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UAE'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE MONTHLY

TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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Rapid changes in Middle East

It was a year of continuous change as the markets have been volatile due to various new factors identified. Research proves that the rapid changes in economies, trends and technology around the globe are at a highly sensitive level exposing new emerging trends especially in the Middle East and Asia.



The question 'what comes next?' has been tossed around at various conferences across the region and we feature some of the most important aspects, which need attention by the players of the industry. A recent study presentation by Amadeus 'Understanding tomorrow's traveller' with a focus on 2030, predicts that by 2030 China will be the world's biggest economy surpassing the US and the median age of the global population will rise from 29.6 to 33.2 years.

Social media use is expected to reach 80-90 per cent worldwide and the roles that were once filled by human workers will be staffed by search algorithms, robotic bellhops, cashless payment systems, virtual customer service avatars and fluid biometric processing systems. Hotels and airlines will offer



Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont
 Head of Commercial Strategy and Business Management, Amadeus

In the case of ME there are three main categories identified—Simplicity Searchers, Reward Hunters and Obligation Meeters

immersive 'previews' of their services through virtual reality technology. About 1.8 billion people will be travelling internationally each year and it is estimated that the



Tony Tyler
 CEO and Director General IATA

Global standards, partnerships and collaboration are as critical for aviation today as they were seven decades ago - possibly even more so

passenger traffic will rise by five per cent every year.

The study has put forward six new traveller personalities (tribes), namely



Yanik Hoyle
 IATA Program Director NDC

NDC standards were the result of over 2.5 years of meetings and workshops with airlines, agents and other representatives

Social Capital Seekers, Cultural Purists, Simplicity Searchers, Ethical Traveller, Obligation Meeters and Reward Hunters. First tribe identified are Social Capital

seekers are known as a tribe heavily influenced by social media by real people's statements and will validate their decisions by reading peer reviews online. Second are the Cultural Purists, a tribe that will emerge in conjunction with the idea of an "ageless" society as older people engage in what is typically seen now as "youth travel" or gap year style trips. They prefer genuine and transparent localities over cosmopolitan trends. Simplicity Searchers are those who seek information in a simple and transparent form. Millions of new travellers from emerging markets will fall within this category. They prefer basics with direct options and technology interfaces that are user friendly with even a tailor made option for example on the inflight entertainment list. Ethical Traveller is a tribe which will look out for low scale deals, cutting down on luxuries and pre-

fer to spend money in local hotels or restaurants to help the local community or may even take part in volunteer work on their trip. Obligation Meeters include people with a hard objective for their travel either business, religious or medical purposes or even to attend family functions or events. Fluid airport systems, including time saving check in options will be most appealing to this tribe who will also have a very low tolerance for delays. The last tribe of Reward Hunters crave for a reward experience in return for their hard earned investment in the office or their day today lives.

"Currently, in the case of Middle East there are three main categories identified—Simplicity Searchers occupy 32 per cent, whilst Reward Hunters enjoy 23 per cent and Obligation Meeters take

Contd. on page 3 ►



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Ajman's successful show at WTM

The Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) showcased different attractions in Ajman to visitors and delegates at WTM 2015. The team also met potential partners in order to attract travellers from the European market—one of the target markets of the emirate.

TT BUREAU

The Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD), headed by HE **Faisal Al Nuaimi**, General Manager, ATDD, participated in this year's World Travel Market (WTM), the leading global event for the travel industry, staged annually in London. The Ajman delegation included **Khulood Khalid Alnuaimi**, Director, Tourism Development & Marketing Department and **Hind Sultan Al**

Marzooqi, Head, Marketing and Promotion, ATDD and participants from the hospitality sector as well as travel agencies.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi, the Representative of Ajman's Ruler for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Chairman of the Economic Development Department and Ajman Free Zone Authority, and **Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Humaid Al Nuaimi**, Chairman of Aj-

man Tourism Development Department (ATDD) visited the Ajman pavilion at the World Travel Market (WTM) in London.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Humaid and Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Humaid were welcomed by **Khulood Khalid Alnuaimi**, who headed the delegation along with **Hind Sultan Al Marzooqi**.

Both dignitaries were impressed with the success of the department's

second participation in the world's leading global event for the travel industry. The participating delegation from the hospitality sector and travel agencies welcomed them and revealed the great interest received from industry people, dignitaries including foreign media representatives who visited the stand.

The ATDD chairman acknowledged the importance of participating in the annual WTM exhibition because of

the huge business opportunities presented at the show, since majority of the visitors and exhibitors were key industry stakeholders.

"ATDD's participation in international tourism exhibition was aimed at increasing awareness and strengthening our tourism industry in order to attract more travellers to visit the destination. We are targeting five million visitors to Ajman in 2021 and we hope to achieve this through the support of our

hotel partners and travel agencies. Our existing attractions and upcoming projects will truly enhance the tourism experience of our visitors," said **Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Humaid**.

During the visit, the dignitaries also toured other participating UAE and GCC stands, as well as a number of European, Asian and African stands to learn about the latest industry trends including new destination and brands.



Ajman to host World Golf Championship

■ The emirate of Ajman is all set to host the 2016 World Golf Championship in keeping with their 2021 vision to promote sports tourism. The announcement was made by **HE Faisal Al Nuaimi**, General Manager, Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD), during a meeting with hoteliers in Ajman and the management of Al Zorah to prepare for the event that will start in February 2016. The golf tournament will bring together top professional golf players from around the world, who will be playing across different countries in the Middle East, North Africa and South Africa. The game will commence in Ajman at Al Zorah Golf Club and will continue to cities such as Bahrain, Muscat, Cairo, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Doha, and Kuwait. The grand finale will be held in Ajman from December 9-11, 2016. "We are proud to be the official sponsor of the World Golf Championship tournament. This is a major sporting event and we are confident that it will attract a lot of golf enthusiasts to the event and to the emirate," said **Al Nuaimi**.



Air passenger traffic surges in Dubai

► Contd. from page 1

up 18 per cent. These tribes were constructed and validated using various teams and resources at Future Foundation, key members of the senior team at Amadeus, recognised futurologists and travel experts from across the sector," states **Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont**, Head of Commercial Strategy and Business Management at Amadeus.

Current Trends in the Middle East

As we come to the end of the current year, there is a tremendous increase in terms of passenger traffic at the Dubai International Airport, the world's number one airport for international passengers. Passenger traffic in September totalled 6,432,654, compared to 5,942,628 recorded during September 2014. Until now, the traffic rose 12 per cent to 58,696,877 compared to 52,422,547 recorded during the first nine months of 2014.

At the recent 70 year celebrations by International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Abu Dhabi, the CEO and Director General **Tony Tyler** states that the rapid growth of the region and the way it has affected the economies by transforming the entire aviation industry. The Middle East has invested over \$200 billion in more than 1,000 aircraft since 2005, and plans to spend a further \$200 billion in the next 10 years. More than \$100 billion has been spent on airport projects, most notably in Dubai, Doha, Oman, Jordan, and in Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia plans to invest \$12.3 billion in its airports until 2020. The result of this investment has not only transformed the economies of this region, it has helped to reshape the entire aviation industry. Now the challenge is to look beyond merely national issues and focus on the bigger picture—the strategic development of aviation across the entire Middle East.

Safety is priority

The safety performance in Africa and in the Middle East has been improving for some time. Last year, the jet hull loss rate for Middle East-North Africa (MENA) was 0.63 per million sectors flown – an improvement on the five-year trend of 1.82. In Africa, in 2014, there was not a single jet hull loss – an excellent achievement. In safety, a key tool for improvement is compliance with global standards. The United Arab Emirates was recently commended by ICAO for the particularly impressive achievement of complying with 98.86 per cent of all ICAO safety standards – the highest compliance rate in ICAO's history. "Global standards, partnerships and collaboration are as critical for aviation today as they were seven decades ago – possibly even more so," states Tyler.

These priorities remain particularly appropriate for the Middle East. The enormous success that aviation

has enjoyed in much of the region has created challenges that will require cooperation and visionary planning to overcome. In some ways the region is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. The increase in aircraft movements has not been accompanied with an increase in the amount of available civil airspace. There are still some bottlenecks at key airports. There are new pressures to create onerous taxation, increased airport and air traffic charges and regulatory obligations on the industry. In much of the region, consultation and transparency are not yet embedded in the aviation charges process. It is paramount that ICAO principles be followed. The answer to these concerns is to embrace competition and collaboration. These twin strands have helped build the global aviation system we rely on today – and will continue to shape how our industry develops in decades to come.

NDC: The new standard

IATA also recently set the first version of the industry standards which enhances the communication between airlines and travel agents as NDC (New distribution capability). It is a travel industry-supported program launched by IATA for the development and market adoption of a new, XML-based data transmission standard.

Yanik Hoyles, IATA Program Director, NDC reiterated that these standards were the result of over two and a half years of meetings and workshops with various groups of airlines, travel agents and other representatives from different regions. Some of the findings include that more than 75 per cent of air travellers said the NDC-based display would make it easier to compare flights and prices and understand the true cost of their flight, compared to how they shop and book travel online today; more than 70 per cent of business fliers and 65

per cent of leisure travellers would be more likely to purchase optional airline services if presented with information about the services in an NDC-based display; 63 per cent of business travellers and 69 per cent of leisure travellers would find it helpful to receive timely promotional offers via text message; 68 per cent of business passengers and 64 per cent of leisure passengers would be comfortable with an airline or travel agent informing them about the availability of optional products based on previous purchase data.

NDC Benefits

- ◆ More than 75% of air travellers say the NDC-based display would make it easier to compare flights and prices
- ◆ More than 70% of business fliers and 65% of leisure travellers would be more likely to purchase optional airline services

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

2015: Year of rapid growth

The year 2015 has been eventful around the globe with many unprecedented market changes; there has been slow movement in certain months resulting in market fluctuation. However, the feeder markets in the GCC region are stable. In terms of hospitality, re-branding is the modern trend of the day as most partners opt for re-branding their image to increase business potential.

There are notable differences in the hospitality industry today. In the UAE, most hotels are performing well in terms of occupancy but how well are they with their revenue levels? It is a cause of concern for the decision makers and a key factor to focus for the next year where the trade partners need to take some collective action to address these issues. United Kingdom has emerged as number one in the UAE travel market in the recent months; with Asian markets like India and China the market expectations for 2016 is definitely on a higher level in groups and MICE market.

In the aviation industry, Dubai airport has emerged as the busiest airport this year with the influx of tourists; next year it is estimated to sky rocket even further. Government, IATA and other controlling bodies are working together to address all issues with a broad perspective towards the next 15 years. A pressing concern facing air transport in the region is Air Traffic Management (ATM).

As the gulf is strategically located with significant volumes of transiting air traffic from various destinations, it has reported more than 13 per cent growth per annum over the last five years, according to reports. Next year there will surely be more national projects implemented to integrate and collaborate among aviation stakeholders. Technology trends will contribute fairly well to solve the immediate problems in the region.

There were some very good partnerships agreed upon during the Dubai Airshow, making it over US\$30 billion worth deals.

Linking the hemispheres

Turkish Airlines is not just the world's most globally connected airline flying to 280 destinations but also with the most connections in the Middle East. The airline flies to 33 cities in 13 countries across the ME making it the only international carrier to have so many flights to the region.

Eighty two years after it was established, Turkish Airlines has grown to serve passengers travelling across hemispheres - in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas. The international carrier also flies to 46 destinations in Africa - the most of any global airline to the continent.

We have grown tremendously over the years and this year was no exception. To give you an idea, in the Middle East, during the period between January and September 2015, the number of passengers increased by approximately 15 per cent, as against the same period in 2014. Business or Comfort Class passengers increased by approximately 14 per cent for the same period, too. In the UAE, the number of passengers increased by around 2.5

Middle East traffic results for the period of January-September 2015:

- ▶ During the period of January-September 2015 passenger carried increased by 14.6%, reaching approximately 4.3 million passengers
- ▶ Business/Comfort Class passengers increased by 13.5% for the same period.
- ▶ Capacity (ASK) grew 11% and reached approximately over 11 billion during the period of January-September 2015

per cent, against the same period in 2014. Business or Comfort Class passengers increased by around seven per cent for the same period.

We are always looking at new route enhancements to be honest. We have gained our reputation by travelling to more countries than any other airline in the world and we will continue to follow this strategy. We

will focus on expanding our network in Africa and the Americas, in particular, over the next five years. Negotiations are underway for a few code shares in the pipeline.

Turkey is a very beautiful destination, especially in winter. If you leave Istanbul you can find some really special ski resorts like Uluda, Kartepe, Palandöken etc. Visitors from

carry more passengers to and from the UAE and GCC in the years ahead.

Turkish Airlines and the Turkish Tourist Board recently partnered for a new travel campaign featuring top social media stars. Leading creators from YouTube, Snapchat and Facebook are travelling to Turkey for a mystery tour where they will explore the nation's many facets. The campaign fea-

We will focus on expanding our network in Africa and the Americas, in particular, over the next five years

tures prominent global creators, including Snapchat star Jerome Jarre, Casey Neistat, German vlogger star Sami Slimani as well as soccer freestyle group F2. Their visit to Istanbul will be in addition to the promise of a trip to an additional secret, Turkish destination. The stars, with a total social following of over 40 million will create a series of videos including a travelogue from their time in Istanbul and the second destination. The creators are already unboxing videos where they discover their invitation to Turkey.



UAE traffic results for the period of January-September 2015:

- ▶ During the period of January-September 2015 passenger carried increased by 2.2%, reaching approximately over 300,000 passengers
- ▶ Business/Comfort Class passengers increased by 6.3% for the same period.
- ▶ Capacity ASK grew 3.2% and reached approximately over 1.15 billion during the period of January-September 2015

across the world are paying more and more attention to these destinations so I'm sure winter and 2016 will both be very bright!

We already fly to most cities in the UAE and GCC so our connectivity is very strong. We plan on growing by increasing the frequency of flights in many of our destinations so that we can



Dr. Temel Kotil
CEO
Turkish Airlines



Publisher : Sanjeet
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is published
by Sanjeet on behalf of
**Durga Das Publications
Private Limited**
Printed at
System Graphics India Pvt. Ltd.
A-1, Naraina Industrial Area,
Phase-I, New Delhi - 28 India

Offices:

DELHI: 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Ph: +91-11-23710793, 23716318
Fax: +91-11-23351503
E-mail: travtalk@ddppl.com
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New Marine Lines, Opp. SNTD College,
Mumbai - 400 020, India
Ph: +91-22-22070129, 22070130,
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E-mail: mumbai@ddppl.com
UAE: Z1-02, P.O. Box 9348, Saf Zone, Sharjah, UAE
Ph: +971 6 5528954
Fax: +971 6 5528956
E-mail: uae@ddppl.com

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Steigenberger opens in Dubai

German hospitality company, Steigenberger Hotel Group has opened its first property - waterfront Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay in Dubai.



The flagship Steigenberger Dubai is right at the heart of the city close to the iconic Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest tower and the Dubai Mall in the cosmopolitan Downtown neighbourhood. The hotel's 367 rooms include 28 suites designed for business and city leisure travellers while its four restaurants, which offer a variety of cuisine, all have fabulous views over Business Bay.

There is also a banqueting and conference area – with a daylight ballroom for 450 people, four meeting room options, a board room, library and outdoor terraces.

The property is owned by Twenty14 Holdings, the hospitality investment arm of LuLu Group International, the Abu Dhabi-based retail giant. The company is



Puneet Chhatwal
CEO
Steigenberger Hotels AG

This new hotel at Business Bay re-affirms our commitment to international growth in general and the Middle East in particular

focussed on acquisitions and management of assets worldwide. Puneet Chhatwal, CEO, Steigenberger Hotels AG, commented,

"This new hotel at Business Bay re-affirms our commitment to international growth in general and the Middle East in particular."

"The new hotel is symbolic of our growing international presence at strategically important locations made possible through teaming with like-minded and expansion-oriented partners."

Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, Twenty14 Holding, said, "We are proud to be associated with the Steigenberger Hotel Group to bring its first five-property in the region. Our vision is to be the most preferred hospitality company with an exclusive portfolio of world-class properties, which are unique in design, service and functionality. We believe that the new hotel truly complements our vision and will encapsulate an absolutely remarkable experience."

Fast Wi-Fi to pull travellers

Jannah Burj Al Sarab, an upcoming hotel in Abu Dhabi claims to offer the fastest Internet speed of any hotel in the world.



Managers of Jannah Burj Al Sarab located in Mina Street say they recently had their bandwidth upgraded to 1.2 Gigabits per second (Gbps), putting them ahead of every other hotels in the world.

According to the website www.Hotelwifitest.com, there is no hotel nationally or internationally that comes close to Jannah Burj Al Sarab's Internet speed capabilities. Prior to the upgrade, the hotel's Internet speed was 270 Megabits per second (Mbps), which was still higher than the world's average Internet speed of 100-250 Mbps.

Jannah Burj Al Sarab's fastest hotel internet speed will help our guests in achieving that balance so they can complete their tasks in a shorter period of time



Adonis Darwiche
Chief Information Officer
Jannah Hotels and Resorts


The highest measured speed in Abu Dhabi is 240 Mbps, while it has been recorded to be 48 Mbps in Dubai.


The record-breaking Wi-Fi speed is good news for tourists and business travel-


lers checking into the 318-room, luxury hotel, which officially opens this month.

"In our technology-driven world, having Internet connection is no longer sufficient. Most people own more than one device now – so more data will also be consumed," said Adonis Darwiche, Chief Information Officer, Jannah Hotels and Resorts.

"We cater to successful and ambitious travellers who seek a balance between work and play. Jannah Burj Al Sarab's fastest hotel internet speed will help our guests in achieving that balance so they can complete their tasks in a shorter period of time," he added. This unique feature is offered to all guests staying at the hotel, enabling them to browse the web at full speed – and completely free of charge.








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EASA TCO certificate for Qatar

Qatar Executive is the first private jet company in the Middle East to receive the EASA third-country operator safety certificate.



Qatar Executive has been awarded the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) third-country operator (TCO) safety certificate

The achievement enables Qatar Executive to further grow its worldwide aircraft charter business while continuing to leverage on the rapidly developing network and support of the award-winning Qatar Airways group. Qatar Airways also obtained the EASA TCO approval in July this year.

Qatar Airways' Group Chief Executive, His Excellency **Akbar Al Baker**, who also heads up the airline's private jet division, said, "Being the first business aviation operator in the Middle East to be awarded the EASA TCO certificate demonstrates that Qatar Executive is at the forefront of



Akbar Al Baker
Group Chief Executive
Qatar Airways

The new safety authorisation is a testament to our group's high standards of safety, security

international aviation standards and that we are setting a benchmark for operational excellence across our industry. "The new safety authorisation is a testament to our group's high standards of safety, security, and atten-

tion to detail in all operational aspects, and is a proud moment for the company.

"The safety and security of all our passengers and staff is our top priority, and we applaud EASA for its continuous efforts in enhancing international safety standards, and raising the bar for airlines and business aviation operators worldwide." By 2016, all non-EU commercial operators wishing to fly to the EU will be required to hold the authorisation certifying their compliance with international ICAO safety standards.

As of now, operators are required to apply for operating permits from each European country, whereas, under the new rule, the "EASA TCO" approval is a single safety authorisation valid in all EASA member states and outlying territories. 🇦🇪

BBJ completion on the anvil

Lufthansa Technik AG and Royal Jet recently signed an agreement for the design materialisation of two B737-700 Boeing Business Jet (BBJ).



The two projects will be completed at Lufthansa Technik's VIP & Executive Jet Solutions site in Hamburg. The cabin interior was done by the New York based designer Edése Doret who is known for his elegant yet innovative designs. Both cabins will be very modern with a spectacular interior design. The VIP interior comprises a private master bedroom together with a fully equipped master bathroom as well as a large lounge area, business and economy class areas. Both aircrafts will be equipped with the latest telecommunication and entertainment technology to meet the needs of the exclusive customer base of Royal Jet. Each aircraft will comfortably accommodate 34 guests.

"Royal Jet is the benchmark for private charter



Captain Patrick Gordon
Interim President and
Chief Executive Officer, Royal Jet

Royal Jet is the benchmark for private charter companies. It is our aim to be the benchmark for global operators offering VIP chartered services

companies in the region. It is our aim to be the benchmark for global operators offering VIP chartered services," said **Captain Patrick Gordon**,

Interim President and Chief Executive Officer, Royal Jet.

"The company's continued growth and success is testimony to the vision and leadership of our chairman **H.E. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan**, the Board of Directors, shareholders and over 400 of Royal Jet staff who deliver service and operational excellence every day. Our partnership with Lufthansa Technik reinforces Royal Jet's consistent offering of award-winning service excellence," added Captain Gordon.

Lufthansa Technik's Senior Vice President VIP & Executive Jet Solutions, **Walter Heerdt**, explained: "We are very proud that we have been selected by Royal Jet and also given the chance to materialise the spectacular design of Edése Doret." 🇦🇪

Turkish, Petra Tourism sign pact

Turkish Airlines has signed a historic partnership agreement with the Petra Development and Tourism Authority that will benefit tour agents.



The deal was signed in the presence of **Nayef Al-Fayez**, Jordan's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, **Mohammad Al-Nawafleh**, the Chief Commissioner of the Petra Development and Tourism Authority, **Ahmet Olmurtur**, Turkish Airline's Chief Marketing Officer, and other senior management from

across the Middle East and the airline's offices in Amman and Aqaba. The agreement was signed in front of Petra's famous 'Treasury' – its most impressive 2000 year old rock-cut tomb – further symbolising the importance of the friendly ties between the two prestigious entities. Upon visiting Petra, Turkish Airlines passengers will now receive a 15 per cent discount on

entry tickets into Jordan's most unique heritage site by submitting their boarding passes. Turkish Airlines will also be promoted at the entry of the Petra Visitor Centre by the Jordanian authorities. In exchange, Turkish Airlines will give special discounts to tour agents for events organised in other countries by the Petra Development and Tourism Authority.

Olmurtur said, "Turkish Airlines will work to promote Petra as one of the new seven wonders of the world through various channels. We plan to support this historic destination by promoting Petra through our internal channels, and Sky-life, our inflight magazine. The airline will also promote the city in its external communications by supporting

their marketing and development projects."

As the partnership unfolds, Turkish Airlines and Petra Authority will participate in international tourism fairs together. They will invite and host agencies, press, and public figures from other countries across the world to promote the beauty of Petra. 🇦🇪



Ahmet Olmurtur
Chief Marketing Officer
Turkish Airlines

Turkish Airlines will work to promote Petra as one of the new seven wonders of the world through various channels

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Perfect Beach Holiday

The Philippines is a tropical archipelago with one of the longest coastlines in Asia at 36,289 kilometers. One of the must visit beaches are at Boracay Island, located on the northern west tip of Panay, Western Visayas. With its sugary white sand and azure blue waters, the beaches here are brighter than most others in the region. Lying in the heart of Cebu is the island of Mactan, which is popular for its beaches, hotels, resorts, nightlife, to music, food and drinks.



Shopping Galore

Shopping in the Philippines offers one enough scope to bargain and find variety. Most shopping places or malls in Manila, Makati, Cebu and Davao virtually have everything that one can need—right from designer western brands to items specifically designed for the tourist market. Shops are open from morning until late at night, especially on weekends. In Manila, shop at the third largest mall in the world—Mall of Asia, Robinson Place, Balibayan Handicrafts, Greenhills Shopping Centre, Megamall, Shangri-La Mall and at Tiendecitas.

Nightlife

Every major city of the Philippines is full of entertainment till the wee hours. In Makati, there is the Greenbelt, Glorietta, The Fort, Jupiter St. and J. P. Rizal Street. The capital city of Manila also offers a diverse nightlife. Do not miss to visit '71 Gramercy', the highest club in Manila. Also, there are newly revitalised Roxas Boulevard and its Baywalk in Malate. Quezon City is a popular destination for locals as the club prices are a little lower than those in Makati. Most clubs are close to each other so bar hopping is quite popular.



Spa Indulgence

Enjoy the traditional Filipino healing massage or touch therapy called Hilot. This massage helps relax and heal tired muscles and aching joints. Try this and other spa treatments at the Nurture Spa in Tagaytay, Mandala Spa in Boracay, Sanctuario Spa in Manila, Chi Spa Village in Shangri-La Mactan, Cebu, and at The Farm at San Benito in Batangas.



Now Zillious enters ME

India's leading travel technology solution provider Zillious has expanded its operations into the Middle East in the month of September 2015.



Talking on how Zillious' entry into the Middle East will only be advantageous to the travel trade community, **B. Rajan**, Director Sales at Zillious Solutions, said, "We are also happy with the kind of positive response we have received from the three GDS's operating in the UAE. The response from the travel agent community is positive. They



B. Rajan
Director Sales
Zillious Solutions

The response from the travel agent community is positive. They are happy to have signed up with one of ME's largest Travel management companies (TMCs)

are happy to have signed up with one of Middle East's largest Travel management companies (TMCs)."

Established in 2009, Zillious has empowered over six million travel bookings with over US\$ 960 million travel turnover annually. The company is known for its strength to understand regional requirements and

challenges with its collaborative style of working, ensuring long term partnerships. Clients can use their modules or integrate their traveller profile systems, authentication system, back office (accounting) and MIS systems.

Companies that use their product in India include Carlson Wagon-

lit, Thomas Cook, Kuoni, Flight Centre, Cox & Kings, International Travel House, ATB Uniglobe, PL Worldways, Atlas Travels and Pearl Travels.

The focus for Zillious has been the Corporate Booking tool and it has succeeded in India. After the response it has seen in India, the company is glad that more and more mid and large Travel Management Companies (TMCs) are looking at Zillious for providing e-Commerce solutions for their corporate operations including point of sale for support staff. Currently, they operate in India and have been adjudged as the best technology provider for North India in 2014 by India Travel Awards.

Growth Story

◆ Zillious has empowered over six million travel bookings with over US\$ 960 million travel turnover annually

High prospects for agents

There is a tremendous increase in web portals and online presence around the globe especially among the trade where everything is now available on a click.



Gateway is an online hotel booking portal through which travel agents can book hotels from around the world. Gateway's products allow travel partners to easily compare rates and directly book hotels. They have also recently launched a transfer option through which travel agents can arrange their client's transfer requirements. Worldwide there are more than 5,000 travel agents, OTA's, tour operators and airlines who use Gateway's services daily.

Besides being able to offer more than 200,000 hotels worldwide, Gateway2Travel remains the online booking engine which offers one of the largest varieties of hotels accommodations including hotels for business and leisure, boutique hotels, luxury resorts, all-inclusive hotels, apartment hotels, guest houses, wellness resorts, etc. These wide variety of hotels are avail-



Shahjahan
Representative
Gateway

able at competitive net rates, on top of which allows the agents to define their own commission levels.

The portal is equipped with many filter options such as location, price range, rating, etc. which makes the system very user-friendly and makes narrowing down the choices easier. Another innovative feature is their Cancellation Insurance which allows agents to avoid any last minute cancellation costs. Their customer service support team is also available 24/7 via telephone, e-mail and live chat.

Shahjahan, Representative, Gateway, says, "On Gateway2Travel website, travel agents have the liberty of defining their own commission level. I would strongly recommend them to use this option. We regularly distribute destination mailings through our large agent database and social media channels. This way, agents are well connected with popular deals and have an idea about the best deals to propose to their clients. For regular updates on popular deals, travel agents can check out Facebook page www.facebook.com/gatewayoutmiddleeast and know more. Again, I would urge travel agents to make use of our cancellation insurance as it saves the agent from unwanted costs that might arise due to last minute cancellations. By defining the commission levels, agents can earn higher revenue for themselves. The portal offers wide range of hotels at competitive rates. A wider pool of hotel content allows the agent to cater to all sort of clientele."

Seminars at sea for agents

Celebrity Cruises recently held its Seminar at Sea for the travel agents from across Middle East.

TT BUREAU

Since the first sailing of Celebrity Cruises in 1990, it has evolved into being an industry leader, praised for providing spacious, stylish and sophisticated interiors; dining experiences elevated to an art form; personalised service, with a guest-to-staff ratio of nearly 2:1 and unexpected, trendsetting onboard activities, all designed to provide an unmatched experience for vacationers' precious time.

The company is determined to set a new, world-wide standard for cruising, and to create a distinctive expression of superior quality and grand style.

They sell their world-wide cruises to the Middle Eastern guests. Europe is a key destination that sells well due to its proximity and the direct flight options.



Lakshmi Durai
Chief Executive Officer
Celebrity Cruises

This is our first year with dedicated representation for Celebrity Cruises. It has been a good year and we expect the business to grow further in 2016

Their clientele are predominantly leisure travellers. Cruise is a preferred option for vacationers in the Middle East. They have MICE facilities and there is a per-

centage of companies from Middle East choosing cruises for their Meetings and Incentive travels.

"We do offer special price and promotions for the travel agents periodically. We recently had a Seminar at Sea for the travel agents from across Middle East, where the agents got the opportunity to sail with us in Europe gaining the first-hand experience of cruising. In addition the seminar we conduct on board the ship gives the agent the complete experience to sell our cruises efficiently," said Lakshmi Durai, Chief Executive Officer.

She further stated, "This is our first year with dedicated representation for Celebrity Cruises. It has been a good year and we expect the business to grow further in the next year." Today, among Celebrity's 10 ships are its Solstice Class ships. 🌟

Cruising on scenic waterways

Jalboot–Abu Dhabi's only private scheduled passenger service covers 100 kms of scenic waterways.

TT BUREAU

The ferry has won a warm reception from residents and tourists alike with the operator already planning fleet and network expansion for early in the New Year. Currently running daily from 2 pm until 9.30 pm, the service, which calls at, and can be boarded from, four destinations – Abu Dhabi Mall, Yas Marina, Fairmont Bab Al Bahr and Etihad Towers with each leg taking less than an hour – is being taken up by residents as an alternative to road transport while visitors are using it to get a waterborne perspective of the capital and its surrounds and to reach individual tourist destinations with ease.

After a week of a soft trial using its flagship 'Al Dana' launch ferry, Jalboot Marine Network LLC (Jalboot), which operates the service on behalf of its parent company Emirates



Chakib Bouayad
CEO
Emirates Consortium

We have now embarked on expanding our reseller network and plan, in 2016, to add additional boats and stops to the service

Consortium, said take-up and feedback has been "extremely positive."

"We've had bookings and enquiries from individuals and groups and strong

interest from DMCs and tour operators within the UAE," said Chakib Bouayad, CEO, Emirates Consortium. "We have now embarked on expanding our reseller network and plan, in 2016, to add additional boats and stops to the service. It's all looking very good indeed."

Named to pay homage to the UAE's traditional pearl-diving boats – the first boat is named Al Dana, to represent the most prized pearl - Jalboot ferries have been designed by an award-winning European boat builder. The launch ferry has been custom-made in the UAE to Jalboot specifications as will others due to join the fleet in 2016. The ferries accommodate up to 40 seated passengers and three crew members, are fully enclosed and air-conditioned and with windows for passengers to take in the views from their leather, business class-style seating. 🌟

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Making grand destination weddings

As one of the premier wedding venues, The Ajman Palace Hotel provides a complete range of services for the perfect wedding. To make things simple, the hotel offers both tailor-made options as well as fabulous packages for weddings and honeymoon.

TT BUREAU

Boasting the largest 'Al Saalah' Ballroom (divisible into three rooms), The Ajman Palace Hotel is the most prestigious and romantic address in the Northern Emirates. In addition to the ballroom, the various wedding functions can spread across the hotel's event spaces including Pool Terrace, Beach Garden, Al Ewan Conference Hall, Al Meelas – VIP Majlis Room, Rooftop Terrace, Rooftop Deck, Foyer and pre-function areas.

Fergal Purcell, General Manager, The Ajman Palace Hotel, stated that wedding cel-

ebrations require perfection and at The Ajman Palace Hotel they are dedicated to exceed their guests' expectations. Luxury and comfort go hand in hand. Be it a serene beachside setting overlooking the beautiful Arabian Gulf, a secluded terrace for private dinners, unique spot on the beach, exclusive rooftop deck or a special corner in a restaurant, they have got the most ro-

mantic spaces reserved for guests combined with the finest hospitality.

As one of the premier wedding venues, The Ajman Palace Hotel provides the complete range of services for a destination wedding. To make things simple, the hotel offers both tailor-made options as well as fabulous packages for weddings and honeymoon. Ferghal said,

"We have devised a choice of unique all-inclusive wedding packages that allow you to have the full price with no hidden costs. Large or intimate, we promise perfection all the way. That's what dreams are made of."

The Ajman Palace Hotel offers a choice of Bridal Suites



consisting of a private room with plush white furniture, dressing area, and a spacious living room furnished with mirrors and sofas. Couples can enjoy a relaxing stay in an all-embracing romantic atmosphere with a host of indulgent in-

room amenities, chocolates, flowers, fragrances that spell opulence. In addition, the hotel offers a private make-up room immediately adjacent to the 'Al Saalah' Ballroom. Private access for ladies and a separate lift for the bride that would take her to the reception straight from her exclusive make-up room are just some of the thoughtful touches. 🌸



Prime location; Premier property

Best Western Premier, a leading hotel chain in the US, recently commenced their operation in the UAE by taking over the Shangri-La Traders property.

SHEHARA RIZLY

This year has witnessed many re-branding strategies which has enhanced new opportunities and a brand new outlook in business. Although the market trend seems to be on a slow pace currently, most hospitality management companies are re-strategising the properties in time for the next few years. New Group Head for Al Khaleej Palace, Sun and Sky and Best Western Premier, Govind Pratap stated, "investors and owners are looking at the market trend, although there is a slow down because of the drift markets which has affected, busi-



Govind Pratap
New Group Head for
Al Khaleej Palace, Sun and Sky and
Best Western Premier

factor we are trying to work around as hoteliers."

Revenue v/s occupancy

Every hotel in Deira has more than 75 per cent to 80 per cent occupancy and an

in the market today. Focusing on the group business is essential in terms of occupancy and the online marketing trends have become very active within the past few years. There are many newly identified groups emerging from India and China but the feeder market is still the GCC region. As a hotel catering to the business clientele their focus at Best Western will first be on FIT business and then look into other group markets.

Best Western Premier is a four star deluxe hotel with five star standards. They accommodate the crew from Singapore Airlines with special lounge facilities. There are two executive floors especially dedicated to the corporate sector where there are many privileges one can witness and receive many add-ons. Although the Russian market has slowed down, UK and European market is still quite active. The UK has emerged a number one market in the UAE currently according to many experts. 🌸

average of 73 per cent but in terms of revenue does it really make even is a question

ness still prevails under all circumstances but the volume of the business is a key

Le Méridien ballroom for 1,750 guests

■ The Great Ballroom at the Le Meridien Dubai Hotel and Conference Centre has been inaugurated as the tallest and most spacious ballroom venues in Dubai. The 2467

Conceived to create illusions of vibrant theatrical lighting, the 9.5-meter high ceiling features different settings of LED colour lights. Skyhooks on the ceiling with power

The launch event unfurled itself in an evening of splendour, surprise giveaways and enthralling performances, hosted by Dubai's most adored radio



sq m pillar-less ballroom can accommodate over 1750 guests. Located on the ground level, the new Great Ballroom offers easy access to guests and set-up companies.

The entrance is directly connected to the main road and is close to the airport, offering convenience to guests. The Great Ballroom can be divided into three sections, each equipped with a walk-in live kitchen featuring built in hot plate, tandoor, contemporary oven and wok stations that can also be partitioned.

connections and large doors provide for creative representation to all kinds of events, including launches of large products like cars. It also has two big foyer areas that can accommodate more than 1,000 guests. The Great Ballroom features two built-in LED screens to display and project images at every corner of the ballroom, and five built-in electronic screens in the foyer areas. The Great Ballroom bestows a spectacular sense of grandeur to the luxurious city resort.

personalities from Virgin Radio—the trios-Kris Fade, Priti Malik and Big Rossi.

"We're very excited about our all-new Great Ballroom, which is rich in detail and reflect the signs of times to come in the UAE, a fast growing leading MICE destination globally", said Complex General Manager Shaun Parsons. "It is wonderful that we have been able to combine the grandeur Dubai is known for around the world with this special venue that truly reflects our iconic position in the industry."

Investors and owners are looking at the market trend, although there is a slow down because of the drift markets

Online market key for Asiana

Cahal Altman, Marcom Manager at Asiana, reveals that online marketing will be the hotel's priority in the New Year.



Asiana Hotel, a 5-star themed hotel which opened in 2011 with an array of delightful outlets at the venue with 35 per cent of group business accounts while the other is FIT guests. Their clientele being leisure clients at 60 per cent and business FIT 40 per cent with markets like Chinese 36 per cent, Korean 22 per cent and Japan 10 per cent and other Asia 10 per cent, GCC 10 per cent, Europe 6 per cent, America 3 per cent and 3 per cent others.

Their unique selling points mainly revolve around the entertainment and activities as they have all Asian style outlets such as Korean, Japanese and Filipino. Entertainment is provided through their state of the art nightclub, Boracay, which has numerous live bands, a



Cahal Altman
Marcom Manager
Asiana

DJ and top class dancers. They have two karaoke venues which are very unique in Dubai including many Asian classic hits for Asian guests. Compared to last year, they have a 3 per cent occupancy drop, which seems to have occurred all through Dubai but they are confident that next year there will be a considerable increase especially as they focus on the Korean and

online markets, which are currently performing well.

Participation in various trade shows increase their business potential namely B5, Arab health, Food exhibition and auto mechanics. Another noteworthy participation is in the Chinese market roadshows.

The rapid growth of the online market is their key focus for next year at Asiana hotel. In the pipeline is another new hotel expected to open in 2017. 📶



Katara Hospitality goes green

Katara Hospitality has been awarded for its efforts in reducing its organisational carbon footprint in an initiative that recycles cooking oil to produce renewable energy.



Katara Hospitality, the global hotel developer, owner and operator based in Qatar, is actively recycling their used cooking oil for bio-fuel production in a process approved by the European Commission. This practice is recognised by the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification System (ISCC) as one that contributes to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, protection of natural biospheres, sustainable land use and social responsibility. Katara Hospitality, which includes hotels like Sharq Village & Spa, a Ritz Carlton Hotel, Somerset West Bay Doha, Mövenpick Hotel Doha and Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel, works closely with GBO, the only ISCC certified company in Qatar approved

to collect and recycle oil safely according to "Green Restaurants" standards.

"As human activity increases across the globe, it is the duty of every noble citizen and organisation to employ initiatives that re-

Katara Hospitality has in place a broadly integrated approach to corporate social responsibility, with keen focus on environmental issues and sustainable development in the tourism sector. Particularly where energy conservation is concerned,



duce the impact of GHG emissions," says **Hamad Abdulla Al-Mulla**, Chief Executive Officer, Katara Hospitality. "We are honoured to be awarded this certification as it symbolises our continued commitment to reducing the impacts of global warming and our corporate efforts towards environmental preservation" he said.

it is actively evaluating and continually improving upon its processes for reducing energy and water consumption within its hotels and resorts. Recycling used cooking oil from F&B outlets is a noteworthy exercise by which Katara Hospitality employs sustainable hospitality focus and innovative technologies. 📶

When luxury becomes a lifestyle

Developed in partnership with Enshaa Group—one of UAE's premier developers—Palazzo Versace will be the most luxurious hotel the ME has ever seen. Donatella Versace has exclusively designed the interiors and furniture for each of the 215 rooms, bringing the universe of Versace to life.



Situated in the heart of the city, Palazzo Versace Dubai is at the centre of the new Culture Village, located on a prime waterfront plot with unobstructed views of the Dubai Creek.

Every detail is exquisite—from the ceilings with gold hand-detailing to the finest marbles and mosaics. The opulent interiors reflect the Versace lifestyle through the contemporary eye of Artistic Director – **Donatella Versace**. Throughout the interiors run the iconic motifs of Versace, such as the Medusa head, the Greek Key and the house's legendary prints, with many designs created exclusively for the Palazzo Versace Dubai. The grand lobby features an extraordinary 1000sq m marble mosaic floor, with be-

spoke furniture and textiles decorated with peacocks, falcons and horses.

The all day dining restaurant Giardino has marble flooring and columns, with the walls decorated in a special edition of the iconic Jungle print from Versace Wallpaper collection. Meanwhile the Vanitas restaurant is like a classical Italian palace, with handmade wall decorations featuring the Grotteschellatiane. Palazzo Versace Dubai will also be home to 169 residences, ranging from one to six bedrooms, each decorated and furnished in true Versace style.

"Versace is a renowned fashion, luxury and lifestyle Company. Since the very be-



ginning we've encompassed many product categories—from clothing to accessories, luxury goods to home collection—to convey the uniqueness and iconic style of the brand," said **GianGiacomo Ferraris**, Chief Executive Officer of Versace.

"In 2000, we pioneered the luxury fashion brand-ed hotels by opening the first Palazzo Versace Gold Coast, Australia and today we are proud to bring the ultimate Versace lifestyle in

Dubai with the new hotel. The fine and luxurious designs by Versace will be present in every detail of the living environment, and luxury will become a lifestyle."

Speaking at the hotel's opening, **Raza Jafar**, Master Developer, ENSHAA PSC CEO, said, "This is a very exciting time for the Palazzo Versace chain, and we are thrilled to bring this iconic hotel to the exquisite, cosmopolitan city of Dubai. 📶

Millennium focus on MICE

Noting the significance of Asian market for the Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai, **Hossam Nabil**, Director of Sales & Marketing for the property says, "We see Asia as an important and growing market for MICE segment. In fact, in terms of Asian business we have seen a massive increase of 80 per cent compared to last year to our hotel."

The Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai exhibited its exceptional MICE facilities at ITB Asia 2015 for the first

and selective as well as their needs and expectations are constantly developing. We are confident that following our participation in ITB Asia demand for the Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai will get a tremendous boost, particularly from MICE & group segments," he adds.

Organised by Messe Berlin (Singapore) and supported by the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau, ITB Asia 2015 played host to over 750 exhibitors from 76 countries, as



time, held in Singapore from October 21-23. "ITB Asia was the perfect platform for us to showcase our unique hospitality to the Asian market. We have recently added seven new meeting rooms to our corporate facilities and will soon announce the opening of our Grand Ballroom—Al Garhoud which will help us a lot while approaching MICE companies knowing that our clientele are savvy

well as 850 buyers from 62 countries. The event offers key insights into corporate travel trends to support business travel professionals looking to expand in the strong Asian business travel market. Currently, the Asia Pacific region owns the largest share of the business travel spend market, and business travel spend in China alone is forecast to skyrocket 61 per cent in the next five years.

Exploring Ladakh and Kashmir

Air India, along with leading hotels, organised a Fam trip for leading tour operators of UAE to Ladakh, Gulmarg and Srinagar in Jammu & Kashmir, India. Air India also showcased its much acclaimed Dreamliner on the Dubai-Delhi route.

 FAISAL H. BHAT FROM LEH



It was an unforgettable experience. The Grand Hotel in Leh is an excellent property offering good views. The staff is very friendly and service is excellent. Khyber Resorts, Spa in Gulmarg is a luxurious hotel. The L'Occitane Spa is wonderful. The rooms are big and clean with a really spacious balcony that offers stunning view. Mascot House Boat in Srinagar is a beautifully furnished, luxurious property and a very unique experience. We send about 100 pax annually from the UAE to India. There are also a lot of clients whom we book for medical treatments. We expect further growth in the Medical and Wellness Tourism in India.

Manisha Sharma

Travel Consultant-Mall of Emirates
Al-Futtam Travel Company LLC Dubai



All the destinations were exotic. The best hospitality I got was from The Grand Dragon, Ladakh. It was the best I ever experienced on a Fam trip. On an average, we send more than 5,000 tourists to India per year. Majority of tourists from the UAE visit Kerala, Goa, Mumbai, Kashmir, and the Golden Triangle. The eTourist Visa facility will encourage more traffic from UAE and infrastructure also needs improvement all over India.

Maffie Dcosta

Office Manager
Jamal Travel Agency



Leh is very beautiful, but the weather needs some getting used to. In, Gulmarg and Srinagar, the climate is very pleasant and beautiful. The hospitality was at its best at Grand Dragon; next best was the Mascot house boat. From the UAE, we have movement to Goa and South of India. The Taj Mahal, Red fort in Delhi, backwaters Kerala and the beaches of Goa attract our clients.

Ajaaz Adenwala

Team Supervisor
Orient Travels

Ladakh is one of the best destinations I have ever visited and enjoyed a lot. The hospitality at the properties is awesome and unforgettable. Usually we send around 50-100 visitors to India. Indian visa is very easy to obtain, except for some countries. Kerala, Rajasthan, Delhi and Goa are the most popular tourist attractions tourists find in India. A big change is expected from the UAE market in 2016. The number of UAE nationals visiting Indian destinations have increased.



Najeebudhin. CK

Manager
Alhind Travel and Tours L.L.C

The destinations we visited were very good and have a lot of potential for more tourism. The hospitality at the properties we visited and stayed was very good and on par with international standards. From the UAE we send about 1000 pax to India. Visa process and duration is based on nationality. The most attractive tourist attraction are Kerala and Goa, Himachal Pradesh. 2016 should see good numbers of tourists to India.



Riaz Arshad

Asst. Manager Emerging Markets
Kanoo Travels

The whole trip was truly amazing. The hospitality we received from The Grand Dragon Ladakh was incomparable to any of the other properties. Our FITs are mostly focused on Europe, the Far East and the US but we send not less than 200-250 pax to India which is very nominal. More countries should get visa on arrival. It's little time consuming process and takes 5-6 working days to get a visa from Dubai. Our visitors usually go to Kerala for beautiful landscape, backwaters, beaches and high range whereas Goa specialises in beaches and culture. As a whole, India has more potential in tourism than any other country in the world.



Royson S. Sunny

Manager - Finance
ATS Beyond Travel,

The trip was a learning experience for me. The Grand Dragon hosted us a memorable stay. They extended hospitality which was one of the best I have experienced in my life. Gulmarg is a popular skiing destination. The Khyber resort and Spa provides a feel of nature while providing all the luxuries of a five star hotel. Presently we are sending very small number of tourists, but we will do our best to promote India. Kerala backwaters, Lake Palace, Virupaksha Temple, Kanha National Park, Harmandir Sahib, Jaisalmer, Ajanta Caves, Varanasi, Taj Mahal are likely to receive huge traffic in 2016.



Shafeek Moideen

Supervisor-Corporate
Deira Travel and Tourist Industry

Fabulous place to visit. Grand Dragon hospitality is above all standards and all other places were very good. We will try my level best to send as many tourists as possible to visit Kashmir, now that I have experienced it. Never heard any client complaining yet in Indian visa process. Golden Triangle, Goa and Kerala are the most popular tourist attractions in India. More awareness would be fruitful to see tourism bloom in 2016.



Rosario Fernandes

Senior Travel Consultant
Airlink International UAE

Foras eyes UK market

Yehia El Hajj and Hossam Andraous will together strengthen Foras Travel's MICE, B2B and Leisure sectors.



Foras Travel surges ahead with an undying effort to go beyond horizon in search of the best practices. This partnership by two stalwarts, **Yehia El Hajj**, known for his remarkable expertise in travel management, MICE and incentives segment and leisure and technology expert **Hossam Andraous**, in the travel and tourism sector will ensure sustainable business from some of the key clientele beneficial for the overall UAE market.

United Kingdom is one of the biggest markets for the UAE, therefore they have identified the growth potential and focus in this market in terms of MICE groups and leisure. They have planned their first branch office in the UK which will be operational by end of this year or early January 2016. Andraous adds, "Yehia has brought in a wealth of experience and



Hossam Andraous
CEO
Foras Travel and Tourism

Yehia has brought in a wealth of experience and expertise which is equally potential in terms of MICE business

expertise which is equally potential in terms of MICE business including other players like French, Spanish and Latin American will definitely raise their bar." Yehia,



Yehia El Hajj
Managing Director
Foras Travel and Tourism

We will be hosting 120 travel agents from France in March 2016 in a move to promote the UAE, not just Dubai but Abu Dhabi as well

the newly appointed MD, says, "We will be hosting 120 travel agents from France in March 2016 in a move to promote the UAE, not just Dubai but Abu Dhabi as well."

GTA to promote Dubai

GTA will work closely with travel agents to promote Dubai as a tourist destination with a special emphasis on Asia Pacific.



GTA launched its Strategic Partnership Program for Dubai with 24 hotels including both local hotel chains and international brand hotels. The move is an extension of GTA's global initiative to help specific markets generate more business worldwide, and follows similar launches in Hong Kong and Singapore. GTA will work closely with travel agents to promote Dubai as a tourist destination with special emphasis in Asia Pacific. Together with participating hotels in Dubai, GTA launched the 'Only in Dubai' Strategic Partnership Program which will help travel agents promote exclusive deals to promote hotel stays in Dubai exceeding three nights.

According to the statistics issued by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing

(DTCM), the top 10 source markets for Dubai in 2014 were Saudi Arabia at the top, the UK at third, and USA, Iran, Oman, Kuwait, Russia and Germany. India and China were placed second and seventh respectively. Overall guest nights booked for Dubai hotels and hotel apartment establishments also increased by 7.4 per cent in 2014 with the average length of stay increased from 3.78 days to 3.84 days.

GTA's 'Only in Dubai' Strategic Partnership Program targets the outbound traveller from Asia Pacific

Focus Dubai

- ◆ GTA is focused on promoting awareness and education of Dubai
- ◆ It will launch training videos and other educational materials for its travel sellers that introduce key tourist attractions

and introduces it as a major tourism hub. GTA is focused on promoting awareness and education of Dubai as a key tourist destination and will launch training videos and other educational materials for its travel sellers that introduce key tourist attractions that are found 'Only in Dubai'.

Celebrating 40 years in business in 2015, GTA is part of the Kuoni Group. Core to GTA's success as a leading travel company for the fully independent travel (FIT) industry is its longevity in the industry and financial stability, coupled with its global presence, and the expertise of its people. GTA has long-connected travel sellers with unrivalled content at the best possible prices through its reliable technology. Since May this year, Dubai is also home to GTA's Global Assistance Team which supports travel agents and travellers worldwide.



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Al Raha Beach Hotel

New networks at WTM 2015

The Middle East secured a large number of new business opportunities as they participated in the World Travel Market (WTM) last month in London. The four days experienced an impressive overall delegate increase in all major categories. The trade exhibition saw participation from over 250 exhibitors from airlines, tourism boards, luxury resorts and technology specialists.



Dubai Airshow attracts 65,000 visitors

Dubai Airshow 2015 took place at the Dubai World Central (DWC) and received more than 65,000 visitors through five days. **TRAVTALK** speaks to some of the delegates and exhibitors.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

The Dubai Airshow truly is the centre of the aerospace industry. With exhibitors coming from over 60 countries including new ones from places such as the USA and Asia, we will see some very new and innovative additions to the show this year. This is not only due to the phenomenal growth trajectory of the industry but also underscores our commitment to ensuring that the aviation sector is represented across all areas of the business mix.



Michele Van Akeijen
Managing Director, Dubai Airshow

We are happy to announce our new project at the most visited trade event—the Dubai Airshow. Designed by French designer Didier Wolff, our airships are classified as 'lighter than air' generated by helium gas with smaller engines and are much easier to drive and manoeuvre. It will be a safe and environment-friendly airship that gives a feeling of floating over the clouds through the use of massive windows that allow passengers vast uninterrupted views of the ground.



Captain Khalid Ahmed Al Ansari
CEO, Spirit of the Emirates

At Lufthansa Technik we try to position ourselves as close as we can to our customers. We have a sales and representation office in the Middle East. We want to be close to our customers from a sales point of view and an operational point of view. That is the key to our success and everyone visits the Dubai Airshow to talk business and that is what is important to us.



Richard Haas
Director Sales MEA, Lufthansa Technik



We have come to the Dubai Airshow to share our presence and gain more business and showcase our new services. We started a new service called the engine wash in the Middle East-Dubai. We also have a customer service desk, where the customers can get quick service and we also started storing parts here.

Ziad Faisal Al Hazmi
CEO of UAE Base - Lufthansa Technik



We are one of the world's leading aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul organisations, which are placed within four hour flight distance for customers in Europe, North Africa, Middle East and CIS countries. Our presence at the show is very important as we have the chance to display our services whilst we also get the opportunity to witness the new products and services available around the world.

Ahmat Karaman
CEO, Turkish Technic



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1,100+ exhibitors at Dubai Airshow

Dubai Airshow saw a total of 1,103 exhibitors and received an overwhelming response from trade visitors at Dubai World Central (DWC). The show, for the first time featured a 3D print pavilion, 3D Printshow Dubai, and an exhibition by the newly formed UAE Space Agency.





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IATA celebrates 70 years

International Air Traffic Association (IATA) celebrated its 70th anniversary in Abu Dhabi with its members. This two day programme discussed many pressing issues pertaining to various problems in the region from air traffic control to other important aspects such as safety.



Kuoni Group

Dubai

Zubin Karkaria has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Kuoni Group. He is the first Indian to be selected for this top post. Karkaria was appointed as the COO of the Kuoni India Tour Operating Division in 1999, and moved on to become the Deputy CEO and Head Business Development in 2003. He conceptualised and launched VFS Global in 2001, and was appointed as the CEO and MD of Kuoni India and South Asia in 2005. In March 2013, Karkaria was appointed on the Executive Board of Kuoni Group. He graduated from Mumbai University and completed his Business Management studies from Mumbai.



China Eastern Airlines

UAE

Cui Wei has been appointed as the new General Manager of China Eastern Airlines UAE. Wei has worked in China Eastern Airlines head office, as part of the marketing and sales department since 2003. From 2009 he has worked in senior roles at China Eastern Airlines overseas offices such as Japan and Italy. With 12 years of experience in airlines industry, Wei is working towards developing the Middle East market via Dubai for China Eastern Airlines.



Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Doha

Martin Schnider has been appointed as the General Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Doha. Schnider joins the Doha property, which is scheduled to open in 2016, from Mandarin Oriental, Macau where he has held the position of General Manager since 2008. Prior to this, Schnider was Hotel Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo. Martin began his career with the Group at Mandarin Oriental, Singapore in 1994, progressing from there to Assistant Food and Beverage Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Manila, before joining Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur in 2000.



Cove Rotana Resort

Ras Al Khaimah

Sander Ackermans has been appointed Director of Food & Beverage for The Cove Rotana Resort. Born in Netherlands, Ackermans graduated from Business School Notenboom, Maastricht with a degree in Hospitality Management. Prior to joining the Rotana family, Ackermans previously worked at Sun Resorts Mauritius. He brings 10 years of hospitality experience in Food & Beverage management in luxury operations across multi brands in the US, Europe, Africa and United Arab Emirates.



The Chedi Muscat

Oman

The Chedi Muscat announces the appointment of **Lore Koenig**, who has returned to Oman as the Executive Regional Director of Sales and Marketing. In this role, she will be responsible for the overall strategic sales, marketing and communication of the hotel locally, regionally and internationally. A German native, Koenig first joined The Chedi Muscat in 2004 as Director of Sales and Marketing. Over the years, she has built considerable experience in the luxury hospitality segment.



The Ajman Palace Hotel

Ajman

The Ajman Palace Hotel has appointed **Ghazi Louhichi** as its new Food and Beverage Manager. Louhichi brings more than eight years' experience to his new role, having worked at prestigious properties such as Hilton London Metropole, Europe's largest conference and banqueting hotel, and Al Bustan Rotana Hotel Dubai, winner of Dubai Leading City Hotel 2013 at the World Travel Market. Prior to joining The Ajman Palace Hotel, he was Assistant Director of Food and Beverage at Al Bustan Rotana Hotel Dubai.



Strengthening inbound travel

Dubai Leisure Holidays has a new addition to its inbound portfolio. It has purchased its own campsite, refurbished with special VIP lounge areas, tailor-made to the needs of its clients.



A well-known established company in the industry, Dubai Leisure Holidays, primarily was an IATA travel company with superior expertise in outbound tourism, today it has diversified and increased its portfolio to add the inbound travel strength to their agenda. Duly authorised by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), Dubai Leisure Holidays has a proven track record of service and professionalism which includes personalised service to their clients in order to understand their needs and provide them a superior

service for large tour groups and individual travellers. The company was initiated by a very hard working and sincere entrepreneur in the country, **Simon D'Mello** with a track record of 35 years experience in this field.

The recent addition in their inbound portfolio is the purchase of their own campsite, which gives them an edge over other players as it is tailor made to a novel concept in keeping with the demands of their clientele. The campsite, set to open in December this year, has been refurbished with special VIP lounge areas, which will be on a higher pedestal, and another elevated position with sofas for other



Simon D'Mello
Founder
Dubai Leisure Holidays

guests instead of the regular ground position that makes it a totally new experience for up-market clientele.

A special hand-picked menu has been carefully prepared to fit both the Arabic and European

markets. It will be a different experience to the visitors as they introduce new entertainment facilities, a souk inside the campsite, many heritage photographs, which will enable the visitors to learn of the tradition and culture.

Apart from this project, they have been granted a special quota of visas with 14 days, 30 days, multiple visas, 30 day single entry, 90 day single entry and multiple-entry, service visa, cruise visa and all other categories of visa requirements.

Transportation is another addition to the strengths of their portfolio as they specialise in certain areas



as they have their own transportation service for 14 seater, 40 seater, excursions, desert safari, dhow cruise, every little detail required as a fully-fledged DMC. Next year their plans include a special cruise itinerary package as well, which will give them a cutting edge over other players in the market.

Their highly qualified and dedicated team of staff recruited from some of the

leading trade partners have added on to expand their market outreach placing them at the helm of service in both inbound and outbound travel. The secret of their success is that they can perceive the requirements and expectations of their clients and provide sheer satisfaction to make their vacation hassle free. Their dynamic and modern approach to the travel and tour operations has emerged as one of the leading agencies based in Dubai as they offer a comprehensive service to the travellers. 🌟



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