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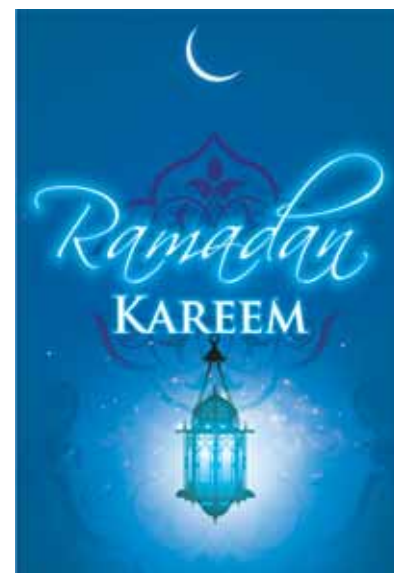
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- 7% increase in visitors @ATM 07
- Innovation roadshow in Egypt..... 09
- Rocco Forte Hotels enters KSA 12



Gearing up for summer travel

The past few months witnessed the emergence of new destinations and trends for discerning travellers who seek something novel to explore. It will be a mixed bag of options for those who seek to travel outbound during this season. **TRAVTALK** finds out which destinations are preparing to beat the heat this summer!

SHEHARA RIZLY

Check in Georgia

Georgia is known for its hospitality, delicious cuisine, landscapes and high level of safety. The new project for summer 'Check in Georgia' encompasses concerts of famous artists and festivals taking place throughout the season. We uphold a visa-free regime for citizens and resident permit holders of GCC countries. One of the key areas where Georgia prevails in attracting visitors from the UAE is its ease of access; it is geographically close, thus requires little travel time, we have good connectivity through regular direct flights by flydubai and Air Arabia.

In 2015, over 17,000 visitors came to Georgia from the UAE (increase of 687% compared to 2014), this year the number has risen even further, within the first four months we have seen over 5,000 visitors arriving into the country (increase of 140% compared to the same four months of 2015).



Tornike Zirakishvili
Head-Department of International Relations
Georgian National Tourism Administration

India for Wellness Tourism

Arab travellers plan their trip to hill stations in India due to close proximity and best air connectivity. During the summer in the UAE, Arab travellers visit Kerala and nearby states to enjoy the monsoon. Hill stations like Munnar, Shimla, Ooty, Kodaikanal, Lonavala, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Jammu and Kashmir are famous retreats among Arab travellers. During 2015, India received 62,000 tourists from the UAE. Since the introduction of e-Tourist Visa (eTV), UAE travellers are finding it very easy to visit India. Arab travellers consider India a suitable medical tourism destination due to reasonable cost and treatment.

As per the survey conducted by Marketing and Research Division of the Ministry of Tourism, a foreign individual tourist spends around \$2,900 in India per visit. Whereas, Arabs are among high-end travellers and spend over \$3,500 per visit approximately. Places like Cochin, Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad are among the popular cities that Arabs visit for shopping.



I.R.V.Rao
Assistant Director
India Tourism Dubai Office

Luxurious Thailand



Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor
Tourism Authority of Thailand

Middle East travellers recognise quality and seek family-friendly luxury offerings, all of which Thailand is famous for. In terms of accommodation, healthcare, shopping and cultural experiences, Thailand's standards are always high. By marketing the Kingdom as a 'Quality Leisure Destination through Thainess', we are positioning ourselves as a unique nation that serves the needs of luxury lovers while also meeting their religious requirements. The Middle East remains one of the key markets to raise Thailand's quality tourism benchmark, especially for people seeking luxury shopping and healthcare. The importance of the Middle East market has been noted as 67 per cent of Middle East visitors make repeat visits to the country, an outstanding record that underscores Thailand's enviable status as a top leisure travel destination. Thailand welcomed 571,920 visitors from the region in 2015, with 163,960 visitors from the UAE, 90,012 from Oman, over 85,597 from Iran and 71,000 from Kuwait.

A vibrant Egyptian holiday



Hisham Zaazou
Minister of Tourism
Egypt

We are at a pivotal point in terms of tourism development in the country and the new #thisisegypt campaign demonstrates our commitment in attracting travellers from our sister Arab countries. Targeting the Arabic traveller from the Middle East, #thisisegypt will harness the power of digital in a region where Internet penetration is 5.8% higher at 48.1% than the world average and social media sites play a significant role in 88% of Internet users' daily lives. The campaign focuses on personalising the Egyptian experience by encouraging the wider Arab audience to consider the variety of holiday which can be enjoyed in Egypt from a vibrant city break in Alexandria or Cairo to luxury beach getaway in Hurgada or Sharm El Sheikh.

Azerbaijan: Carving a niche in ME

This former Soviet country offers warm summers, sublime beaches, megalithic monuments and a distinctively diverse culture. Though 9 out of the 11 world's climatic zones are found here, this summer temperatures may vary between 25 and 27 degrees Celsius. Visa procurement is a hassle-free activity, as nationals from UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore get visas-on-arrival facility whereas other nationalities can apply for visa online in advance of travel, and get them stamped on arrival at the airport. From Dubai it takes two and a half-hour via air to reach Azerbaijan on its national carrier AZAL, and flydubai.



Rashid Al Noori
Chairman- Representative office of the
Ministry of Culture and Tourism
Republic of Azerbaijan



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Unique holiday experiences

► Contd. from page 1

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Maja Pak, MSc
Acting Director
Slovenian Tourist Board

In nature's lap in Slovenia

Slovenia is best known for its natural health resorts, thermal spas and wellness centres. Due to the therapeutic effects of the springs reaching the surface at 32-73°C, many thermal spas and resorts continue to provide medical rehabilitation and other treatments, while others provide thermal entertainment in the form of water parks and fun for the whole family.

Another unique attraction is the ecological tourist farms, which offer a healthy living environment and certified organic food. There are more than 400 tourist farms for visitors to stay and enjoy a reconnection to the land, peace and relaxation, an opportunity to meet warm-hearted people and learn about their customs and livestock. Slovenia is conveniently accessed through its capital's Ljubljana Airport, or can be reached by road from Zagreb, Croatia within two hours, from Venice and Vienna within three and a half hours, from Munich within four and a half hours, or from Milan within five hours.

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Own a piece of paradise

We not only want guests from the Middle East to visit us, we want them to stay and call the OC home. We have come up with a first of its kind holiday package, exclusive to the Middle East traveller, which includes complimentary VIP shopping experiences and buying a luxury apartment or villa in Orange County, California! This is the first time for Orange County to offer such a package in any market around the world, and we are extremely excited to launch here in the Middle East.

The OC is blessed with one of the world's most comfortable all-year climates. Combined with our internationally acclaimed cuisine, shopping experiences, family entertainment, theme parks and stunning coastline and mountain landscapes, the OC offers an aspirational lifestyle that we not only want to share with visiting international tourists, but visitors that we could then hopefully call neighbours. It is the first, and to date the only, US tourism association to have a permanent promotional office within the G.C.C.



Ed Fuller
President & CEO, Orange County Visitors
Association (OCVA), California

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Turkish Airlines launches Istanbul-Atlanta route

Turkish Airlines launched flights from Istanbul Atatürk Airport to Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport; the world's busiest airport. Atlanta becomes Turkish Airlines' 15th destination in the Americas and 9th in the United States. The inaugural flight to Atlanta took place on May 16, 2016. Turkish Airlines flies to Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Panama, Bogota, Toronto, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Boston, Montreal, San Francisco and Miami in the Americas.




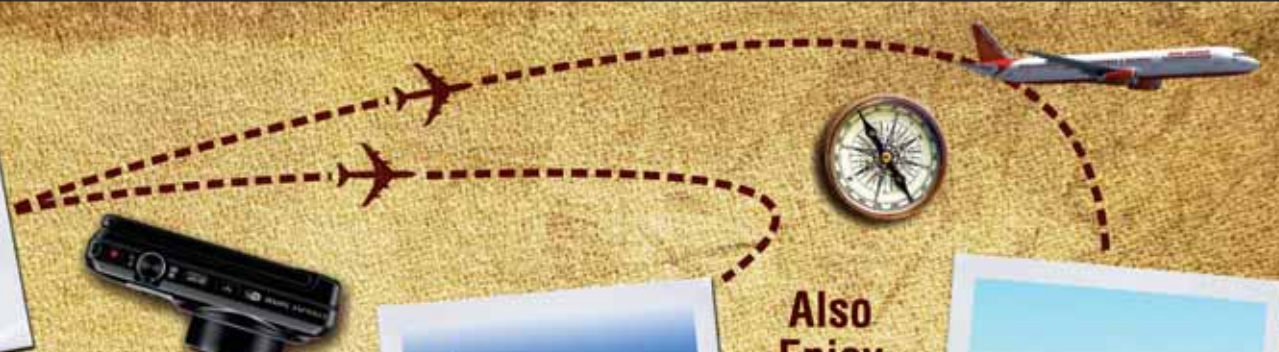


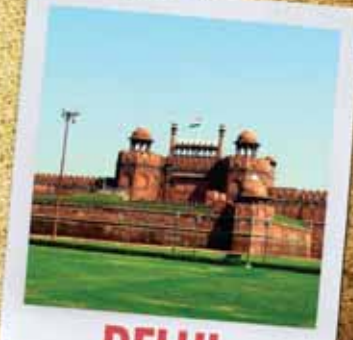
Ahmet Olmüstür
Chief Marketing Officer
Turkish Airlines

The addition of the Atlanta gateway means that we will now be connecting business and leisure travellers through our Istanbul hub

"This significant launch reinforces Turkish Airlines as a global leader in aviation with an internationally known brand helping passengers widen their world. The addition of the Atlanta gateway means that we will now be connecting business and leisure travellers through our Istanbul hub more efficiently and to more destinations than any other airline via one-stop connection through the world's most traveled airport, Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International Airport," said Ahmet Olmüstür, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Turkish Airlines.

"We are pleased to welcome Turkish Airlines as the newest carrier to Atlanta, solidifying the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport not only as the world's

busiest airport, but also the gateway to the World," said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed. "The new route will open a wide range of business and tourism opportunities to a vast array of global destinations served by the leading carrier who enables the passengers to reach more countries than any other airline and further advance Atlanta's tourism industry."

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Travel trends for summer

Come June, the holy month of Ramadan will commence paving the way for two categories of travel — those observing fast will be taking short 'staycations' locally, and others will prefer to explore some new destinations.

Hotels and resorts are prepared well in advance with different staycation packages tailor-made for guests from the region. Travel agents and tour operators, on the other hand, are arming themselves this month with various interesting new destinations on the cards to explore and experience.

The Middle East has a good influx of traffic consisting of expats who travel home for vacation or take a few days leave to travel to local destinations. These trends keep the tourism and travel fraternity on their toes as they continuously need to address the ever-changing demands of this travel segment.

Decreasing oil prices and the volatility of the European market has opened doors for destinations like Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovenia, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Georgia and Azerbaijan

Traditionally, travel was enjoyed only by the affluent class. But this is slowly changing with the dramatic shift in the middle class, which is on road to become well heeled. Luxury travel was a concept only used for the high-end customers, however, we see a different trend emerging even in terms of cabin class in airlines. The introduction of a Premium Economy Class rapidly set a new platform for the business travellers who prefer to travel in luxury.

The role of the travel agent is also changing in various ways. The traveller is well-informed today due to the rapid advancement in technology. Online search engines are on the rise, yet there are still travellers who prefer the agent over the software process. However, the emerging new trends of millennials top the list with online or smartphone usage, making it more popular. In a matter of time, millennials will be the decision-makers who will indulge in luxury travel of the future.

Shaping tomorrow's luxury travel

Luxury travel, across the globe, is going to see a 6.2 per cent rise in demand as it exceeds overall travel growth predictions, according to a latest study.

The future of luxury travel

Over the next 10 years, the growth rate in outbound luxury trips is projected at 6.2%, almost a third greater than overall travel (4.8%).

6.2%

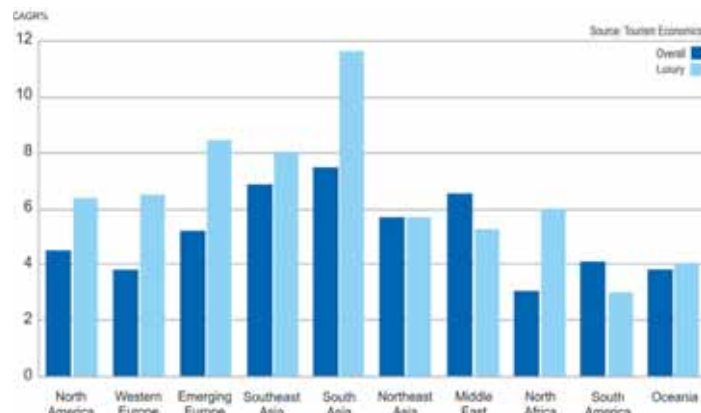
Projected 10-year
growth rate of
luxury travel

4.8%

Projected 10-year
growth rate of
overall travel

Luxury travel trends 2011-2015

Comparing 2015-2025 growth in overall travel and luxury travel across regions



Source: 'Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel' report by Amadeus

In Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, the overall travel market will grow by 4.4 per cent, while the luxury market will expand by 4.5 per cent.

These nations will experience growth despite their oil dependent economies. It will be interesting to see how their current innovation in the global luxury market — demonstrated in the world-leading first class products of their airlines — continues to set new standards in luxury in the next decade.

The emerging Middle Eastern markets of Lebanon, Iran, Jordan and Egypt will grow at a faster pace 7.5 per cent for overall travel and 8.9 per cent for luxury travel.

In the case of Iran, this is driven by the lifting of economic sanctions and the return of tourism to the nation.

Hyatt woos UAE and KSA

Hyatt Hotels is upbeat about the brand's expansion into key regional markets of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) at the recently concluded Arabian Travel Market in Dubai.



Among the properties coming up in the next three years, there are four in KSA — Hyatt Regency Riyadh Olaya, Hyatt Place Riyadh Sulaimania, Hyatt House Jeddah/Sari Street and Hyatt Place Jeddah/Medina Road — and two in UAE — Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Residences Emirates Pearl and Hyatt Place Dubai/AI Maktoum.

Tareq Daoud, Regional Vice President, Hyatt Sales Force-Middle East & Africa, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, South West Asia, said, "The Middle East provides a unique and diverse arena for us to evolve our



Tareq Daoud
Regional Vice President
Hyatt Sales Force-Middle East & Africa
Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, South West Asia

brand portfolio and we continue to make a strong impact in this region. We currently operate 12 full service hotels across the GCC and continue to recognise the benefits of expansion in this critically strategic market."

Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel & Residences Emirates Pearl enjoys a prime location close to the centre of Abu Dhabi, the iconic 47-storey hotel is located on the South West end of the Coastal Boulevard in the Ras Al Akhdar district. It is conveniently located close to upscale shopping malls and tourist attractions, and 30 minutes from Abu Dhabi International airport and less than two hours from Dubai's international airport. The contemporary 'twisting' glass tower offers 368-rooms and 60 fully-furnished service apartments with four restaurants, a lounge, two bars, extensive meeting facilities and a sophisticated spa & fitness centre. The hotel has been designed by Dennis

Lems Architects Associates, with interiors by MKV Design of London.

Hyatt Regency Riyadh Olaya, in the Kingdom's capital, a Hyatt affiliate has entered into an agreement with Mohammed A. Al Swailem Co. for commercial investment for a Hyatt Regency hotel in Riyadh offering 260 guest rooms including 40 suites spread across 28 floors of gracefully modern architecture. The hotel, slated to launch in 2016, will also feature a lobby lounge, two restaurants, a Regency Club lounge, Fitness Centre, more than 1,000 square metres of ballroom and event space, and a number of small meeting rooms.



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Targeting 1,100 rooms by 2019

As the Dubai hotel market becomes ever more competitive, a new wave of affordable properties, such as the Dubai-based three and four star Al Khoory Hotels, is giving visitors the facilities they want, coupled with exceptional value.

TT BUREAU

The mid-market hospitality sector is set to grow significantly in the UAE, over the next few years, primarily due to the upcoming Expo2020 envisioned by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United

Mohammed M T Khoory, Managing Director, Al Khoory Group, said, "Our hospitality division is in a steady proposition, and with new openings in the pipeline, we plan to offer 1,100 rooms in Dubai by 2019 end. During this time, we will also start to explore opportunities internationally and foresee to create management con-

Our hospitality division is in a steady proposition, and with new openings in the pipeline, we plan to offer 1,100 rooms in Dubai by 2019 end.

Mohammed M T Khoory
Managing Director, Al Khoory Group

Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Ruler of Dubai. Other contributing factors for the growth are rise in demand from China, India and GCC countries as well as Generation Y travellers and young families on a budget.

tracts with stand-alone properties in the UAE and GCC market, where we see long-term growth opportunities." In addition to existing properties such as the Al Khoory Hotel Apartments in Al Barsha and Al Khoory Executive Hotel in



Al Wasl, which are predominantly aimed at leisure and business travellers, Al Khoory Hotels launched their latest mid-market proposition at the recently concluded Arabian Travel Market (ATM), starting with the 227-room Al Khoory Atrium Hotel Al Barsha which is set to open in July 2016. With free Wi-Fi and a media hub in every room, the hotel's offering is complemented by its convenient location midway between Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum

International with Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre just 10 minutes away.

The hotel is a short distance from the upcoming Expo 2020 site, Jebel Ali port and the free zone areas. The property also offers meeting rooms with banquet and conference facilities for up to 70 people. All hotels within the group are dry, serve Halal food and have a no smoking policy, making it a family friendly hotel. 🌟

11 Louvre hotels to open this year

■ Louvre Hotels Group has announced the opening of 11 new hotels in the region this year, including six hotels in the GCC. The move forms part of an aggressive expansion plan that will see one of Europe's largest hotel groups greatly increase its operational footprint in MENA to have 95 hotels and over 15,000 guest rooms under its regional portfolio by 2020.



Amine E. Moukarzel
President
Louvre Hotels Group MENA

The Middle East and North Africa is an important market for Louvre Hotels and remains central to our global expansion

The new openings in 2016 — set to no less than 1,500 keys to the group's existing inventory in the region — include three hotels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and two each in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Lebanon. The group will also open properties in Qatar, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Tunisia this year. "Increasingly, we are seeing that growth in the MENA hospitality market is being driven not by luxury or premium hotels, but instead by mid-scale and budget hotels that offer the full spectrum of services at affordable prices. This presents an enormous window of opportunity for international players like Louvre Hotels to bring our global reputation and high

standards to the table and combine these with a superior customer value proposition to reshape the dynamics of the regional hospitality industry.

The Middle East and North Africa is an important market for Louvre Hotels and remains central to our global expansion," said **Amine E. Moukarzel**, President, Louvre Hotels Group MENA.



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28,000 visitors attend ATM 2016

Arabian Travel Market (ATM), the largest B2B travel and tourism exhibition in the region, recorded 28,000 visitors at the show this year with over 100 new exhibitors. The overall increase in visitor numbers and specifically the 9 per cent rise in key buyers reiterates that ATM 2016 is poised to top last year's record \$2.5 billion in business deals facilitated.



7% increase in visitors@ATM

Arabian Travel Market 2016, held at Dubai World Centre from April 25-28 recorded a 7% year-on-year rise in visitors.

SHEHARA RIZLY

The show registered an increase of nine per cent in Buyers' Club members (those with budget responsibility for regional and international contracting). "The initial estimated figures for this year's show highlights ATM's significance as a lead-

Nadege Noblet-Segers, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market (ATM).

The overall increase in visitor numbers and specifically the rise in key buyers underscores ATM's importance to trade buyers and also means ATM 2016 is poised to top last year's record \$2.5 billion in business deals facilitated.

"This year's popular mid-market theme also resonated with the region's travel professionals – with many exhibitors leveraging opportunities to launch mid-tier brands as well

as discussing strategies, developments and future trends during the ATM seminars," added Noblet-Segers.

Held under the patronage of **His Highness Sheikh**

Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, ATM has grown to become the largest event of its kind in the region and one of the biggest in the world. The 2016 edition boasted an additional hall, with 423 main stand holders representing 86 countries, 64 country pavilions and over 100 new exhibitors making their debut.

Once again, the show welcomed a number of new initiatives including the launch of the ATM Global Stage, which opened the week's proceedings with a high-level panel discussion on the future of tourism in the UAE featuring leading industry leaders and the Wellness & Spa Lounge, the inaugural Travel Agent Academy; and, in line with the show's ongoing focus on technological innovation, the first-ever ATM Bloggers' Speed Networking session, at which 40 travel bloggers met with interested exhibitors.



ing exhibition for the region's travel and tourism sector, as an increasing number of destinations ramp-up efforts to drive travel and tourism as part of economic diversification and sustainability," said

Impressive Incredible India Pavilion at ATM

A continuous stream of visitors packed the India Pavilion where 28 companies and state tourism departments from India were represented under the 'Incredible India' banner. The theme for this year's event was 'Yoga and Wellness'. **R.K. Bhatnagar**, Additional Director General (MR), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said that the number of tourist arrivals in India during 2015 had reached a record 8 million in 2015, an increase of 4.5 per cent over 2014. The Gulf and Middle East regions are important markets for India, with the UAE, KSA, Oman and Yemen, registering a consistent



and positive increase of tourist arrivals. He elaborated on the new initiatives being undertaken to streamline the e-Tourist Visa (eTV) process available currently to citizens of over 150 countries. The website www.incredibleindia.org is currently available in Arabic, English, Chinese (simplified), French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish languages, and is being further streamlined. Visitors to the site can get 360-degree views of their planned destinations. They can access, tag and review 'points of interests', hotels, shops, monuments, parks, etc., and also view the interiors of several key locations. The website can also be used for the booking of domestic air, train and bus tickets, hotel rooms and tour packages.



Ramadan Kareem

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Zaafaran

Gen Z travellers' forum

TIME Hotels just completed first in a four part study to seek perception of today's teenagers about travel and tourism.

TT BUREAU

This teen-focused roundtable provided unexpected insight into the next generation of frequent travellers with quality family time, hotel comfort, good food and memorable experiences winning out over 24/7 information and technology access. Conducted in partnership with BNC and kicking off with a roundtable event that brought together six expatriate teenagers resident in Dubai, for an open forum on their own travel experiences, desires and expectations.

"The impact of Gen Y on the travel and tourism landscape in recent years has been wholly focused on technology and mobile access to satisfy their 24/7 expectation of access to relevant information and desire for immediacy. With this roundtable, we expected a similar level of intensity when it comes to the importance of technology, but this was of diminished rel-



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
TIME Hotels

evance when compared with other more practical considerations. Although technology is still extremely important, with Wi-Fi access a basic expectation and the availability of games consoles a prerequisite of any Kids Club, our teen panel was adamant about the importance of a comfy bed, large clean room and good food as the non-negotiable fundamentals of a great holiday," said **Mohamed Awadalla**, CEO, TIME Hotels.

The six panelists agreed that some of their best holidays have had a significant lei-

sure focus with entertainment such as water park slides, nature-based attractions and local cultural experiences also key to a memorable family holiday. Quality family time was also highlighted as integral to an enjoyable stay with Gen Z travellers also very much involved in the travel decision-making process. The antithesis of the stereotypical Gen Y who can sometimes be unfairly pigeonholed as unsociable loners glued to a mobile device, and often oblivious to the surrounding environment, Gen Z appears to be far more socially interactive, and thus a dramatically different type of future traveller.

"At TIME Hotels, while we know that technology will continue to influence the travel process from every angle, I believe that we are seeing a return to more traditional values with social interaction, quality products and services and cultural experiences all on the Gen Z wish-list," remarked Awadalla. 🇦🇪

700 delegates at AHIC 2016

Arabian Hotel Investment Conference marked 12 years of a platform for the hotel investment industry in the Middle East.

TT BUREAU

AHIC was organised under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Airports, President of Dubai Department for Civil Aviation and Chairman and Group CEO of Emirates.

More than 700 delegates, sponsors, and speakers interacted with industry leaders during various sessions with topics including risk perception versus reality, travel patterns of the future, future global demographic and societal changes which will shape the tourism industry, industry headlines, industry outlook, transaction analysis; what to buy and when along with the signature and theme topic called 'Eye of the Future' which was presented by **David Scowsill**, President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC). Scowsill said that the travel

and tourism industry needs to come together in terms of the government working with the industry to encourage growth and that particular attention should be paid to visa policies as currently 63 per cent of the world's travellers need a visa stamp on their passport. He commented that the freedom of travel is under threat and this must be addressed by all stakeholders in the industry and beyond. Data shows that traveller numbers will double by 2025, he said, pointing out that the tourism sector supports 284,000,000 jobs worldwide and that 'no travel = no life'.

Thierry Antinori, EVP and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates Group, said the airline will take delivery of 37 new aircraft whilst retiring 26 in 2016.

Wyndham Hotel Group's President and CEO, **Geoff**



Ballotti commented that the most powerful tool a hotel can have is loyalty but it must be executed correctly to be of true value.

Hotly discussed topics at several panels included the introduction of VAT in Dubai and the implications this will have on the industry, airlift issues to growing destinations and how the banking sector is still a major issue for emerging destinations. "This year's event has been extremely interesting as anticipated," said **Jonathan Worsley**, Chairman of Bench Events and co-founder of AHIC. 🇦🇪

BlueBay expands its MENA portfolio

A gala dinner was hosted by the BlueBay Hotels chain at Arabian Travel Market (ATM) to present its new projects in the area and new properties included in its portfolio following the merger with Le Royal Hotels & Resorts.



Innovation roadshow in Egypt

With the tourism industry supporting nearly 3 million jobs in Egypt, Travelport initiated a programme at their recent roadshow for the travel industry leaders to leverage technology to support the growth of local travel businesses.

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The Travelport LIVE 'Spotlight on Innovation Roadshow' concluded in the Egyptian cities of Cairo and Alexandria on May 18 and May 23 respectively, with over 400 local travel industry players in attendance, including leading travel agencies and travel management companies, and representatives from airlines, and corporates. Travel and tourism contribute 12.8 per cent to Egypt's GDP and supports nearly three million jobs.

Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform provides travel agents with a firm foundation for future growth, as well as enabling them to stay competitive in a challenging business environment

Egypt's travel and tourism sector suffered a series of setbacks, but Travelport's Country Manager for Egypt, **Mervat Alfy**, believes that initiatives such as the LIVE 'Spotlight on Innovation Roadshow' contributes to the swifter recovery of the Egypt's travel industry. Commenting on the initiative, Alfy, who has over 20 years' experience operating in Egypt's travel industry, said, "Egypt remains the region's vital travel hub and Travelport is determined to support Egypt's travel industry stakeholders through the challenges they face by sharing knowledge on the most cutting-edge travel industry technologies they can leverage to

grow and accelerate the recovery of their businesses. By 2025, travel and tourism is forecast to support over 3.5 million jobs in Egypt and technology will play a key role in the growth and stability of our industry.

environment." While Egypt has faced several challenges in recent years, tourism remains one of

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Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform provides travel agents with a firm foundation for future growth, as well as enabling them to stay competitive in a challenging business en-

vironment." While Egypt has faced several challenges in recent years, tourism remains one of its leading foreign currency exchange providers and the sector is a key contributor to both GDP and job creation. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was EGP255.0 billion (12.8 per cent of GDP) in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 4.7 per cent per annum to EGP413.2 billion (12.4 per cent of GDP) in 2025.

As airline offers get more complex and travellers seek more choice, Travelport Smartpoint and associated technologies are helping travel agents maximise their revenues and profitability with the capability to seamlessly integrate this type of unrivalled content into their travel agency screens.

The roadshow will feature a series of interactive sessions which will showcase the solutions and technologies redefining the way travel is being searched, shared and booked by Egypt's leading travel industry players. 



Mervat Alfy, Country Manager for Egypt, Travelport

Touchless suite for fast, accurate service



Graham J. Nichols
Managing Director
Amadeus Gulf

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Amadeus promises to deliver efficiency, automation and business process

Amadeus Gulf launched a suite of cutting edge robotics and touchless solutions at ATM 2016 in order to empower travel companies, automate their processes and deliver streamlined customer experiences.

optimisation to its customers. **Graham J. Nichols**, Managing Director, Amadeus Gulf, says, "Our motivation has always been to help our clients deliver great customer experiences. The touchless suite can automate many manual checks, tasks and processes within an agency, helping deliver seamless, super-fast and accurate levels of service. The suite also helps our customers focus on travel inspiration and travel selling rather

Our motivation has always been to help our clients deliver great customer experiences. The touchless suite can automate many manual checks, tasks and processes within an agency, helping deliver seamless, super-fast and accurate levels of service


than pure fulfillment related tasks." The Middle East travel market is poised for enormous growth in the next three years, both online and offline. The

regional online travel market is forecast to almost double in value within the next two years, rising from \$18 billion to \$35 billion by 2018. These num-

bers represent a crucial call to action for travel agencies to better answer the customer needs through efficient and automated processes.

Amadeus Touchless Solutions are built on a flexible automation platform, which can be fully customised to help travel agencies process and better manage the time-consuming and complex tasks through a robust system along with the flexibility of four fully-customis-

able modules: quality control, auto ticketing, schedule change and fare optimisation.

This technology allows travel agents to perform various routine tasks at much faster speeds 24/7, some of the capabilities of the touchless suite include automatically finding the lowest daily fares available on selected flights, make fare comparisons and provide travellers with best prices. 

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Sharjah puts spotlight on

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) unveiled its 'Sharjah My Family Destination' campaign to strengthen the emirate's leading position in family tourism at the recently concluded Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2016.

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The announcement was made during a press conference organised by the Authority on its stand at ATM in the presence of **His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, SCTDA, **Hana Al Suwaidi**, Chairperson of the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA), **Ahmed Al Qaseer**, COO, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), and **Aisha Deemas**, Director, Executive Affairs at Sharjah Museums Department, **Ian Phillips**, acting CEO, Sharjah National Hotels, and **Jamal Abdunazar** from Cozmo Holidays as well as representatives from the local and international media. The conference highlighted the details of the campaign launched by the Authority to support the family tourism sector and strengthen Sharjah's position as a leading destination for family tourism in the region.

Addressing the press conference, Al Midfa described family tourism as one of the major sectors of tourism and a key contributor to the growth of this industry in prominent destinations around the world. He added that family tourism represents 12.5 per cent of the global tourism market, recording a total value of \$1.7 trillion in 2012. Family tourism is expected to achieve 4.8 per cent annual growth worldwide, according to Crescentrating, the Singaporean website specialised in the field of travel and tourism. Al Midfa pointed out that the leading status of this sector in Sharjah is the outcome of the concerted ef-



forts and integrated approach of all partners to achieve the common goal of promoting Sharjah's events and festivals as well as its mega projects as major family attractions. As a result of all these efforts and initiatives, the hotel sector in the emirate recorded cent per cent occupancy during the spring holiday in the Gulf region. Significant tourist inflow has been witnessed from the Saudi market, which has emerged as the most important source of family tourism in the region, he added.

"As part of SCTDA's pursuit to build on the achievements in the family tourism sector and develop it further, we are launching the 'Sharjah My Family Destination' campaign to strengthen cooperation between the Authority and all our partners in the emirate's tourism sector," Al Midfa said.

The Authority has opened several new environment tourism projects that offer innovative facilities for families in various cities of Sharjah, enhancing the emirate's position



family travel

as an ideal tourist destination for families. Al Suwaidi noted that these centres have received more than half a million visitors in the past year, most of them families. Wasit Nature Reserve, a wetland which opened recently, is an ideal family destination that offers educational and cultural classes and facilities such as observation platforms, she said.

The Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre preserves the mountain environment and provides unique opportunities for families to closely understand nature in a fun-filled manner, she added. Al Suwaidi pointed out that the EPAA will contribute to raising Sharjah's share in the family tourism market at a time when the emirate is witnessing a key stage in the growth and development of its tourism sector.

On the occasion, Al Qaseer said, "Since Shurooq's inception in 2009, we've focused on incorporating family tourism initiatives into physical objects which are featured in our multiple tourism projects. Our primary objective when developing all our projects is to ensure the establishment and sustainability of facilities, project characterisation and services that cater to the demands of families and family

tourists." Al Qaseer asserted that Shurooq has successfully implemented pioneering solutions in multiple tourism projects such as eco-tourism projects, archaeological tourism projects and cultural tourism projects. He said projects such as Al Majaz Waterfront, Al Qasba, Al Montazah Amusement and Water Park, Al Noor Island and the Mleiha Archaeological and eco-tourism project have made Sharjah one of the leading destinations for families and family tourists.

"Sharjah My Family Destination initiative is the closest we can get to the significance and importance which families

and family tourism play in the development of our societies and businesses. Sharjah My Family Destination will position Sharjah as one of the leading cities in the world to focus on family tourism, and will open new doors for pioneering solutions that will sustain the emirate's family-friendly environment," Al Qaseer stated. He added that Shurooq will play a key role in supporting the initiative, and will study multiple objectives with SCTDA to explore new strategies and plans related to this campaign.

Deemas said Sharjah Museums Department has 16



museums under its management, all of which collectively aim to deliver the highest museum standards to preserve collections and enhance an appreciation of culture and learning through exhibitions, educational and community programmes. "Our museums focus on providing unique discovery and learning experiences to all of our visitors, including community groups such as school and university students, various residents who may visit with groups of friends and family, as well as tourists who are looking for a cultural experience. One of our main aims is to cater to the vital area of family tourism. We achieve this through a wide range of activities including

gallery talks, cultural discussions, interactive workshops, academic programmes and much more," Deemas said.

"We are committed to ensuring that all of our main museums, including Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah Science Museum, Sharjah Maritime Museum and others, provide an element of interactive activity to enhance the family experience. We believe that giving access to these opportunities that everyone can get involved in provides memorable experience that results in repeat visitors and positive feedback," Deemas added.

The 'Sharjah My Family Destination' campaign aims

to introduce new tourism offers and packages by tour companies, hotels and leisure destinations for families visiting Sharjah from within and outside the country. It will establish direct communication with the public and family tourists through the Authority's social media channels in order to learn about their requirements and enhance the development of Sharjah's family tourism sector.

SCTDA is launching this campaign in cooperation with Sharjah Investment and Development Authority 'Shurooq', Sharjah Museums Department, travel agencies, hotels and resorts as well as shopping malls.



7 hotels in MENA by 2017

Spanish hotel chain, BlueBay Hotels is coming up with seven properties in the Middle East by 2017.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

The multi-brand BlueBay Hotels currently has two four star properties in the United Arab Emirates: Armada BlueBay Jumeirah Lakes Towers and BlueBay Black Stone. The hotel chain has five star properties in Jordan — Le Royal Amman Hotel by BlueBay; in the capital of Lebanon — Libano: Le Royal Beirut Hotel by BlueBay; in Morocco — Le Royal El Minzah Hotel by BlueBay and Grand Hotel Villa de France by BlueBay, both in Tangier; and in Tunisia — Le Royal Hammamet Hotel by BlueBay, in Hammamet.

Some of the new expansion plans for the MENA region were stated by **Ramón Hernández**, Director General/CEO, Blue Bay Group. "Our next openings will take place in the coming months in the Middle East and North Africa. Our main markets vary depending



Ramón Hernández
Director General/CEO
Blue Bay Group

on the area in which our hotels are located. For example, for the hotels in the Caribbean, the main markets are the US

and Canada; for the hotels in Europe the dominating one is the European market; and Arab countries for the MENA area. But equally, we must bear in mind that we focus on innovation and digital marketing to promote the hotels. In the summer we are coming to Central Europe with hotels in Luxembourg and France, and to Colombia in America. We are also presently weighing up the options in Asia, particularly in China, which would give BlueBay Hotels presence on every continent."

Upcoming properties

Hotels	Inventory	Opening
BlueBay Abu Dhabi (UAE)-4 stars	150 luxury apartments	2016
BlueBay Salalah (Oman) - 4 stars	45 luxury apartments	Q4 2016
Blue Diamond Fujairah (UAE)-5 stars	250 guest rooms and 112 apartments	Q1 2017
Armada BlueBay Sharjah (UAE)-4 stars	360 rooms	Q1 2017
BlueBay Savanna (Sharm El Sheikh Egypt)-5 stars	202 rooms	2017
BlueBay Istanbul (Turkey)-4 stars	403 rooms	2017
BlueBay Eucalyptus (Argelia)-4 stars	160 rooms	2017

Rocco Forte Hotels enters KSA

Rocco Forte Hotels has announced that it will open its first property in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Jeddah.

 TT BUREAU

With construction already complete, the Assila Hotel will open in September this year. Located at a prime site on Jeddah's fashionable Tahlia Street, the Assila Hotel will be a landmark building that adds 210 rooms and suites to the growing accommodation needs of the rapidly expanding hospitality sector of the region's largest market.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the total contribution of travel and tourism to Saudi GDP was SAR218 billion in 2014, accounting for 7.7 per cent of GDP. This is forecast to rise by 4.4 per cent pa to SAR356.6 billion (9.0 per cent of GDP) in 2025. This projected increase is due to Saudi Arabia's impressive tourism attractions and the ongoing growth of religious tourism.

In addition to the 210 hotel rooms and suites, Assila Hotel offers 94 residential suites, the first fully-serviced apartments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With a choice of one bedroom, two bedroom and four bedrooms apartments avail-

the hotel has taken centre stage, with over 2,000 pieces of handpicked original art, both contemporary and traditional, all from Saudi Arabian artists.

Established in 1996 by hotelier **Sir Rocco Forte** and his



Sir Rocco Forte and Zeinab Badawi at ATM 2016

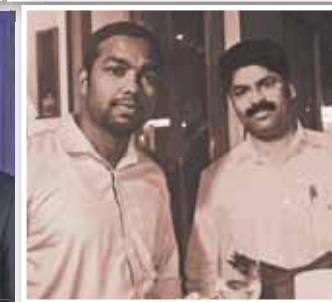
able, residents can enjoy the exquisite design and facilities of the hotel, whilst utilising the housekeeping and concierge service as they wish.

The design of the Assila Hotel is contemporary, punctuated with traditional Arabic elements in the lighting, colourful materials and artwork. Art at

sister **Olga Polizzi**, the Rocco Forte Hotels family includes the Hotel de Russie, Rome; Hotel Savoy, Florence; Verdura Resort, Sicily; The Balmoral, Edinburgh; Brown's Hotel, London; The Charles Hotel, Munich; Villa Kennedy, Frankfurt; Hotel de Rome, Berlin; Hotel Amigo, Brussels; and the Hotel Astoria, St Petersburg. 

Wyndham Hotel's grand UAE debut

The Wyndham Hotel Group and more than 250 guests celebrated the official opening of the Wyndham Dubai Marina, the first Wyndham Hotels and Resorts hotel in the UAE. The official Wyndham Dubai Marina Grand Opening coincided with Wyndham Hotel Group's ATM party.



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Anantara Hotels and Resorts

Oman

James Hewitson has been appointed as General Manager of Al Balee Resort Salalah by Anantara in the Sultanate of Oman. Having worked with Anantara for five years, Hewitson brings with him an extensive experience garnered from key roles at prominent hotels throughout the world. He has 25 years of experience across Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, including overseeing the pre-opening of several luxury resorts. He will oversee every aspect from operations and financing, to marketing and culture development at the resort.



Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Downtown

Dubai

Kosta Kourtsidis has been appointed as General Manager at the Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Downtown. He joined the Rezidor Hotel Group in March 2000 and has been a part of several hotel operations in Europe before moving to the region. Kosta started his hospitality career with Copthorne and Millennium Hotel in Hanover. He then moved to Rezidor where he spent most of his 16 years of hospitality experience. Kosta was part of Rezidor General Manager fast track programme, moving around several hotels sharing his expertise and assisting teams in opening new properties.



Denis Glibic joins Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Downtown as the Director of Sales & Marketing. An experienced sales professional Denis joined the Radisson Royal Hotel Dubai & Radisson Blu Resort Fujairah where he was responsible for key account management and the management of RFPs for the two hotels. Prior to that he was the Senior Sales Manager at the Jumeirah Group looking after the sales function of their portfolio of properties. In his new role Glibic will develop detailed sales and marketing plans, establish budgets and drive implementation strategies for the sales process.



All in One Travel & Tourism UAE

Dubai

Yehia El Hajj joins All in One Travel and Tourism as General Manager. He will work closely with the All in One team developing diversification strategies for the company. All in One Travel & Tourism is a leading Destination Management Company based in UAE with regional offices in KSA, Turkey, and Egypt; selling exclusively through tour operators, travel agents and travel trade experts. Hajj, with over 15 years of experience, is known for his expertise in travel management, MICE and incentive segments as well as leisure and technology experience in the travel & tourism industry.



Ramada Downtown Dubai

Dubai

Farrah Ismail joins Ramada Downtown Dubai as its new Director of Sales and Marketing. A Malaysian national with over 25 years of hospitality in Asia and Middle East, Ismail will be developing and executing new sales schemes aimed at yielding higher profit for the property as part of her new role. She will head both sales and marketing teams in the implementation of new and existing campaigns to boost occupancy and revenue, amid the highly competitive market. She is also responsible for strengthening the hotel's existing partnerships and keeping an eye on new and emerging markets.



Desert Adventures

Dubai

Tarek Alghar is now Business Development Manager of Desert Adventures Tourism. In his new role, Alghar will be tasked with developing new areas such as those in Central Asia. At the same time, he will continue to look after the CIS, MENA, GCC and Eastern Europe markets. He first joined the company in 2007 as Customer Service Manager for Reem Tours. After a year, he moved to the Sales department. Alghar has held various positions within the Sales unit. Prior to his promotion, he was Senior Sales Manager.





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