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Moscow: A leisure & luxury hub

The focus this month is on Leisure Moscow (Otdykh), Russia's leading international autumn trade fair for travel and tourism, which attracts over 750 exhibitors from 70 countries. The four-day event that begins from September 21 boasts of a slew of events that include one-on-one meetings and seminars.

SHEHARA RIZLY

“Travel exhibitions always reflect the situation of the market. Political and economic issues in the past years may have been a challenge for the industry. However, it seems that Russian economy is starting to recover.

This year we expect an increase in the number of visitors and expect growth in terms of business with an increase as the market situation in Russia is looking positive at the moment. From the seven emirates at present participation is confirmed from three emirates – Sharjah, Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah. Even at this point we are still accepting bookings hence the list of exhibitors is still under construction.”



Ekaterina Kohlhauser
Director of Exhibitions & Sales
Euroexpo Exhibitions & Congress
Development

“This is a very important event because Russia remains one of the top source markets for Sharjah, sending 54,461 visitors in H1 2016, a 1.8 per cent increase from H1 2015. This is the 14th time we are participating in the event.

In March, SCTDA participated in a Russian expedition and the Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibition for the seventh year in a row to promote the emirate. We expect to maintain Sharjah's positioning as an authentic destination in the key Russian market and boost visitor numbers from the country.”



H. E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and
Tourism Development Authority



Sergey G. Kanaev
Director, DTCM-Russia
CIS & Baltic States

“The official name of the fair is Otdykh, which means Leisure in Russian. This is the biggest autumn fair in Russia with 53,626 visitors and 700 exhibitors from 70 countries in 2016. The fair takes place on the eve of the high season in Dubai and Dubai stakeholders usually attach high importance to Otdykh Fair.

We participated annually from 1997 and next year we shall have a jubilee of 20 years of participation. Russian market shows signs of recovery and we expect increasing interest from local business towards our destination.”



Haitham Mattar
CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism
Development Authority

travel agencies in Russia. We will be meeting with more travel trade partners and promote Ras Al Khaimah to media and trade.”

“Russia continues to be a very important source market for Ras Al Khaimah Tourism, and currently ranks as our third international source market.

This is the second time when Ras Al Khaimah will be participating in this event. We will be exhibiting alongside our key industry partners – among which are Air Arabia. We have strategic partnerships in place with the major tour operators and



Adnan Aridi
Managing Director
Alpha Destination Management

hotel bookings. After the drop last year due to the economic situation in CIS, we hope that the CIS market to the UAE will improve this year.”

“This is a very important exhibition for the beginning of season in the UAE. There will be many deals presented during this exhibition. For the past 20 years Alpha Destination Management Company has been actively participating with Department of Tourism and Cultural Marketing Dubai (DTCM) in this exhibition.

The Russian tourist is one of the main markets of the UAE and very well known in terms of



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Religious tourism will save the day

According to the World Tourism Organisation, an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. The annual Hajj pilgrimage accounts for the largest gathering of tourists for the purpose of religious belief, generating good revenue for the destination.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Pilgrim or religious tourism is one of the oldest contributors to the travel and tourism sector. Today, it is one of the most lucrative in terms of economic growth builders to most nations worldwide. In the Middle Eastern region there are two specific areas where the growth of religious tourism is more rapid than other parts of the world namely Mecca/Madinah and the Holy City in Jerusalem. The world's largest form of mass religious tourism takes place at the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. North American religious tourists comprise an estimated \$10 billion of the industry.

This year the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) will be organising a conference on Religious Heritage

Middle East and Africa: Ramadan Update

Change in Destination Ranking Q1 to Q2

Departures: June 30 to July 6

Rank	Q1 Origin Region	Q2 Origin Region	Rank Change
1	India	India	-
2	US	Saudi Arabia	+
3	Turkey	US	-1
4	UK	Egypt	+2
5	Germany	Turkey	-2

Source: Q2 2016 Global Travel Insights, Sojern report April-June 2016

and Tourism with the Cultural Heritage Agency of Netherlands on how to increase religious heritage tourism in a changing society from October 5-7, in Netherlands. The Conference will discuss how religious heritage sites enrich the attractiveness of destinations and how they drive international tourism and economic growth. Religious

heritage tourism will create an opportunity for development of the sites of the destinations and provide more employment opportunities to sustain a steady income which contributes to the GDP. Faith-based travel or religious tourism will always stand out as the most stable or sustainable contributor to the economy. Although economic times

may differ from being stable to unstable conditions, the traveller who wish to perform his or her obligation in terms of their faith are committed to save for these religious and spiritual experiences and therefore there will be a regular steady flow of income to the local tourism economy.

Saudi Arabia's new 'post oil' economy plan as outlined in their 'Vision 2030' is to receive an influx of religious tourists to the kingdom for their Hajj pilgrimage. According to the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, more than 600,000 pilgrims are already in Madinah before Hajj. Among the initiatives outlined in the Vision 2030 is to increase the number of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to 30 million annually. Reports show that the number of people visiting Makkah to perform Hajj is increasing every year, estimating

the growth from 12 million in 2012 to almost 17 million by 2025, further strengthening the religious tourism sector's contribution to the national economy. At present, the segment concerning tour-

development in the region with 35,770 rooms in 81 hotels, with 24,133 rooms being constructed in Makkah alone.

Ziyad Bin Mahfouz, CEO, Elaf Group, said, "Religious tourism will significantly contribute to the country's shift towards the post oil era. In line with our commitments to support the tourism sector, especially the segment of tourism for religious purposes and the Kingdom's national economy, we are providing a wide range of services to facilitate and guarantee a comfortable stay in our hotels in Makkah and Madinah while performing Hajj. We continue to innovate with our service offerings for our guests such as extended and all-inclusive packages for all our hotels in Saudi Arabia, so that they can explore other parts of the country before or after their Hajj/Umrah performance."



Ziyad Bin Mahfouz
CEO
Elaf Group

ism for religious purposes contributes up to three per cent in the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Industry data shows that Saudi Arabia has the most rooms under construction for hotel

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Recovering markets

The steady signs of recovery by the Russian economy will ensure a successful 'Leisure Moscow' this year as all leading tourism boards, tour operators and travel professionals flock to the most sought after autumn networking event in Russia. Participation from Dubai, Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah from the United Arab Emirates is an indication that more arrivals are sought from these recovering markets. Being the 22nd international travel and trade fair it covers many aspects this year as well. There will be many areas covered during this four day event which will comprise of leisure, luxury, wellness and spa tourism, technology in tourism etc.

Russian market was one of the most important feeder markets to many destinations, especially in the Middle East and Turkey. In Sharjah, Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, the Russian market still holds its fort as an important feeder market at number three or number two. This proves that the changes in the markets are just temporary and given the right support even the smallest market could recover much faster than anticipated.

As Russia is on a road to recovery this could open up many new trends and avenues to the trade. We are yet to witness the trend of the millennials in the Russian and CIS sector, hence we could only reckon that there will be such an emergence of not only a new segment of travellers but that these may be influencers or trendsetters to other important markets. Challengers are prevalent in every sector and trade but in terms of travel and tourism, these are minor setbacks for a limited time period which will be recovered soon.

As stakeholders gather in Moscow this year to celebrate another successful year, this would be a first positive step towards the road to victory in terms of securing business for most participants. The highlight would always be the final business turnover during the four day event which would seal the deal.

Timeshare can add Dh14 bn

Timeshare industry can complement the tourism industry if fair legislations are brought in to protect the stakeholders, consumers and owners. It is a trend which can generate more revenues for the Dubai hospitality sector.

Arabian Falcon Holidays was formed in 1999, with five employees. Almost 18 years today, we have grown to become the region's biggest and largest independent sales and marketing company that deals with the timeshare industry. My wife and I started this business with two or three other colleagues, who are still with us; today, we have over 100 employees.

The first ever timeshare project based in Dubai was in 2003. At first, we started with marketing projects outside the UAE, mainly Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon. When the opportunity came to us to have a project here in Dubai, we were the first company to get the license and the approval to sell timeshare properties in the emirate, mainly in The Palm, Palm Jumeirah.

It was the Dubai Economic Development (DED) which handled all the licensing and legal requirements. We were dealing with Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA), DED and other entities until 2008 when the Dubai Land Department took over. We are not a cent per cent real estate company nor are we a cent per cent tour or travel agency. We are a mix of everything — a hotel, a furnished apartment as well as tourism and travel agency.

We should preferably be under the DTCM but because we own the properties here in Dubai, RERA has to be involved in regulating or working out the units of timeshare. Once the project goes into timeshare, the RERA system is blocked so you cannot resell it in a real estate because the rights of views of the particular units are now the rights of the people who own the timeshare.

We have drafted a set of guidelines utilising legal advice from the best lawyers in the world on the subject of timeshare since 2008. The laws are yet to be released. There are many players including leading hotel chains who are eagerly awaiting a fair law for the timeshare industry which will reap a good profit for the economy and protect all stakeholders, the owners, companies, and government, among others.

The core idea of timeshare is "family vacation" and we have our 16,000 members visiting the emirate every year. We are confident that the market will flourish as soon as the timeshare law comes into play, allowing us to release new marketing campaigns across the globe to increase tourism in Dubai. The hospitality segment in Dubai has been quite active with several companies announcing new hotels and com-

mencing construction of their projects as Dubai gears up to host Expo 2020 and aims to attract 25 million visitors by then. Although local media reports have suggested that the groundbreaking timeshare law has been in the draft stage for some time now, no concrete news on its release date has been issued so far.

Shared vacation ownership through AFH generates direct turnover of between Dh350 million and Dh500 million, which expands to Dh1 billion when indirect and induced impacts are included.

The timeshare industry is expected to add Dh14 billion to Dubai's economy by 2020. We believe that the timeshare market will also replicate the growth witnessed in the hospitality sector seeking to increase the inflow of international tourists since timeshare owners are guaranteed vacations. The upcoming law will unlock the potentials of the industry participants to extend amazing Dubai deals that offer "value-for-money" to timeshare buyers from all across the world.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects Dubai's economy to record a 3.7 per cent growth in 2016, up from 3.6 per cent in 2015, far above the Gulf Cooperation Council growth forecast of 1.8 percent for the current

year. Dubai has made it to the top 25, according to the Travellers' Choice Destinations 2016 list published by TripAdvisor. The emirate has likewise been named in the 2016's "Six Hottest Destinations" by Air Canada's in-flight magazine, terming shopping centres in Dubai as "legendary."

Timeshare is also fast catching up among the millennials. The concept echoed loudly amongst younger people. In the US, the median age was 39 and half of them have children younger than 18 living at home. We also have seen the Generation X showing more interest in timeshare as their disposable income has increased and as they desire spending holidays in foreign countries.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Mohannad Sharafuddin
Chairman
Arabian Falcon Holidays

DusitPrincess ACES to open in Dubai



Suphaje Suthumpun
Group Chief Executive Officer
Dusit International

Strategically located overlooking the Dubai Marina Skyline, and offering easy access to the new Al Maktoum International Airport, the Palm Jumeirah, and other exciting shopping and entertainment venues, DusitPrincess ACES Dubai will cater to both transient and extended stay guests. DusitPrincess ACES Dubai will comprise over 250 spacious apartments,

ranging from studios to three-bedroom penthouses.

Suphaje Suthumpun, Group CEO, Dusit International, stated, "We are delighted that ACES Property Development has entrusted Dusit with this project, which we are confident will be a great success. The DusitPrincess brand is all about great value and friendly, dynamic service, and we are

very glad to see it joining and complementing our existing Dusit Thani and DusitD2 properties within the region."

Kashif Shahzad, President, ACES, said: "We are extremely proud of our development, and believe Dusit International, possessing a wealth of experience within the hospitality industry, is the perfect partner to deliver our vision."



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Kathmandu-Dubai route resumes

State owned carrier Nepal Airlines resumed its flights to Dubai as the first flight took off from Kathmandu on August 19, 2016. The airline had cancelled services due to fleet reliability issues four years ago.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Nepal Airlines will operate from Dubai Terminal 2 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4.10 am. The flight schedules and fares are updated in Sabre, Galileo and Amadeus reservation systems. The airline has acquired a 158-seat A320 to operate three weekly services between Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, and Dubai. It consists of 150 economy class and 8 business class seats in every flight. There will be complementary meals offered for all the passengers as it is a full service carrier. Initially the bulk of passengers will be Nepalese working in the UAE but by next March there are plans to promote tourism within the two destinations.

Ramesh Poudel, Country Manager, Nepal Airlines, shared, "We are representing



our country's airline to promote business in Dubai alongside our GSA Anta Travels. Nepal Airlines is fully owned by the government; currently we fly to different destinations,

new sectors such as Kolkata India, Dammam, Saudi Arabia and Guangzhou, China. We have come with a strategic plan which will enhance the relationship between the two

We are representing our country's airline to promote business in Dubai alongside our GSA Anta Travels. Nepal Airlines currently flies to Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and in India sectors like Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore

Ramesh Poudel
Country Manager, Nepal Airlines

in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and in India sectors like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. There are plans to add

sectors — Dubai and Kathmandu. The first priority is our people working here, and it is the responsibility of our gov-

ernment to provide them easy passage back and forth. The second is the business and tourism promotion, Nepal is a good touristic destination with a lot to offer for the visitors. From Dubai we are planning a connecting flights to Europe, and various other destinations. We are currently researching the sectors which need to be improved. As we have the Nepalese embassy and tourism board here in Dubai, we are looking at combining various programmes to promote Nepal.

We have many five star properties in our destinations and it is quite an interesting destination with affordable luxuries around. Apart from the highest mountain in the world we have a lot more to offer for the tourists who wish to explore our country."

Ajman Tourism sees 11% growth

■ Tourism revenues from April to June 2016 reached AED92 million, 11 per cent higher compared to the same period in 2015. Total guests for the period are 129,617 from 119,376 in 2015. Three Furnished Apartments are added to the inventory of establishments during the three month period. Occupancy rate for the second quarter is reported at 63 per cent for hotels while hotel apartments has 68 per cent occupancy rate.



H.E. Faisal Al Nuaimi
General Manager, Ajman Tourism Development Department

H.E. Faisal Al Nuaimi, General Manager, Ajman Tourism Development Department, said, "The increase for the second quarter of 2016 may be minimal but it is still a significant increase because when combined with the revenue of the first quarter, the result is very encouraging. Factors such as the fall in oil prices, currency fluctuations and geopolitical situation are impacting industry performance but as the report indicated, the numbers of visitors are picking up which means tourists view the UAE as a safe destination with our stable and economic environment and a diverse

range of offerings that attract both existing and potential markets."

Guest nights for the second quarter reached 293,512 with majority of the guests staying at five- and four-star hotels and superior and standard hotel apartments. Local tourists still top the emirate's guests followed by visitors from Asia and Africa, other Arab countries and GCC nationals. Europeans, Americans and Russian visitors comprised more than 30,000 of the total guests. With the addition of three Furnished Apartments to the inventory, Ajman has 39 establishments with total 3,392 hotel rooms and units and 5,737 beds.



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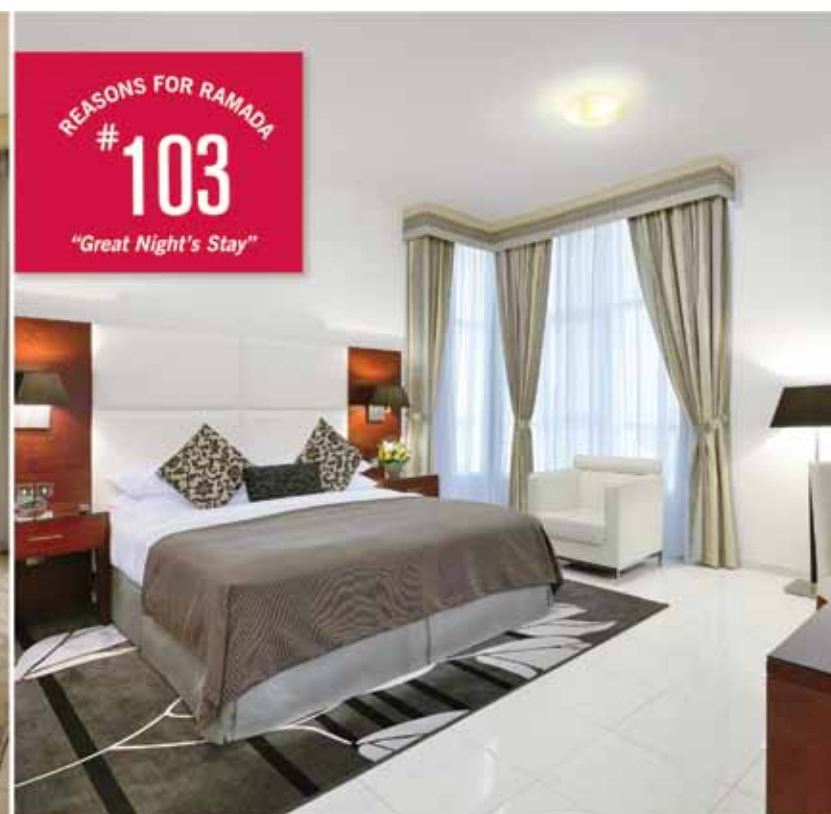
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RAMADA
Sharjah

Sharjah hotel revenue up by 7% in 2016

■ The emirate of Sharjah has registered a seven per cent increase in hotel revenues, reaching AED 378 million (\$103m) during the first six months of 2016 according to the latest figures from Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA). The authority has been targeting markets identified in its strategic marketing plan and says that H1 2016 hotel statistics show a 19 per cent increase from those markets, compared with H1 2015. A total of 878,006 visitors booked accommodation in Sharjah during the first half of 2016, compared with about one million visitors registered during the first half of 2015. Sharjah guests stayed a total number of 1.99 million hotel nights from January 1 to June 30, 2016.

China is now Sharjah's fastest growing tourism market. The SCTDA has recently stepped up marketing efforts in China, opening up a representative office, recruiting Chinese

staff and adding a Chinese language website to Sharjah's tourism portal. The emirate saw a 78 per cent increase in Chinese visitors during 2015 and, this year, has seen a 73.2 per cent increase in Chinese tourist numbers during the first six months. Overall, the largest numbers of visitors during the first six months of this year came from the GCC which accounted for nearly



220,000 hotel guests or about 25 per cent of the total. Asia provided the second largest source of tourists, showing a 12 per cent increase compared to H1 2015. Meanwhile, 180,768 registered Sharjah hotel guests came from Europe, accounting for about 21 per cent of the total.

A drive to conserve nature

Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island plants a mangrove tree in commemoration of every visitor to the island dedicated to saving and protecting the environment. **Christian Gerart**, General Manager, Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island Resorts, tells more.



SHEHARA RIZLY

Please share the reason behind this project?

The project of planting one mangrove tree per visitor was initiated in order to preserve Abu Dhabi's natural resources, all in accordance with Sheikh Zayed's conservation vision. While the number of tourists to Sir Bani Yas Island increases gradually, we do not want to sacrifice any conservation results that have been achieved so far. By involving our guests into the conservation activities on Sir Bani Yas Island we hope to create awareness of the importance of those activities, as well as encourage them to get involved with the same even after their visit. For us, it was important that tourists get to see the positive impact of their visit, rather than only hearing about it. A unique element to our conservation programme

is planting a mangrove tree for each visitor to Sir Bani Yas. This not only offsets any changes but also helps maintain the ecology on the island.



Christian Gerart
General Manager
Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island Resorts

How does one become part of this project?

As part of an island experience, Anantara invites participants of its culture and history tour to plant their own mangrove tree at the end of the excursion. By giving the

tree a name, leaving a note when planting it into the water, or even taking pictures with it, guests have the chance to touch and see the environmental impact they have when visiting Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island. Anantara's Culture and History Tour is AED 235* for adults and AED 100* for children and is available for all Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island guests. Tours are available twice a day at 1000 hours and 1730 hours. There are special rates for travel agents and tour operators. Please contact salesuae@anantara.com

How will this project promote the property and the destination?

While the project is a great way to support Abu Dhabi's preservation efforts, it is also a way to raise people's awareness about Sir Bani Yas Island. Not only has the island helped to save the endan-

gered Arabian oryx, which was classified as extinct in the wild in the 1970s, but also its flora and fauna is very unique to the region. By promoting this initiative, we grant an insight into a side of Abu Dhabi's tourism that is very distinct and special.

From which countries do you receive guests mainly and what feedback did you get?

Our guests are very international and arrive from various countries. However, a big share in the visitor numbers is owned by UAE residents and locals. The feedback from their side has been very positive so far. Taking part in Anantara's culture and history tour, guests can appreciate where Sheikh Zayed spent his time within the island and learn about his heritage, his considerable contributions to the Island and his initiative to preserve the island's natural habitat. 🌿

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Millennium & Copthorne in Tbilisi

The hotel was unveiled in Tbilisi by Georgian Prime Minister **Giorgi Kvirikashvili** and **H.H. Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan**, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development.



Located on the famous Rustaveli Avenue, The Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi is situated in the heart of the capital. Surrounded by chic designer boutiques, art galleries and a wealth of historical and cultural attractions as well as commercial and governmental buildings, the hotel is perfectly positioned for discerning travellers.

Introducing the hotel, **Ali Hamad Lakhraim Alzaabi**, President & CEO, Millennium & Copthorne, Middle East & Africa, says, "We are delighted to bring our luxury brand The Biltmore to Georgia and look forward to introducing its refined elegance and seamless service to our guests, providing them with exceptional experiences so they leave with long-lasting memories. The Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi captures the soul



Ali Hamad Lakhraim Alzaabi
President & CEO
Millennium & Copthorne
Middle East & Africa

of Georgia's history and culture, where impeccable style and majestic architecture are combined with renowned Georgian charm."

Sami Edward, CEO, Dhahi Group says, "Located in the most prestigious address in the city, The Biltmore Hotel Tbilisi delivers a new level of bespoke luxury hospitality, set within a remarkable space with unparalleled design inspired by Georgia's rich history."

Occupying a landmark historical building known as the former Institute of Marxism and Leninism (IMEL), with the addition of a striking glass skyscraper, the hotel's distinctive design cleverly marries Georgian tradition and modernism. The hotel comprises 214 spacious rooms and suites, each boasting state-of-the-art facilities and postcard-perfect views of the city's historical downtown and bustling streets. Guests have the choice of eight room categories, including the exclusive Royal Suite, which offers the epitome of luxury. Culinary desires are catered to with a collection of six exquisite restaurants and lounges set to open in the coming months. Meanwhile, a one-of-a-kind historic amphitheatre, The auditorium, has been resorted to become one of the city's most enigmatic dining and entertainment destinations. 🍷

New strategy at Grand Excelsior

Strategically located from Dubai International Airport with easy access to shopping malls and the many exhibition centers, former Sheraton is now renamed as Grand Excelsior.



SHEHARA RIZLY

The property defines true Arabian hospitality to leisure and business travellers. It is a great choice for those who wish to explore the region from the old city of Deira along the historic Dubai Creek to the popular Gold souks.

General Manager of the property, **Safwan El Khayat**, shared the plans for the property. "This year at GEH group, we will participate in roadshows in China, UK, Azerbaijan, India and Latin America in order to promote our properties. The current market situation depends on how one looks at it, in demand perspective visitors have not slowed down. There are markets that have reduced their travel to Dubai and you also have new emerging markets that replaced them. However the main concern of our market is average rates. The more hotels more com-



Safwan El Khayat
General Manager
Grand Excelsior

We are making sure to optimise every opportunity to the best and get our fair share of market business, hence strengthening our average rates

petitors, this is a fact. We are making sure to optimise every opportunity to the best and get our fair share of market business, hence strengthening our average rates."

He reiterated that when it comes to the ADR (average daily rate) and RevPar (revenue per available room) they are on par with the current rate trend in their area on similar category of hotels. "We are making sure to optimise every opportunity as our main aim is to gain a substantial and fair market share from our main competitor hotels," he said. Currently, visitors from the UAE, Iran, the UK, US, India, Vietnam are the top geographical source markets and the property will be focusing on specific target markets and base business so that they will have a demand for both and yield according to their rates. El Khayat adds, "The latest trend we witness is the increasing number of rooms and hotel portfolio. Therefore as a counter strategy we are looking into other rising markets that are proving to be beneficial which will bring traction not only to us as a hotel but to Dubai as a whole." 🍷

Theatre-themed hotel in Sharjah

Designed by Draw Link, the first theatrically themed hotel 'The Act' will soon open doors in Sharjah.



Architectural and interior design firm, Draw Link Group, has announced the completion of a five-star hotel, 'The Act', located on Al Jabarti Street, Sharjah. Draw Link Group was assigned the task of creating a hotel which would significantly contribute to the development of the

which is named The Act, and revolves around the concept of a theatre.

The 5-star hotel with a total area of 21,727 square metres comprises 18 floors, has 180 rooms and suites, 2 F&B outlets – The Oscars All Day Dining and The Scene Coffee Lounge, 5 meeting rooms, a ballroom, full treat-

to create dramatic contrasts. Design features in the Act Hotel include, customised standing stage projector lights, pendant ceiling lights, giant sculptural metal chandeliers in the public washrooms, luxurious golden mosaic tiles, a customised horse-shaped floor light in the ballroom and contemporary artworks inspired by famous tragedies such as Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. Draw Link Group CEO, **Daousser Chennoufi**, comments, "The finished result is an unmatched atmosphere of mystery achieved through the considered combination of statement furniture pieces which keep the visitor intrigued and entertained, and the overall contemporary minimalist sophistication with the expected warmth of hospitality outlets."

The Act Hotel is the second hotel in Sharjah developed by Draw Link Group from the initial concept, including the hotel branding, to the execution. 🍷



tourism sector in Sharjah. This hospitality project was requested to be one-of-a-kind in order to raise the overall tourism rating in the emirate. As a result, Draw Link has brought to life this themed hotel to the UAE,

ment spa and gym, an outdoor swimming pool.

The theatrically-themed Act hotel embodies a lighter atmosphere as you enter, leading to deeper hues towards the heart of the hotel,

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Somewhere in Barsha Heights

Conveniently located in the heart of Barsha Heights, the flagship four-star property Somewhere Hotel opened with 306 rooms offering a combination of suites and numerous facilities to cater to the requirements of different clientele.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Jean Francois Asimus, a connoisseur in the hospitality industry is the opening Cluster General Manager of the property. Starting off his career in the trade from London, he moved to Dubai in the early nineties with Hyatt. Thereafter he spent about 10 years in Asia exploring different destinations such as Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and Maldives and returned to the Middle East. His expertise in different hotel chains over the years such as Raffles, Dusit will be beneficial to this new brand which has been in the market just a little over three years.

There are many unique points to the property. Location takes the first place as stated earlier it is just five minutes from Mall of the Emirates,

10-minute taxi ride from Ibn Battuta mall, 10 minutes from Marina mall, 40 kms from Al Maktoum Airport and 30 kms from Dubai airport. The fresh French fragrance upon the arrival of the guest is a unique feature in the chain of properties. The year-round outdoor pool and sun terrace add to this list, apart from the other food and beverage options one can indulge in. The bar will be a niche location for relaxation for the corporate clients.

Somewhere Hotel Barsha Heights features air-conditioned rooms and free private parking. Every room includes a seating area with flat-screen TV and a work desk. The rooms also include a mini bar and all the usual amenities as well as your personal espresso machine on the club rooms.



Jean Francois Asimus
Cluster General Manager
Somewhere Hotel Barsha Heights

Our philosophy has been 'Hospitality is taught in colleges... We learned ours at home', we believe in the unique characteristics encapsulated by the heart of Middle-Eastern hospitality

In terms of F&B there are three venues; firstly Nay Mediterranean kitchen offers guests an indulging evening with Shisha and bubbly. The venue offers both indoor and outdoor seating with an am-

bience suited for both private and corporate events.

The Clavichord bar is the signature jazz bar and lounge, a cozy venue which hosts multiple piano and bass duos plus solo piano, guitarists both solo and duo and other more

intimate configurations. It offers best wines, spirit selections and cocktails with a happy hour for the early birds and a specialty tapas menu for the guests.

The Bakery by Nay, based on a grab-and-go concept, is a lounge café conveniently located in the lobby for the residents and busy life stylers. The café offers fresh bakery products with fresh brewed and signature ground premium coffee beans. It hosts both indoor and outdoor seating with a different concept.

The company was established three years ago. "We have currently six hotels in total; which consists of

two in Dubai, two in Saudi and two in Greece. There are more expansion plans in the pipeline. Our service standards make sure that the guests are complied with their requests; we basically go the extra mile for the guest.

"Our philosophy has been 'Hospitality is taught in colleges... We learned ours at home', we believe in the unique characteristics encapsulated by the heart of Middle-Eastern hospital-

market. OTAs have become a very valuable tool for the industry, yet the traditional travel agents clientele will continue to attract certain segments of clientele. If the OTAs can provide more flexibility to the hotels in every way such as guest comments, payments etc., would add more value.

"We want to be one of the leaders, within the area, Tecom and Internet city. Barsha Heights is a new side of Dubai and we want to join



ity. Another advantage is the change of name of the area as Barsha Heights, this boosts the quality and ranking of the vicinity which would benefit those in the trade as guests would prefer their indulgence in a niche property," states Francois.

Dubai is currently focusing on a range of markets to accommodate more visitors to the destination. Somewhere Hotels will be focusing on both leisure and corporate markets for this flagship property with an eye on the growing Asian

the main players within the area. I think we have the tools, the knowledge and the company has some new concepts to be announced. We want to take the property to the maximum, to be known and have new properties, within the UAE or within the Gulf in fact. All the tools are there for this company to take on the next level. We would look at other areas like the Palm, Marina, and JBR. In the future we would put up in other regions as well, probably within the next two or three years," concluded Francois.





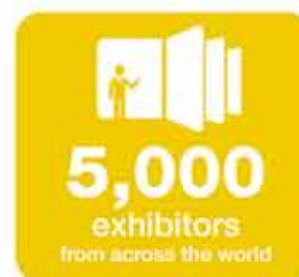
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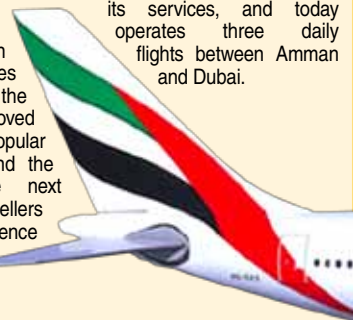
■ A special one off A380 service to Amman is planned on September 25 to mark their 30 years of commitment to Jordan. The airline's flagship double decker carrier will make history at Queen Alia International Airport.

The Emirates A380 service will operate EK 901 and EK 902, departing Dubai at 0725hrs and arriving in Amman at 0930hrs. The flight will then depart Amman at 1300hrs arriving in Dubai at 1700hrs on the same day.

With the support of the Jordanian Authorities and Airport International Group, the deployment of the one-off Emirates A380 operation has been made possible through significant infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the aircraft. Since its introduction to the Emirates fleet in 2008, the A380 has proved tremendously popular with customers, and the upcoming service next month will give travellers the chance to experience this revolutionary aircraft and

the best service in the sky. Jordanian Minister of Transport, **Engineer Yahya Kisbi**, said, "The decision to bring the Emirates A380 for a one-off flight to Amman is a testament to the competitiveness of Jordan's aviation infrastructure and strong transport sector. We thank Emirates for the long-standing partnership and look forward to welcoming the airline's flagship in Amman next month."

Emirates has been flying to Jordan since 1986, and since then has carried over 4.1 million passengers. In the last five years, Emirates has also transported 100,000 tonnes of cargo to and from the country. Emirates has developed its operations in Jordan by gradually increasing its services, and today operates three daily flights between Amman and Dubai.



Targeting Serbia and Poland

Saudi Arabia was the top source market for Hawthorne Suites during the first half of 2016, with 29 per cent of the total guest mix, followed by the UAE (12 per cent), UK (8 per cent), Russia (4 per cent) and France (2 per cent). **Samir Arora**, General Manager, Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham, talks to **TRAVTALK**.



SHEHARA RIZLY

What are the latest trends you see in terms of trade in the UAE?

There are a lot of budget brands coming in the UAE, which is a good indication of the growing diversity of tourist arrivals in the country. The competition is getting tougher as the room inventory continues to increase but we are optimistic that we will be able to eventually even out the supply-demand and the revenue will bounce back by 2017.

What are the strategies used to gain more business?

Ideally located at The Walk, Jumeirah Beach Residence, the 188-key Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham offers deluxe, one-bedroom, and two bedroom suites. The property



Samir Arora
General Manager
Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham

boasts highest inventory of one-bedroom suite among the hotels in JBR, with 76 units. We are also the only dry hotel in our area, which makes us the preferred accommodation for families.

Given that our main feeder market is KSA, especially family travellers, we launched new room categories which are Family One Bedroom Suite

and the Three-Bedroom Suite. The first new room type, Family One Bedroom Suite features a king size bed and a convertible sofa bed, which can accommodate two adults and two kids, or as many as four adults. We also have the three-Bedroom Suite, which connects a two-bedroom, and a deluxe suite. The 160-square-metre suite can accommodate up to six adults and two kids. The new room category also offers flexibility and can be booked as separate suites when there are no demands for a three-bedroom unit.

How has the last quarter been when you compare with last year?

The hotel's YTD occupancy rate is at 89 per cent. Our occupancy for the past three months is slightly

higher compared to the same period last year, with a 2.1 per cent increase.

What are the new markets you will be focusing on during Q3?

We are looking at tapping tourist arrivals from Poland and Serbia during the last quarter.

Do you have anything special for the GCC clients during the long weekends and the travel agents and tour operators?

We have a special Eid promotion from September 8 to 14, 2016 where travel agents and tour operators could offer attractive rates to their clients and we also have special rates for our loyal guests. 🌸



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Yellow boats partners with Sightseeing tours

■ The UAE's leading water sightseeing company, The Yellow Boats, has teamed up with City Sightseeing

The Yellow Boats' guests will also benefit from a free City Sightseeing transfer service, allowing them to travel



Dubai tours to launch a new combination ticket from September, offering both activities at a pocket-pleasing price. For just AED 340 per adult and AED 220 per child, combination ticket holders can tour the best of Dubai via the hop-on, hop-off buses for a full 24 hours, and see incredible city vistas from the sparkling UAE seas aboard a 75-minute Yellow Boats trip, enjoying savings of up to AED 100 as they do.

around Dubai Marina and Palm Jumeirah to a dedicated Yellow Boats bus stop from last month (August). All Yellow Boats ticket holders can use the bus, and simply need to show details of their booking to board. Combination tickets holders will also have 24-hour access to the entire City Sightseeing bus route, which travels between the old and new of Dubai, from souks, mosques and museums to beaches and magnificent malls.

Focus on Turkey and CIS

Founded by two doyens in the travel trade, **Salih Gozcu** and **Alpay Ozcan**, BTB Tours will offer flexible options via technology and quality customer service with a special focus on Turkey and CIS market. They share their insight with **TRAVELTALK**.



SHEHARA RIZLY

Providing a customer an experience is not an easy task — as a tour operator, travel agent or destination management company there are many aspects to be followed. The two gentlemen from BTB Tours claim travel is their passion and the outstanding knowledge they have gained over the years about various destinations gives them the edge over others.

Alpay worked in Tez Tours for 10 years. Salih worked in Antalya and Istanbul tourism sectors for 7 years and counts eight years' experience in Dubai. Salih worked in Quality Tours (4 years), Voyage Tour (2 years) and Adonis.com (2 years). His last position was Managing Director in Adonis.com.

"We are proud to have a high number of loyal cus-



Salih Gozcu
Founder
BTB Tours



Alpay Ozcan
Founder
BTB Tours

Our online booking system is being used by thousands of tour operators and travel agents in the world. It provides extensive travel services within the UAE and offers you comprehensive service

tomers and our customers consider our services to be excellent. We constantly negotiate excellent hotel deals and exclusive rates for our customers. We are one of the market leaders offering flexible options through results

via technology and quality customer service focusing on Turkey and CIS market. Servicing your needs is our single directive. Through a combination of user friendly tools and human touch, we deliver the most responsive personal-

ised service in the industry. No matter what size and nature of business we get, we offer an extraordinary travel experience you will ever have. We are a young and dynamic company with fully dedicated and determined specialists. Our reputation is based on innovation, technology, qualified services and trustworthy relationship with our valuable partners. Our online booking system is being used by thousands of tour operators and travel agents in the world. It provides extensive travel services within the UAE and offers you comprehensive service," the duo stated.

Their vision is to deliver a satisfied and unforgettable journey, an experience which one can share with others. They strongly believe in continuous learning which will ensure that they provide a high standard of service to their customers. 🌟



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Travelport-Emirates renew deal

Travel commerce platform Travelport and Emirates Airlines strengthened their partnership with new multi-year agreements for both IT solutions and enhanced distribution.

TT BUREAU

The strengthened partnership will see Emirates offer Travelport connected agencies in 180 countries — serving hundreds of millions of travellers around the world — continued access to all of Emirates' fares and inventory through the Travel Commerce Platform. Furthermore, Travelport has signed an extension of its long-standing IT services agreement with Emirates. This agreement

Terms of agreement

♦ As part of the deal, Emirates will roll out Travelport's airline merchandising solutions

will see Travelport continue to provide Emirates with industry leading pricing, shopping and ticket rebooking technology, enabling Emirates to support advanced shopping and rebooking options within their internal sales channels including www.emirates.com.

On the distribution side, the new deal means Emirates will commence the initial rollout of Travelport's airline merchandising solutions giving them the capability to directly promote their fare brands, ancillaries and associated upsell options

— for the first time — to the global travel agent community. Joining approximately 170 airlines now live with Travelport's merchandising solution (Rich Content and Branding), Emirates will benefit

from Travelport's ability to provide detailed product descriptions, including images and related ancillary options to travel agencies. **Derek Sharp**, Senior Vice President and Managing

Director, Air Commerce, Travelport, commented, "We are delighted to build on our strong partnership with Emirates through this enhanced global full content agreement as well as the



Derek Sharp
Senior Vice President and
Managing Director
Air Commerce Travelport

descriptions and imagery will enable agents to more


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We are delighted to build on our strong partnership with Emirates through this enhanced global full content agreement as well as the renewal of our long standing IT agreement

renewal of our long standing IT agreement. Emirates' choice to offer agents their branded fares content with detailed

effectively upsell Emirates' services providing an improved service to travellers and hopefully boosting Emirates' growth across the globe." 

ISA partners with Armenia Aircompany

Armenia Aircompany has signed an agreement with Information Systems Associates (ISA) to avail its passenger service system comprehending reservation, departure control, weight and balance, and budgetary solutions.

TT BUREAU

This contract with ISA will empower Armenia Aircompany with a new generation web based reservation system aeroMART SELL embedded with aeroMART WEB - Internet booking engine, aeroMART AGENT - Agent Booking Engine, aeroMART MOBILE - Mobile Application and aer-



system and the aeroPORT TRIM Weight & Balance system. State-of-the-art budget management system aeroLINE SALES is the other main product included to Aircompany Armenia shopping cart which is going to automate and streamline the budgeting process of the airline.

menia Aircompany. Armenia Aircompany has chosen ISA for its industry leading technology solution, experience and expertise in providing passenger

tions for their business," **Nader A. Shukralla**, CEO, ISA, said. "The continuous expansion of ISA in the market reflects the strength of our products and

We were pleased with this deal, and we could not be more impressed with the experience of ISA and the capabilities of their innovative solutions

Robert Oganessian
CEO, Armenia Aircompany

oMART REWARD - Loyalty Management System. In addition to the above, the Armenia Aircompany contract with ISA includes aeroPORT solution suite, which comprises of aeroPORT FLY departure control

"We were pleased with this deal, and we could not be more impressed with the experience of ISA and the capabilities of their innovative solutions," said **Robert Oganessian**, CEO, Ar-

We are happy to be the preferred partner of Armenia Aircompany for the key IT solutions for their business

Nader A. Shukralla
CEO, ISA

services solutions for many of the leading airlines across the world. "We are happy to be the preferred partner of Armenia Aircompany for the key IT solu-

its technology competences, our company's focus is to deliver leading technology solutions faster than ever before," he added. 



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Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts

Switzerland

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts (MH&R) has appointed **Olivier Chavy**, as its new CEO. Chavy will take over from Jean-Gabriel Pères in September 2016. Chavy is a hospitality veteran with a 28-year track record in hotel operations and brand management. He served as International Head, Global Brand Performance of Luxury & Lifestyle Brands for Hilton Worldwide. Chavy received his MBA from Cornell University, a PG diploma from ESSEC Business School and a BA in Hotel Management from Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Hotel Management School in France.



Grand Excelsior Hotel

Al Barsha Dubai

Ramy Khairallah has been appointed as the new General Manager of Grand Excelsior Hotel – Al Barsha. With his expertise in revenue management, sales and marketing, he is now entrusted by Bin Haider Hospitality division of Mohammed Omar Bin Haider Group to oversee the daily successful operation of this 230 rooms property as the leading hotel branch of its brand. His previous appointment includes Louvre Hotels Group and Starwood Hotels and Resorts-The Luxury Collections where he stemmed the passion in developing sustainable environment through sharing his ideas of green initiatives.



Time Hotels

Dubai

Laurent Barelrier has been appointed as Corporate Director of Revenue Management and e-distribution at Time Hotels Dubai. A graduate of the American College of Greece and holder of an MBA in International Hospitality Management from Cornell University, Paris, French national Barelrier has over 17 years' corporate hospitality experience having worked for a number of international hospitality chains. His career includes senior management roles with InterContinental in Athens, Greece, AccorHotels, Dubai, Wyndham Hotel Group, Dubai and later as a management consultant for the Majestic Tower Hotel, Dubai.



Corinthia Khartoum

Khartoum

Mahmoud Tabbara has joined Corinthia Hotel Khartoum as Director of Sales and Marketing to lead their team in affirming the property's position as a leading five-star luxury hotel in Khartoum. A Lebanese national, Tabbara has gained experience within the hospitality sector while holding several senior positions with international hotel chains around the world including, Rotana, IHG, Ritz Carlton and Warwick. Having previously worked in Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Baghdad, he brings with him an extensive knowledge of sales and marketing in the Middle East.



Jumeirah Etihad Towers

Abu Dhabi

Jumeirah at Etihad Towers has appointed **Tarek Madanat** as the new Director of Sales and Marketing. Prior to joining Jumeirah at Etihad Towers, Tarek held the position of Area Director of Sales and Marketing with IHG Hotels Jordan, representing five hotels in four destinations. His previous roles have included positions at JA Resorts and Hotels, The Ritz Carlton, InterContinental Jordan and Kempinski Hotels, where he was appointed as Area Director of Sales and Marketing in Jordan and Levant region. He will be responsible of managing the sales, marketing and public relations teams of the hotel.



Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai

Dubai

Binu S. Varghese joins Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai as the new Director of Sales to further develop their growing portfolio of international, regional and national accounts. Varghese served as Executive Assistant Manager of Operations at Wyndham Dubai Marina. His 19 years' of experience includes 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.



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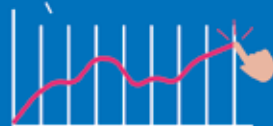
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