's passenger capacity will surge from 4.5 million to 12.5 million per year
- The Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) is touted to be the start of Philippine airports matching the best in the world

## 'Masr Qareeba' for Arab tourists

Since early 2015, efforts by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) to revive tourism to the country continues to be reflected in the sustained growth of visitors to Egypt.

TT BUREAU

The number of visitors who travelled to Egypt in May 2015 increased by 16.5 per cent compared to the number of visitors in May 2014. In a similar trend, the number of Arab tourists who visited Egypt in May 2015 also increased by 23.1 per cent compared to the number of Arab tourists in May 2014.

These statistics demonstrate the positive impact of recently launched campaigns that aim to attract more tourists from all over the world to Egypt. This increase in visitors is in line with the objectives of the Ministry of Tourism's "Masr Qareeba" (Egypt is close) campaign which specifically targets Arab tourists from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait.

**Sami Mahmoud**, Chairman, ETA, expressed,

"These positive results reflect that Egypt has fans from all over the world, particularly from our Arab neighbors. The steady increase in Arab tourists demonstrates their trust and belief in Egypt's

which will focus on cultural tourism in the country. This new campaign aims to promote the importance of Egypt's cultural destinations among family and youth demographics.

**The steady increase in Arab tourists demonstrates their trust and belief in Egypt's ability to provide its visitors with opportunities to enjoy the most beautiful touristic destinations**

**Sami Mahmoud**  
Chairman, ETA

ability to provide its visitors with opportunities to enjoy the most beautiful touristic destinations."

Both the Ministry and the Authority are ramping up efforts prior to the launch of their forthcoming global publicity campaign

Statistics reflect an increase in the number of Emirati tourists by 48.3 per cent during the first five months of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014. In May 2015, the number of Emirati tourists who visited Egypt increased by 43.5 per cent compared to May 2014.

Statistics also demonstrate an increase in the number of Saudi tourists by 67.2 per cent during the first five months of 2015 compared with the same period last year. In May 2015, the number of Saudi tourists who visited Egypt increased by 58.2 per cent compared to May 2014.

Furthermore, the number of Kuwaiti tourists increased by 48.6 per cent in the first five months of 2015 compared to the same period 2014. In May 2015, the number of Kuwaiti tourists who visited Egypt increased by 74.4 per cent compared to May 2014.

### Number Talk

- In May 2015, the number of Emirati tourists who visited Egypt increased by 43.5 per cent compared to May 2014

## Croatia eyes GCC market

The Croatian National Tourist Board and flydubai, along with the Zagreb Tourist Board, have highlighted an increase in the number of routes to the Croatian capital.

TT BUREAU

Croatian National Tourist Board representative, **Jelena Slavujevic** says, "Income from foreign visitors to Croatia totaled \$7.8 billion in 2014, growth of 2.8 per cent over 2013. However, we have already witnessed a 24 per cent increase in the number of arrivals during the first quarter of 2015, so we are confident our tourism receipts this year will eclipse our 2014 earnings."

Slavujevic justified part of this increase to the new and direct routes between Dubai and Zagreb operated by flydubai which offers direct flights three times a week. Qatar Airways has also announced it will introduce two additional flights soon to the Croatian capital taking its tally to seven weekly direct flights from Doha. Turkish

Airlines and Lufthansa already operate seven flights weekly to Zagreb from Dubai via Istanbul and Germany.

"The GCC market holds great potential for us, notwithstanding Croatia's stunning

dubai and Qatar Airways. Many people may not realise that we are little more than five hours away from Dubai," Slavujevic adds.

**Martina Bienenfeld**, CEO, Zagreb Tourist Board,

**The GCC market holds great potential for us, notwithstanding Croatia's stunning natural beauty, our heritage and our cultural similarities. The real game-changer now is the increased number of direct flights to Zagreb, most notably those operated by flydubai and Qatar Airways**

**Jelena Slavujevic**  
Representative, Croatian National Tourist Board

natural beauty, our heritage and our cultural similarities. The real game-changer now is the increased number of direct flights to Zagreb, most notably those operated by fly-

highlighted the work the capital has undertaken to meet the demands of the Middle East market. "Zagreb is witnessing a growth in demand from the GCC visitors and

was one of the first cities in Croatia to identify the opportunities of halal tourism. We're now home to 30 per cent of Croatia's 15 halal quality certified hotels."

To attract a greater number of tourists from GCC countries the Croatian government has introduced a raft of measures to meet the specific demands of Gulf tourists. Croatia will host the Halal Tourism & Trade congress in March and as a nation will celebrate World Halal Day in November 2016.

### Luring the Middle East

- Croatia will host the Halal Tourism & Trade congress in March and as a nation will celebrate World Halal Day in November 2016



# UAE: most preferred by UK travellers

► Contd. from page 1

Marketing (DTCM) revealed that the emirate welcomed 687,000 UK hotel guests in 2012, and a further 759,000 UK hotel guests in 2013, representing a 10 per cent year-on-year increase. In 2014, Dubai welcomed 845,000 UK hotel guests to its shores, an increase of 11 per cent compared to 2013.

**Steen Jakobsen**, Director, Dubai Business Events (DBE), a division of DTCM which acts as the city's official convention bureau, says, "Dubai's status as a destination for both business and leisure continues to rise in the UK, thanks to the emirate's quality infrastructure, accessibility and superior service level. Dubai's proximity to the UK also makes it a convenient destination for visitors seeking warm weather and world-class experiences, a point underscored by the UK being the number one European source market for visitors to Dubai, and third

internationally after Saudi Arabia and India."

DBE team has participated in the 2015 edition of The Meetings Show being held at Olympia London.

**Laurent A. Voivenel**, CEO, Hospitality Management Holdings (HMH), explains that, "The economic environment continues to vary from one region to another. However, our 2015 H1 results demonstrate our capacity to deliver on our objectives with determination and discipline despite very challenging market conditions and a slow summer. The CIS crisis, weakening of euro, political turmoil and instability in different parts of the Middle East, oversupply of rooms in some key cities, competition from cheaper destinations – all put pressure on demand and rates".

Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority woos travellers from Oman. During the first four months of 2015, Oman was

Abu Dhabi's second largest GCC source market with 21,342 visitors marking a 12 per cent growth from last year. Qatar accounted for 9,793 visitors, while Kuwaiti visitors amounted to 9,776 over the same period. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia led the market share with 46,576 visitors, a solid 46 per cent growth over the same period.

The tour aimed to reinforce bilateral relations between the GCC countries, especially in the areas of business and conventions, notes **Mubarak Al Shamsi**, Director, Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau.

According to Shamsi, Abu Dhabi offers a favourable atmosphere and unique advantages to organise specialised conferences and exhibitions, illustrated by the bureau's wide range of free consultation and advisory services.

Etihad Airways has experienced one of the busiest



**Capt. Richard Hill**  
COO  
Etihad Airways

**We've once again carried record numbers of guests and baggage across the Etihad Airways network during Eid-Al-Fitr**

travel periods in the history of the airline with 291,518 guests flying across its global network during Eid-Al-Fitr, an increase of 12 per cent on the 260,641 guests flown in the same five day period in 2014.



**Sherif Elibrashy**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
Tamani

**We achieved great rates during Eid, that came as a result of special offers we launched during Ramadan addressed to Gulf and Arab family tourism**

The load factor out of Abu Dhabi during this period rose from 82.1 per cent in 2014 to 82.3 per cent in 2015, with a network-wide seat factor of 78.3 per cent. The airline operated 83 more flights out

of the hub than during Eid-Al-Fitr in 2014.

**Capt. Richard Hill**, COO, Etihad Airways, says, "We're pleased to have once again carried record numbers of guests and baggage across the Etihad Airways network during Eid-Al-Fitr, one of the busiest and most challenging periods in the year."

UAE confirms its lead as the first family tourism destination during Eid. Occupancy rate has exceeded 96 per cent in Tamani hotel rooms and apartments allocated for families that spent their Eid holidays in the UAE.

**Sherif Elibrashy**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Tamani Hotel says, "We achieved great rates during Eid holiday, that came as a result of special offers we launched during holy month of Ramadan addressed to Gulf and Arab family

Contd. on page 8 ►

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## TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

## UAE is hot and happening!

A huge lineup of events related to the Holy Month of Ramadan and a fun-filled calendar of activities and promotions for the summer season have kept the tourism mood upbeat in the Gulf region.

Interestingly, there was a 75 per cent surge in Chinese tourist numbers during the first four months of 2015, which resulted in higher guest arrivals in the UAE capital, as per WAM agency.

During January to April, Abu Dhabi attracted more than one million guests who stayed at least one night at the 161 hotels in the emirate. In Dubai, the stage has been set for the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of Summer Surprises, DSS, which kicked off on July 23 with a series of events packed with celebrity shows, world premieres and retail promotions. The emirate is already abuzz with Ramadan activities. About 40,000 visitors flocked to the Ramadan Night Market in the first four days since it opened at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Under the slogan, '45 Days of Summer,' DSS 2015 is offering residents and visitors from around the world an opportunity to enjoy a diverse range of events. International celebrity appearances, world premieres featuring children's cartoon characters, and summer promotions that reward shoppers with millions of dirhams worth of prizes are among the varied attractions for travellers.

The cruise sector is making waves too. National airline Etihad Airways and MSC Cruises have signed a new partnership agreement that will benefit MSC Cruises' guests travelling to Abu Dhabi and the UAE.

In Sharjah, innovative ideas are being initiated to benefit tourists. The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, SCTDA, has announced the distribution of Interactive Touch Screens, ITS, in all four- and five-star hotels and luxury hotel apartments in the Emirate, activating its 'Innovative Tourism Approach.'

The idea comes as part of the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021 that aims to attract 10 million tourists by 2021. The sun shines bright this summer, so does the tourism sector!

## Take off with Turkish Airlines

Connections between Europe and Asia of Turkish Airlines and the growing popularity of Turkey as a holiday and business destination are propelling the growth of the airline. Today we fly to 13 cities in the GCC and this number is only growing.

Within the last six months we have experienced tremendous increase in passenger traffic, people either visiting or flying through Istanbul. We have an average annual growth of 4 per cent in the region. Our success here has encouraged us even more to plan an expansion of our frequencies and routes of our high quality flights at competitive prices.

Turkish Airlines celebrated Eid-Al-Fitr by demonstrating its generosity and appreciation for over 100 nationalities it serves across the Middle East. Customers were greeted with an 'Eid Mubarak' message painted in Arabic

**Dubai is one of the key markets in our network, and we are planning to invest more in order to serve our customers better. Now, we are flying to Istanbul with A330 and B777 aircraft, but we will be using only B777 aircraft in the future**

and English on the A321 aircraft which flies to 34 markets in the Middle East and North Africa.

In keeping with the spirit of Ramadan, Turkish Airlines also offered Iftar meals to the underprivileged in 18 destinations across the Middle East and Asia. The airline also commemorated the Holy Month by launching an Arabic Call centre to serve its customers across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

Our growth in the region has been very encouraging. During January-June 2015 the total passengers carried by Turkish Airlines in the GCC increased by 37 per cent, reaching 1.35 million passen-

## Eying the GCC

- During Jan-Jun 2015 the total passengers carried by Turkish Airlines in the GCC increased by 37%, reaching 1.35 million passengers
- "Invest On Board" gives entrepreneurs the chance to reach investors in the sky

gers versus 983.931 passengers for 2014. Our Business/Comfort Class passengers grew by 9.4 per cent in the same period. L/F increased by 0.3 point to 75.3 per cent and our ASK had a

32 per cent increase to become 4.3 million during January-June 2015, this was up from 3.2 million for the same period in 2014.

Our network is growing too. We are increasing flights to/from Sabiha Gökçen Airport by adding new routes from Kuwait and Tehran. We recently have launched a new passenger route to Dammam in Saudi Arabia from the same airport and a new cargo route to Bahrain as we believe these markets need more connectivity to and from Istanbul and beyond.

People from the GCC love to travel. Saudi Arabians, for example, travel to Europe a fair amount and Istanbul is

the perfect city for them to visit or transit through.

Beyond the GCC, we have launched new flights to Graz in Austria and Baden in Germany, in the Americas we have announced flights to Miami and Atlanta.

Travelling has become a refined experience, and through upgrading our fleet and lounge facilities, we aim to create memorable experiences which encourage brand loyalty. Moreover, we fly to 276 destinations in 110 countries around the world, the most of any airline globally. With this sort of unbeatable connectivity, we are the preferred airline of many travellers. In fact, we were recently awarded Europe's Best Airline at the Skytrax awards for the fifth year in a row. Part of the appeal is our superlative in-flight food, too, which sets us apart from many other airlines and which many of our GCC customers have appreciated.

Our current hub at Ataturk Airport isn't very large but we see 57 million annual passengers at that airport, which is the third largest in Europe. At the new airport, which will open in 2017, we're planning massive business lounges for economy passengers too so that they are comfortable with Turkish Airlines from the time they check in. I think many travellers from the GCC are quite used to luxury and comfort and the new airport will appeal to them greatly.

We are hoping to operate a strict wide-body fleet to destinations in the Arabian Gulf, as we fly to all the GCC countries. Dubai and Abu

Dhabi are already operated by wide body aircraft as are select services to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. We hope that soon all our GCC passengers will avail of these aircraft.

Dubai is one of the key markets in our network, and we are planning to invest more in order to serve our customers better. Now, we are flying to Istanbul with A330 and B777 aircraft, but we will be using only B777 aircraft in the future.

We run social media campaigns on Facebook, etc., to engage with our audiences. A very interesting on-board feature for entrepreneurs is our "Invest on Board" facility wherein Turkish Airlines gives people the chance to reach investors in the sky. "Invest On Board" is a worldwide programme that allows investors to meet start-ups while sitting in their seats. We are also planning on building strong relationships with the universities in the GCC to and will conduct workshops related to our "Invest on Board" project on campus.

With so much happening within the GCC, we are sure to strike a chord not only with the youth of the region but also with families and business travellers!



**Emre Ismailoglu**  
General Manager,  
Turkish Airlines, Dubai



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# Turkish delights for holy nights

Turkish Airlines invited travel fraternity for a special Iftar evening of Turkish delicacies. The event highlighted the experience of the hospitality of the airline and celebrated its continued growth record.





# What's trending this summer

Destinia.com has unveiled the most popular travel destinations for UAE travellers during Eid holidays. Searches and reservations for flights and hotels through Destinia.com revealed that Egypt, Turkey, India and Thailand are some of the top trending travel destinations for Eid al-Fitr this year.



SUSMITA GHOSH

Alexandria is the most popular destination of choice for local holidaymakers, reiterating the growing trend of Egypt's tourism recovery. Turkey is also a clear contender to the most coveted holiday spot, with Istanbul and Trabzon ranking second and fourth respectively. Bangkok ranked third in the list followed by Amman, London, Munich and New York are amongst

the trendiest western cities for UAE travellers.

"Eid holidays are the perfect opportunity to spend time with family and friends," says **Ines Chueca**, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Destinia.com. "This year's top destinations reflect both the local market's preferences, but also the efforts of outbound destinations to attract travellers from this part of the world," she adds.

**Egypt is resurging as a destination with initiatives like Masr Qareeba, the country's new campaign which highlights Egypt's proximity to other Arab countries through culture, history and social grounds**



"We can see how Egypt is resurging as a tourist destination with initiatives like Masr Qareeba, the country's new campaign which highlights Egypt's proximity to other Arab

countries through culture, history and social grounds. Thailand, on the other hand is proving that its strategies, like the recently launched Thailand Muslim Friendly Destination

App, are extremely effective, making it one of the most popular Asian countries among Arab tourists. European countries, on the other hand, continue to attract Middle



**Ines Chueca**  
Strategic Partnerships Manager  
Destinia.com

Eastern tourists. Destinia has joined efforts with Tourism Germany, to promote the country amongst GCC travellers," she concludes.

One of Europe's top online travel agencies, Destinia.com boasts a selection of 300,000 hotels and 600 airlines around the world, offering an infinite number of destinations for travellers to pick. Having witnessed 140 per cent increase in growth sales in the Middle East in 2014, Destinia.com aims to be positioned as one of the top three online travel agencies by 2017 in the region. 📈

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# Thriving on family tourism

▶ Contd. from page 3

tourism, included discounts on prices and benefits of staying at Tamani to make their holiday a happy and memorable one, a goal that we always pursue."

It is expected that family tourism's value rise to \$181 billion by 2018 driven by population growth in the Muslim world and strong economic performance. Industry experts predict that family tourism will achieve

strong annual growth estimated at 4.79 per cent until 2020, and at a rate higher than the global growth estimated at 3.8 per cent, reflecting the growing importance of Islamic economics. ☺

## Turkish Airlines launches Arabic Call Centre

Turkish Airlines, the national flag carrier of Turkey, launched an Arabic Call Centre to serve customers across 10 countries in the Middle Eastern region. Arabic-speaking passengers booking or travelling with Turkish Airlines can now get their queries answered in their language as tele-callers receive calls from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The call centre was launched at an Iftar event in Amman, Jordan, hosted for travel agents and attended by senior Turkish Airlines officials. The awards night was held to honour and recognise Turkish Airlines travel agents.



# DFW welcomes new brands

In response to a Request for Proposals issued earlier 2015, the Dallas/Fort Worth International (DFW) Airport Board of Directors approved 10 new concessions outlets.

TT BUREAU

"At DFW, we work hard to introduce new services and amenities that cater to the expanding demographics and tastes of our customers," says **Ken Buchanan**, Executive Vice President-Revenue Management, DFW. "With these new concessions and retail shops, the Airport welcomes fantastic brands that will enhance the travelling experience and offer exciting choices."

DFW's Board approved 10 new or expanded locations for eight brands. An additional 24 locations will be awarded



**Ken Buchanan**  
Executive Vice President-  
Revenue Management, DFW

over the next two months, intended to provide more new shops for DFW customers.

"Since adding new international and domestic desti-

nations, DFW Airport has seen a steady increase in customers," says Buchanan. "These new shops and restaurants are a reflection of our commitment to provide our customers an outstanding retail, food service and relaxation experience at DFW."

Potential concessionaires attended a series of workshops and outreach events with DFW Concessions representatives before the RFP was issued to learn about doing business with the airport, passenger demographic information, specifics about being located in an airport and proposal requirements.

Dallas / Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) is ready for the busiest summer in its 41-year history, with more than 18 million passengers expected during the 2015 summer travel season. ☺

**These new shops and restaurants are a reflection of our commitment to provide our customers an outstanding retail, food service and relaxation experience at DFW**

# BA expands premium options

British Airways is set to take delivery of its first Boeing 787-9 in 2015 with the UAE, Oman and Delhi routes among the first to welcome the Dreamliner. Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, complete with a new First Class cabin, will start flying to Delhi from Oct 25 with the UAE and Oman to follow later in 2015.

TT BUREAU

The new First Suites are the harbingers of a new generation of premium travel. The First cabin will have just eight seats in comparison to the 14 available on other British Airways long-haul aircraft, giving even more exclusivity and privacy to customers. The seat and in-flight entertainment console has been updated with a new handset, much like a smartphone, integrated into the seat from which travellers can control their in-flight entertainment. "British Airways continues to renew its commit-



**Paolo De Renzis**  
British Airways Area Commercial  
Manager, Middle East & Central Asia

ment across the region as the airline invests in new aircraft and expands its premium travel offerings," says **Paolo De Renzis**, British Airways Area

Commercial Manager for the Middle East & Central Asia. Return fares on the new aircraft from Abu Dhabi to London will start from as little as AED 2375 for passengers flying World Traveller and for as little as AED 9855 for passengers flying with British Airways Club World.

"In response to our passengers' demand for luxury travel options, we have selected Abu Dhabi and Muscat among the first routes to welcome the new Dreamliners," he further states.

The 787s are the most technologically advanced aircraft in British Airways' fleet. The aircraft's smooth ride technology also provides extra comfort during any turbulence.

The airline is revamping 18 of its 747s in line with the newest arrivals to British Airways' fleet, the first of which will also begin flying during the winter 2015 schedule. The revamped jumbos will operate on selected flights to New York JFK, Chicago, Lagos, Dubai, Boston, Riyadh and Kuwait, with further routes added in summer 2016.

## Taking Flight

- ◆ British Airways is revamping 18 of its 747s in line with the newest arrivals to its fleet
- ◆ The revamped jumbos will operate on selected flights to New York JFK, Chicago, Lagos, Dubai, Boston, Riyadh and Kuwait

## 17.2% surge in passengers at Abu Dhabi International Airport during H1, 2015

■ Abu Dhabi Airports has reported a 17.2 per cent increase in passenger traffic at Abu Dhabi International Airport during January 1 to June 30, 2015, as compared to the same period in 2014. During the H1 period, a total of

73,862 aircraft movements reported in H1, 2014. The month of June alone saw 1,848,080 passengers, an increase of 10.8 per cent as compared to June 2014 (1,667,551 passengers).

Several new destinations were added during the



11,111,577 passengers passed through Abu Dhabi International Airport, compared with 9,481,744 in the equivalent period in 2014. The number of aircraft movements rose to 84,938, representing 15.0 per cent growth compared with

six months including flights to Madrid, Pune, Edinburgh, Venice and Entebbe. Additionally, the frequency of flights between the existing routes increased significantly. Just last month, the airport announced 271 additional weekly flights for its summer programme.

**British Airways continues to renew its commitment across the region as the airline invests in new aircraft and expands its premium travel offerings**



## Pushing innovative tech

To advance the use of innovative technology in tourism, Amadeus, a leading provider of technology solutions for the tourism sector, and UNWTO are joining forces.



TT BUREAU

UNWTO and Amadeus, a UNWTO Affiliate Member since 2007, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to consolidate their partnership in several areas. This includes the development of a UNWTO Prototype on multi-modality – the door-to-door planning and ticketing of trips involving all possible transport options. It will further integrate different

**It gives me great satisfaction to strengthen our relationship and build upon our respective areas of expertise: technology and tourism**

means of transport between destinations around the world.

"Innovative technological solutions are fundamental for the tourism sector's com-



**Tomas Lopez Fernebrand**  
Senior Vice President  
General Counsel & Corporate Secretary  
Amadeus IT Group

petitiveness and ability to create jobs and inclusive development worldwide. UNWTO is looking forward to work even closer with Amadeus, a highly valued Affiliate Member and

key player in this field, to strengthen the ties between tourism and technology," says **Taleb Rifai**, Secretary-General, UNWTO.

"It gives me great satisfaction to strengthen our relationship and build upon our respective areas of expertise: technology and tourism. Amadeus is committed to strengthening the sustainability of the travel and tourism sector and already has many initiatives in two of the key agreed priorities, tourism education and innovation in technology," comments **Tomas Lopez Fernebrand**, Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Amadeus IT Group.

UNWTO and Amadeus will also collaborate on issues of sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility and education. 🌐

## Empowering travel agents

The new Travelport Smartpoint 6.0 provides travel consultants with capabilities to advise their customers about a range of products, optional services and offers.



TT BUREAU

These are available from the airlines that Travelport distributes, with fully interactive, graphical screen displays and real time booking.

Travelport Smartpoint 6.0 is available now either as a simple download to the desktop App or an automated upgrade for those using the web browser version. Using this latest iteration of the product, travel agents can now access airlines branded fares

**We are also listening to our travel agency customers to find out exactly what they want from our products and systems**

and ancillaries at the availability, fare quote and fare shop stages of the booking process, providing a new level



**Rabih Saab**  
President & Managing Director,  
Travelport Africa, Middle East and Asia

of product insight and information at more of the key

stages in the customer buying experience. In turn, travellers can be better informed of the products available to them,

the options, the cost of the next product up and the ancillary products available to buy, to tailor their journey to their specific requirements.

**Rabih Saab**, President & Managing Director, Travelport Africa, Middle East and Asia, comments, "We are constantly looking at ways to improve our already ground-breaking point-of-sale solution Travelport Smartpoint. We are also listening to our travel agency customers to find out exactly what they want from our products and systems. This latest version allows travel agents to sell more efficiently, increase revenues and grow their businesses. We have received positive feedback from the agents who have been testing this for us and we are excited to be rolling it out so all of our customers can benefit." 🌐



## Ayla Hotels ... Authentic flair

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# Relishing Indian feast for Suhoor

India Tourism, Dubai and Consul General of India organised Suhoor, a meal just before sunrise during Ramadan, for the travel trade and other dignitaries.





# Marriott debuts in Makkah

With the opening of Marriott Hotels brand in Makkah, Muslim pilgrims will have a property that resonates with their needs of a futuristic, comfortable place to stay while undertaking one of the most important journeys of their lives.



TT BUREAU

The 426-room property sits on the hilltop of Makkah, providing guests with exquisite views of the Holy City and Haram. From the hotel, guests can travel to Haram via a shuttle service that runs several times during the day.

"It's very fitting that our flagship brand, Marriott Hotels, is seeing a rapid



Alex Kyriakidis  
President, Middle East & Africa  
Marriott International

**The opening of a Marriott Hotel in Makkah is part of our commitment to fill a growing gap in the religious tourism sector in the region, which experts estimate will increase as the population of the Islamic faith grows**

expansion in the Kingdom. The opening of a Marriott Hotel in Makkah is part of our

commitment to fill a growing gap in the religious tourism sector in the region, which

experts estimate will increase as the population of the Islamic faith grows. We are privileged to have opened our first-ever Marriott Hotel in this Holy City to serve millions of global pilgrims over the years to come," says **Alex Kyriakidis**, President, Middle East & Africa, Marriott International.

Signature features at the newly opened property include the Greatroom lobby and mobile check-in and check-out facility. The re-imagined Greatroom is part of Marriott Hotels brand initiative to transform lobbies from a formal living room into a local destination. With the Marriott mobile App guests can also easily check in before their arrival and will receive an automatic notification when their room is ready, making it a seamless experience when they have come for the

most sacred trips of their life in Makkah.

During the annual pilgrimage of Hajj and Umrah, a tradition that Muslims from all over the world need to fulfill at least once in their lifetime, sees millions of Muslims from across the globe converge in the Holy City. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) forecasts that domestic tourism will grow to a staggering 128 million trips and 640 million nights by 2019.

## Going Mobile

◆ With the Marriott mobile App guests can also easily check in before their arrival and will receive an automatic notification when their room is ready

## Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel, Jeddah opens doors

■ Carlson Rezidor has announced the opening of its newest property in Saudi Arabia, the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel in Jeddah. "Saudi Arabia enjoys a growing economy and Jeddah continues to be an important city for domestic tourism in the country," says **Mark Willis**, Area Vice President Middle East and Turkey, Rezidor Hotel Group. "Our primary concern is to maintain the high standards and quality reputation we have established wherever we have our hotels and I am confident that the new Radisson Blu Plaza Jeddah will complement our growth in the Kingdom."

Located close to local businesses and near to Jeddah's Al Andalus Square project, the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel is ideally positioned for business, leisure, and pleasure. Guests also have easy access to Al Andalus and Al Salam malls. The property has 112 rooms and suites, with space, light and comfort taking priority in their decor. Suites within the

hotel are designed to be a premier accommodation choice in Jeddah, with separated lounge and bedroom areas. "With its prime location, the Radisson Blu Plaza Jeddah is a welcome addition to the growing hospitality market in Jeddah and we are delighted to be flying the Radisson Blu flag at this new hotel. We have a first class team in place and an unqualified desire to make this newly rebranded property a huge success," says **Basel Talal**, District Director Saudi Arabia, the Rezidor Hotel Group Saudi Arabia and General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh.



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# Together for a glorious Ramadan

Gloria Hotel enjoyed the goodness and togetherness of the Holy Month of Ramadan with special Iftar evening inviting overall travel fraternity.





# Omani touch to the Holy Month

Oman's Ministry of Tourism, in cooperation with Oman Air, invited the travel trade for an Iftar. The Ministry of Tourism in Oman have displayed an interactive authentic Omani experience as part of its efforts to promote the Sultanate as a tourist destination.



## DWC targets Chinese companies

As part of its sustained drive to attract foreign investment, Dubai World Central's Business Park Free Zone has concluded a series of B2B meetings with selected companies in China.



TT BUREAU

The delegation from DWC's Business Park Free Zone visited three Chinese cities, Beijing, Chengdu and Taiyuan, as part of its exclusive B2B outreach programme.

**Paolo Serra**, VP, Business Park, Dubai World Central, comments, "Dubai World Central is Dubai's largest urban development project, an ecosystem that will ultimately support one million people. We are keen to see China well represented here. Presently, we have over 2,500 companies based at DWC and the objective of this tour was to demonstrate the value proposition Dubai World Central holds for Chinese businesses."

Bilateral economic ties between the UAE and China are witnessing an upward



**Paolo Serra**  
VP, Business Park  
Dubai World Central

growth trend with the country maintaining its status as the UAE's second largest trading partner. The UAE is a hub for countries in the Arabian Peninsula and one of the most important countries for the exports in the Arab world.

Earlier this year, its business delegation toured Italy. In 2013, visits to New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru were part of its agenda to attract investors from India. The China meetings are the latest

in a series of international outreach initiatives planned by Dubai World Central to attract foreign investments.

"During this visit, we chose to focus on meetings with specific companies from China's perishables, logistics

An increasing number of foreign investors are setting up operations at Dubai World Central to leverage its growing business ecosystem that centers on the Al Maktoum International Airport (AMIA).

**Dubai World Central is Dubai's largest urban development project, an ecosystem that will ultimately support one million people. We are keen to see China well represented here**

and general trading sectors, who are also looking to expand their operations in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia region. With that in mind, we held fruitful one-on-one meetings with several business prospects. We look forward to growing their intent and interest," adds Serra.

The Al Maktoum International Airport received its first passenger flight in 2013, while cargo operations began in 2010. As operations at the airport grow, the destination is anticipated to generate powerful business, employment and investment opportunities. 🇦🇪

## Generous gifts as Ayla marks Ramadan

Sponsored by Ayla Hotels and Resorts, Gulf Air and Eastern Motors, Ayla Hotels in Al Ain have conducted a Grand Raffle draw and marked the last day of Ramadan. Throughout the month of Ramadan all Iftar diners in Ayla Hotel and in Ayla Bawadi Hotel got a chance to enter the draw and win flight tickets courtesy of Gulf Air, test drive for a weekend by Mercedes Benz and valuable prizes from Ayla Hotels in Al Ain. More to mention, lavish list of gifts included free stays in Al Ain properties, dining vouchers and gifts from Pulse Health Club. Lucky winners were simultaneously chosen in Ayla Hotel and in Ayla Bawadi Hotel. The Grand Raffle draw is annual promotion organized by Ayla Hotels and Resorts in Al Ain and it is conducted during holy month of Ramadan.





## India Tourism engages Al Ain travel agents

IRV Rao, Assistant Director, India Tourism, Dubai, attended the maiden meeting of Al Ain Indian Travel Trade Association (AITTA), Al Ain on July 12, 2015, at Hilton Hotel, Al Ain. Rao gave a powerpoint presentation on e-Tourist Visa for the 130 travel agents who are the members of the Association. The Association felicitated India Tourism, Dubai with a trophy for their continued support. The President of the Association requested the office to have quarterly interaction with AITTA.



## Airport privatisation finds favour

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's aviation sector is a dynamic industry due to the country's expanding population and increasing religious tourism. The KSA Government is working to streamline the industry through infrastructure development, privatisation initiatives and market liberalisation.

TT BUREAU

Keeping up with the growing need, the KSA has just opened the first phase of its airport expansion project. The \$1.2 billion expansion plans consist of a three-level terminal covering over 156,940 square metres with 16 aircraft stands and boarding bridges.

Frost & Sullivan estimates that the KSA receives close to 11 million tourists annually of which 5.7 million are aviation passengers. Aviation traffic is likely to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 27.2 per cent over the next decade or so. In view of this, the airport expansion project assumes special significance. The new airport is expected to significantly boost Madinah's economy.

"Privatisation is seen as a welcome move as it provides a more competitive environment for airports to function. Besides improving efficiency, privatisation ensures that the airport management will have

Senior Consultant, Business and Financial Services, Frost & Sullivan. "Growth is also more likely in the privatisation setup with airports looking to non-aeronautical revenue sources as well."

been steadily moving towards aviation privatisation and the sale of Saudi Airlines was the first of multiple such steps.

With the need to support an entire business environment, airports have more varied source of revenue, leading to diversification. "Given that airport revenue is tied to economic cycles and uncertainties, diversified sources of revenue can help stabilise the airport's cash flow. Studies indicate that as airports mature in terms of traffic, non-aeronautical revenue increases correspondingly," adds Cartic.

The Madinah airport could also pave the way for a Madinah Aerotropolis, an urban planning concept where all economic and business activity revolves around the airport.

**Privatisation is seen as a welcome move as it provides a more competitive environment. Privatisation ensures that the airport management will have a more focused business outlook that could contribute to the economy of the KSA**

**Vinod Cartic**

Senior Consultant, Business and Financial Services, Frost & Sullivan

a more focused business outlook that could contribute to the economy of the KSA," says **Vinod Cartic**,

The Madinah airport project was constructed and will now be operated as a private enterprise. The KSA has

## Promoting Medical Tourism in UAE

Thumbay Moideen, Founder President, Thumbay Group UAE, and T.L.S Iyer, General Manager, SNTTA, signed a MoU to give a fillip to medical and health tourism in the emirate. Thumbay Hospitals and SNTTA have strategically partnered to offer world-class services at affordable prices to international patients and guests, look after all their needs while they are in the UAE.

SUSMITA GHOSH

There are so many issues relating to medical tourism and the area is developing quickly. It is essential for the hospitals, insurers and policy makers to work together closely to streamline processes to cater to this market. According to Thumbay Group UAE, Dubai has a well-deserved reputation for excellence and professional practice and hence they want to contribute to the vision, mission and goals of the UAE health authorities.

SNTTA will look after the travel, accommodation and other logistics for Thumbay Hospital's international patients and increase their client base which is a win-win situation for both and create an all-inclusive pack-



**Thumbay Moideen**  
Founder President  
Thumbay Group UAE

**The partnership will help Thumbay Hospital's to extend its reach and market worldwide to prospective patients**



**T.L.S Iyer**  
General Manager  
SNTTA

**SNTTA will be venturing in medical tourism for the first time and will be able to offer healthcare services to its ever growing number of tourists**

age for international patients including air flights, hotel accommodations, visa and excursion facilities.

"SNTTA will be venturing in Medical Tourism for the first time and will be able to offer healthcare services to its ever growing number of tourists," informs **T.L.S Iyer**, General Manager, SNTTA.

The partnership will help Thumbay Hospital's to extend its reach and market worldwide to prospective patients. This partnership will leave Thumbay Hospitals to concentrate on its commitment of providing world class healthcare at affordable prices.

Thumbay Hospitals is aligning itself with the Dubai's Vision 2020 for Medical Tourism. Along with Dubai, the

other Emirates of UAE are gearing up to attract more medical tourists in the near future.

Medical Tourism is now perceived as one of the fastest growing segment in healthcare. Technology will lead the way in future Medical Tourism.

### Handle with Care

- ◆ The partnership will help Thumbay Hospitals to extend its reach and market worldwide to prospective patients
- ◆ Medical Tourism is now perceived as one of the fastest growing segment in healthcare

## Free iPad Mini from Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Cruise Master are offering free iPad Mini to travel agents across GCC and MENA regions. Process to claim iPad Mini is very simple. Travel agents need to book a suite on any of the Regent Seven Seas sailings up to March 31, 2016. The bookings need to be paid in full by September 30, 2015. The Regent Seven Seas Cruises fleet includes sister all-suite, all-balcony, 700-guests ships Seven Seas Voyager and Seven Seas Mariner; and the all-suite, 90% balcony Seven Seas Navigator. They will be joined in the summer of 2016 by the most luxurious ship ever built, the all-balcony, all-suite 750-guest Seven Seas Explorer. Booking should be made via Cruise Master – preferred business partner of Regent Seven Seas Cruises in ME.



## Park inn by Radisson Hotel Apartments

### Dubai



The Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed **Stanislaw Kondov** as general manager of the new Park inn by Radisson Hotel Apartments Al Rigga. Kondov was most recently with the Radisson Blu Resort Jizan. Prior to that he was at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria, where he was responsible for the 170-room property, and at the Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton as the executive assistant manager. Kondov has over 15 years' experience.

## Radisson Blu Hotel

### Dubai

Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Deira Creek, welcomes **Maria Tullberg** as the new general manager. Tullberg will be responsible for overseeing the refurbishment and financial performance of the property and a team of over 500 employees. She worked as a general manager at Scandic Infra City in Stockholm from 2006 to 2008 and as district director for Scandic's 10 hotels in the Stockholm region from 2008 to 2010. Most recently, Tullberg was GM of the Radisson BluArlandia Hotel and the Radisson BluSkycity Hotel in Sweden.



## Radisson Blu Hotel and Park Inn by Radisson

### Abu Dhabi



**Guido Bayley** has been appointed the new cluster general manager for the Radisson Blu Hotel Abu Dhabi Yas Island and the Park Inn by Radisson Abu Dhabi Yas Island. Bayley joins from the Radisson Blu Portman Hotel, London where he has been the general manager for the last five years. He has been with the Rezidor Hotel Group for the last 18 years and has worked in six different countries including South Africa, Hungary and Germany.

## Six Senses Zighy Bay

### Oman

Six Senses Zighy Bay appointed **Greg Kocsis** as the new resort manager. Kocsis has more than 15 years of experience in hospitality industry. A Hungarian national, Kocsis held the position of Executive Assistant Manager of Taj Exotica Resort and Spa in Maldives prior to joining Six Senses Zighy Bay. His professional career started as a restaurant manager at the Four Seasons Hotel in Newport Beach. He is an adventure enthusiast and is looking forward to paragliding at Six Senses Zighy Bay.



## Rotana

### UAE

**Ahmad Shaban** has joined Rotana as Head of Sales for Abu Dhabi & Al Ain. Born in Spain, Shaban completed his degree in Accounting from Amman Private University in Jordan and worked with international chains such as Marriott and IHG; his last position was Country Director of Sales & Marketing for Marriott Kuwait. In this new role with Rotana, Shaban will be building on the strengths of the sales team to develop a solid platform that will serve the 13 hotels in Abu Dhabi & Al Ain.



**Victor Devries** was appointed as Head of Sales for Dubai & Northern Emirates. Born in Netherlands and completed his Masters in Marketing and Advertising in Solvay Business School in Belgium, Devries' last position was Director of Regional Marketing – Canada & US with Hilton Worldwide. With over 14 years in key commercial leadership roles across the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the US, Devries will direct the company's sales initiatives in Dubai & Northern Emirates where Rotana currently operate 20 properties.



# A British touch to Dubai

Seven Tides, Dubai-based luxury developer, has unveiled its newest project, the DUKES Oceana, Dubai hotel and residences, located on Palm Jumeirah.

 **SUSMITA GHOSH**

The first international property for the DUKES Collection brand, whose flagship hotel DUKES London is a popular destination for GCC travellers. It's a five-star hotel

community, Palm Jumeirah," says **Abdulla bin Sulayem**, CEO, Seven Tides. "The residences have launched on April 14, 2015 for investors and other guests, with the show apartments open for viewing," he adds.

**With this launch we are bringing ideal British charm and style to the UAE, blending it with cosmopolitan luxury to create a unique residence and hotel situated in the heart of Palm Jumeirah**

**Abdulla bin Sulayem**  
CEO, Seven Tides

and adjacent residences are scheduled to be handed over within Q1 of 2016.

"With this launch we are bringing ideal British charm and style to the UAE, blending it with cosmopolitan luxury to create a unique residence and hotel situated in the heart of Dubai's most desirable island

The 273-room hotel will offer leisure and entertainment facilities including a private beach, indoor pool and outdoor infinity pool plus gym along with a number of restaurants.

The 227 studio and one-bedroom apartments that comprise the DUKES

Oceana, Dubai residences are targeted at the regional and international investment community, with Seven Tides guaranteeing a return on investment (ROI) of 10 per cent per annum for the first five years.

"International HNWIs consider lifestyle appeal as major criteria when looking to grow their investment portfolio and Palm Jumeirah fits the bill in every respect," informs Bin Sulayem. "Dubai continues to offer value for money even at the top end of the investment spectrum, especially when it comes to apartment square footage compared to other major metropolises such as London or New York," he adds.

Residents will also have full access to the DUKES Oceana, Dubai suite of leisure facilities and support services. 

# Expand payment options

Gateway, an online hotel booking engine, has expanded the payment options of travel agents to make payments at any Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB) branch or ATM.

 **TT BUREAU**

The ADIB payment options commence with immediate effect and supplement payment through Gateway's BNP Paribas account, providing increased options, convenience and time and cost-saving for agents.

"Gateway is constantly looking at viable solutions to enhance our clients' businesses and make agent bookings as convenient and user-friendly as possible. By listening to and addressing the needs of our clients we are excited to launch expanded payment options with ADIB," explains **Shahjahan Syed**, Regional Sales Manager GCC and Middle East, Gateway. "With over 70 branches and 460 ATMs throughout the region, payment has never been easier."

Gateway offers a 24/7 customer service desk that



**Shahjahan Syed**  
Regional Sales Manager GCC and Middle East, Gateway

**With over 70 branches and 460 ATMs throughout the region, payment has never been easier**

can be accessed through email, live chat and landline. By providing professional client support and care, along with a portfolio of over 200,000 unique hotels worldwide, Gateway has established itself as a popular hotel booking engine that provides

travel agents access to business and leisure hotels, boutique hotels, aparthotels, wellness resorts and guest houses worldwide. The travel agents presently using the Gateway2Travel system can book hotel properties at competitive rates while others can easily gain access by subscription at the Gateway website.

Gateway intends to expand opportunities in Kuwait, Qatar and the other Gulf states after the office launched in Dubai in 2013, which has focused mainly on the UAE.

## Reaching Out

- ◆ Gateway offers a 24/7 customer service desk that can be accessed through email, live chat and landline
- ◆ Gateway intends to expand opportunities in Kuwait, Qatar and the other Gulf states



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