

TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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Tapping outbound @ITB Asia

The 9th ITB Asia, to be held from October 19-21, 2016, is poised to be the biggest edition till date. **Katrina Leung**, Executive Director, Messe Berlin (Singapore), organiser of ITB Asia, lays emphasis on the Middle East outbound market.



What are the highlights of ITB Asia 2016?

This year, ITB Asia is expected to be the biggest and most exciting edition yet as we continue to forge new partnerships and connect our delegates to hundreds of companies from MICE, corporate and leisure companies across the globe.

The focus is on the theme of creating a better customer experience through innovation and technology. We return with new collaborations with industry heavyweights including the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), Crescent Rating, Travel Massive, Singapore Outbound Travel Agents Association (SO-TAA), Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers (SACEOS) and many more. For the first time ever, our keynote sessions will also be running across all three days



Katrina Leung
Executive Director, Messe Berlin
(Singapore), organiser of ITB Asia

of the show. Another conference highlight is our inaugural MICE day — a full day programme with representatives from leading companies such as Amway China and Oracle Corporation.

How important is the Middle East market for ITB Asia?

The Middle East is one of the key growth markets for ITB Asia and we have continuously received strong support from exhibitors and partners in this region. According to the ITB World Travel Trends Report

2015-2016, the Middle East outbound travel market was actually the world's fastest-growing market this year with a nine per cent increase in outbound trips over the first eight months in 2015.

How many emirates have confirmed participation this year?

As of August 31, 2016, as many as 24 exhibitors from the Middle East region

ist Agency, Sunway Tours, Al Ola Tourism and Amiel Tours are some of the attendees that have confirmed participation.

What is the expected value of the event this year?

In 2015, the event recorded close to 760 exhibitors and 880 buyers from all around the world. The show also attracted almost 10,300

According to the ITB World Travel Trends Report 2015-2016, the Middle East outbound travel market was actually the world's fastest-growing market this year with a nine per cent increase in outbound trips over the first eight months in 2015

have confirmed participation. Qatar Tourism Authority, Dubai Parks Destination Management, Jordan Tourism Board, Iran Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Holiday Inn Dubai Al Barsha, Ritz Carlton Doha, Mövenpick Hotel West Bay Doha, Arabian Adventures Qatar, Atlas Travel & Tour-

trade delegates and set up over 16,000 matched meetings. ITB Asia is currently working to finalise the number of buyers and exhibitors at this year's show. However, we are confident that ITB Asia will continue to be a leading global platform for all delegates and this year's numbers are set to grow. 📈

Networking with Asia

ITB Asia this year expects upto 24 exhibitors from the Middle East. Some of the exhibitors share their insight about the event.



“As the Official Airline Partner of ITB Asia, we would like the delegates to experience Singapore Airlines' inflight products and services when they travel with us to Singapore from Dubai. Our target markets include business travel and MICE travel into Singapore and Asia pacific destinations, and leisure traffic to South East Asia. We are working together with key partners to promote travel to South East Asian destinations in line with Visit ASEAN@50: Golden Celebration in 2017 especially from this region. We leverage on strong partnerships with key distribution partners in the markets, and work closely with tourism organisations to promote the unique strengths of each destination.”



Erwin Widjaja
General Manager Gulf region
Singapore Airlines



Roxana Jaffer
CEO
Holiday Inn Al Barsha

“Our participation at ITB Asia is mainly for exposure and networking in the Far East and Asia markets. The key players we are targeting include Singapore, China, Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia, with a focus on outbound MICE agents. These markets generate volume business into the region. As these are relatively new markets for us we expect them to grow by five per cent over the next year. In terms of a B2B strategy we will be conducting Fam trips and special market-specific tactics to lure more visitors.”

Contd. on page 3 ▶



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AI Express explores new routes

Air India Express is on an expansion spree connecting the UAE with potential important markets in India, reveals its Chief Executive Officer **K. Shyam Sundar**.

TT BUREAU

QWhich latest routes have you introduced this year?

Air India Express is going to launch direct flights from Sharjah to Chandigarh and to Tiruchirappalli (Trichy).

QHow has the traffic been between the UAE and India?

The traffic between India and the UAE has been growing at a healthy rate of about 10 per cent. It is a vibrant market and we expect to gain from this growth.



K. Shyam Sundar
Chief Executive Officer
Air India Express

and Kochi. We have seen an increase in traffic on the Sharjah to Varanasi, and Sharjah

Dubai to Delhi and Dubai to Mumbai, and there is still a huge potential to add more flights on this route.

QWhat is AI Express' growth strategy in the UAE?

Air Express has almost 60-65 per cent of its flights and capacities on the India-UAE routes and I expect this trend to continue in the future. This is also evident by the fact that when we launched a flight from Ras Al Khaimah to India, the seats were sold out in a instant. In-

We have also launched flights from Dubai to Delhi and Dubai to Mumbai, and there is still a huge potential to add more flights on this route. We have also launched flights from Dubai to Delhi and Dubai to Mumbai, and there is still potential to add more flights

to Mumbai routes, which were introduced recently. We have also launched flights from

dia has great potential and will always be a key market for Air India Express.

Enhancing trade relations

► Contd. from page 1

“We are very excited about our participation in ITB Asia, which is a prominent platform to connect with the Far East and Asia markets. We look forward to meeting our partners in that region, while introducing the destination and what it has to offer. At Dubai Parks and Resorts we are creating a unique leisure and entertainment destination. Upon opening we will be the largest multi-theme park destination in the Middle East, with over 100 rides and attractions over 25 million square feet. The theme park market is an untapped resource for the region with huge potential, and we aim to capitalize on this by boosting tourism and raising the profile of the UAE as a family destination. **”**



Julien Munoz
VP Sales
Dubai Parks and Resorts



Mark Simmons
Vice President Sales and Marketing
Asia Pacific, Outrigger Resorts

“Through our participation at ITB Asia, we expect to get the good news out about Outrigger Signature Experiences, our Outrigger Expert Agent program and the new-look Outrigger.com. The Middle East market is one of our key focus areas. With the increase in connectivity between the Middle East and Asia Pacific, and the growing family travel sector from the region, Outrigger is well positioned to welcome large families from the region in all our properties. Our B2B marketing strategy includes wholesales and travel agents account for up to 70 per cent of our business. We will continue to enhance those industry relations. **”**

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Next pit stop: ITB Asia

Travel has caught the fancy of everyone all over the world, and the Middle East is no exception. The region recorded an all-time high in terms of outbound traffic during the first few months of 2016. With outbound doing well, inbound in the Middle East is also looking to grab a share of the world travel pie. This is evident from the fact that more than 24 exhibitors from the Middle East are participating at ITB Asia 2016 to be held from October 19-21. In a first, ITB Asia will collaborate with 'International SOS,' a medical and travel security partner which will leverage its market expertise and global assistance network to educate delegates at the event.

Travel trends keep changing and technology is making it all the more interesting and worthwhile for discerning travellers. The hospitality industry is also on a full scale refurbishment in terms of technology as the travellers today require a lot more than just a bed and shower, free Wi-Fi is the deal breaker. However, now with technology, the latest competition is between Li-Fi and Wi-Fi. Some of the hotels in the UK are already trying out Li-Fi and have commented that it is much easier in terms of infrastructure but it is still to be tried and tested in the Middle East.

Security is another important aspect in travel and tourism sectors. Today, leaders from aviation and other sectors are discussing ways to combat various challenges faced especially due to technology. Cyber security is another relevant matter especially in the UAE. It has been found that USA is the first nation to be cyber attacked whilst the UAE is at number two. From the whole region, UAE has the most number of devices, so providing safety to the guests is a responsibility.

We need to ensure that all this free Wi-Fi or Li-Fi can secure us from hackers. The trade needs to spend some time researching hacker issues which could deter guests.

Tourism, travel and hospitality are the strongest assets in every economy as they contribute to every aspect of growth, that's why developing tourism is important for any economy.

When tech comes to the rescue

With growing competition among 3/4 star hotels, there is an urgent need for an all-in-one-integrated business solution for such hotels that is reliable, efficient and cost-effective.

The all-in-one business solution is ideal for small hotels that integrates direct booking technology, channel management technology, and property management technology all into one system, thus empowering small accommodation providers with the technology they need to run more profitably. Also, with a channel manager, small hotels can partner with as many OTAs as possible without fear of overbooking, because channel managers push a hotel's live availability, rates, and inventory simultaneously across all of their online distribution channels – including the brand's own website. This allows hotels to take advantage of direct channels like metasearch sites, which minimises the cost to acquire additional guests. When it comes to delivering the latest trends in in-room entertainment, I

believe smart connectivity capabilities that can access and display content without adding additional hardware can reduce costs while enhancing user experience.

Integrated services is the way to go. A one-stop-shop for a property's network, phone and television systems, etc., while reduc-

It is important to find a vendor that provides, and is capable of supporting, more than just one component of in-room entertainment.

ing the need for additional one-use devices will allow for bundled pricing to the hotel, which can translate to competitive prices for guests. It is important to find a vendor that provides, and is capable of supporting, more than just one component of in-room entertainment.

With the demand for guests to stay in entry to mid-scale hotels growing over the coming 3-5 years, more and more 3-4 star hotels are being built, which means competition is growing heavily. Finding an all-in-one-integrated solution that is reliable, efficient and cost-effective is both easy and difficult. When it comes to technology all of us want more

with major brands to streamline technology-buying solutions for franchisees. A roster of partners is the way forward for solving such issues as data security, network bandwidth and cloud computing.

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

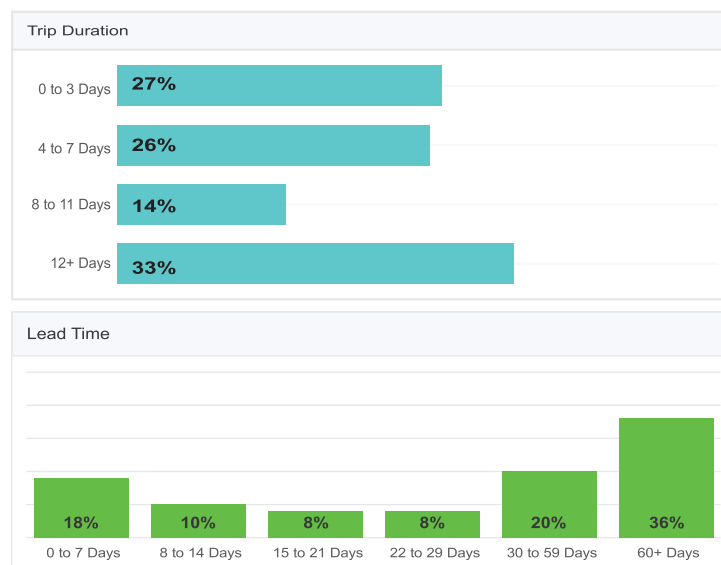


Laurent A. Voivenel
CEO
HMFH

ME travellers' London dreams

The quarterly outbound search trends for the Middle East & Africa in 2016 suggest that the favourite destination for travellers' from the region is London, followed by New York and Paris.

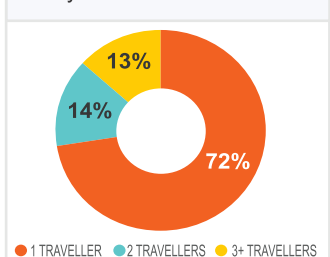
Quarterly outbound search trends for the Middle East & Africa



Top 5 Destinations

London
New York City
Paris
Istanbul
Dubai

Party Size



Source: Sojern Report on Q2 2016 Global Travel Insights



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Shopping spend boosts tourism

Dubai's popular shopping festivals not only boost tourism but also allow the retail industry and economy in general to grow, says **Saeed Al Falasi**, Executive Director, Retail & Strategic Alliances, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment.

TT BUREAU

QHow important are shopping festivals to Dubai for promoting tourism?

Shopping is an important pillar of any economy. The infrastructure and facilities that are available inside the shopping malls are quite different than any other place in the region. Shopping is a key attraction for many people, and we make sure that we have enough festivals and initiatives in Dubai for people to come and spend their time with us.

QWhat role does DFRE play?

The Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE) has been a key pillar in attracting tourists throughout the year. We start with the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), move on to Ramadan & Eid celebrations, then onto the Summer Surprises, immediately fol-



Saeed Al Falasi
Executive Director, Retail & Strategic Alliances, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE)

Shopping is a key attraction for many people, and we make sure that we have enough festivals and initiatives in Dubai for people to come and spend their time with us

lowed by the bigger Eid and finally prepare for the Shopping Festival. This year DSF is scheduled from December 26 to January 28, 2017. All of these festivals highlight the tremendous support by the retailers, to ensure that we actually provide a good environment for them to work in Dubai and gain more visitors to the destination.

QHave you added any new festivals to the existing list?

The Big Clearance Sale is a new initiative that we launched last year. It has been attracting a lot of tourists from the region and the residents. It is different from a normal shopping mall as we bring all big brands together under one roof with competitive pricing. Most of the shopping malls would offer 25 to 70 per cent, we ensure that all products within the Big Clearance Sale are actually over 80 per cent.

QHow important are these festivals to boost tourism?

Events like these are quite important to help tourism and the retail industry. In terms of retail, it ensures that they have a clear sale out before they start getting their new products for the new season. It is very supportive to the economy as well as to the tourism sectors as people are aware and make sure that they visit.

Festivities Galore

◆ Dubai Shopping Festival is scheduled from December 26 to January 28, 2017

◆ The Big Clearance Sale, a new initiative launched last year, allows visitors to purchase all products at over 80 per cent discounted price

Cove Rotana Resort calls for animal welfare

■ As part of Rotana's Corporate Social Responsibility program, The Cove Rotana Resort team recently designed, painted and installed the boundary wall panel boards with information of the services provided and contact details of the new location at the Ras Al Khaimah Animal Welfare Centre. The animal centre has recently moved to its permanent and bigger location at Al Jazeera Al Hamra. The centre opened its door, January 2010 in plight of abandoned and abused dogs and cats in Ras Al Khaimah under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah.



Andreas Mueller
General Manager
Cove Rotana Resort

We are happy to support the Ras Al Khaimah Animal Welfare Centre, not only to provide a safe shelter but also in providing the daily needs & create awareness

The centre rely heavily on support from animal lovers in the UAE, not just for fundraising but also to volunteer and help with the day-to-day operations of the shelter.

The panel boards were artistically designed and painted voluntarily by the Cove Rotana employees and delivered for installation. The Cove Rotana Resort team has been an active supporter for the Centre for years. General Manager **Andreas**

Mueller commented, "We are happy to support the Ras Al Khaimah Animal Welfare Centre, not only to provide a safe shelter but also in providing the daily needs, create awareness and inviting the community to adopt the neglected cats and dogs."

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RwandAir connects Mombasa to Dubai

RwandAir has gradually increased its fleet from just thrice a week to four weekly non-stop flights to Kigali, Kenya and Mombasa since it started Dubai operations in November 2010. **Timothy Njihia**, Country Manager – UAE shares some insight.

TT BUREAU

Q Tell us about the recent fleet upgrade by RwandAir?

We have acquired two new A330s (A330-200 and A330-300) equipped with full flat beds in Business Class, inflight connectivity and inflight entertainment across the entire cabin. It is a first in East Africa, with unmatched luxurious comfort. The two aircraft arriving will serve different routes — A330-200 will serve Dubai, Lagos & Accra routes; and A330-300 will serve Mumbai and Guangzhou routes.

The A330-200 will have 244 seats while the A330-300 will have 274 seats.

RwandAir is the only direct airline to Kigali and Mombasa with on-time performance, no prior record



Timothy Njihia
Country Manager – UAE
RwandAir

A huge percentage of our traffic to Dubai consists mostly of African traders conducting business into/out of Dubai

Q How important is UAE market for the airline?

UAE is important for RwandAir due to its dynamism as a hub for global commerce coupled with its strategic location in relation to Africa. The UAE was important in unlocking Rwanda's trade linkages and opportunities. Interestingly, a huge percentage of our traffic to Dubai consists mostly of African traders conducting business into/out of Dubai and there continues to be demand on this route hence our new wide body aircraft on this route.

Q How does RwandAir contribute in tourism promotion between the two destinations?

First, RwandAir proactively promotes inbound leisure into Dubai from across our network by encouraging



network sales into Dubai, promoting leisure and trade as well and secondly by encouraging leisure and MICE tourism into Rwanda. Rwanda's tourism sector continues to grow and has been recording impressive growth over the years, with MICE leading the way.

It is worth noting that Rwanda is currently ranked 7th in the most popular MICE destinations in Africa according to a report released in May 2016 by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

From Dubai, one of our strategies is identifying, targeting and continuously specific groups of people such as media, tour operators, travel writers etc. These groups of people are important in creating awareness about Rwanda as a country, its tourism potential and standing in Africa or the world and not forgetting the airline and its route network.

With the arrival of our new aircraft, we plan to hold exclusive familiarisation trips targeting the groups mentioned above to Kigali,

Rwanda, the hub and home to RwandAir and a country whose green, mountainous landscape has earned it the nickname 'Land of a Thousand Hills.'

Q Do you have any other route enhancements in the pipeline?

We recently launched flights to Cotonou in Benin effective September 2, 2016, and Abidjan is starting Oct 2, 2016. Mumbai, India is in the pipeline by the end of 2016 and Guangzhou is scheduled to start early 2017. 🇰🇷



Louvre Hotels Group
Opens 3 Star Hotel in Ras Al Khaimah

Located in the heart of the city, Tulip Inn -Ras Al Khaimah will enhance the midscale value proposition for guests by offering superior facilities and service standards.

Louvre Hotels Group, one of the largest hospitality groups in the world, has announced further expansion of its regional portfolio with opening of a new 3-star hotel in the UAE - **The Tulip Inn Ras Al Khaimah**.

Located in the heart of the city, with convenient proximity to the central business district and just minutes from Ras Al Khaimah's famed beachfront locations, Tulip Inn offers 102 spacious, modern rooms and suites along with state-of-the-art business facilities and an elegant selection of restaurants and cafes to meet the needs of families as well as business travellers.

Tulip Inn—Ras Al Khaimah is the first of many ventures between Louvre Hotels Group and Action Hotels



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Seychelles-Cluj Napoca direct

The latest additions to Turkish Airlines' vast route network are Seychelles and Cluj Napoca, in Romania.

TT BUREAU

Already flying to 48 destinations in Africa, Turkish Airlines will increase its flight network by adding Seychelles as another destination in the continent, bringing the total number of destinations that Europe's best airline serves to 243 worldwide, and 49 in Africa. With the addition of Seychelles, Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other airline by serving 117 countries will promise a great experience for users of the new route from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, with a one stop in Istanbul, Turkey.

Three weekly flights will be operated on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, and the passengers will depart from Istanbul at 01:05 on board TK748 arriving at 10:55, with a return service on TK749 departing from Seychelles at 12:25 to arrive in Istanbul at 18:10 on the same days.

With already existing services to Bucharest and Constanta, Turkish Airlines has added new flights to Cluj-Napoca, one of the most important academic, cultural industrial cities in Romania, as its 3rd destination in the country. Cluj-Napoca flights will

be operated four times per week on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays in both directions. Additionally, for the first 6 months of operation to the new destinations, there is a special offer for Miles&Smiles members, with a 25 per cent reduction in the miles needed to redeem either award tickets or upgrades.

Bonus Offer

♦ Under a special offer for Miles&Smiles members, a 25 per cent reduction in the miles is needed to redeem either award tickets or upgrades



AME renews optimism in Turkey

The congress, meeting and event industry exhibition, ACE of MICE (AME), will be held from February 22-24, 2017, in Istanbul. **Selin Kamil**, International Relations Executive, ACE of MICE Exhibition, says the event will address issues such as crisis communication and management.

SHEHARA RIZLY

What is the focus of the exhibition for 2017?

ACE of MICE Exhibition is the meeting point of top level decision-makers of meetings and event industry in Turkey and the world. We

& Management on Events,' 'Sports Events' and '3rd University Students Meet the MICE Industry'.

We are planning to open registration for hosted buyers, press and visitors towards the end of September on www.ameistanbul.com.



Selin Kamil
International Relations Executive,
ACE of MICE Exhibition

Turkey has had a tough time this year, but in spite of the difficulties we have overcome the situation. During this period, Turkish MICE companies continued to work hard and thanks to their professionalism, we escaped with minimum damages

offer an excellent opportunity to the attendees with Hosted Buyer programme, B2B meetings, network activities, enriched seminars and panels. The sessions will be held on topics such as 'Crisis Communication

The companies that would like to exhibit can contact us at sales@ameistanbul.com.

What are your expectations from the event?

We have partnered

with industry associations and international media to promote AME. We are also working with hosted buyer group coordinators to invite qualified buyers. Besides we are in touch with Convention Bureaus and MICE companies. Based on our intensive communication campaign, we aim to reach the maximum number in the meaning of both exhibitors and hosted buyers and visitors at AME 2017.

How is the MICE market faring in Turkey?

Turkey has had a tough time this year, but in spite of the difficulties we have overcome the situation.

During this period, Turkish MICE companies continued to work hard and thanks to their professionalism, we escaped with minimum damages. We will continue to host international congresses and groups in Turkey to encourage tourism. According to 2015 ICCA statistics Turkey is ranked 18th worldwide and ranked 11th in Europe.

What are the latest trends in MICE?

Today, the MICE industry is strongly connected through technology than ever before. Apps, mobile sites and social media channels are assisting planners before,

during and after events. Virtual reality is becoming one of the most popular trends. Moreover, green meetings and sustainable event trends are still in the foreground like last year.

How important are the Middle East and India markets for Turkey?

We absolutely believe that the Middle East and India markets are really attractive for Turkey. Turkey hosts many groups both from Middle East and India. We have worked with European market until today and now there is a need to enter new different markets.

So, we are aware that Middle East and India are potential markets. Also direct air connectivity gives advantages between these destinations. 🌟

541 projects and 158,950 rooms in ME by 2020



■ There are 541 new hotels in the pipeline across the Middle East – bringing an additional 158,950 hotel rooms to the region, an industry report has revealed. The Middle East Hotel Construction Overview report prepared by TOPHOTELPROJECTS exclusively for The Hotel Show Dubai 2016 forecasts that the majority of new hotel rooms will open before 2020. The UAE (180 projects) and Saudi Arabia (134 projects) remain the most active hotel construction hotspots in the region.

The busiest year for hotel openings leading up to 2020 is forecast to be 2017 with 189 projects and 58,527 rooms. Notable hotel openings scheduled for 2017 include: the world's largest hotel in Makkah, Saudi Arabia with 10,000 rooms, and the world's first Paramount Hotels & Resorts property; the Paramount Hotel in Dubai.



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RAMADA
Sharjah

India tourism unveils ITM 2017

The India Tourism Board headed by **I.R.V. Rao**, recently unveiled the first India Travel Mart (ITM) set to take place from February 1-4, 2017, in Delhi (India), during events held in Dubai and Qatar. The B2B event, to be organised in association with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Tourism Finance Corporation, will promote and strengthen ties between the UAE and India as well as Qatar and India.

DUBAI



QATAR



Nepal Airlines returns to Dubai



A gala event was held recently to celebrate the re-entrance of Nepal Airlines in Dubai. A special team of officials including Managing Director **Sugat Ratna Kansakar** flew in for the celebration. Announcements for tourism promotion between the two countries were also made during the event.



Next-gen tech savvy hotels

The recently-concluded Hotel Show gave insights into the trends of the region's hospitality industry. Experts from the hospitality and technology sectors discuss the importance of being more 'trendy with technology.'

TT BUREAU

The Hotel Show was held at Dubai World Trade Centre from Sept 17-19. It discussed an introduction of technology in the hospitality sector has created many new opportunities for both travelers and hotels. With technol-

It is very important that we have a proper IT security both from the side of the guest as well as internally from the hotel

Jeroen Wisse

ogy stepping in, the hotel staff is able to spend more time listening to the guests and making sure that they are looked after very well.

Jeroen Wisse, IT Director Hotel Services ME, AccorHotels, shared the importance of information technology in hotels. "It is very important that we have a proper IT security both from the side of the guest as well as internally from the hotel. From a guest's perspective it is just inherent that we make sure that all the data that the guest provides will remain secure on the network. One of the ways of doing that is



Jeroen Wisse
IT Director Hotel Services ME
AccorHotels

through strong international partners to help with the integration and client segregation. If you look at the UAE, it has one of the highest density of mobile devices in



Audai Altaie
Director of Business Development,
LG Electronics MEA

the world. So security is becoming important here.

Audai Altaie, Director of Business Development, LG Electronics MEA, recommended a few important

points at this stage. "Right now we are in a very competitive industry and we have to do something different not just to cut down cost but also to increase revenue by implementing technology. I recommend the cloud technology, because it's cost effective. Winning the loyalty of the clients and making sure they repeat and recommend to others as influencers is a vital point today in the industry," he said.

"We have to give the customers the satisfaction, the best experience to get their loyalty to us. And this is the real cost effectiveness and the value for us in order to get

Right now we are in a very competitive industry and we have to do something different not just to cut down cost but also to increase revenue by implementing technology

Audai Altaie

a quick return guest. This will ensure that the guest would not just be a repeat customer but also an ambassador by recommending to others by posting on social media sites," Altaie added. 📱

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Swissôtel KSA to open in 2019

Swissôtel in the city of Al Khobar is FRHI Hotels & Resorts' first venture into the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in the eastern part of the country.

TT BUREAU

Swissôtel Hotels & Resorts entered into an agreement with Mohammed Ibrahim Al Subeaei & Sons Investment Company (MASIC) to manage the 180-room Swissôtel Al

In addition to 180 guestrooms, Swissôtel Al Khobar will feature over 1,300 sq mts of meeting and conference space and a variety of food and beverage offerings from Café Swiss and Swiss Gourmet to a pool and grill restaurant. This

ran city and a short distance away from the Arabian Gulf, and is linked to neighbouring Bahrain by a 25 kms causeway.

"Continuing our growth in the KSA is a key focus for our world-leading luxury hotel brands," said **Sami Nasser**, Senior VP, Operations, Middle East, Africa and India, FRHI. "Since our debut in the region over five years ago with our multi-branded hotel complex in Makkah, our brands have been well-positioned to appeal to both business and religious tourism in this increasing sophisticated travel market." The addition of Swissôtel Al Khobar complements a growing portfolio of FRHI-managed hotels currently under development in Saudi Arabia, including Swissôtel, Raffles and Fairmont hotels in Jeddah all slated to open before 2020, in addition to Fairmont Riyadh, to open in 2016. 📍



Khobar in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With a planned opening in 2019, Swissôtel Al Khobar will be situated within the MASIC Business Park development, occupying an enviable location within the urban area's commercial and residential district. Encompassing around 55,000 square metres of retail and prime office space, this development will become a landmark in the Eastern Province.

mixed use property will also present 20 exclusive and contemporary luxury residential apartments, branded under the Swissôtel Living concept offering high-end amenities and round-the-clock service to residents. Situated in the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in the eastern part of the country with the city of Al Khobar as its commercial centre, the property is close to Dhah-

IHG's boutique segment for ME

In an initiative to lure more visitors from the Middle East to Paris, IHG is on a new strategy as they plan to open the first Kimpton hotel in the French capital city by 2020.

TT BUREAU

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), one of the world's leading hotel companies, has announced plans to open the first Kimpton hotel in the home of European fashion and design — Paris. Situated in one of the city's most sought-after districts, near the famous Paris Opéra, the luxury hotel is set to open its doors in 2020. The building will be fully transformed with Kimpton's signature bold and playful design to feature 149 guest rooms including 27 suites, luxury spa and fitness facilities, and a state-of-the-art meeting space overlooking the high-end Parisian streets, buildings and rooftops.

In the Middle East, IHG is actively developing strategic partnerships to expand its regional footprint across markets including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Riyadh and Doha.

IHG sees enormous potential for Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants. The brand belongs to the boutique segment, which is clearly emerging as a fast growing segment in the industry globally.

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, acquired by IHG in January 2015, is renowned for its innovative design and personal approach to guest

restaurants and bars are loved locally, and provide guests with an authentic taste of the city.

Pascal Gauvin, Chief Operating Officer, IHG across India, Middle East and Africa, also commented on the announcement saying, "We're confident the new Kimpton Hotels will set a new standard for hospitality in Paris. Here in the IMEA region, we plan to capi-



service, using thoughtful perks and amenities, and a sense of delight, to make guests feel truly at home. Kimpton's award-winning destination res-

talise on our scale, powerful distribution systems and owner networks to support the growth of the Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants." 📍



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Tech-savvy Aloft enters Riyadh

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has announced the entry of its innovative Aloft brand into the Saudi Arabian market with the opening of Aloft Riyadh.

TT BUREAU

Aloft continues to re-define the traditional hotel experience and strengthen its footprint in the Middle East, following the success of Aloft Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Owned and developed by FAS Hotels, division of Fawal Al Hokair Group, Aloft Riyadh offers a vibrant social scene in the dynamic city of Riyadh.

Brian McGuinness, Global Brand Leader, Specialty Select Brands, Star-

wood Hotels & Resorts, says, "With a portfolio of more than 100 hotels in dynamic destinations around the globe, Aloft continues to be one of the fastest growing hotel brands and is set to open 12 more properties in the Middle East by 2020. Saudi Arabia boasts a rapidly growing tech-savvy culture, and Aloft resonates in this market with its innovative programming and approach to technology, which appeal to today's hyper-connected traveller."

Michael Wale, President, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Europe, Africa and Middle East, said, "We thank Fawal Al Hokair Group for putting their trust in Starwood to open the first Aloft in Saudi Arabia. Aloft truly brings something new and unique to the hospitality sector in the Kingdom where there is a

growing demand for modern, tech-forward hotels at an affordable price."

Centrally located at the intersection of Riyadh's main Olaya Street and Makkah Road, the hotel is in close proximity from the key government ministries, the shopping and restaurants of the downtown core, the National Museum and the Diplomatic Quarter. Aloft Riyadh features 281 modern, loft-inspired guest rooms with the brand's signature offerings.

With design-led innovation in the brand's DNA, Aloft Riyadh will feature SPG Keyless, the hospitality industry's first mobile, keyless entry system that allows guests to use their smart phone or Apple watch as a room key. Aimed at the mobile generation, guests of Aloft Riyadh will also be able to make requests from the hotel via the SPG Let's Chat text messaging service. 📍



UAE unveils future urban living

The ruler of Dubai recently unveiled Jumeirah Central, an urban mixed-use city district expected to become a comprehensive model for future urban planning.

TT BUREAU

According to the Dubai Government media office, the district will comprise 47 million sq ft of gross floor area ('GFA') along Dubai's Sheikh Zayed Road and will



introduce new international standards in city planning that are able to balance requirements from an environmental, urban development and societal perspective; conceptualising His Highness's vision of Dubai's future development and evolu-

tion. The Jumeirah Central master plan is a product of the collaborative work of over 19 government and private agencies, international experts and consultants under the leadership of Dubai Holding over the last two years.

Jumeirah Central's infrastructure will include a multi-modal transport network, environmentally-friendly transport options and aerial gondolas. The district, of which over half will be open space, will offer one million sq ft. of climate-controlled arcades

for all-season lifestyle and a comfortable pedestrian experience. The district will be home to 35,000 residents and will host 100,000 people annually.

Commenting on the announcement, **H.H. Al Maktoum** said, "As our vision for future cities evolves, Dubai will continue to set the benchmark for city development across the globe. Jumeirah Central is a clear milestone in our journey towards building the city of the future and the creation of engaged and happy communities. We will not stop investing in our economy, and these projects are tools to expedite that journey of growth. We are confident in the strength of our economy and are optimistic for the future of our nation. To that end, our vision will continuously evolve and expand."

The district is located on Sheikh Zayed Road with 25 points of vehicular access. 🇦🇪

2nd Westin opens in Dubai

Westin Hotels and Resorts announced the soft opening of The Westin Dubai, Al Habtoor City, which has added more than 1000 rooms to Sheikh Zayed Road.

TT BUREAU

The hotel is the second Westin hotel to open in Dubai and the largest Westin hotel across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. **Michael Wale**, President, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Europe, Africa and Middle East, said, "Together with Al Habtoor Group, we are excited to deliver Westin's well-being promise to guests at Starwood's largest hospitality project in the Middle East. This opening reaffirms Westin is on track to double its presence in the Middle East in the next three years."

The Westin Dubai, Al Habtoor City, features 1,004 guestrooms, including 142 suites. The two-bedroom Heavenly Suite is located on the 40th floor with floor-to-ceiling windows framing views of Dubai Water Canal and Sheikh Zayed Road. As the hotel's top suite, this is a

425 sq m sanctuary with king size Westin Heavenly beds to ensure unsurpassed comfort.

The hotel opens with five of its six dining venues including: Cook Hall – a casual industrial-style American gastro pub; Il Capo Restaurant – serving hearty New York Italian dishes, the lobby lounge Daily Treats – where indulgences are made healthy; Seasonal Tastes – serving global cuisine from its six live cooking stations, and Blinq – serving cocktails and snacks in a flirty and glamorous space. Westin Fresh by The Juicery offers a selection of juices.

General Manager **Khaled Ghaleb** said, "The Westin Dubai, Al Habtoor City is the largest Westin to open in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Providing an urban retreat with a resort feel, the hotel offers an array of endless choices across its many fa-



Khaled Ghaleb
General Manager
The Westin Dubai

ilities including 6 restaurants and bars, and our 20-treatment room Heavenly Spa."

The hotel presents 15 meeting rooms, each offering clutter-free and fully equipped spaces with SuperfoodsRX meeting breaks in natural daylight. Complementing the conference and event facilities is the 1,450 square-metre Al Joud ballroom, ideal for banquet style events and celebrations of up to 1,200 guests. 🇦🇪

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Centara Ceysands: A Lankan paradise



With its river and ocean setting, and direct access to the beach, Centara Ceysands has an abundance of natural attractions. Along with the leisure activities at the resort, diving trips, visits to heritage sites, and a river safari make for a memorable experience for adults and children alike.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Located on the Bentota Peninsula, a narrow strip of land that runs between the Bentota River and the Indian Ocean, Centara Ceysands Resort & Spa Sri Lanka has dreamy views

arcade and water sports are located on the ground and mezzanine level whilst the rooms, library and other recreation areas are on the first level. The wide open spaces of the resort allows guests to relax from the moment one steps into the



trim during their stay whilst enjoying their time spent in the pool. Their authentic Cenvaree spa is a must visit as guests can enjoy a blissful Thai massage but it is essential to make a prior appointment.

available upon request, river and deep sea fishing and river safaris. Special tours and sightseeing excursions can be arranged. If you are a water enthusiast this is the place to try out all the aquatic sports with an instructor and guide all the way. Guests are also offered excursions to other parts of the country upon request and all facilities are arranged at the desk. When you book your room online or through your travel agent, make sure you book the extras to avoid the rush even during the off-season time.

Food and beverage wise, the latest addition is the new signature Thai res-

taurant 'Suan Bua' opened very recently serving authentic Thai cuisine. Café Bem overlooking the river offers traditional Sri Lankan specialities, Asian and international cuisine presented either by buffet or even a la carte menu according to the season coupled with live cooking stations. 360 Restaurant serves international cuisines with specialises in sumptuous, locally sourced seafood prepared in a variety of ways. Perfect to immerse in a relaxing ambience and take in the views of the ocean, Ceylon Club serves refreshments, snacks and fabulous afternoon teas. Two bars complete the range of

dining experiences. In-room dining is available to those who wish to munch on something whilst enjoying the view of the pool or the river.

It is a very unique facility which could even host MICE guests. The resort's versatile event space can accommodate a wide-ranging number of functions including meetings with working lunch, incentives, weddings and outdoor receptions, all supported by state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. With either the Bentota River or the Indian Ocean as a picture-perfect background the resort is a natural location for wedding celebrations.



of the slow-moving river and its mangroves to one side, and to the other side views of the golden beach and blue sea. For adventure enthusiasts and those who prefer a quiet and rejuvenating time, this is an ideal destination. It is just about 100 kms from Colombo, best accessed through the southern expressway which is about a 45-minute ride.

Access to the resort is also exotic, with guests boarding a barge on the landward bank of the river and taking a two-minute journey across to a warm welcome in the resort lobby. The restaurants, shopping

property, it is best to check in by 3 pm and check-out time would be 12 noon.

This state of the art luxury resort consists of 165 rooms and suites in various categories to suit the requirements of the guests with an average size from about 37 to 139 square metres. On request inter-connecting rooms, suites, rooms with view of the pool and the sea are available. Complimentary wireless Internet access is given to all guests for a minimum of two devices. The ocean-facing swimming pool provides water aerobics to those who wish to indulge in keeping themselves fit and

Other facilities include a fitness centre, kids club (camp safari and e-Zone) and babysitting services upon request. Some of the key water sports include snorkelling, canoeing, sailing and sailing lessons, and wakeboarding, kneeboarding, jet skiing, and rubber dinghy rafting and banana boat, scuba diving



Cyprus Visa Centre in Amman

The new Cyprus Visa Application Centre in Amman will make visa application to Jordan much more convenient.

TT BUREAU

With Cyprus emerging as a preferred outbound destination, applicants will find this centre, located in the heart of the city, an easily accessible and convenient op-

Commenting on the launch of the new centre, **H.E. Nafsika Krousti**, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Amman, said, "It is indeed important that the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Amman is launch-

Jordanian citizens applying for visas to travel to Cyprus either for business, or pleasure."

The key features of the new centre are: longer operating hours allowing applicants to visit at a time of their convenience, professional staff with local language capability to handle queries and applications, automated queue governance for smooth flow of applicants, providing better crowd management, dedicated counters for applicants and travel agents/tour operators, dedicated website for easy access to information including visa categories, requirements, checklist and applicable fees, online appointment scheduling, and tracking of application status, dedicated call centre and email support to answer queries, handling of passports, documents and personal information, visa status update via website or SMS alerts. 🇳🇵



tion. The newly launched centre is located at Galleria Mall, Sweifieh Street, Amman, and joins nine other client governments also served from the same premise. Services at the new Cyprus Visa Application Centre commenced from September 4, 2016.

ing this visa application centre, in collaboration with VFS Global. I need to emphasise that the Cyprus Government highly cherishes its bilateral relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and wishes to provide the best possible facilities to

1st phase of Marasi Bay in 2017

The first phase of Marasi Business Bay, comprising of The Marina and The Park, is scheduled to be ready by Q4 2017.

TT BUREAU

Dubai Properties Group (DPG) announced that the iconic Marasi Business Bay development is on schedule and will be completed by 2023, transforming the Business Bay promenade and marina as the city's next waterfront landmark. Located along the Dubai Water Canal on the extension to the Dubai Creek, the region's first ever purpose-built yachting destination will become synonymous with the best of what Dubai has to offer as a global business and tourism hub ahead of the World Expo 2020.

Marasi Business Bay is divided into three themed main areas – The Marina, The Park and The Pier. Phase 1, comprising The Marina and The Park, is on schedule for delivery in Q4, 2017.

Abdulla M. Lahej, CEO, Dubai Properties

Group (DPG), said, "The Marasi Business Bay destination will send residents and visitors to Dubai on a journey of discovery into the new world of waterfront living never seen before in the UAE. In line with the country's vision for 2021 and beyond, this new floating lifestyle destination will play a key role in supporting the government to realise its vision of enhancing Dubai's iconic status as the fourth most visited city in the world by reinvigorating the historic Dubai Creek and boosting tourism in the Business Bay area."

As part of the first phase, 'The Marina' will bring to the UAE the first-ever water-homes, which are being built on water with pedestri-

an and boat access, provide unparalleled direct water views. Marasi Business Bay has new and exciting public



spaces at its heart, including the longest water-side promenade in the Emirate of Dubai, spanning almost 12 kilometers. The Park, also a part of Phase 1, comprises a sprawling 50,000 square meter area, including 16 parks with water features, play areas, and interactive furniture, as well as an events space with an amphitheater, outdoor cinema and weekly markets. 🇦🇪

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Luxurious Arabian hospitality

Pierre Ghorayeb, General Manager, Telal Resort, says the luxury desert resort offers its guests an opportunity to live the Arabian experience through high service standards, and various leisure and traditional activities.

TT BUREAU

Noting that the hospitality industry in the emirates is growing very fast and changing the scenario of demand and supply, Ghorayeb says technology plays a vital role in global approach today way more than what was expected a few years ago.

The guests have changed with time and they are quite aware of the products purchased hence, as hoteliers or hospitality partners, we are kept in check

time and again. "We have to speed up with the technology trend and not be left behind," he adds.

The resort offers especially handcrafted tent villas designed to portray the utmost scenery of tradition blended with modern luxury. Ghorayeb describes the property as a "heritage village where the history, culture and traditions of the Emiratis are brought to life to recreate the traditional Bedouin experience." The resort is focusing on enhancing its products, implementing



Pierre Ghorayeb
General Manager
Telal Resort

We are aggressively approaching the GCC and international markets. We are also meeting international partners to explain our resort concept

new activities such as ziplining, zorbing balls, launching a new Emirati restaurant in mid of October, and a new luxury SPA. Another unique

feature of Telal Resort is hunting. It is the only resort where hunting of exotic animals like Arabian oryx, reem gazelle and domani is legal.

A majority of the guests at hotel come from the Middle East and Europe, who are interested in discover-

international markets, and we are also meeting international business partners to explain them our unique resort concept," he says.

On the latest trends in trade in the UAE, Ghorayeb reveals that, "the staycation trend witnessed a positive

like ITB, WTM, ADIHEX, FITUR, TOP RESA, COTTAM, and Arabian Travel Market. "A constant business growth rate has been achieved for the year 2015 and by participating at WTM, and ITB we are aiming for a larger international market share," he adds. "The political situation in the Middle East area in general is affecting the hotel industry, yet the tourism business in the UAE is still stable due to the wise decisions taken by its leaders," Ghorayeb adds.

Ghorayeb started his hospitality career in 1977 and has since worked for international brands like Holiday Inn, Meridien, Rotana and Millennium. His new role as General Manager of Telal Resorts entails motivating a large hotel team to deliver service standards and driving a sales and marketing strategy. 📌



ing Arabian heritage, desert and wildlife. A good mix of 70 per cent leisure and 30 per cent corporate and stop-over guests visit the resort. "Our team is aggressively approaching the GCC and

growth as well Airbnb that enables people to list, find, then rent vacation homes."

He says the resort participates in all the major international trade exhibitions

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Starwood expands in KSA

Sheraton Makkah Jabal Al Kaaba, in the holy city of Makkah, will be the 7th property by Starwood to be opened in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The property is owned by Al Tayyar Travel Group and will be in operation by the end of the year.

TT BUREAU

The hotel is located close to the new expansion of the mosque and will provide guests with special access and views of the holy Haram. "Makkah has been in particular focus for Starwood growth, with Sheraton being one of three brands to make its entrance into the market in the next year. The property will offer pilgrims the Sheraton brand's renowned world-class service and a comfortable hospitality experience in the holy city," said **Michael Wale**, President, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Europe, Africa and Middle East.

Sheraton Makkah Jabal Al Kaaba will feature 414 rooms and branded service apartments, all outfitted with the Sheraton brand's signature amenities and services, including its premium sleep



Michael Wale
President, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Europe, Africa and Middle East



Abdullah Aldawood
Chief Executive Officer, Al Tayyar Travel Group

experience. The hotel will also offer four dining experiences, as well as ample meeting and events space.

"Saudi Arabia remains one of our strongest growth markets in the region and we are on track to more than double our presence in the country in the next three years. With the growth of religious travel into Saudi Arabia, there continues to

be a strong demand for hotels within the holy city and Starwood is in an enviable position with a pipeline of more than 3,000 new rooms in addition to 1,200 existing rooms in this market," stated **Neil George**, Senior Vice President, Acquisitions & Development, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, MEA.

Abdullah Aldawood, CEO, Al Tayyar Travel Group,

said, "We believe the location of this hotel together with a strong brand name like Sheraton makes for a winning combination for our first branded hotel in the holy city. We are confident in Starwood's ability to provide the finest of its globally recognised services under the Sheraton brand to pilgrims. We are committed to modernisation across all of our business units to ensure sustained growth through integrating the hospitality aspect and innovation in our existing travel related businesses."

Al Tayyar Travel Group has recently taken a strategic direction to integrate and expand its business into the hospitality sector, and to build a solid portfolio complementing its current business of travel-related services and e-commerce. Starwood is on track to operate 100 hotels in the region by 2020.

Weekend getaway at Al Ghurair Rayhaan by Rotana



Al Ghurair Rayhaan and Al Ghurair Arjaan by Rotana, the 5-star hotel and deluxe hotel apartments in Deira, Dubai, hosted several 'Family Weekend Getaway at Al Ghurair Rayhaan by Rotana' as part of their annual corporate social responsibility. They invited one family from Beit Al Khair Society; a humanitarian beneficial society that organises charitable programs and projects for the poor, orphans, handicapped and others who really need their help. The orphans together with their mother spent a memorable weekend at Al Ghurair Rayhaan by Rotana and had breakfast buffet, 'Little Chefs Family' brunch buffet & dinner buffet at the all-day dining, Liwan restaurant.

Travelwings.com: Inspiring travellers

From flights, hotels and holiday packages to sightseeing, travel insurance and car rental, Travelwings.com has fast established itself as one of the leading online travel agencies in the UAE.

The portal was established in last year with a clear focus on delivering the best deals on travel-related services to the consumer. With a multi-cultural team endowed with multitude of knowledge within the digital landscape, the Travelwings.

Travelwings.com is not your ordinary travel agency. We strive to connect with our customers on a much deeper level. It's not just about travel but everyday living as well

com team has been swiftly successful in establishing the brand as a top player within the UAE market.

Knowledge is power, so it is all about investing in the staff, understanding future trends and how the brand can get there. Innovation, performance, productivity and efficiency, a positive and energetic work environment with a 'can do' attitude is the key to delivering success for the business.

Customer satisfaction is at the forefront of all aspects of the business, offering a 24/7 customer care approach in order to ensure that all customer needs are attended to at any time of the day. Availing the best pricing across various travel arrangements is what Travelwings.com strives for to ensure that customer is always satisfied with their booking.

"Travelwings.com is not your ordinary travel agency. We strive to connect with our customers on a much deeper level. It's not just about travel but everyday living as well. Fun, excitement and inspiration to all our customers is what we want

to deliver on. It should evoke the greatest emotion of all, happiness with a lifetime of memories. This is our goal and its showcased with the brand's efforts in the market," shares **Richard Santana**, Head of Marketing, Travelwings.com.

Ongoing focus continues to drive brand awareness throughout the UAE in an effort to consolidate their presence. Current efforts have cemented the brand within various communities as "the brand that gives you wings to fly." Travel is fun, its inspiring and exciting and it's with this mindset that the message is deliv-

ered. Connecting with the customer across different levels is a key focus for the brand. Whether it is through music events and concerts, sports games or joining in on their travels, Travelwings.com is more than just the customers' travel agent, but a partner to share memories with.

Fun, excitement and inspiration to all our customers is what we want to deliver on. It should evoke the greatest emotion of all, happiness

Richard Santana
Head of Marketing, Travelwings.com

The year 2017 will see Travelwings.com enhance its technology and launch a state of the art website, purely devised to optimise and enhance the users experience. Global expansion is the following priority for the brand as it plans to launch across two key continents in the near future.



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- ◆ Understanding each customer as an individual and their needs while tailor making each itinerary accordingly

Dining in at Rotana's Olive Oil

Jumeira Rotana Dubai recently opened their all-day dining restaurant 'Olive Oil' for business and leisure travellers. General Manager **Ulrich Hoffmeister** and hotel staff welcomed the guests at the event.



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IndiGo inks GDS deal with Travelport

India's largest domestic airline, IndiGo, has announced a strategic partnership with Travelport. The agreement will enable IndiGo to distribute all of its fares and ancillary products to customers worldwide.

TT BUREAU

This is the first time that IndiGo has struck a deal with a global GDS, and the



Derek Sharp
Managing Director, Air Commerce
Travelport

choice of Travelport as its distribution partner reflects the value the airline sees in Travelport's Travel Commerce Platform. The platform offers fully integrated, industry lead-

ing merchandising capabilities and is used extensively by travel agencies in India as well as other key target markets for IndiGo.

IndiGo, which commenced operations in 2006 with a single aircraft, now operates a fleet of 112 aircraft including the new Airbus A320 Neos with 424 more on order. Through the strategic partnership with Travelport, IndiGo will place its fares, ancillary products and offers into the Travel Commerce Platform. This distribution platform, unique to Travelport, will enable IndiGo to provide its content via an API connection, rather

than the more traditional fare filing methods often favoured by network carriers, and still have their fares and ancillaries displayed, compared and booked in exactly the same way. In addition, the airline will

bring IndiGo's brand proposition to life for travellers arriving into India and then seeking domestic flights within the country. The distribution partnership will also help the airline reach travellers in interna-

into destinations in the Indian Subcontinent, the Middle East and South East Asia.

Derek Sharp, Managing Director, Air Commerce, Travelport, said, "It is a testament to our product leadership, geographical coverage and customer engagement that IndiGo has selected Travelport as its global distribution partner. Today's announcement is very good news for all of our connected travel agencies in India and around the world."

Commenting on the partnership, **Aditya Ghosh**, President & Whole Time Director, IndiGo, said, "This arrangement with

Travelport will allow us to reach new customers, both at home and overseas, in a cost-effective



Aditya Ghosh
President & Whole Time Director
IndiGo

manner without incurring the traditional costs associated with participating in global distribution platforms using old style industry mechanisms and instead, enabling our real time connectivity to the GDS platform via an XML API link."

Technology News

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also use Travelport's leading merchandising capabilities to

tional markets as it continues to expand its route network

Sabre expands Qatar operations

Sabre Corporation has expanded their Sabre Travel Network Middle East (STNME) operations with a new office in Doha, followed by the appointment of Country Manager **Ghassan Abu Khalaf**.

TT BUREAU

The new office in Qatar highlights STNME's continued growth across the Middle East, after first establishing a presence in the region more than 30 years ago. Today, STNME has a long-standing strategic relationships with some of the region's largest travel agencies including Kanoo, ITL, and dnata. As primary technology provider, Sabre has supported the growth and success of its agency customers by providing industry-leading technology and tailor-made solutions to en-



able agents to shop, book and manage travel for its clients. STNME also recently opened offices in Iraq and Palestine, and expanded its presence in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, where its focus on training and customer service

has helped the company grow its customer base.

In Qatar, the new office opening was marked by an official ceremony with clients, partners, and government officials last month, in the pres-

ence of Sabre executives from around the region. The ribbon cutting ceremony was followed by a note from **Daniel Naoumovitch**, CEO, STNME, who officially announced the appointment of the new country manager of Qatar, **Ghassan Abu Khalaf**. Naoumovitch spoke about the uniqueness of the Qatar travel industry and STNME's investments in industry-leading product and expertise to support its growth and success.

Naoumovitch said, "Qatar has established its position

as a global tourism destination and showed resilience in spite of many challenges

region to compete even more effectively on a global scale. Sabre's industry-leading solutions

Qatar has established its position as a global tourism destination and showed resilience in spite of many challenges impacting the wider industry and economy

Daniel Naoumovitch
CEO, STNME

impacting the wider industry and economy. Now is the right time for the travel industry to invest in global technology and solutions that will enable the

such as Sabre Red Workspace, and mobile, data, retailing and personalisation technology positions the industry for success."

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Sabre Corporation

Qatar

Ghassan Abu Khalaf has been appointed as the new Country Manager for Qatar, to lead its operations and deploy Sabre's expansion strategy across the country. Abu Khalaf holds a Bachelor's degree in Engineering from the University of Jordan and an MBA from Montclair State University, New Jersey, USA. With more than 20 years' experience working for global technology companies in the Middle East, Abu Khalaf's primary role will be leading the Sabre Travel Network Middle East (STNME) team in Qatar to maintain and support the growth of its customers within an evolving and expanding market.



Arjaan by Rotana

Dubai

Ayman Ashor joins Arjaan by Rotana Dubai as the new General Manager. Having worked in Rotana since 2014, he was the General Manager of Centro Capital Centre Abu Dhabi. Ashor brings with him an extensive experience garnered from key roles at international hospitality chains in Egypt, the Netherlands and Germany. He has 21 years of experience overseeing rooms, revenues and operations. Ashor has been in the UAE for eight years and holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and MBA in Marketing & Communications from the Netherlands.



Yas Island Rotana & Centro Yas Island

Abu Dhabi

Craig Bruce has been appointed as the new General Manager of Yas Island Rotana and Centro Yas Island, Abu Dhabi by Rotana Hotel Management Corporation. Bruce has a wealth of experience from diverse international postings from his home country South Africa to the UK, Botswana and UAE. He will be responsible for management and operations of both Yas Island Rotana & Centro Yas Island Abu Dhabi hotels; to further strengthen the company's position in the market, and spearhead commercial growth.



Meliá Doha

Doha

Meliá Doha, the first five-star Spanish hotel in Qatar, has appointed **Sherief Abouelmagd**, an American Egyptian, as its new General Manager. After graduating in December 1988 with a Master's degree from Florida International University, US, in Hotel Management and Food Service, Abouelmagd started his 28 years' career with Marriott Hotels International in the USA where he held several managerial positions including opening and managing as General Manager of the North and South Carolina Courtyard by Marriott hotels.



Hilal Saade has been appointed as the new Director of Sales And Marketing, at Melia Doha. Saade is originally from Lebanon and has graduated from Ecole Hotelière de Paris in France. He has proven to have an impressive track record operating across luxury hospitality brands in Europe, the Middle East and Lebanon, including Le Gray Hotel Beirut, Hotel Missoni Kuwait and the InterContinental Hotels Group.



MOTIONGATE

Dubai

John Hallenbeck has been appointed as the General Manager for MOTIONGATE Dubai, the Middle East's largest Hollywood-inspired theme park, part of Dubai Parks and Resorts, the region's largest integrated theme park destination. With more than 25 years of experience in theme park operations, Hallenbeck has worked with some of the biggest theme parks around the world. Having joined the company in 2015 as Vice President-Revenue Operations, in his new role in MOTIONGATE Dubai, Hallenbeck will assume responsibility for the opening of the park and providing strategic direction across all departments.





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Can security dilemma hinder tourism?

Of the factors hindering tourism, security and safety has come to the fore in the wake of recent terror attacks in some parts of the world. Aviation industry experts tell **TRAVTALK** that the tourism industry will continue to boom in spite of security risks.

SHEHARA RIZLY

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and Airports Council International (ACI) have joined hands to address evolving aviation security risks with integrated solutions. Key topics such as securing landside spaces at airports, information sharing among governments, managing the risks of home-grown ter-

rorism and preventing cyber threats will top the agenda of the 25th AVSEC (Aviation Security) World Conference, taking place from October 25-27, 2016, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The event is expected to attract more than 500 delegates in security-related activities at airlines, airports, government agencies, defense and equipment and technology manufacturers.



Alexandre de Juniac
Director General and
CEO, IATA

“Flying is secure. Keeping it that way is the responsibility of governments and a challenge for all parties involved in air transport. Aviation is the business of freedom. But recent months have shown that it remains a target for terrorists. AVSEC

World strengthens the vital partnership between industry and government on security. It is a catalyst that helps to turn our common interest into a shared agenda to stay a step ahead of those with an agenda of evil.”

“Aviation security needs to evolve in step with changing threats. The global policy and regulatory framework has to adapt effectively and in a timely fashion to address this increasingly dynamic risk. Having so many global aviation security experts and leading thinkers gathered together at AVSEC World provides a valuable opportunity to identify common objectives and combine the industry's strengths and resources towards achieving better aviation security and facilitation.”



Dr. Fang Liu
Secretary General
ICAO



Angela Gittens
Director General
ACI World

“The recent tragic attacks on Brussels and Atatürk airports have brought aviation security sharply into focus in the worldwide media. Ensuring the security of the travelling public is a top priority for ACI and its members, and a prerequisite for a sustainable aviation system. This is a goal that can only be accomplished through close collaboration among stakeholders. The landscape of aviation security is changing, and AVSEC World 2016 will lay the groundwork for where we're going and the best way to get there.”

“With recent terror attacks happened on several tourism facilities and destinations, ITW-Abu Dhabi aims to address tourism security and safety during its inaugural WHTS Ministerial Forum. Participants will have the opportunity to discover, learn and share knowledge with industry professionals and leaders which in turn will assist them in defining and improving the future of their own business.”



Andy Buchanan
Executive Organising
Committee Director,
International Travel
Week



Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor, Tourism
Authority of Thailand

“To boost industry and tourist confidence, TAT is putting initiatives in place to ensure that Thailand's positive image as a safe and welcoming tourist destination remains intact. TAT is also launching a 'We Care' initiative, campaigning for the local communities to pull out the stops when it comes to hosting tourists and to encourage everyone working in the field of tourism to wear special white-yellow ribbons – symbols of the peace and unity of the nation. We want to show that Thailand and the Thai people genuinely care for the well-being of all tourists. And we want tourists to know that by visiting Thailand, they'll make memorable travel memories and enjoy experiences that will entice them to return time after time.”

“We have police boxes called Koban located almost everywhere in Japanese neighbourhood. They help to guide directions, report the lost and found, or stolen items. Even for reporting a crime, Kobans are the places to go. Probably this is one of the reasons why the crime rate is lower in Japan compared to other countries.”



Shuhei Akahoshi
Managing Director
Kyoto Convention &
Visitors Bureau

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