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RIYADH
TRAVEL FAIR

Special
Issue

April 12-15
2016

Rapid increase in halal tourism

The world's Muslim population will grow at 35 per cent over the next decade, bringing the Muslim population from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030, according to a study by Pew Research Centre. Reportedly, the Islamic tourism market is projected to be worth \$181 billion by 2018.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Thailand is named one of the Top 10 Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in the world by Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2015. The recent hosting of the first-ever Thailand Muslim Friendly Destination in Bangkok further strengthens Thailand's position to cater to Muslim travellers by providing Arabic speaking staff, halal food options, prayer facilities in the airport and Muslim-friendly hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions throughout the country.



Chalernsak Suranant

Director - Dubai and Middle East office
Tourism Authority of Thailand

Recently, the Thai cabinet approved the Halal Development and Promotion Strategy for 2016-2020. The objective is to promote Thailand as a key manufacturing and export base for halal products and services, increase the country's revenue, build awareness and trust in Thai halal products. The accompanying Action Plan is a three-pronged effort involving the Thai public and private sectors and various Islamic institutions in Thailand. Other than that, TAT has developed a long term Muslim-friendly destination campaign all over their networks worldwide to further attract Muslim visitors.

Muslim travellers have increased from only 25 million in 2000 to 108 million in 2014, bringing in \$145 million in value. In 2020, the number of Muslim travellers would reach 150 million, bringing in more than \$200 million in tourism receipts.



Director Verna C. Buensuceso

Officer-in-Charge, Market Development Group
DOT Philippines

The Philippines Department of Tourism (PDOT) seeks to position the Philippines as the world's newest Muslim-friendly destination by giving out a host of incentives to tourism and travel establishments that will seek halal certification and turn their facilities 'Muslim-friendly.' Under the Philippine Halal Tourism Program, DOT will cover all fees for halal accreditation and assist the establishments every step of the way if they commit to turn their facilities 'Muslim-friendly' at least 40 establishments — 20 in Manila; 10 in Cebu and Boracay; and 10 in Davao — the four pilot areas identified for the Philippine Halal Tourism Program, have been targeted for halal certification by April 7, in time for the gastronomic event, "Madrid Fusion" to be opened in Manila, where PDOT has reserved a section for the halal showcase.

As far as Islamic Tourism in Malaysia is concerned, the country is the best destination for Muslim travellers in the world. According to a Thomson Reuters report, Malaysia is recognised as the leading country with the most developed Islamic economy for Muslim travellers ahead of big names like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bahrain and Jordan.



Zulkifly Md. Said

Director General - Islamic Tourism Centre
Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia

The Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia through Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) will continue to carry out activities, conducting research and organise capacity building programmes as well as training courses that will help contribute to the Islamic tourism segment of Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia, the marketing and promotional arm of Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, has established 44 offices in various markets throughout the world to carry out marketing and promotional activities. These include offices in Dubai, Jeddah, Iran, Istanbul and Almaty.

Contd. on page 3 ▶



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Capturing lucrative markets

► Contd. from page 1

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In 2014, the Maldives received 37,201 tourists from the Middle East region which increased by 14.7 per cent in 2015. Saudi Arabia remains a priority bringing 12,405 visitors to the Maldives in 2014, other GCC countries are also emerging as potential expanding markets including the UAE with 7,007 visitors and Kuwait with 5,248 visitors. Other Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Jordan are accountable to 10,591 visitors to the Maldives.



Ibrahim Asim
Director, Maldives Marketing and
PR Corporation, Maldives

To attract more of Muslim travellers, we are working very closely with our hotel partners to ensure that the hotels have the availability of Halal cuisine along with Muslim-friendly accommodations. We are also working closely with our industry partners to create a calendar of events that celebrates events such as Ramadan, Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitr.

“

In the past years, there has been an increase in the number of halal food outlets all over Japan particularly in Kyoto. In order to cater to Muslim guests, Kyoto City has founded an independent halal certification system and provides information in four languages about restaurants and hotels that have received this certification.



Shuhei Akahoshi
Managing Director
Kyoto Convention & Visitors Bureau

We have a local base in the UAE that covers the entire Middle East region, we have introduced several campaigns and initiatives that are aimed at proactively attracting more and more tourists from the Middle East to Kyoto City, for many unique and memorable experiences. Local seminars are held regularly to educate the travel industry on the importance of providing Halal and Muslim-friendly cuisine and other services and amenities that would be appreciated by guests from the region. We have also have a special online Muslim-friendly Kyoto website www.kyoto.travel/muslim which is available in English, Arabic, Bahasa Malaysian and Turkish, where visitors can log on to gain detailed information on travelling to Kyoto city.

“

As a US destination, Orange County, California, through the OCVA, continues to remain at the forefront of proactively reaching out to welcome guests from the Middle East. It is the first, and to date only, U.S. tourism association to have a permanent promotional office within the GCC.



Ed Fuller
President and CEO
Orange County Visitors Association

In 2015 OCVA launched an online educational video in conjunction with the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding in Dubai, to train Orange County's retail, hospitality, tourism and even police force on how to warmly welcome and effectively interact with guests from the Middle East. We hope businesses use this as training to encourage culturally-aware hospitality. Ensuring that we assist visitors by culturally providing for their needs will motivate Middle Eastern travellers to return to Orange County year on year.

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

New source markets

The halal economy which encompasses halal tourism, food, clothing, cosmetics among others, is set to grow over the next few years valued at approximately \$3.2 trillion in 2012, the halal sector is forecasted to increase to \$6.4 trillion by 2018. In the State of the Global Islamic Economy 2015/2016 report, the Muslim travel market is valued at \$142 billion – not accounting for Hajj and Umrah.

According to the 2014-2015 report by Thomson Reuters on the State of the Global Islamic Economy the global Muslim spending on travel (outbound) has increased 7.7 per cent to reach \$140 billion in 2013 (excluding Hajj and Umrah). This is 11.6 per cent of the global expenditure and is expected to reach \$238 billion by 2019. Top source countries of Muslim tourists based on 2013 expenditure were: Saudi Arabia (\$17.8 billion), Iran (\$14.3 billion), UAE (\$11.2 billion), Qatar (\$7.8 billion), Kuwait (\$7.7 billion), and Indonesia (\$7.5 billion). Meanwhile, Malaysia, UAE and Singapore lead the Halal Travel Indicator that focuses on the health of the family-friendly/Halal Travel ecosystem a country has relative to its size.

Recognising the potential in the rapidly growing Muslim population, and the increasing demand for halal alternatives in various retail sectors, many countries including non-Muslim countries are already opening up their markets for Muslim capital and tourists.

During this month, we can witness the Riyadh Travel fair, which is one of the biggest trade fairs in the region with a record number of exhibitors and visitors flocking to display, demonstrate and study on the resources available. Over 55 countries participate with more than 250 exhibitors representing tourism boards with their marketing plans. The 2016 edition is expected to be the largest on record with an increase in both the number of exhibitors and expected visitor arrivals. Over 50 national and regional pavilions will have a prominent presence with the show floor space also increased by 11 per cent compared to the 2015 event. The Riyadh Travel Fair is targeted at both travel professionals and the general public looking for in-depth destination information and special deals. Visitors to the 2016 edition will interact with various tourism authorities, hotels, airlines and travel agents from around the world.

Air Arabia: Low cost leader in ME

The most significant achievement for Air Arabia in 2015 was becoming the first low cost carrier to enter the Chinese market with the launch of regular non-stop services to Urumqi (Western China) and adding 23 routes to its network and the fifth international hub in Jordan.

The year 2015 was a highly successful year of growth and achievement for Air Arabia as our expansion strategy, efficient operations and tight cost controls reinforced our market leading position. The impact of low oil prices continues to have its effect on the

airline continued to expand its customer base. More than 7.6 million passengers flew with Air Arabia in 2015, a 12 per cent year-on-year increase.

Some of the key highlights for last year included becoming the first low-cost

airline from the Middle East and Africa to enter the Chinese market with the launch of regular non-stop services to Urumqi, the largest city in Western China.

The airline also added a fifth international hub with the formation of 'Air Arabia Jordan' and the opening of a fixed-based operation at Amman Queen Alia International Airport. Customer retention was boosted in 2015 with the launch of Airewards, the first loyalty programme from a regional low-cost carrier. It offers the same simple, transparent and value-

packed experience that customers associate with Air Arabia, with points based on money spent rather than distance flown, and able to be earned on any product or service purchased from the airline. 23 new routes were added to the airline network and 7.6 million passengers flew Air Arabia in 2015.

Going forward, we will remain focused on ceaselessly delivering on our promise to help people fly more for less, with innovation and operational efficiency at the heart of our business.

Customer retention was boosted in 2015 with the launch of Airewards, the first loyalty programme from a regional low-cost carrier. It offers the same simple, transparent and value-packed experience that customers associate with Air Arabia

wider global economy, while pressure on yields and geopolitical uncertainty continued to weigh on the aviation industry. Despite these challenges, Air Arabia once again delivered a strong set of numbers and remains well positioned for further growth in 2016.

Air Arabia's net profit for the full year ending December 31, 2015 was AED 531 million. Turnover in 2015 reached AED 3.8 billion, an increase of 3 per cent on the preceding 12 months as the



The author is Adel Abdulla Ali, Group CEO, Air Arabia

Etihad enhances trainer fleet

■ Etihad Flight College has expanded its fleet of trainer aircraft with the delivery of two Extra EA 330 LT aircraft. The aircrafts were shipped and reassembled by the manufacturer at the Flight College's hangar in Al Ain and

showcased at the Abu Dhabi Air Expo.

The two aircraft join the college's existing fleet of trainer aircraft which includes 13 Cessna 172s and six Diamond DA42NG aircraft. The fleet will be further enhanced with the arrival of four additional Embraer Phenom 100 aircraft which

are expected to arrive later this year. **Christopher Ranganathan**, Etihad Airways' Vice President Operations Training, said, "Our main aim is to train pilots who are able to demonstrate safe, effective and efficient operations, and the addition of these new trainer aircraft greatly support this goal."

Based in Al Ain, the Etihad Flight College runs a Multi-Crew Pilot License (MPL) program to train up to 120 Emirati and international cadets each year from Etihad Airways and its partners Alitalia and Air Seychelles.

The Extra aircraft will be used for prevention and recovery training, which equips pilots with the skills to recognise, prevent and, if necessary, recover from a developing or developed airplane loss of control event.



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250+ exhibitors expected at RTF

To be held from April 12-15, over the years Riyadh Travel Fair (RTF) has become one of the biggest events in Saudi Arabia with over 200 exhibitors participating from over 50 countries. **TRAVTALK** catches up with **Sheikh Hafeez**, Director of Sales and Marketing, ASAS Exhibitions, organisers of RTF, to know more about this year's exhibition.

SHEHARA RIZLY

What are your expectations from the event this year?

This year's expectation is higher compared to last year. We expect more than 250 exhibitors representing more than 55 countries, national pavilions and seminars and welcome an anticipated 20,000 visitors. Riyadh Travel Fair (RTF) 2016, Saudi Arabia's leading travel industry showcase, will open its doors for the eighth consecutive year, with the 2016 edition to be located at the Al Faisaliah Hotel, Riyadh from April 12-15, 2016. The four-day event will become the focus of business networking opportunities, insightful seminar sessions, ministerial discussions and the recognition of 12 months of the tourism industry's achievements. The 2016 edition

will be the largest on record with an increase in both the number of exhibitors and expected visitor arrivals. Over 50 national and regional pavilions will have a prominent presence with the show floor space also increased by 11% compared to the 2015 event. The expectations are really high this year as we are having all our partners and big tourism boards increasing or keeping the same space and bringing in new co-exhibitors for the introduction into Saudi market through RTF.

What are the targeted markets and who are the key players?

Riyadh Travel Fair is targeted at both travel professionals and the general public looking for in-depth destination information and special deals. Visitors to the



Sheikh Hafeez
Director of Sales and Marketing
ASAS Exhibitions, organizers of RTF

This year will continue our growth as exhibitors hit over 250 and expected visitor numbers over 20,000

2016 edition will be able to interact directly with various tourism authorities, hotels, airlines and travel agents from around the world. The Arabian Gulf region will have a strong presence at the fair

including pavilions sponsored by; Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority, Qatar Tourism Authority, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority and Oman Tourism. National pavilions confirmed to attend include those of: Austria, Hungary, Jordan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Bursa and Korea, to name just a few.

Exhibitors from Asia, Oceania, Europe and North Africa will also be present, along with hotels, airlines, travel agencies, online booking sites, and car rental companies such as Rotana, Lufthansa, Al Riyadh Travel and Tourism, MATATO, TravZilla, Dollar Rent A Car, Fursan Travel, and Flyin, to name a few.

Riyadh Travel Fair is organised by ASAS Exhibition and Conference Organising company under the sponsorship of Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority & Qatar Tourism Authority as (Strategic Partner), Sharjah Tourism (Diamond Sponsor), Al Riyadh Travel and Tourism (Gold Sponsor), Fujairah Tourism and Antiques & Flyin.com (Silver Sponsor). The Target Market is all the travel tourism Groups.

How does it contribute to the growth of the region?

We are regularly getting feedbacks from all our Tourism Boards as they are continuously having 10-15 per cent more Saudis going into their destinations due to Riyadh Travel fair. With Saudi nationals' increasingly travelling both domestically and overseas,

the opportunities that the Riyadh Travel Fair provides for domestic and overseas destinations, hospitality service providers and other tourism related businesses, to directly meet with the kingdom's leading travel professionals and travellers has never been more significant.

How is this year different from last year?

Last year the Riyadh Travel Fair featured 219 exhibitors with visitor attendance at 17,573. That was an increase of 15 per cent compared to the 2014 edition. This year will continue our year-on-year growth as exhibitors hit over 250 and expected visitor numbers over 20,000. Also this year, we are having more local travel agents participating to RTF to promote more B2B interactions between stakeholders. 🌟

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Dubai: Air Canada's new hub

The new five year plan for Air Canada includes converting Toronto into a 'Super Hub' and Dubai to be the 'hub' for the GCC region.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Air Canada inaugurated a new non-stop service in November 2015 between Dubai and Toronto, further expanding its growing international network. The new route is operated with Air Canada's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner which features a larger capacity and greater range allowing Air Canada to accelerate its international expansion strategy.

"The addition of Dubai to our international network is further evidence of our focus on our international growth strategy," says **Duncan Bureau**, Vice President – Global Sales, Air Canada. "Dubai is our first non-stop flight from the UAE, and is a great addition at a time when air travel between North America and the region is growing and offers great connection



Duncan Bureau
Vice President – Global Sales
Air Canada

Dubai is our first non-stop flight from the UAE, and is a great addition at a time when travel between America and the region is growing

possibilities not only to other destinations in the Gulf region including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar and also for customers in the region to

access our expansive North American network which includes over 50 destinations in the United States."

The three-times-weekly service to Dubai is operated with the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, offers three classes of service including next generation lie-flat seats in International Business Class, a Premium Economy cabin and upgraded In-Flight Entertainment available at every seat throughout the aircraft. All premium customers are eligible for priority check-in, Maple Leaf Lounge access, priority boarding and other benefits. Since December 2014, Air Canada and Air Canada rouge have announced new international service to Dubai, Delhi, Brisbane, Lyon, London-Gatwick, Casablanca, Prague, Budapest, Glasgow and Warsaw. 🇦🇪

Turkish Airlines: \$1.69 bn profit

According to the consolidated financial statements, Turkish Airlines reported \$1.69 billion as net profit surpassing a billion dollar level for the first time in history.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Profit from main operations stood at \$895 million with an increase of 32 per cent from the previous year. Turkish Airlines generated sales revenues of \$10.522 billion in 2015. Pointing to the operational cash generation ability, Turkish Airlines generated \$2.6 billion of EBITDAR with a 24.5 per cent margin, increasing 5.7 percentage points in 2015. With these financial results the company strengthened its place among the most profitable airlines in the world despite the political and economical instabilities over its operating environment and significant currency fluctuations.

In 2015 Turkish Airlines realised a capacity increase of 13.6 per cent (available seat km) and carried 61.2



M. Iker Ayçi
Turkish Airlines' Chairman of the Board
and the Executive Committee

Turkish Airlines has reinforced its position among the most profitable airlines with these financial results

million passengers on its 453,000 flights with a load factor of 78 per cent. **M. Iker Ayçi**, Turkish Airlines' Chairman of the Board and the Ex-

ecutive Committee, said: "First of all, I would like to specify that we successfully completed 2015 which was generally described as a tough year for both the world and our country. Turkish Airlines has reinforced its position among the most profitable airlines with these financial results recorded in this challenging year despite the fierce competition in the global aviation industry and also the political and economical instabilities over its operating environment and significant currency fluctuations."

Selected the "Best Airline in Europe" for the fifth time in a row, Turkish Airlines flies to 49 domestic and 235 international destinations, a total of 284 destinations in 113 countries including routes inaugurated in 2015 such as San Francisco, Miami, Maputo, Taipei and Manila. 🇦🇪

Lufthansa's lounge in Dubai

Lufthansa has opened its Business Class and Senator Lounge at the new Concourse D being opened to all departing passengers via the Skytrain.

 TT BUREAU

The total 500 sqm facility is now available for Lufthansa, SWISS and Star Alliance passengers with Business Class tickets and Frequent Travellers cardholders (Business lounge), as well as guests with Miles & More flyer programme HON circle status, Senator and Star Gold cardholder, and First Class tickets (Senator lounge) so they can rest, dine, relax or freshen up in an exclusive comfort before boarding their flights.

Karsten Zang, Lufthansa's Regional Director Gulf, I.R. Iran, Afghanistan & Pakistan, said, "We are very excited to inaugurate our Business Class and Senator Lounge here at Concourse D. Finally, we are able to provide a bigger and more spacious comfort zone for guests with our signature quality on-ground services. In 2015, we welcomed

around 40,000 guests at our Senator Lounge in Concourse C. Now, with our new premium facility that

"The new Business Class and Senator Lounges highlight our premium strategy - the design and the



has just been doubled in size, we expect to receive about 75,000 guests, 35,000 of whom would be first-time visitors to our Business Class lounge. We are proud of the multi-million Euro investments we made to build this new lounge knowing that our passengers will have the comfort they deserve while waiting for their flights."

services provided are reflective of the highest standards of quality and of Lufthansa's consistent commitment to superior customer service. It is quite apt that our modern lounge would also be located at the opulent Concourse D of the Dubai International Airport," said **Dr. Björn Becker**, Director Product Management Airport & Passenger Services, Lufthansa. 🇦🇪



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Eco-tourism: big boost for Vision 2021

Sharjah is working on a new eco-tourism project aimed at attracting tourists interested in nature, heritage and architecture to further enhance their vision for the next five years and also to provide more opportunities for investment and employment in the emirate of Sharjah.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Sharjah is making use of all the resources to portray the emirate as a diversified destination which attracts different segments of travellers around the globe. **H.H. Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Mohamed Al Qasimi**, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah

launched the Mleiha Archaeological Centre, the first phase of the eco-tourism project, which displays ancient relics found at Mleiha. The centre takes visitors on a tour through Mleiha's history over three millenniums in its separate sections. The centre will be constantly updated as new findings are uncovered through ongoing excavation work and placed on display there. His High-




ness was introduced to the various services provided by the center which includes administration offices, a prayer room, a souvenirs

shop, guided tours, as well as cafes and lounges.

Sheikha Bodourbint Sultan Al Qasimi, Chairperson, Shurooq, said, "I am very happy to be here to announce the launch of the Mleiha Archaeological and Eco-tourism Project. I am particularly delighted because I know that this project will add value to Sharjah and the UAE generally. Launching this project reflects the keenness of our

leadership to protect our heritage and preserve our Emirati identity."

H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal, CEO, Shurooq, gave a detailed presentation about the first phase of the Mleiha Archaeological and Eco-tourism Project, which was officially opened by the Ruler of Sharjah, on January 27, 2016. Al Sarkal said, "The project is implemented under the directives of His

Highness the Ruler of Sharjah and provides a new focal point in Shurooq's strategy to attract investment to the Central and Eastern regions of Sharjah and create job opportunities for the local community. The project aims to highlight tourist and historical attractions, introduce the region's rich cultural legacy and archaeological heritage and attract visitors, particularly nature and heritage lovers to the emirate of Sharjah." 



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RAMADA
Sharjah

1st Aloft Dubai resort

Aloft Dubai will be Starwood Hotels & Resorts' first resort style property in the Middle East, complete with beach access when it opens in 2017.

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Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide recently signed an agreement with **Rashid Al Abbar**, Chairman, Al Abbar Group, to open a 192-room Aloft on Dubai's iconic man-made island – Palm Jumeirah. Scheduled to open in 2017, Aloft Dubai, The Palm will be the brand's first resort in the Middle East, complete with beach access, when it opens its doors as the first mid-market hotel brand on the island.

"We are delighted to work with Rashid Al Abbar to debut our tech-forward Aloft experience to the Palm Jumeirah and bring the brand's passion for live music, vibrant design and innovation to this exciting development," said **Michael Wale**, President, Starwood Hotels & Hotels Europe, Africa and Middle East. "The UAE remains our strongest growth market in the Middle East, and this deal reinforces the

demand for mid-market hotel development in the region."

Al Abbar commented, "This is a very exciting and prestigious opportunity for us to work with Starwood. From the moment we shortlisted the proposed brands for this venture, we were convinced that the Aloft brand was a clear leader and we are happy with our decision. We are confident that Aloft Dubai, The Palm will create a new level of experience for guests by providing an international, mid-level, resort style hotel in Palm Jumeirah, at attractive rates."

Featuring an urban-influenced design, Aloft Dubai, The Palm will have 192 guest rooms, including 10 suites. Designed with the

needs of the savvy hyper-connected traveller in mind, the hotel will feature SPG Keyless (keyless entry sys-



tem that enables guests to use their smartphone or Apple Watch as a room key) and Wi-Fi throughout the property. For events and conferences, Aloft Dubai, The Palm will offer over 100 square meters of creative space including four meeting rooms equipped with the latest audio-visual technology. 🌟

'MICE to meet you'

Gloria and Yassat Gloria hotel and apartments recently revealed their campaign titled, "Hello...MICE to meet you" at the just concluded MICE Arabia Congress.

TT BUREAU

The new 'Hello...MICE to meet you' campaign introduces Gloria Hotel and Yassat Gloria Hotel and Apartments' business, culinary, leisure and entertainment facilities in Dubai's media and technology hub, Dubai Internet City, with elegantly designed interiors, facilities and authentic Arabian hospitality. The new campaign enables organisers to pick and choose from various price points to suit their specific event and budget. Alternatively, a completely bespoke event can be created in collaboration with Gloria Hotel and Yassat Gloria Hotel & Apartments' expert events team.

Freddy Farid, Area General Manager, Gloria Hotels and Resorts, says, "The GCC meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) industry is a booming sector that is set to expand exponentially. Our new initiative to highlight our MICE facilities



Freddy Farid
Area General Manager
Gloria Hotels and Resorts

will help us achieve our goal on positioning Gloria Hotels and Resorts as a leader in the MICE tourism sector."

Located on Sheikh Zayed Road, exactly in front of Dubai Internet City metro station, Gloria Hotel boasts of completed meeting and banqueting facilities with a space of 1845.51 sq. meters of meetings and conference rooms. The 41 storied tower offers options to MICE and meetings specialists to host large-scale events for up to 800 people as well as smaller gatherings.

Yassat Gloria Hotel & Apartments offers short and long-term guests stylish hotel apartment-style accommodation and is equipped with 400-sq-meter space solely dedicated for holding meetings and events, the hotel is also outfitted with different facilities such as an outdoor mini-football, volleyball and basketball court, an indoor squash court, an outdoor swimming pool and kids sports club with various activities.

In 2015, a total of 457 events were held at Gloria Hotel and while 398 events took place at Yassat Gloria Hotel & Apartments. With recent renovation and additions to the meeting space, share of revenue from MICE sector is expected to rise exponentially.

MICE Venue

- ◆ The 41 storied tower offers options to host large-scale events for up to 800 people

Discover Belek: Turkey's hidden gem

Considered as the hidden gem of Turkey, Belek is pivotal to Turkey's tourism industry being home to more than 30 four-star and five-star properties.



SHEHARA RIZLY

Antalya Aquarium: It claims to be the biggest tunnel aquarium in the world with a length of 131 meters and a width of 3 meters. It offers visitors a journey into the most colourful, unusual and often deadly marine life. The aquarium also has

multi-dimensional movie technology in its Ocean ride XD Cinema.

Golf: Belek has 14 golf courses designed by famous names such as Feherty, and Montgomerie. These courses have given Turkey international golfing credibility, and have

ensured that a golf holiday in Turkey is a once in a life time opportunity.

Mount Olympos: Take a ride in the cable car and witness the bright blue sea on one side and the snow covered mountains on the other with an added advantage of looking down



at the lush greenery of the Turkish Riviera.

The Belek town mosque is one of the town's most historic landmarks. Located in the centre of the town, the mosque stands alongside statues and a waterfall.

Duden Waterfalls: Karpuzkaldiran is another sight worth seeing in the province of Antalya. The waterfalls, formed by the recycle station water, are located 12 kilome-

tres north-east of Antalya. They end where the waters of the Lower Düden Falls drop off a rocky cliff directly into the Mediterranean Sea.

Dining Out: Among the specialties in Belek, one can have a soup called kulakli (chickpeas and diced meat); tahinliپیاز (dried-bean salad seasoned with crushed sesame seeds); tandirkebab; kabaktatlısi (pumpkin desert) sweetened with crushed sesame seeds and grape syrup and bergamot jam. 🌟

Getting there

- ◆ Turkish Airlines offers international flights to Antalya with a one stop flight in Istanbul or direct flights from Istanbul to Antalya for local flyers
- ◆ Their prices are quite reasonable and the special loyalty programme rewards frequent flyers
- ◆ If you fly business class the CIP lounge in Istanbul is a must visit place as it is located just adjacent to the runway and enables the passengers to get onboard hassle free

JA Resorts parties Hollywood style

JA Resorts & Hotels hosted its very own Oscar awards ceremony to celebrate and honour its key DMC partners in style at the Jebel Ali Golf Resort. The evening was filled with old hollywood glamour, suspense, entertainment and great food. It was an evening where they celebrated their top producers throughout the UAE and provided many interesting insights into their success with their tourism partners.



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Sharjah tourism shines

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) was pronounced the second-best exhibitor from the Middle East at ITB Berlin 2016. The Sharjah stand at ITB Berlin drew attention from the decision-makers, tour operators and representatives of international destinations as it showcased the emirate's new tourism products.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

The Sharjah delegation to ITB Berlin, led by SCTDA, included for the first time Knowledge without Borders and Sharjah Institute of Heritage, as well as SATA, Cozmo; Shurooq, Sharjah Healthcare City, Sharjah Museums, Sharjah International Airport, EPAA, Hotel Holiday International, Marbella Resort, Oceanic Hotel, Copthorne Hotel, Al Shaab Village, Coral Beach, Sheraton Resort, Ramada, Lou'lou'a Beach Resort, Radisson Blue Resort, Golden Tulip among others.

During the exhibition, SCTDA led high-level meetings with senior decision-makers in the German, European and global tourism field. Sharjah's participation also included a number of activities that highlighted the cultural identity and heritage of the emirate.

The exhibition offered SCTDA a platform to promote Sharjah's distinct family destinations, particularly the recently launched Al Noor Island, and its eco-



at ITB Berlin 2016



tourism initiative, the Mleiha archaeological project. The authority also showcased its innovative solutions, including mobile apps and interactive touchscreens, which have contributed to improving the experience of tourists in the emirate.

More than 185 countries from around the world participated in ITB Berlin this year. The exhibition, held over an area of 160,000 square metres, brought together 10,000 exhibitors, and attracted 23,000 trade visitors as well as 50,000 regular visitors. 🇦🇪



Xclusive dinner for travel agents

A dinner party was hosted by the team at Xclusive Maples at HC Hall to the travel professionals who have been supportive during the year. The key host for the evening was the Group General Manager **Nishchaya Dheer**, **Bhakti Barretto** and **Naveed Akram** – Cluster Sales Managers and the rest of the team.



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KSA top source market

Mohamed Saad, Director of Sales and Marketing, Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham, talks about the importance of Saudi Arabia to the United Arab Emirates.

SHEHARA RIZLY

The Saudi market has a huge potential in yielding high revenue, Saad believes. "The UAE remains the top travel destination for families from Saudi Arabia, and this trend supports the hotels in achieving their revenue target by as much as five times per year. In addition, Saudi Arabia sees an increase of 5



Mohamed Saad
Director of Sales and Marketing
Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham

The UAE remains as top travel destination for families from Saudi Arabia, and this trend supports the hotels in achieving their revenue target

per cent in outbound travel, compared to the same quarter last year, 2 per cent of which are from family travellers," he says.

Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham will actively take part in major exhibitions in

the region including the Riyadh Travel Fair, Jeddah International Tourism Exhibition, and Oman Tourism Exhibition. "We will offer tactical promotions to attract families, partner with major wholesale agents, and sign up with the major corporate and govern-

ment organisations in the GCC. The tourists from Saudi Arabia are mainly looking for family-friendly and kid-friendly facilities. They take in factors including room sizes, amenities like kitchenettes, as well as the rates. They also prefer locations near major attractions of the city, especially the shopping malls."

Saad opines that GCC, particularly KSA, is the most important market for UAE and that they are expecting increased arrivals from this region throughout the year. The GCC contributed 33 per cent to the total revenue of the property, 23 per cent of which are from Saudi Arabia (10 per cent from other GCC regions). Their expectations from the Riyadh Travel Fair is to further strengthen their existing relationships with their partners in Saudi Arabia and at the same time, tap new business through their participation. 🇦🇪

458-room Rove At The Park

Rove Hotels is planning to open 458-room Rove At The Park, which will reflect Dubai's cosmopolitan cultural identity adjacent to Dubai Parks and Resorts.

TT BUREAU

Rove Hotels is set to expand its portfolio with a new property, Rove At The Park, adjacent to Dubai Parks and Resorts, the region's largest integrated theme park destination taking shape in Jebel Ali. Rove Hotels plans to operate 10 properties with over 2,660 keys to support the ongoing preparation for Expo 2020 Dubai.

The new 458-room Rove At The Park, will be strategically located off Sheikh Zayed Road, close to Palm Jebel Ali midway between the Dubai and Abu Dhabi International Airports. It will complement the ambience offered by the three theme parks and water park which are part of the Dubai Parks and Resorts destination. It will become the region's largest integrated theme

park destination, set to open in 2016.

Chris Newman, Corporate Director of Operations, Emaar Hospitality Group, said, "Rove At The Park, our latest hotel within the vicinity of Dubai Parks and Resorts, the region's largest multi-themed leisure and entertainment destination, underlines the

spirit of partnership in supporting Dubai Plan 2021 and Dubai Tourism Vision 2020 announced by His Highness **Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai. We are keen to leverage the significant business opportunity within the proximity of Dubai Parks and Resorts that is set to catalyse Dubai's leisure and tourism sector."

The new property will also reflect all the value propositions that make the brand unique in Dubai's hospitality sector. The hotel will sport a



contemporary and urban design with Arabesque elements and display local art-pieces throughout the public areas. Assuring a high-tech environment, the new property will have a spaciouly designed lobby and lounge, elegantly designed rooms, starting at 26 sq meters and featuring a 42 inch TV screen complete with media hub, designer mattresses and a modern bathroom. 🇦🇪



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10,000 exhibitors @ITB Berlin

More than 185 countries from around the world participated in ITB Berlin this year. The exhibition, held over an area of 160,000 square metres, brought together 10,000 exhibitors, and attracted 23,000 trade visitors as well as 50,000 regular visitors.



Focus on mid-market travel

Arabian Travel Mart 2016 scheduled for April 25-28, focuses on mid-market travel, and adds special focus on other segments like wellness, technology, halal tourism, etc.

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The upcoming edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2016 will introduce a dedicated Wellness and Spa lounge exclusively for 25 exhibitors from the most recognised health and wellness hospitality destinations in the world. This move comes as a key to capitalise the second fastest-growing market for spas, according to the Global Wellness Institute (GWI).

GWI's 2014 Global Spa and Wellness Economy Monitor report states that the UAE will top spa growth in the region by 2017, more than doubling current business volume with 17.9 per cent annual growth since 2012.

"This prompted us to design a dedicated space with seminar sessions focused exclusively on industry topics.



Nadege Noblet-Segers
Exhibition Manager
Arabian Travel Market

ATM Wellness & Spa Lounge will be working in association with Spafinder Wellness 365™ to offer suppliers an exclusive and convenient platform

ATM Wellness & Spa Lounge will be working in association with Spafinder Wellness 365™, the leading consumer

resource for wellness travel and the largest marketing and incentives company for the wellness industry, to offer suppliers an exclusive and convenient platform to meet new contacts and conduct business," said **Nadege Noblet-Segers**, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market.

The lounge will host two full days of pre-scheduled appointments with high calibre Middle Eastern buyers and international wellness suppliers, and act as a hub for wellness and spa professionals. A wellness seminar will also be held on April 27, under the theme Wellbeing Hospitality – Competitive Concepts for Hospitality and Leisure Assets.

ATM 2015 witnessed a year-on-year visitor attendance increase of 15 per cent, with exhibiting companies increasing by 5 per cent. 📈

Dine with Disney at the Bateaux



Disney Destinations hosted an event on Bateaux in Dubai with **Brigitte Elmekies-Sitbon**, Director International Sales & Marketing, Disney Destinations, **Brigid McDonnell**, Head of Sales International Markets, Disney Destinations and **Damien Vayne**, Head of International Press Relations, to celebrate new announcements for Walt Disney World, Disney Cruise Line and Disneyland Paris. "With all these new experiences coming soon, we are looking forward to welcoming Guests from the region to enjoy magical moments in our Disney Destinations," said Elmekies-Sitbon. Disney Cruise Line announced 2016 Summer itineraries. Throughout the summer of 2016, Disney Cruise Line also will return to Norway, Iceland and ports of call in more than 15 European countries. In addition to the tour of Europe with limited engagements in the Baltic, Norwegian Fjords, Iceland, British Isles and the Mediterranean, Disney Cruise Line will revisit favorite destinations elsewhere around the globe including Alaska, the Caribbean and the Bahamas.



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Pullman marks Women's Day

To mark the collective and global celebration of International Women's Day and Mother's Day celebrated on March 8 and March 21, the Pullman Dubai Jumeirah Lakes Towers showcased the new series of contemporary portrait and figurative paintings of beautiful and symbolic women by Susan Brooker under the theme - 'more than a woman.'



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DINE IN, LUNCH BOX DELIVERY AND CATERING

Focus on innovation in S. Arabia

Travelport LIVE 'Spotlight on Innovation Roadshow', with focus on travel agencies, took place in the cities of Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam on March 9, 14, and 15, 2016 respectively.

TT BUREAU

In each city, delegates had the chance to discuss topics related to air, hospitality, corporate, mobile, customer support as well as learn how to take full advantage of Travelport's innovation in booking technology to meet the needs of their customers and earn new reve-

The roadshow is designed to empower travel professionals to continue redefining travel commerce in Saudi Arabia through set of tailored tools that boost efficiency

nues. The roadshow attracted owners, managers and frontline travel consultants from travel agencies, airlines, hotels and car rentals, as well as corporate managers.

This year's roadshow focused on tools designed for online travel agencies, reflecting the findings from Travelport's co-sponsored study from 2015 which highlighted trends in Saudi Arabia on a growing volume of online travel bookings. Also responding to the needs of corporates, the Travelport team running the roadshow also spoke through the efficient solutions on offer to meet today's ever-connected business travellers' expectations.

During the event, delegates also had a chance to explore the benefits of TravelportSmartpoint. As airline offers get more complex and travellers

want the ability to tailor their journeys according to their needs (for example, travellers on a budget or who want to earn more miles, carry extra baggage or make last minute travel changes etc.), Travelport is helping

The latest airline ancillary revenue report estimates ancillary revenue will have hit more

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travel agents maximise their revenues and profitability with the capability to seamlessly integrate this type of unrivalled content into their travel agency screens.

the full range of airlines' fares and ancillaries at the availability, fare quote and fare shop stages of the booking process, providing a new level of product insight and informa-



Ibrahim El Mohandes
Country Manager for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Travelport

than \$59 billion last year, an increase of more than 18% than 2014's figure of \$36.7 billion. Using TravelportSmartpoint and its branded fares and ancillaries capability, travel agents can compare

tion to better promote upsell opportunities to the customer. **Ibrahim El Mohandes**, Country Manager for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Travelport, commented, "Travelport's unique value proposition is driven by unrivalled access to global travel content, including over 650,000 hotel properties as well as fares and ancillaries from over 400 airlines. The roadshow is designed to empower travel professionals to continue redefining travel commerce in Saudi Arabia through set of tailored tools that boost efficiency, revenue growth and customers' loyalty. We are proud to see Travelport's solutions meeting the needs of Saudi Arabia's travel buyers and we will continue to invite industry players to build Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform together."

Improved mobile App for Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi Tourism and Cultural Authority has upgraded and enhanced the features of the mobile App which allows users to gain instant access to all the new services offered by the destination.

TT BUREAU

The latest Visit Abu Dhabi App version, which allows users to gain instant access to all that's new in the emirate via their mobile phones, is now live and features several upgrades and enhancements as TCA Abu Dhabi continues to improve the functionality of the service. Version 4.0 of the App, which allows access to the

The App boasts an elegant new design following the latest user experience trends and new user-friendly hotel and restaurant filters, where you can find exactly what you need at the click of a button

Mouza Al Shamsi

Acting Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, TCA Abu Dhabi

same content at the Authority's destination portal, VisitAbuDhabi.ae, is available for iPhone, Android &

Windows Phone, and will feature enhancements to make it a more user-friendly experience.

"We've listened carefully to all your feedback and our App has been completely redesigned from top to bottom following the latest user experience trends to make the whole experience even more immersive and easy to use," said **Mouza Al Shamsi**, Acting Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, TCA Abu Dhabi.

"All of the key features

that you're familiar with from our previous versions are still present but now they're even faster, smarter and bursting with functionality. A number of useful and intuitive new additions are also present, including integration with The Centre for Regulation of Transport by Hire Cars, which will allow users to book a taxi directly from within the App, and also integration with the Department of Transport to get live geo-locat-

ed bus data, which will allow the user to discover the best route and schedule to get to any point of interest. The App has also been integrated with TripAdvisor, to allow access to reviews for all locations, hotels and restaurants. In addition, the App boasts an elegant new design following the latest user experience trends and new user-friendly hotel and restaurant filters, where you can find exactly what you need at the click of a button, so discovering everything you need to know about the emirate of Abu Dhabi has never looked so good!" added Al Shamsi.

Travelport Smartpoint

Upgrade to the latest Travelport Smartpoint 7.0

We've been listening to what our customers' value and Travelport Smartpoint 7.0 has improved usability and includes many new features, such as the ability to position the start of message (SOM) and execute commands anywhere on the screen. Including the ability to access the new upgraded Travelport ViewTrip, our itinerary management solution, and improvements to the 4 window 'Grid View' mode.

These enhancements will help make significant steps towards the travel agent's overall selling experience.



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Ajman reveals record revenues @ITB

The delegation from Ajman Tourism released their total tourism revenues for 2015 and the new destination brand identity at the ITB Berlin with a slogan 'Sincerely Emirati'.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Total tourism revenues in Ajman for 2015 has reached AED359million, an increase of 19% from 2014, according to tourism statistics released by the Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) at the ITB event in Berlin.

The report was presented by the Ajman delegation to H.E. Juma Mubarak Al Junaibi, UAE Ambassador to Germany, who visited the Ajman government pavilion.

this year after the launch of Ajman's new destination brand which will help position the emirate as a leisure and investment destination."

The Ajman delegation included Ajman Tourism, Ajman Saray, Fairmont Ajman, Crown Palace Hotel, Kempinski Hotel Ajman, The Ajman Palace Hotel, Ramada Hotel, Travel Center, ITLT and Anta Travel and Tours.

The report showed that total guests in Ajman in 2015 reached 509,658 while total guest nights reached



new establishments added in the inventory totaling 36 establishments with 3,354 hotel rooms and units and 5,074 beds.

The delegation also launched the emirate's new destination brand that will focus on the slogan "Sincerely Emirati."

The new brand is about promoting Ajman as tourism and investment destination offering different touristic attractions and facilities for investors. The brand's slogan 'Sincerely Emirati' embodies the true spirit of modern Emirati hospitality.

During the five-day exhibition, visitors to the Ajman stand received information about the new identity. Representatives of hotels and travel agencies also provided details about the destination and its key attractions.



lowed by GCC nationals with 93,510 and Asians and Africans came in third with 89,113.

Visitors from Europe, America, Russia, CIS countries, New Zealand, Austral-

ia and other Arab countries participated in the exhibition. In 2015, there were five

H.E. Faisal Al Nuaimi, General Manager of ATDD, said: "The report is extremely encouraging knowing that the tourism industry in the UAE has been affected by the drop in the influx of holidaymakers from key markets coupled with low oil prices, currency fluctuations and regional unrest. We anticipate continued growth

1,392,406 with majority of the guests booked their stay in hotel and hotel apartments. Average occupancy for hotel last year was 60 per cent with average room rate of AED514 while hotel apartments recorded average occupancy of 68 per cent. Guests from the UAE remains the biggest contributor with 132,455 in 2015 fol-



First Central Hotel Apartments TECOM

Dubai

Wael El Behi has been appointed as the General Manager of First Central Hotel Apartments, TECOM. Wael will oversee all operations of the 524-room property, including guest services, sales and marketing efforts and hotel administration. Wael brings in a wealth of hospitality industry experience, most recently served as general manager of Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham. Prior to this, he worked as general manager of Ramada Downtown Dubai, Corinthia Hotels International, Safir Hotels, Coral International, Danat Hotels and Resorts, Minc Apartments and Auris Hotels.



Campbell Gray Hotels

Beirut

Campbell Gray Hotels appointed **Georges Ojeil** as General Manager of Le Gray, Beirut. Ojeil brings with him over 18 years of experience within the sector including hospitality business and hotel management. He was appointed Corporate Director of Food and Beverage for Le Royal Hotels & Resorts, where he oversaw Le Royal Hammamet, Le Royal Luxembourg, Le Royal Beirut, Le Royal El Minzah and Grand Hotel Ville De France by Le Royal in Tangier. His eventually joined InterContinental Hotels Group's Crowne Plaza, Jordan Red Sea as Executive Assistant Manager.



Hyatt Regency

Dubai

Hyatt Regency Dubai has appointed **Stéphane Blanc** as its new General Manager. Blanc joins Hyatt Regency Dubai from a long career with Starwood, where he last held the position of Deputy General Manager at the Le Méridien Dubai hotel, before opening his own Food & Beverage consulting company in Thailand. In 2000, he joined the Le Méridien in Dubai, where he held the positions of Director of Food & Beverage, Executive Assistant Manager, and subsequently from 2011 to 2015 his previous role of Deputy General Manager.



Wyndham Dubai Marina

Dubai

Manish Gehani has been appointed as the Director of Finance for the newly opened 486-room hotel, Wyndham Dubai Marina. Gehani brings over a decade of experience in hotel finance, including six years with the Wyndham Hotel Group and hotel pre-openings within the UAE. He will prepare the opening budget and plan the initial and annual capital expenditure for the hotel. Gehani will lead a Finance, IT and Purchasing Department, conduct internal audits of the operational departments, manage the costs, cash and treasury for the hotel and keep a close watch on the financial analysis of the market.



Binu Varghese has been appointed as Executive Assistant Manager of Operations at Wyndham Dubai Marina. Varghese comes on board as part of the pre-opening team and brings over 17 years' of experience including seven years with the Wyndham Hotel Group. He has vast experience over the EMA region as well as pre-openings in Bahrain, Tanzania and Ethiopia for the Wyndham Group. In his new role he will lead and develop the Food and Beverage department, creating development plans and training programs and implementing standard operation procedures.



Samer Kaddoura has been appointed as Executive Assistant Manager of Rooms Division at the Wyndham Dubai Marina. Kaddoura has been with the Wyndham hotel Group for the past four years. He brings over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry with leading hotel brands in the UAE and Malaysia holding various roles including pre-opening support. His new role will be to support the General Manager in overseeing day-to-day operations, implementing standard operation procedures, monitoring the guest satisfaction scores, among other things.



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