

TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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The best of ME on display @WTM

The world's leading travel and tourism industry event, World Travel Market (WTM), being held at ExCel London from November 7-9, 2016, will see 150 exhibitors from the six emirates and GCC with an expected new business value of over \$3.23 billion.

SHEHARA RIZLY

“As an Authority we always look forward to the World Travel Market. Sharjah has a long aligned history with the UK and we always receive a warm welcome when we attend events here. We recognise fully the immense opportunity that the World Travel Market presents through its 30,000 business to business visitors and we look forward to hosting our media and trade events on the

pavilion. The recent mainstream coverage in the UK has generated a new surge of interest in Sharjah and the visit this week by HRH Prince Charles into Sharjah will all help in creating further interest in the emirate from this market.

Sharjah is a perfect family destination with great connectivity from the UK and Europe making this region a key part of our growth strategy moving forward.



His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

At this year's WTM, the stand is a fusion of the best of Sharjah, showcasing product offerings ranging from the new Mleiha attraction through to the EPAA conservation areas and of course the accommodation sector. This is underlined and supported by Sharjah's many events including the World Championship Week with its F1 Grand Prix championship race, the spectacular Sharjah Light Festival, the International Book Fair, the Art

Biennial and Heritage days among others. There are many exciting new developments in Sharjah not least the development of a cruise terminal and the ambitious airport expansion plans all of which will help support the authority in reaching its 2021 Vision of 10 million guests. Currently Western Europe contributes over 200,000 visitors into Sharjah and we are confident that with our continued efforts this will grow substantially.”



Freddy Farid
Area General Manager
Gloria Hotels & Resorts

“WTM is a great place to discover the latest technology pushing travel into the future, including advanced personalisation capabilities, wearable devices, and Apps. Gloria Hotels & Resorts will be on the Dubai Tourism stand at World Travel Market, Stand No ME200. In 2015, the UK was the second biggest tourism market for the UAE. WTM is an aid for trade; our main focus would be on relationship building and communication using marketing activities that generate leads that can be nurtured during the sales cycle. Without giving too much away we will have an aggressive strategy for 2017 to maintain a very strong business mix in corporate, leisure, MICE, government and conference and events business.”



Nehme Imad Darwiche
Chief Executive Officer
Jannah Hotels and Resorts

“We participate at WTM to explore new regions in Europe and to network and grow the business for Jannah Hotels & Resorts. The UK market is very important as they are the third largest market in all our hotels. Our focus is on residents of the UAE, GCC, Europe, United Kingdom, Germany and Russia. The exhibition contributes to the growth of the region through awareness and connecting the key players of the industry in one major platform. We work closely with Abu Dhabi Culture & Tourism Authority to attend trade shows domestically, regionally and internationally in order to attract potential markets.”



Saoud Al Darmaki
CEO & Founder
Premier Travel & Tourism

“This is our fourth year participating under Abu Dhabi and we expect to expand the variety of tourism business opportunities in the European region and the world. The UK market is always important to the UAE. Our new target markets are India, China and Japan — mainly DMCs and tour operators of these countries. We use the B2B marketing strategy to reach the markets by networking and offering competitive business opportunities to serve and show best quality tourism activities and products by best prices and best services.”

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All eyes on Europe & UK markets

WTM 2016 is expected to rise above last year's record \$3.23 billion business. The Middle East, with over 150 exhibitors from the six emirates and GCC, will be well represented. **Simon Press**, Senior Director, WTM London, reveals more.



Give us a brief update of the highlights of the event this year.

This year, World Travel Market London will be a three day event (November 7-9) with opening hours extended from 10 am to 7 pm.

There will be more than 80 conference seminars covering all the key sectors including aviation, hotels, sports, tourism, responsible tourism, blogging, social media and travel technology. Do not miss out the WTM Presents Keynotes with tourism expert Doug Lansky and futurist Brain Solis.

The WTM Speed Networking in the Global Stage will bring 1,400 exhibitors and more than 200 businesses senior buyers over one ses-



Simon Press
Senior Director
WTM London

sion. The two pillars of the WTM London 2016: World Responsible Tourism Day and the prestigious UNWTO & WTM Ministers' Summit will both celebrate their 10th editions this year. Let's not forget the Travel Tech Show, the UK's largest travel technology event and the fastest growing region at WTM London. The show brings together the latest products and services in technology to the global travel industry.

What are the highlights from the UAE this year?

This year, Ajman Tourism Development Department has increased their presence at WTM London 2016 by taking a larger space. Their delegation will focus on promoting the finest of the emirate's hotels, resorts, cultural and heritage attractions.

Ras Al Khaimah, the northern-most emirate of the UAE has seen record growth from their major source markets, including a 33% rise in visitors from the UK between Jan-Jul 2016 versus Jan-Jul 2015. This is why Ras Al Khaimah has increased their stand space for WTM London 2016 as they will be using WTM as a platform to launch some exciting new tourism attractions in the highest mountain of the UAE and they will also

be launching their destination website.

For Fujairah, WTM London remains to be one of their most must attend European fairs as the UK market is an important source market for them. Their destination will be represented together with their partners from the tourism sector and are looking forward to the great opportunities for deal making and meetings during the three day event.

Are there any new exhibitors from ME or UAE in particular?

We have Saudia Airline who is exhibiting again this year. This year the UAE tourism bodies which are Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah will be bringing with them new stand sharers to take part in promoting the different destinations within the UAE. 🇦🇪

Expanding trade ties

▶ Contd. from page 1



T.L.S. Iyer
General Manager
SNTTA Emir Tours

“It's the 24th year SNTTA Emir Tours is participating in WTM. The UK and Europe have been key markets for the last two decades and our objective is to increase share of business from this region. We have seen steady growth from source as well as emerging markets as the UAE continues to invest in building and enhancing its tourism infrastructure. The UK has always been an attractive destination for UAE nationals & residents and interest

in travelling to the UK shows a rise as seen from the outbound demand we experience. One of the largest exhibitions to showcase our products to the right clientele as it takes place at the right time of the year. Provides an opportunity to meet with existing partners as well as forge new relationships. Emir Tours will be showcasing Abu Dhabi, Ajman and Ras Al Khaimah at WTM and we hope to explore new business opportunities.”

“We expect to convince the 50,000 industry professionals that Bahrain is a destination of choice with its authentic history and culture, warm hospitality and world class hotels and facilities. Our aim is to ensure there are activities, experiences and facilities on offer to meet the travellers' needs and desires. Bahrain is seeking strategic investments in accommodation, retail and leisure that will enhance the Bahrain travel experience to both regional and international visitors. Tourism contributes to 5 per cent of Bahrain's GDP; the industry has grown from 4 million visitors per year in 2000 to 11.6 million in 2015.”



Jerad Bachar
CDME, Executive Director
Tourism and Leisure, Bahrain
Economic Development Board

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

World on stage

World Travel Market, the leading global event covering aviation, hotels, sports, tourism, responsible tourism, blogging, social media and travel technology will be in its 37th year when it begins in London on November 7, 2016. The event provides a unique opportunity for the whole global travel trade to meet, network, negotiate and conduct business. This year over 150 participants will arrive from the Middle East region alone. The UK is a very important market for the UAE and experts in the travel trade are working at increasing their feeder markets.

The Travel Tech Show at WTM is the UK's largest travel technology event, and the fastest growing one at WTM London. The show brings together the latest products and services in technology to the global travel industry. This year, the event has high-profile names from the technology and travel industry, including Pegasus Solutions, DerbySoft, and Open Destinations.

Emergence of technology in travel, tourism and hospitality has brought forth a variety of clientele from leisure to business. Traveller trends keep changing at a rapid pace alongside travel technology. The players must be prepared to adapt to these various changes ensuring that the game plan will consist all aspects.

According to the latest Global Passenger Survey report by IATA, more passengers are looking for technology to improve their travel experience. Some of the key findings revealed that passengers want to be able to do more of the traditional airport processes 'off airport' by taking advantage of the latest digital self-service options. In 2016, the percentage of passengers who checked in online and used a mobile boarding pass rather than a printed one increased to 71 per cent from 69 per cent in 2015.

We are heading into a new era of travel, tourism and hospitality but are all stakeholders ready to handle this new scenario? The role of the travel agent is changing rather rapidly; and they would soon need to adapt and ensure to act more like a travel consultant.

Trending beyond 2020

The hospitality industry is expanding exponentially. With new brands penetrating the market and existing operators expanding their presence across the region, TIME Hotels too is penetrating Qatar and KSA markets and expanding its footprints.

The trend is inclined to affordable budget hotels within a preset price range bracket while receiving essential hotel services and facilities. Destination is selected on what best fit the budget as step one and then what best fits their needs, coming from that angle travellers are looking to enjoy, experience, and tick some of their bucket list items in an affordable yet comfortable stay.

Millennials are the core target of the focus groups that we have initiated. They are the most vibrant generation until today, driven by getting the core of an experience away from the halo revolving around it, in other words they are looking for essential elements within limited compensation.

Hotel operators are on an exponential rise in the coming years to achieve the forecast room inventory for

the Expo. In line with DTCM projected plans and calculated figures the expected turnout for the EXPO 2020 will meet the need.

Theme parks are the latest addition to the portfolio of entertainment that Dubai has planned for winter 2016-

Hotel operators are on an exponential rise to achieve the forecast room inventory for the EXPO. In line with DTCM projected plans the expected turnout for the EXPO 2020 will meet the need

2017 and with both indoor and outdoor establishments Dubai strives further to be an entertainment city 365 days a year. The presence of entertainment theme parks will create a reason for returning travellers and extended stays for new comers. The addition of theme parks on top of the existing water parks will create a more diverse attraction for all visitor preferences.

TIME Hotels has endorsed technological advancements to place at the disposal of its guests that are simple and uncomplicated. Online check-in App is the latest initiative that will assist guests in skipping queues at the reception desk on arrival after their tiring journey

and reaching their room in no time.

Technological tools are used mainly as a revenue generation tool, whether it was direct or indirect. The main goal is to share a tool to ensure travellers' journey as seamless and positive as it could be. Tools can be either assistive at one side with an injection of an upsell mecha-

nism to get the guest to opt-in for service or facility while ensuring that his stay will be remarkable, other could be indirect by acquiring a guest's preferences and details to be utilised in future communications customised to his taste and preferences to ensure a revisit.

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



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
Time Hotels

App-dated Turkish Airlines

Flying to the most number of destinations, Turkish Airlines has developed a new mobile application to make their travellers' journey accessible on finger tips. A host of new features await the clientele and the App can be downloaded from iOS App Store or Google Play.



Designed to provide the ultimate user-friendly layout, with high quality visuals of destinations that Turkish Airlines flies to, the new mobile application offers the best experience to mobile users. Users can now buy tickets, make reservations and check-in, manage Miles&Smiles account and follow departure - arrival status via the recent application. All processes can be done quickly under favor



of the simple and easy to use design. It is now possible to add passengers, display the latest airport searches, and gain time by choosing favorite airports. Also the flights can be reserved easier due to the interactive map. The promo-

tions which provide new discoveries via Turkish Airlines can be reached at any place and any time.

The new functionalities of the mobile application allow passengers to change tickets,

make cancellations, add infants, and add flights directly. The application includes the terminal maps in order to make mobile users find their desired location.

Also the mobile application users will have ability to buy emergency row seats to have a more comfortable journey. Also it is now possible to upgrade Economy tickets to Business via new update.



Publisher : Sanjeet
Director : Sumera Bahl
Managing Editor : Peden Doma Bhutia
Assistant Editor : Shehara Rizvi
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Assistant Desk Editor : Shivani Kaul
Design : Nityanand Misra
Business Development Manager : Crisna De Guzman
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is published
by Sanjeet on behalf of
Durga Das Publications
Private Limited

Printed at
Citrus Graphics Private Limited
B-61, Sector-67
Noida, (U.P.) 201 301

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Unique investments by Shurooq

Shurooq is responsible for studying, assessing and sharing market insights on Sharjah's economic growth and investment prospects, promoting key sectors like tourism, environment, and transport. **H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal**, CEO, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), shares his insights.

TT BUREAU

Please give us a brief on Shurooq?

Shurooq was first conceptualised in 2009 in a bid to position and promote Sharjah as a unique investment destination. Shurooq is responsible for the development of some of the biggest leisure and family destinations such as Al Qasba, Al Majaz Waterfront and Al Montazah Amusement and Water Park and the unique Al Noor Island.

Shurooq began to diversify their development process in a bid to diversify the emirate's investment opportunities, and began preserving, restoring and developing historic landmarks in the emirate. This new initiative has opened a new door to authentic tourism, where Sharjah currently holds a distinctive title of becoming one of the most authentic tour-

ism destinations on a GCC and MENA level.

What are the key activities planned for the development of Sharjah by Shurooq?

During late September, we hosted the Sharjah FDI Forum, which was the region's largest and biggest FDI event of its kind, also organized by Shurooq. The event was part of a larger strategy to showcase Sharjah's truest investment potentials with comprehensive panel discussions on multiple business prospects in the emirate.

We want to dedicate our focus in partnering up with some of the most fundamental government departments which contribute directly to the growth of Sharjah's FDI, and travel to the most iconic cities and countries in the world to showcase the business development which Sharjah is undergoing.



H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal
CEO, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq)

Explain the importance of ties between Sharjah and the UK with your participation at WTM?

The Sharjah-UK relationship is one of the UAE's most significant chapters in its history. We are talking about more than 120 years' worth of strategic, political and business bonds and partnerships. The Emirate of Sharjah played a key role in facilitating the British investments

and trade services across the entire region.

Will this relationship gain more visitors to Sharjah from UK?

Certainly! Our relationship is built on years of research, study and implementation of strategies that cater to the demand of British investors and tourists. From an investment perspective, as British companies invest in Sharjah, the process would involve them visiting the emirate on multiple occasions thus eventually experiencing Sharjah's tourism features as well.

What is the strategy to promote business and tourism links between Sharjah and the UK?

When we travelled to the UK this year, we presented investor findings and statistics

reflecting the huge role opportunities to invest, which are completely diverse. From tourism to environment, they truly enable businesses and organisations the chance to make a difference, not just for tourists but to the world's environment.

If the UK is to invest in Sharjah what benefits would they receive in terms of tourism relations?

Thanks to the support of our partners across multiple government entities in Sharjah, our unified goal has allowed us to work closely together in ensuring that UK investors investing in Sharjah receive all the information and services required to facilitate their businesses.

Shurooq has travelled and welcomed delegations from many countries around the world, including the UK

and during these trips we were successful in communicating Sharjah's growing tourism sector, as well as promising opportunities behind its key tourism, healthcare, environmental and logistics and transport sectors.

Could you share the latest tourism promotional events introduced by Shurooq?

On November 18 this year, Shurooq, in partnership with the Spartan Race organisers, will be hosting the latest edition of the world's most popular racing event for the first time in Sharjah's Mleiha Archaeological and Eco-tourism project. The race, which is expected to gather thousands of visitors and fitness fans will also introduce a new race called 'Beast Race', which is Spartan Race's newest challenge introduced in Sharjah for the entire MENA region. 🏃

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Acquiring new businesses

The World Travel Market 2016 is being looked at with great expectations and hopes to build and strengthen travel trade ties.

TT BUREAU

“First Central Hotel Suites will unveil its new and improved website, optimised to provide a digital hub of information on our Rooms, Special Offers, and Services as well as our Green Initiatives for Sustainable Development and Operations. We look forward to acquiring new business ventures during the show through contracting international tour operators and online wholesalers for this market. It is also a great opportunity to strengthen our ties with our current partners.”



Wael El Behi
General Manager, First Central Hotel Suites



Samir Arora
General Manager
Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham JBR

“Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham will boost its presence in the UK and European market, highlighting its excellent location along Jumeirah Beach Residence, proximity to the latest Dubai attractions, and its family-friendly facilities and services. We will reinforce ties with our existing partners, as well as tap new and emerging markets to secure new businesses. We also seek to gain insights on the latest industry trends during the exhibition.”

“In line with its vision to attract tourists from all over the world, Sharjah National Hotels will utilise WTM 2016 to raise its brand knowledge and showcase the best of its hotels, recent developments and achievements to the travel and tourism industry decision-makers and visitors. Sharjah National Hotels' demand for activity holidays is growing from strength to strength, making significant contribution to Sharjah Destination Tourism. Emphasis will be on pacing travel trade demand in line with latest leisure activities expansions and customer service perfections.”



Emad Saeed
Director of Sales & Marketing
Sharjah National Hotels

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ATM 2017 theme: Trending experiential travel

■ Experiential travel encompassing the adventure, culture, heritage, wellness & spa and cruise tourism segments, which are currently trending globally, will be adopted as the official show theme, for Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2017, taking place at the Dubai World Trade Centre from 24-27 April.

ATM 2017 will integrate the experiential theme across all of the show verticals and activities, including focused seminars and roundtable events, featuring dedicated exhibitor participation.

Industry professionals throughout the Middle East region are keen to look for new and niche markets, especially in the short to mid-term as Dubai in particular, continues to grow its hotel supply unabated. According to STR, at the end of August 2016, Dubai had grown its room stock to 85,500 across 403 hotels, which is putting added downward pressure on rates as hotels compete for occupancy, with little respite ahead as room supply is set to rise further to between 140,000 and 160,000 rooms by 2020.

Sustainability is the way forward

With the number of hotel rooms emerging in every nook and corner of the world, the properties are on a rapid process of adopting methods to ensure sustainable tourism techniques to safeguard facilities for generations to come, reveal industry experts.



SHEHARA RIZLY

“Wyndham Hotel Group is committed to sustainable tourism, protecting our planet for the enjoyment of future generations of travellers. Wyndham Green is our sustainability initiative, which is aimed at promoting sustainability best practices to our hotels. Awareness of the environmental impact of travel will lead to travellers seeking out hotels which are actively preserving their surroundings.”



Dan Ruff
President and Managing Director
Wyndham Hotel Group EMEA

“The Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Philippine Hotel Owners Associations (PHOA) are working together to ensure that hotels in the country adopt green practices and help curb greenhouse gas emissions. Greening the hotel industry provides that one big window of opportunity to sustain the growth of this rising tiger in Asia. Through our collaboration with the hotel industry, we can offer cleaner air and a greener environment to travellers, and we help hotel owners bring down their electricity cost. That translates to a more competitive environment for the tourism industry.”



Wanda Corazon Teo
Secretary
Department of Tourism, Philippines



Chalerm Sak Suranant
TAT Director
Dubai & Middle East

“Our marketing plan 2017 is designed to shift the structure and directions of the national tourism industry towards a new value-based offer in order to position Thailand as a Quality Leisure Destination. This is in line with the national reform plan of the Royal Thai Government and its vision slogan, “Stability, Prosperity, and Sustainability.” The goal now is to offer “Value for Experience” and focus on “Unique Thai Local Experiences” to create valuable and memorable experiences to quality tourists by creating valued tourism products. This will mean greater emphasis on promoting Thailand through Thai culture, experiences and way of life.”



Maja Pak
Acting Director
Slovenia Tourist Board

“Slovenia is a world leader in sustainable development, signified by the country's capital Ljubljana being awarded 2016 European Green Capital. Slovenia is a country with green character. Forests cover 58.4 per cent of its area, making it the third most forested country in Europe, and 36 per cent of its area is within the Natura 2000 network. One fifth of its coast is protected, and it is one of the richest European countries with regard to the amount of river water per capita.”

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Accessible tourism comes to the fore

UNWTO has declared this year as the accessible travel year. According to reports, accessible tourism is a rapidly growing segment and Amadeus is pioneering this by supporting UNWTO. **Svend Leirvaag**, Vice President Industry Affairs, Amadeus IT Group, discusses the way forward with **TRAVTALK**.

SHEHARA RIZLY

Q Could you describe the importance of accessible tourism?

I think that we have come to realise that accessible travel and tourism is important for many reasons. Persons with disabilities or accessibility needs are an important market potential, and our research shows that almost 9 out of 10 disabled persons would travel more if the travel process was made more accessible, and the travel experience more seamless. We are convinced that travel technology will play a pivotal role in enabling this future.

The World Health Organisation states that 15 per cent of the total world population has at least one type of disability. It is also estimated that by 2050, 21.5 per cent of the world population will

be 60+. Even today, seniors represent a very lucrative segment in many markets, and the ageing population will probably become an increasingly important market segment for the travel industry. What becomes important, of course, is to approach the challenge holistically – and to ensure that we consider all kinds of disabilities and accessibility needs, and how to address them in travel and tourism.

Q How can Amadeus play a role in this?

Current legislation in markets like the US and the EU obliges companies to ensure certain levels of accessibility e.g. when providing access to information for people with accessibility needs. For example, eRetail, one of our major booking engines for airlines, has been made accessible to –AA level (WCAG 2.0 univer-



Svend Leirvaag
Vice President Industry Affairs
Amadeus IT Group

Enabling what we call 'accessibility by design' can help improve the overall user experience

sal guidelines), with 38 airlines already migrated to the new accessible solution.

This is just the beginning, and Amadeus wishes to create greater awareness within

the global travel industry ecosystem about the potential value of accessible travel and tourism, as a driving force for inclusive growth. Enabling what we call "accessibility by design" can help improve the overall user experience.

We are currently working on a global research project to better understand the needs of this important and growing market segment, and how our customers are likely to respond to them. This ability to anticipate is of course key to remaining a global leader in travel technology. We will be very happy to share the findings of this research when the project finishes early next year.

Q What is the future of Global Distribution Systems?

Global Distribution Systems have played a key role in the success of e.g. Middle

East airlines, giving instant access to travel buyers around the globe in a way and at a cost that would have been impossible to achieve through other means.

So as long as there is competition and choice between travel providers, travel buyers will continue to demand transparency and the ability to compare on an apple-to-apple basis, and transport providers who want their business will want to bring their product to this marketplace to be compared fairly with other competitors.

Q Will the role change for travel agents?

Driven by costs and technology, automation will continue to be a major factor, and all kinds of travel agencies will have to rethink how they shape their organisation, how they develop their

value proposition, in order to remain competitive.

The travel industry is also inherently volume-intensified, and we see how consolidation is happening everywhere. Smaller agencies are finding it more difficult to compete against big brands, and airlines and other travel providers will want to spend their time and money on travel agencies with larger volumes. So travel agents will also have to adapt to the changing times.

Having said that, there are many opportunities out there and big is not always beautiful. Many niches and specialty segments are highly profitable. We at Amadeus are committed to continue guiding our travel agency partners helping them identify and adapt to the challenges ahead.

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UAE's emerging travel tech trends

Tech trends of the region are focused on the 'personalised' travel experience. The typical traveller of 2016 – whether they travel for leisure or business – wants the ability to self-serve and manage their own bookings, which means that mobile technology and apps are becoming increasingly important.

As such, one third of the bookings in major countries around the world are now coming from mobile devices and in app bookings took off last year, accounting for 35-40 per cent of mobile bookings. This means that today's travellers are super connected, including during their trip, with 46 per cent valuing free in-room Wi-Fi as a must-have amenity. Before a trip, travellers tend to base their plans on online reviews and rankings and, after a trip, they will probably share their experience online, including on social media. A total of 42 per cent of stories that were shared on Facebook users' timelines in 2012 were travel experiences, making it the top story being shared by users. There are also currently a staggering 200+ million reviews written across the Internet. Travelport has invested in our mobile offering to allow our customers to interact directly with travellers, which is becoming increasingly significant in this hyper connected world. Whether that's the new MTT-powered mobile app for Etihad or Travelport ViewTrip, the mobile itinerary management tool accessible whilst on the move, we're enabling our

enhanced revenue opportunities offered by new distribution options that allow for a full and rich content retailing experience to the travel agency and corporate channels. In the Middle East we have seen leading national carriers such as Etihad and Emirates following this trend. Their content, devices through which it

is sold, and the airline's needs regarding content have all evolved. Airlines want to more effectively control how their flights and ancillaries are visually presented and described on travel agency screens. Airlines want this content aligned to the airline's value proposition and displayed more in line with the air-

line's own website. The key is making all this new airline content available is an intuitive, comprehensive merchandising platform that allows travel agencies to offer their customers more travel choices, convert more sales opportunities, and sell more airline products and services more often.



Rabih Saab
President and Managing Director
for Europe Middle East, Africa
and South Asia, Travelport

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

Airlines want to more effectively control how their flights and ancillaries are visually presented and described on travel agency screens. They want this content displayed more in line with the airline's own website

customers to remain relevant and add value in an increasingly complicated world. Having said this, travel agents add value for their customers by providing a 'personal touch'. Something that should never be underestimated and will always be relevant. Great advice from an experienced and trusted agent can prove to be far more valuable than an anonymous comment on a travel review site. And this is why it's so important for agencies to invest in their people.

This year we have seen a further maturation of airline merchandising, as more and more airlines recognise the



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The above is given with research taken from the following

- ◆ Criteo
- ◆ (Q2 2015) Criteo
- ◆ TripAdvisor Insights 2016
- ◆ Tnooz in Rezdy research 2016
- ◆ TrustYou statistic in Rezdy research 201

Sabre hospitality strengthens in EMEA

With the recent acquisition of Trust Group Germany by Sabre Corporation, the hospitality solutions arm of Sabre Corporation was further enhanced. **Richard Wiegmann**, MD, Sabre Hospitality Solutions in EMEA, speaks with **TRAVTALK** on this new initiative.

SHEHARA RIZLY

QHow will this merger help Sabre strengthen its hospitality presence?

This merger which is a little under one year will ensure great possibilities to all those involved. We are making quite a number of significant changes in the business and the merger brings a bigger opportunity to Sabre in total because we have a good customer base in EMEA with a special focus on the Middle East & Africa region.

It is a good opportunity to be closer to the customers so currently we are re-arranging our organisation to bring more resources with a focus into the region with regards to account management, sales resources and operational resources.

“We adapt to the local needs and bring in local resource which helps us in adapting to such needs. We are using the latest technology which would make not only the booking process but the arrival and check-in process smoother. We want to serve beyond the distribution of rooms which is customer experience.”

Richard Wiegmann
Managing Director
Sabre Hospitality Solutions in EMEA



Our job is to distribute hotel rooms at Sabre Hospitality Solutions, but it's very different to sell hotel rooms for instance in the UAE to selling rooms in Saudi Arabia or in Japan, Mexico or the USA. Therefore, we adapt to the local needs and bring in local resource which helps us in adapting to such needs. We are using the latest technology

which would make not only the booking process but the arrival and check-in process smoother.

We want to serve beyond the distribution of rooms which is customer experience. This is where we see our focus, we want to give our customers (the hoteliers' customers) that we

serve with our technologies an absolutely amazing experience with the best booking process they can get and at any point the customer wants to book with the hotel.

QWhat will be the future of the travel agents?

There has been a lot of talk in the past about the future of the travel agents and I'm very old school with that and I believe travel agents are very important, they are important to our customers, they are very important for us in Sabre. Travel agents just like everyone else in the travel ecosystems have to change,

they have to adapt to the new rules, they have to adopt the new requirements by the customers, but especially on the hospitality side, travellers are very loyal partners and very important to the business but again they have to transform the business in order for them to be relevant just like we all have to.

I believe that the travel agent needs to become more of a travel consultant or more of an experienced consultant and that is clearly on the leisure side. I am a very difficult traveller, for example on a week I'm a road warrior, I'm just on planes and going to hotels, want to get into my rooms, want to get on the Internet and want to work. Where on the weekend or my holidays, I would like to get someone to organised perfect stay for me and my family. This is where the travel agents, when they become more of a consultant instead of an order taker, have a huge opportunity.

There is a need for the convergence of online and offline as traditional travel agents are mostly of-

fline. Travel agents should look at merging their offline and online presence to meet their customers' needs and demands.

QCould you share the new announcements from Sabre?

We have decided to change our approach to the market. We will divide our hospitality business into regions, and we've identified three regions: that's the Americans, EMEA and Asia Pacific. We've decided for our hospitality business to go into regions, and we've created the role of the regional GM, Regional MD for Americas, EMEA as well as for Asia Pacific, and for the EMEA region I will serve as the MD and CCO which is based on Frankfurt, Germany, but with the team we are currently enhancing and building up in whole region here.

Spreading Wings

◆ Sabre has identified 3 regions - USA, EMEA & Asia Pacific for its hospitality business

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The rise of cross device shopping

QWhat are the products on offer?

In hospitality space, we offer a whole group of solutions to ensure the distribution for hotels is done at the highest standards. We go all the way from the demand generation side, creating the engagement on the medi-search engines and search in Google, ensure that the guest has seen the visibility of the hotels and the right prices and able to compete with their competitors be them the OTAs of the world or direct competitors of the hospitality space. But ensure that the guest engagement then doesn't stop there and it continues on the booking path on the website as an immersive experience. We have solutions for the entire portfolio of the guest experience from inspiration through search and booking and on



Olaf Slater
Head of the Product Division
Sabre & Europe

Our products are designed to cater all of individuals platforms and people in concepts and one of the things we introduced is support for high quality video and virtual experiences

property and as well as on travel winning sharing.

QPlease explain the possibilities through mobile technology.

We like to say it's not about individual mobile platforms rather it's about the devices that people in the journey used. Mobile used to be really relevant and important, but we now see the shift and we call it cross device shopping. Our products are designed to cater all of those individuals platforms and people in concepts and one of the things we just recently introduced is support for high quality video and the virtual experiences and 4k quality videos to ensure that the guest engagement is seamless across all of these touch points.

ibis Styles makes a swift mark

In spite of being comparatively new, the ibis Styles Jumeira has been enjoying an equal share in the market due to its location. **Muhammad Mujtaba Haider**, Hotel Manager, ibis Styles Jumeira, reveals more.

TT BUREAU

As a mid-market brand, ibis Styles Jumeira is fairing extremely well. The kind of response they had and has been witnessing from the market they say is very good as it feels like the hotel is already well established and has been operational for years. The additions of two new restaurants provide more dining options for guests seem to be a strong point for them.

"Location plays a vital role for ibis Styles Jumeira thus our partners are keen on marketing it aggressively. ibis Styles Jumeira boasts easy access to Sheikh Zayed Road, and to Dubai's iconic destinations and landmarks including Burj Khalifa, Dubai Mall and the Downtown Dubai District, plus the Burj Al Arab and Jumeira Beach Road.



Muhammad Mujtaba Haider
Hotel Manager
ibis Styles Jumeira

Presently, we are eager for the opening of Etihad Museum, which is a 10-minute walk from the property, plus other exciting developments in the area like the Dubai Maritime City

We are also near the business hubs like Dubai World Centre, Dubai International Financial Centre and Dubai

International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Presently, we are eager for the opening of Etihad Museum, which is a five to 10-minute walk from the property, plus other exciting developments in the area like the Dubai Maritime City," stated Haider.

Apart from their strong points such as size of rooms and suites, and amenities like restaurants, indoor swimming pool, spa, gym and more, the dedication and hard work of Haider and his entire team are key USP of the hotel. Catering to leisure and corporate guests, their frequent guests are from India, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the UAE, the UK, the Philippines, Egypt, Kuwait, France and Jordan. They are aiming to close cent per cent with a high ARR on the night of Dec 31, like any other hotel in Dubai. 📍

NEWS from Sojern

Below are some key trends from our latest Q3 Global Travel Insights Report for the Middle East & Africa region:

❖ London Most Searched Q3 Destination

London is cited as the most searched destination for MEA travellers in Q3 followed by, in order, Istanbul, Paris, Amsterdam and then Bangkok and New York City tied for fifth place.

❖ Short-Haul Travellers Heading to Istanbul in Q4

Istanbul is the most searched short-haul destination for MEA travellers in Q4 followed by, in order, Dubai, Tel Aviv, Abu Dhabi and Cairo. The most searched long-haul destinations for MEA travellers in Q4 are London, Bangkok, New York City, Amsterdam and Manila.

❖ Shorter Lead Times

The region had some of the shortest lead times globally in Q3, with 42% searching 14 days or less, and 28% searching seven days or less ahead of travelling.

❖ Earlier December Departures

While Europe and North America search for departure dates closer to the Christmas holiday, the top departure date searched by MEA travellers is mid-month, on 15 December.

❖ Affinity for Long-Haul Travel

Middle Eastern travellers are not put off by long-haul trips. Cities in Europe and Asia-Pacific make up eight of the top 10 destinations for travel in December. In fact, India and the Philippines are the countries seeing the most searches so far both in the Middle East and UAE. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) shows a stronger preference for destinations in Asia-Pacific than the Middle East regional average.

❖ Turkey Remains a Top Destination

While Turkey has experienced a loss in tourism this year, the Middle East is bucking the global trend with Turkey among the top 10 destination list in December.








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2.1 million passengers at Abu Dhabi Airport in September

■ Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) has welcomed 2.1 million passengers throughout September, marking an increase of 5 per cent on September 2015. Since the beginning of the year, passenger traffic has grown 6 per cent from the same period last year, with 18,528,723 passengers between January 1 and September 30.

Total departures numbered 352,067, which signify a 10.1 per cent increase on September 2015. Passenger traffic to India grew 10 per cent on 2015, which maintained its position as the top destination, with 355,328 passengers throughout September.

Passengers to Qatar totaled 70,627, representing an increase of 18.4 per cent compared to September 2015. Saudi Arabia rose to become the third busiest destination, with traffic to and from the country increasing by 19 per cent. Traffic to and from Egypt rose by 37.9 per cent to 57,885 passengers.

Marriott acquisition is MEA's gain

September 23, 2016, marked history as the largest hotel merger between Marriott and Starwood finally came through. The new company will operate or franchise more than 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms, representing 30 leading brands from the moderate-tier to luxury in over 110 countries.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

The recent expansion of Marriott International which entails portfolios of 30 leading hotels brands will set a new global standard for unrivaled travel experiences and expanded loyalty whilst providing the agents, tour operators and OTAs one platform. **Alex Kyriakidis**, President and Managing Director for the Middle East and

in 110 countries and 350,000 rooms in the construction pipeline which means by 2020 we will be about 1.5 million rooms globally and half a million associates around the world. We are the largest operator in the Middle East and Africa. Today, we have 52,000 operating rooms in the Middle East and Africa in 30 countries. Our pipeline will take us in the next three years to 90,000 operating



Alex Kyriakidis
President and Managing Director
for the Middle East and Africa
Marriott International

The UAE will be our largest market by 2020, 80 properties and some 23,300 rooms, this is a staggering opportunity which affords us to synergize across our portfolio to work on the top line

Africa, Marriott International, stated, "Marriott International is leapfrogging the competition going from around 750,000 operating rooms to 1.1 million operating rooms

rooms in 38 countries, leading the pack in the Middle East and Africa in terms of presence is the UAE. The UAE will be our largest market by 2020, 80 properties

and some 23,300 rooms, this is a staggering opportunity which affords us to synergize across our portfolio to work on the top line because when you have that kind of muscle you can maximize the value of your partnership with the tour operators, travel agents and other partners OTAs."

At a time when travellers place even greater emphasis on enriching and per-

sonal experiences, they can now choose from the most diverse selection of hotel brands. With more than 5,700 hotels and 1.1 million rooms in over 110 countries across the globe, guests now have access to the best hotels and resorts wherever they travel. Marriott International's portfolio now includes a series of quintessential luxury and lifestyle names. The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, Bulgari Hotels & Resorts, JW Marriott, The Luxury Collection, W Hotels and EDITION define a new era of luxury travel, with dynamic brands such as Westin, Renaissance and Autograph Collection occupying an evolving lifestyle category. Premium brands like Marriott Hotels and Sheraton anchor the portfolio and provide a broad array of choices around the world for business and leisure travel. And new, fun, accessible experiences

at Moxy Hotels, AC Hotels and Aloft add to the portfolio, ensuring our guests have whatever they want, wherever they are in the world.

"We believe that Marriott now has the world's best portfolio of hotel brands, the most comprehensive global footprint, and the most extensive loyalty programs, providing an unparalleled guest experience. Combining Starwood's brands with ours better enables Marriott to reach our goal of having the right brand in the right place to serve our loyal guests and welcome new ones. We can now provide a better range of choices for our guests, more opportunities for our associates, and greater financial benefits for our owners, franchisees, and shareholders," said **Arne Sorenson**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Marriott International. 

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Dubai reaches 100,000-room milestone

Following the opening of Westin Dubai, Al Habtoor city, Dubai has reached a historical milestone of 100,000 rooms across its hotel and hotel apartment inventory. Key players in the tourism industry shared their views on the achievement.

 SHEHARA RIZLY



H.E. Helal Saeed Almarri
Director General of Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism)

“For the hotel sector, high demand from international travellers, and the consequent growth in tourism volumes, has been the cornerstone of fostering continued investment in supply enhancement, which has seen us cross this historic 100,000-room threshold. This has been a journey undertaken collaboratively and achieved through the enduring strength of our public and private partnerships that underscore Dubai's maturing prominence on the world stage. The hotel and hospitality sector continues to share strong interdependencies and complementarities with the growth of tourism, aviation, infrastructure and other destination proposition enhancements, as it has done historically. The concerted efforts of Dubai Government to continually evolve the emirate's transport and logistics infrastructure via committed investments for capacity expansion through to 2020, coupled with Dubai Tourism's enablement of various tourism assets, ranging from theme parks and cultural districts to specialised event venues and entertainment offerings, have laid stable foundations to systematically grow visitation volumes to the city.”



Alex Kyriakidis
President and MD Middle East & Africa
Marriott International

“We are proud that the opening of The Westin Dubai, Al Habtoor City has helped Dubai achieve its 100,000 rooms milestone. Dubai is now home to 30 of our properties across the world's most-renowned brands, making Marriott International the largest hotel operator in the city. With plans to nearly double our presence in this market in the next five years, Marriott International is committed to supporting the vision of Dubai, led by His Highness to strengthen Dubai's position as a leading destination for global travel.”

“Achieving the 100,000-room milestone underlines the remarkable growth of Dubai's hospitality sector led by the strategic directives and vision of His Highness. Tourism and hospitality are core contributors to the city's economy, which gain strength from a robust aviation infrastructure and Dubai's reputation as a global leisure and business hub. We see significant growth prospects for the industry, and the availability of world-class rooms – from ultra-luxury to midscale – will further add to the appeal of Dubai as a preferred destination for visitors from around the world.”



Chris Newman
Chief Operating Officer of Emaar Hospitality Group

“We are exceptionally proud of the contribution Jumeirah Group makes to the development of Dubai as a world-class hospitality and tourism destination. In December, Jumeirah Al Naseem will open with 430 rooms adding to our existing portfolio of luxury properties at Madinat Jumeirah, that includes Jumeirah Al Qasr, Jumeirah Mina A'Salam, Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf. We currently operate nine properties in Dubai with an inventory of 3208 hotel rooms, suites and villas.”



Stefan Leser
Group Chief Executive Officer
Jumeirah Group



Rudi Jagersbacher
President, Middle East, Africa & Turkey, Hilton Worldwide

“We have been welcoming guests to Dubai for over 15 years, and in this time have seen the emirate's hospitality industry and our presence grow from strength to strength. Today we have 10 hotels in Dubai and expect to double this number by 2020 as we grow and evolve our portfolio to suite increasingly diverse guest needs. We have confidence in Dubai's longevity as a thriving and exciting place for any hotelier to operate, and we continue to work alongside our investor partners to solidify the emirate's position as a leading global destination.”

“Al Habtoor Group continues to grow in unison with the economy of Dubai. Our vision is in line with the Government. We have seven quality hotels in the city contributing significantly to the hospitality sector. Addition of The Westin Dubai – Al Habtoor City is another 1,004 superior rooms to Dubai. It is the largest Westin in Europe, Middle East and Africa. Our hospitality portfolio in Dubai is unique and draws people to the city, offering travellers with a multitude of luxury choices.”



Mohammed Al Habtoor
Vice-Chairman & CEO
Al Habtoor Group



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GCC Tourism Ministers Summit

■ The UAE successfully took part in a special meeting for GCC tourism undersecretaries held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of the preparations for the 3rd GCC Tourism Ministers Meeting. The UAE delegation was headed by **H.E. Mohamed Khamis Al Muhairi**, Undersecretary, Ministry of Economy, and was joined by **Saeed Al Samahi**, Director General, FTAA; and **Abdullah Al Hammadi**, director at the Ministry of Economy.

The delegates discussed key points from the minutes of its previous meeting — strongly focused on the development of the GCC region's tourism industry, the further promotion of joint tourism work among GCC countries and the continuation of efforts to achieve common strategic goals and objectives in support of enhancing and improving national tourist attractions of respective member countries.

H.E. Al Muhairi shared that tourism in the GCC

region has witnessed a positive upward shift in the last few years and has resulted in the region's tourism segment's ability to contribute significantly to the economies of countries in the GCC, supplementing contributions that has helped in promoting economic diversity. The Undersecretary revealed that the recommendations produced in the recent meeting complements the move to further enhance joint cooperation among GCC countries.

PAL on new growth trajectory

Philippine Airlines (PAL), the national carrier of the Philippines in Dubai, is one of the earliest airlines to establish Dubai as their hub. It is now on a mission to offer a new aircraft with new features to develop their collaboration. **Genaro 'Bong' Velasquez**, Regional Manager Europe and Middle East, shares his insights.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Philippine Airlines (PAL) flies daily Manila-Dubai flight, and five times weekly Abu Dhabi – Manila flights. In Saudi Arabia, they cover three cities — Dammam, Riyadh and Jeddah. They recently started the Jeddah operation serving three times a week. In the first quarter of 2016 they added Doha five times a week, and Kuwait four times a week expanding their route portfolio in the Middle East.

Their London flights to Heathrow airport recently changed the concourse to Terminal 3 which now offer more flexibility in terms of schedules. Furthermore the London sector was increased to four times daily due to the volume

of passengers. Philippine Airlines is currently studying other European sectors such as Paris to provide better connectivity.

Velasquez said, "We have a population of about 740,000 Philippine nationals in the UAE. This market is very different from our other Middle East route because most passengers here can select their own carrier of choice. This will require more visibility in the market and to remain active in the community and support activities of the local organisations. Presence in the local community publication is also ideal. Traditional Fam trips for travel agents and industry partners were also initiated to promote our product and destination. Currently, we are pro-



Genaro 'Bong' Velasquez
Regional Manager Europe and Middle East
Philippine Airlines

We will also be promoting beyond the Philippines to Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, Auckland, Papua New Guinea, Jakarta, Bali and Singapore

moting the 'Philippines for Free' program by offering free Philippine domestic tickets for every purchase of international tickets. We will also be promoting beyond the Philippines to Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, Auckland, Papua New Guinea, Jakarta, Bali and Singapore.

"In terms of the aircraft, we are currently operating an Airbus A330 with 38 Premium and 376 Economy class seats. We provide two pieces of baggage per passenger (32 kgs each for Premium and 23 kgs each for Economy). We offer 'My Pal Player' downloadable free App on all personal smartphone/tablet devices so passengers may avail of the inflight entertainment streaming of movies, music

and games. Thirty minutes of free Wi-Fi is also extended to all passengers. By May 2017, eight of these aircraft will be reconfigured to provide 18 Business Class, 24 Premium Class and 267 Economy Class seats to cater to a wider market segment."

Velasquez stresses that the PAL flight schedules are very convenient. Flights depart Dubai at 7:45 pm and arrive in Manila at 9:30 am, connecting all Philippine domestic and regional flights. From Manila, our flight conveniently departs at 10:00 pm arriving Dubai at 3:30 am.

In London, we operate daily service between Manila and Heathrow and currently studying other cities in Europe to operate.

Four Seasons at Kuwait's Burj Alshaya to open by 2017

■ Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts and Alshaya announced plans for a Four Seasons hotel in Kuwait. Located in downtown Kuwait City, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya will open in early 2017 as part of Alshaya's new Burj Alshaya mixed-use development. The 284-room Four Seasons Hotel will be located in the Burj Alshaya's 22-storey Eastern Tower.

The Hotel will become the newest addition to a collection of outstanding Four Seasons properties in the Middle East and North Africa region, where the company has been present for the past 16 years, and the latest property in a series of recent openings in the GCC, including Four Seasons Hotel Dubai International Financial Centre and Four Seasons Hotel Abu Dhabi at Al Maryah Island. Featuring two soaring glass towers, the 140,000 square metre Burj Alshaya complex will combine modern architecture, avant-garde luxury and bold design cues to create a prestigious backdrop for business and a new focal point of the city's elite social scene.



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SHARJAH prepares for WTM London



Sharjah Light Festival

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) is preparing to participate in the prestigious World Travel Market (WTM), taking place in London on November 7-9, 2016. In the lead-up to the event, the Authority can look back on a successful year as 2016 enters its final trimester.

As it holds its 37th instalment, WTM London has become an unrivalled must-attend event for any entity with stake in the travel and tourism sector. The travel market draws in upwards of 50,000 senior travel industry professionals, government ministers, and international press, while generating more than £2.5 billion (\$3.24 billion) in travel industry contracts.

WTM tackles several pressing issues that are of great concern to stakeholders in the international travel and tourism market. No-

table events on the calendar this year include a Buyers' Speed Networking event; a session on eTourism and the disrupting innovations that are creating opportunities and challenges in the tourism and hospitality industry; as well as a number of awards, including the World Tourism Awards, the World Travel Leaders Awards, and the Global Sport Tourism Awards, among others.

Seeking to solidify the emirate's place on the touristic map and further promote it as a diverse year-round destination, the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority will

be introducing the audience at the fair to its calendar of events boasting cultural affairs such as Sharjah International Book Fair, Sharjah Heritage Days, and Sharjah Art Biennial, the world-famous Sharjah Light Festival, and sports events including the final race of the U.I.M. F1H2O World Championship, and the Aquabike World Championship grand prix.

Moreover, the Authority will introduce attendees to the new additions to its already rich touristic offering – this includes Sharjah International Airport's expansion, the additions to the famed



Al Qasba



Al Montazah

2016



Sharjah Light Festival



East Coast Hotel



Book Fair

Al Majaz waterfront, and the inauguration of a new 12-square-kilometre wildlife reserve – Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre – on the emirate's east coast. The reserve is now home to the critically endangered Arabian leopard (*panthera pardus nimr*). Not to mention the historic Mleiha archaeological site, where excavations unearthed multi-chambered tombs where horses and camels were laid to rest by their masters' sides, in addition to buildings ranging from small houses to a multi-purpose fort.

The emirate has had a streak of achievements thus

far in 2016. For one, SCTDA was named the second-best exhibitor from the Middle East at ITB Berlin 2016, while the emirate's flagship Light Festival – now in its sixth year – had its best instalment yet, attracting more than 650,000 visitors during 10 days of the event.

What is more, international cruise liner MS Europa 2 arrived at the Khorfakkan Port with more than 500 tourists on board, underlining Sharjah's position as a key cruise tourism destination in the region. Khorfakkan Port will be welcoming the first cruise for 2016-2017 season "Mein Schiff 3" on December 10,



East Coast



Aquabike

followed by 27 calls by 5 cruise lines (TUI Cruises, MSC Cruises, Phoenix Reisen, Thomson Cruises, P & O Cruises) with an estimated number of 66,300 passengers on board.

Sharjah has seen growth in the number of visitors from several key markets. Bookings coming from China, for instance, witnessed a whopping 73.2 per cent increase in numbers in H1 2016 – the number of Asian tourists, overall, grew by a whopping 12 per cent to reach 207,645 during the same period, making Asia the second-largest source market for Sharjah. The

GCC remained the largest source market for Sharjah with 219,264 visitors in the first six months of 2016, while Europe – coming in third place – sent 180,768 tourists in H1 2016.

As the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) continues to build on the momentum it has successfully created for the emirate's travel and tourism the Authority's 14th participation in the global WTM exhibition promises to further solidify the emirate's status as a culture and tourism capital in the region.

Fact File

- ◆ Sharjah Tourism is set to introduce travel market visitors to its new offerings in terms of events and attractions
- ◆ WTM draws in upwards of 50,000 participants, while generating more than \$3 billion in travel industry contracts



Aquabike Free Style



Cruise

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MEDIA PARTNERS



Refurbished Golden Sands 3 @ WTM

Golden Sands Hotel Apartments is exhibiting at this year's World Travel Market (WTM) to showcase the newly refurbished Golden Sands 3 and meet with other UK tour operators to bring more guests from the UK market.

TT BUREAU

The renovation of Golden Sands 3 has been fully completed and visitors to the stand will see images of the spacious rooms and suites that are designed and furnished to meet the expectations of its leisure and business guests.

Mohammed Khoori, General Manager, Golden Sands Hotel Apartments, said: "The UK and European markets are extremely significant for us and we are keen to grow

our share of the leisure and business segments especially of the MICE market during this season. We have completed our refurbishments of Golden Sands 3 and guests would be delighted to find a very comfortable accommodation which is what we always promise – a home away from home. WTM is the perfect platform to share these developments with our existing and potential partners."

Nives Deininger, Director of Sales, Golden Sands Hotel Apartments, added:



Mohammed Khoori
General Manager
Golden Sands Hotel Apartments

The UK and European markets are significant for us and we are keen to grow our share of the leisure and business segments

"We are optimistic that visitors will increase during Q4 and in early 2017 as we are approaching the cooler months which is the best time to visit the UAE. There are also a lot of new attractions such as Dubai



Nives Deininger
Director of Sales
Golden Sands Hotel Apartments

We are optimistic that visitors will increase during Q4 and in early 2017 as we are approaching the cooler months

Parks and IMG World which is expected to attract more families to the destination."

Golden Sands Hotel Apartments offers a wide range of facilities and holidaymakers can



benefit from its favourable location close to the city's exhibition centre and attractions.

The team of Golden Sands Hotel Apartments will be participating in the show

with Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and will be available to meet visitors at Stand ME200 during the three-day exhibition from November 7 to 9, 2016.



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YOU DO YOUR THING. LEAVE THE REST TO US.®

© 2015 Ramada Downtown Dubai. This property is operated by R Hotels (a member of R Holding) under a franchise agreement with Wyndham Hotel Group.

Location: Best-seller for Ramada Downtown

Ramada Downtown Dubai's new General Manager **Shahzad Butt** sat down with **TRAVTALK** after his first quarter in the property to discuss the new strategic plan to stimulate a higher volume of business.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Taking over the property during the Ramadan period, Butt was able to put across a new strategic plan to attract more visitors to Ramada Downtown. A few weeks later, the Dubai Opera opened just adjacent to the property

Among their leading markets are Saudi (KSA), GCC nationals and the expatriates in the Emirates as well. Staycations this year has been a very good crowd puller for all properties in the emirates. Most leisure and business visitors prefer to stay at a place which is conveniently

cured by offering good deals for the agents to increase their occupancy level and keep their ADRs high too.

"When I joined in, it was a slow month therefore I got my team together and drew up a new marketing strategy to target new markets

"Having a good product in this strategic location at the correct time gave us the strength we need to attract more visitors to the property. I think it worked very well; the whole team put an effort to bring in business during these three months and that has been the mission and we have been able to successfully achieve the benefits."

Shahzad Butt
General Manager
Ramada Downtown Dubai



which provided him additional strength to market the property. Location is a key aspect which has continued to attract visitors to Ramada Downtown Dubai.

located to a range of different activities which would also include shopping. Butt ensured that all the business revolving around the area would be se-

and improve the occupancy and ADR. It was an exciting three months as now we are reaping the benefits of our exercise. Location plays a piv-

otal role for Ramada Downtown and I must add that we cash in on it. Having a good product in this strategic location at the correct time gave us the strength we need to attract more visitors to the property.

I think it worked very well; the whole team put an effort to bring in business during these three months and that has been the mission and we

have been able to successfully achieve the benefits. Now we are little ahead in the race, as people are calling us, they are chasing our deal to see what we are doing. I think that was quite exciting and challenging period these past three months. To set the business right, we at Ramada Downtown are able to raise the occupancy level, we are able to raise our ADR because sometimes

you have to give cheaper rooms at the lowest price. In our case we didn't need to adjust as our location was enough to bring in a good volume of business quite well and the product obviously which is very good in terms of people have stayed, people are happy so that has worked very well. So it has been three months of very, very busy to sort out our business from that point of view."



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DINE IN, LUNCH BOX DELIVERY AND CATERING

Travelport signs deal

Travelport has signed a new multi-year agreement with East West Travel group, an Egypt-based travel agency.

TT BUREAU

The East West Travel Group has also now become the sole representative of BCD Travel in Egypt. BCD Travel is a leading global corporate travel management company with over 13,000 employees worldwide and total sales in 2015 of \$25.4 billion.

To mark the occasion, Travelport sponsored a partnership event with East West Travel Group and BCD Travel in Egypt at the Baron Palace Garden, a historic attraction in the suburb of Heliopolis, Cairo. The event brought together some of the leading players from the

Egyptian travel industry from the airline, hotel and government spaces. The event was attended by His Excellency Mohamed Yehia Rashed, Egypt's Minister of Tourism.

As a result of the agreement, East West Travel Group and BCD Travel will now be able to access and utilize Travelport's unrivalled travel content – including the branded fares and ancillaries from the world's leading airlines and low-cost carriers, as well as over 650,000 hotel properties, all from within

the travel agent's workflow. Travelport has established itself as a key technology partner in the Egyptian travel industry and today's announcement with East West Travel and BCD



Travel further reinforces Travelport's brand awareness in the region.

Bassem Wahba, Vice President, East West Travel Group /BCD Travel, commented: "This new agreement with Travelport gives us a fantastic opportunity to grow our business and offer our partners a unique experience when it comes to booking travel. We're excited to be working with BCD Travel in Egypt and our new partnership, backed by Travelport's technology, sets us up to offer an effective and efficient service to business travellers."

Bassem Wahba, Vice President, East West Travel Group /BCD Travel, commented: "This new agreement with Travelport gives us a fantastic opportunity to grow our business and offer our partners a unique experience when it comes to booking travel. We're excited to be working with BCD Travel in Egypt and our new partnership, backed by Travelport's technology, sets us up to offer an effective and efficient service to business travellers."

Mervat Alfy, Country Manager, Travelport Egypt, said: "We are delighted to have East West Travel as a customer and we look forward to working with them to grow their business. We were also thrilled to be able to host this great event to mark our new partnership. Being able to share in this success with BCD Travel is also fantastic news and we look forward to working with both companies for the benefit of travellers across Egypt."

Technology News

Powered by

Travelport 
Redefining travel commerce

Sabre redefines business travel

The Traveler Experience Platform integrates a suite of travel technology products in a consumer-grade mobile experience delivering self-service in-transit travel bookings, itinerary management, payments, expense integration, and safety capabilities to the connected business traveller.

TT BUREAU

While the majority of business travellers want to manage their trips using technology, today they must rely on several different mobile apps to navigate the whole journey. According to a recent survey, The Digital Business Traveler, published by Sabre Corporation and the GBTA Foundation, 77 percent of business travellers in some of the largest corporations around the world prefer using self-service technology to manage their travel but on average they use nine dif-

ferent apps to manage their business travel with the most popular apps being airline, hotel, booking, car and restaurant apps. The survey results also show the proliferation of corporate travel tools and apps creates challenges both for the traveller and the travel program.

To address this disconnect, Sabre has unveiled its new Traveler Experience Platform at its annual Connect corporate travel conference in Dallas. The Traveler Experience Platform brings together the critical aspects of travel



Florian Tinnus
Vice President
Traveler Experience at Sabre

management into a single mobile app that will manage the whole trip for business travellers. The platform combines online booking ca-

pabilities of GetThere for air and hotel, the itinerary management and messaging features of TripCase and the e-payment solutions of Sabre Virtual Payments.

"Travel is a strategic investment for corporations that can bring significant returns which is why we built a platform that provides scalable innovation to drive two key objectives: experience and efficiency. In the past you had to give up one to have the other. With this scalable platform, you basically have it all," said **Florian Tinnus**, Vice President, Travel-

er Experience at Sabre. "With personalisation becoming an expectation for travellers, and mobile as an enabler of a true personalised experience, the future of travel is in the collaboration and execution of the traveller's experience with a corporation's travel program."

In all, the Traveler Experience Platform helps solve some of the biggest challenges facing business travel programs: corporate travel managers searching for a flexible platform, travellers looking for a seamless experience and corporations striving for a posi-

tive return on investment. Available to travellers through their employer's travel program, the platform seamlessly integrates multiple products and solutions, providing corporations a single mobile application for their travellers and freedom-of-choice in expense integration. Within the platform, corporate policies are automatically adhered to when business travellers book or rebook trips, expenses are automatically captured and stored and a detailed expense report is auto-filed when the trip is complete, all from the traveller's mobile device."

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Repositioning Jumeira Rotana

After a complete year of renovation whilst being full time operative, Jumeira Rotana is now ready to welcome visitors with a new look. **Ulrich Hoffmeister**, General Manager, Jumeira Rotana, shares with **TRAVTALK** the latest news on the property.

TT BUREAU

Q Could you give us an overview of the property and its current focus?

Jumeira Rotana is a property and longtime established institution in the buzzing community of Jumeira 1/AI Satwa. We look forward to celebrating our 20th birthday next year with the completed major refurbishment of the entire property, adding 10 more rooms, and one Burj Suite to our inventory

The great thing about all Emirates in the UAE is the fact that each destination keeps on reinventing itself. In doing so, they are attracting more and more visitors from all markets. Visitors to Dubai keep on expecting high degree of luxury and superlatives, even though looking for budget accommodation

with a total room count of 125. Additionally our Food & Beverage facilities provide something for any palate.

Our main focus at present is to reposition our new product on the market. We want to establish ourselves as a trusted provider of very personalised yet unpretentious service — a fact that Jumeira Rotana is long renowned for and in which

we take much pride. On the other hand we are currently driving our involvement in community relations and works. We feel it very important to give something back to the community we live and work in.

Q Would the general USP of the property change with this refurbishment plans?

After our renovation we are more competitive in terms of 'touch and feel' of our hotel. The design is more welcoming

to provide the best possible service in the most personal way. We consider our guests not as clients, but rather as friends. I think it is this honest attitude to service that separates us in a positive way from any competition.

Q What are the feeder markets to the property? Will you be tapping into any new markets?

Historic feeder markets like the UK, Germany, Europe and the entire Gulf region remain strong. We are currently looking at the remaining areas in Eastern Europe as well as India and China.

Q Today there are many new properties coming up in the Emirate, in your opinion what should the hoteliers do to have their share?

We are very thankful that the Governments are doing a lot to make Dubai and the Emirates as such a very desirable destination. Therefore I am personally not worried about the volume of business, even with new hotels coming up almost daily. The challenge lies in Average Rates, and new properties should not be tempted to go into the market with 'dumping



Ulrich Hoffmeister, General Manager, Jumeira Rotana

prices' and as for such put additional stress on an already volatile market.

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

The great thing about all Emirates in the UAE is the fact that each destination keeps on reinventing itself. In doing so, they are attracting more and more visitors from all markets. Visitors to Dubai keep on expecting high degree of luxury

and superlatives, even though looking for budget accommodation. Therefore the demand for value for money is becoming more and more important.

In terms of booking behavior, we see an increase in demand coming from online platforms. Also the booking pace is becoming more short term. Additionally, bookers are more and more tech savvy. Bookings are made from mobile devices through greatly facilitated apps. Arrival and de-

parture experiences are being redefined with express check-in and out facilities.

Q How does the location help in gaining more clientele?

Well, the statement coined by British real estate tycoon Lord Harold Samuel "location, location, location" is equally paramount to gaining hotel business. The location is extremely important for any traveller's choice of hotel. For example, if you are out for a beach holiday, you would rarely consider a property that is far inland with long transfer times. In our case of Jumeira Rotana, the beauty is, that with our location, we can offer shortest distances to all major business and leisure sights. Just 10 minutes' walk or drive to whatever your heart desires is a luxury, every resident in Dubai more than appreciates.

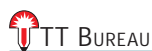
In the Offing

- ◆ The property has undergone major refurbishment, adding 10 more rooms, and one Burj Suite to its inventory with a total room count of 125
- ◆ The hotel is eyeing Eastern Europe, India and China for new feeder markets



Tune Protect your travel

Malaysia-based Tune Protect spearheaded innovative initiatives with existing airline partners which in turn gave them strong foundation when crafting and managing travel insurance. **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager, Tune Protect Group Berhad, talks about the products on offer for the B2B sector.



Q Do share the importance of purchasing travel insurance especially in today's context?

Travelling is perhaps the world's most common favorite pastime. However rare or frequent travelling is to someone, one expects to have the best memories during their travel. Caught up in the excitement, sometimes the traveller forgets to safeguard themselves. Buying travel insurance is as simple as buying an airline ticket or booking a hotel but it is extremely important to prepare for the worst.

Our advice to every traveller would be, when it comes to travelling, be it business or leisure, having an additional travel protection does not hurt. Purchase of travel insurance should become a second nature for every traveller, with tai-

lored benefits to protect, typical travel insurance covers a host of travel & medical benefits such as luggage is damaged, flight is cancelled, a family member falls ill and the traveller has to cut short his or her travel and return home.

Q Why should someone purchase travel assurance facilitated by Tune Protect?

Together with our head office, Tune Protect Re Ltd in Malaysia and local insurance partners, Tune Protect UAE has been able to lay down a very strong foundation when crafting and managing travel insurance. Tune Protect, an online facilitator based in UAE, has partnerships to understand and cater to specific travel requirements, offering today's traveller tailor-made, SMART travel insurance products, which include a host of travel-related insurance benefits that

covers the insured Before, During and After the travel.

Q What are the important areas covered by Tune Protect in the region as a facilitator?

Tune Protect and its local insurance partners have a very good understanding of the

The first is Travel Assurance Before, During & After. These plans are Schengen compliant. Travel Assurance Before, During & After offers more than 20 benefits which include medical, personal accident, evacuation and repatriation, travel inconvenience, baggage and personal effects benefit among others.

The latest addition to the suite of products is Travel Easy. This is a very lean insurance plan that caters to frequent flyers, specifically looking for travel insurance coverage that offers flight and baggage benefits only

growing needs or various types of travellers, be it for adventure, golf, shopping, winter activities or just simple leisure or business travel. With our understanding, we are able to design products which can cover the travel or parts of travel based on travellers' specific needs.

The second product is the Lifestyle Assurance, which caters to specific travel needs, safeguarding travellers while they are enjoying their favorite pastimes during their travel. Products offered are ShopCare, GolfCare, WinterCare and AdventureCare, a suite of



Arijit Munshi
General Manager
Tune Protect Group Berhad

niche insurance for travellers for a very specific activity.

Visit Assurance is yet another unique product offering catered to travellers visiting their friends and families within the region. Tune Protect has also launched a unique product offering for travellers departing from Sharjah Airport to anywhere in the world on any airline, Baggage Assurance, a travel insurance product offered to travellers

to secure their checked-in baggage only. Finally, the latest addition to the suite of products is the Travel Easy. This is a very lean insurance plan that caters to the need of frequent flyers, specifically looking for travel insurance coverage that offers flight and baggage benefits only.

Q Can anyone purchase it outside through their travel agents/tour operators?

Currently the travel insurance facilitated by Tune Protect is only available through the business partners on various sales channels such as Air Arabia, AirAsia & Cebu Pacific websites whereby travellers can purchase either online or through the call centre along with the airline tickets and avail a host of other products & benefits which are available throughout the region. 🇵🇭



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Giving back to the environment

Strategically located in the business precinct of Ajman, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman and Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman have become the leaders in promoting sustainable tourism in the region. Cluster General Manager **Iftikhar Hamdani** speaks to **TRAVTALK** about their joint venture with the United Nations Global Compact.



SHEHARA RIZLY

Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman recently announced its membership in United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the largest corporate social responsibility initiative in the world. The United Nations Global Compact is a voluntary initiative to promote sustainable development and good corporate citizenship. Established in 2002, the UN Global Compact now has thousands of participating businesses and stakeholders from over 160 countries. In order to commence its membership, the hotel associates gathered for an orientation conducted by **Ayla Bajwa** and **Hidaya Mansoor**



Iftikhar Hamdani
General Manager
Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman

Alfalasi, UN Global Compact local network representatives in the UAE. The session provided an overview of the 10 fundamental principles of the initiative, which are in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment, and Anti-Corruption, as well as a presentation on The Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

We are honoured to be part of the UN Global Compact! Our management has always ensured the welfare of our workforce and has been actively involved in various sustainable initiatives and charitable projects over the years

Iftikhar Hamdani, General Manager, Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman, enthused: "We are honoured to be part of the UN Global Compact! Our management has always ensured the welfare of our workforce and has been actively involved in various sustainable initiatives and charitable projects over the years. Through our membership, we seek to enrich our current business practices, and improve our existing CSR programmes. We will strive to become responsible role models in our field and in the community, and ultimately inspire our industry peers to do their share for a socially responsible global economy."

A few years ago, they researched into methods of conserving energy to reduce wastage and costs. Today, they have become the pioneers of initiating commercially viable methods. Ramada Hotel

and Suites Ajman has been a pioneer in various green initiatives in the UAE over the past years. The hotel has its own compost machine for biodegradable wastes, an urban farm which grows seasonal crops, and a reverse osmosis plant which recycles the hotel's waste water by 60 percent. The team was actively doing their share for sustainable tourism all year through regular beach clean-ups, Soap for Hope participation, and more.

UNGC Local Network Representative expressed their support to the property: "We are very proud of Ramada Ajman joining the Global Compact, the largest corporate social responsibility

initiative in the world, and to be part of the UAE UNGC Local Network which is in fact the most active and growing network worldwide. As a net-

partnerships on the local and regional level."

The traditional methods of securing business in hospitality or any trade has changed into different levels over the last few years. The performance of the hotel's revenue depends largely on the efficiency of the management team to mentor and guide the rest of the team, to be proactive to their guests ensuring sustainable and steady relationships which finally reap into revenue. Hamdani further stressed the importance of having a sustainable relationship where the guests will have a prolonged relationship instead of a short stay.

"A simple gesture can change the whole outlook of the guest about a property. It is a continuous training for us as



work, we focus on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure our commitment with the UNGC universally accepted 10 principles is aligned with the UAE's vision to be one of the most sustainable countries in the world. We call companies to join the United Nations Global Compact and benefit from the UNGC resources and best practices shared globally and engage with valuable

hoteliers. It is a business of ensuring a good experience for the guests. With the online OTAs there has been a significant change in the types of guests. They have their own expectations and our duty is to make sure that we send them back with fulfilled expectations. Going the extra mile in our hospitality trade is a key element which needs to be developed all the time," concluded Hamdani.





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OPENING FALL 2017

Moscow Leisure (Otdykh) 2016

The 22nd international trade fair for travel and tourism (Otdykh) concluded recently at the Expo Center Fairgrounds in Moscow. This year, 750 exhibitors from 70 countries, including Russian regions participated with over the 160 business events held on the sprawling 19,000 sqm convention area. The event, which aimed at both inbound and outbound travel of the Russian market, consisted of leisure, MICE, business, medical, spa, health and luxury tourism.





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Beach haven in Khorfakkan

Located on the east coast of the UAE, Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa offers private secluded beaches in a lush green setting in the hills of the Hajar Mountains. The property is just 90-minute drive from Dubai and Sharjah International Airports. **Ian Phillips**, Acting CEO, Sharjah National Hotels, shares the company's plans.

TT BUREAU

Re-opened in April 2013 following extensive renovation, the Oceanic Resort & Spa is a quiet retreat or a family break. With 177 spacious guest rooms and lavish suites, three sea-facing luxurious villas with six spacious bedrooms, exceptional dining establishments, outstanding recreational and leisure facilities, one of a kind



Ian Phillips
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Sharjah National Hotels

Currently we are focused on growing the existing market and enhancing the relationships we have with our current partners. We can see a shorter lead time for all FIT/OTA bookings, many bookings now are coming from direct relationships

dive sites and more, this resort provides the base to discover the remarkable surroundings of the mountains or explore the aquatic wonder of the east coast which exemplifies a true escape. It is a unique family environment situated on the Indian Ocean with visitors from the UAE, CIS and Europe as the key feeder markets. "Currently we are focused on growing the existing market and enhancing the relationships we have with our current partners. We can see a shorter lead time for all FIT/OTA bookings, many bookings now are

coming from direct relationships instead of OTAs which is enabling us to have a closer and better relationship with the guests. ADR and RevPAR, we have seen a 15 per cent growth this year on last year's actual," said Phillips.

International trade exhibitions such as ITB, COTTM, ATM, WTM, Leisure Moscow, MITT, etc. are essential to support and continue their relationship with partners.

Phillips stressed that they are very focused on providing a quality guest experi-

ence which would be a driving force to enhance potential business partners.

He said, "I see a good potential for growth, a clear focus must be on developing new services and improved standards to allow your partners to position you well and sell your product. We have a very good relationship with several key partners, travel agents and DMCs. We work very closely with them to ensure that we are correctly positioned and able to achieve



Deluxe Twin



Massage Room



Al Murjan Dining

our expected room nights on a monthly and yearly basis. The support of travel agents and DMCs is an essential part of our business and one that we work very hard upon to grow and develop. Generally I am very positive that we will see

further growth and improvement in the balance of this year and also in 2017.

Being a beach property is a unique advantage, particularly when the area is so nice which generates many

repeat guests. We mainly receive leisure with other segment supporting the mix; we work hard to develop our segmentation however the majority of the business is leisure. We are very pleased with the last quarter against

budget and last year, exceeding our expectations in both areas. Additionally it is looking very promising that we should continue this improvement on budget and last year through to the end of the year." 🌺

Sabre conference highlights hotel trends

Sabre Hospitality Solutions invited key hotel players from across the region to its EMEA Customer Forum held in Abu Dhabi from October 10-12, 2016. The event brought together Sabre's hospitality clients with industry experts and technology gurus to identify and discuss the most-relevant trends impacting the industry and explore in-depth some of the most avant-garde innovations.



CREATE MEMORIES... ENJOY DUBAI

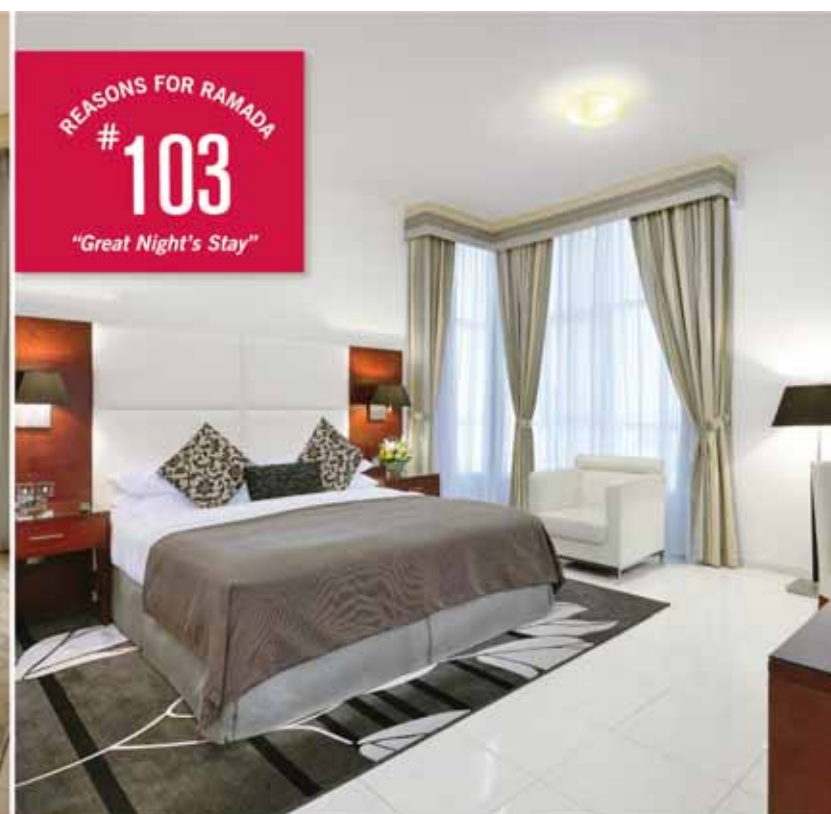
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RAMADA
Sharjah

ITB Asia 2016 in Singapore

The ninth installation of ITB Asia, the region's leading travel trade show, took place from October 19-21, 2016, at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Marina Bay Sands in Singapore. ITB Asia 2016 is the biggest and most exciting edition yet as they continue to forge new partnerships and connect new delegates to hundreds of companies from MICE, corporate and leisure companies across the globe.





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WYNDHAM

Dubai Marina



Le Meridien

Abu Dhabi

Ashraf El Siessy has been appointed as the new General Manager of Le Royal Méridien Abu Dhabi. Originally from Egypt, El Siessy spent the last few years in the Gulf, most recently as General Manager at Sheraton Deira Hotel in Dubai. A seasoned hospitality professional with more than 20 years in the industry, El Siessy has held senior appointments in Qatar, Egypt, United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. Prior to relocating to the United Arab Emirates, El Siessy was Hotel Manager at Sheraton Doha Resort & Convention Hotel.



Ramada Plaza

Jumeirah Beach and Sharjah

Sarah Brooks has been appointed Cluster Director of Human Resources for Ramada Plaza JBR and Ramada Sharjah. Brooks is familiar with the region and the hospitality sector having worked with AccorHotels Middle East in Oman, ibis & Novotel Hotel in Dubai, Baglioni Hotel, Park Plaza Hotel and ibis Hotels Euston & Heathrow in the UK. In her new role, Brooks will be fully in-charge in all Human Resources requirements of both hotels and assist the Management in providing consultation.



Wyndham

Dubai Marina

Jo-Ella Moore has been appointed as Hotel Manager of Wyndham Dubai Marina. Moore will be overseeing all operations of the hotel reporting to Cluster Manager, Rogier M. Hurkmans. With more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Moore has worked with a number of reputable brands including Armani Hotels, InterContinental Hotels Group and Six Senses. Her new responsibilities will be focused on all operational departments of the hotel while supporting the Cluster General Manager.



Wyndham Hotel Group

EMEA

Philippe Bijaoui joins Wyndham Group as Chief Development Officer for EMEA. He has more than 20 years of hotel real estate and development experience in markets across EMEA and most recently served as Vice President Development Europe for InterContinental Hotels Group, where he defined and implemented the development strategy for the region. In this role, Bijaoui will oversee the Company's rapid expansion across the region, introducing additional brands to established markets and building on the 73 countries where Wyndham Hotel Group hotels can already be found.



Seven Tides International

Dubai

Seven Tides International has named **Mike Vroom** as Executive Assistant Manager – Rooms for its latest five-star hospitality venture, DUKES Dubai on Palm Jumeirah. A graduate of the International Hotel School of the American Hotel & Lodging Association, he will lead the Rooms Division Operation for both the 273-room hotel and 227 hotel apartments, and brings with him extensive experience garnered from key roles in leading luxury properties in his native South Africa. Vroom joins the DUKES team directly from Queen Victoria Hotel and Dock House Hotel in Cape Town, where he was resident manager for both locations.



Desert Adventures

UK

Jean Joseph has been appointed as representative in the UK for Desert Adventures, part of the Kuoni Destination Management Specialists division. Throughout her 20-year career in the hotel industry, Joseph has worked for a number of luxury brands. These include Atlantis The Palm, One&Only Resorts and most recently Kerzner. Her extensive knowledge of the UK market and experience of working with Dubai as a key destination makes her an ideal representative for Desert Adventures.



Curious Cat Chronicles in Dubai

■ Cox & Kings has launched its educational travel tours - 'Curious Cat Chronicles in Dubai' to cater to the changing perspective of educational travel in local schools and provide students the opportunity to learn through exploration.



Karan Anand
Head, Relationships
Cox & Kings

'Curious Cat Chronicles' is a unique educational travel program that transcends classroom learning and broadens the horizon of a child's world, by giving them the freedom to discover, share and explore. Each itinerary is curated in a way that expands a student's knowledge and experience of the world.

The itineraries include fun and educative experiences like tailor-made tours to places

of historic significance in Europe, lunch with astronauts, zero-gravity experience at NASA centres and Universal Studios in the United States, workshops on Biodiversity and visit to Science centres in Singapore, Art schools in London, and witness the unique architecture styles in India, that present the world to the students as a global classroom. Schools can pick and choose from an array of curated itineraries that can be further customised based on the curriculum needs.

Speaking at the launch event, **Karan Anand**, Head, Relationships, Cox & Kings said, "As a leading education travel group, we have always emphasised on travel as a means to learn. Learning through travel exposes curious minds to new experiences that involve them. "Today, schools and parents realise the importance of educational trips that complement the curriculum and enhances a child's learning. Keeping this in mind we have conceived and designed our educational itineraries that combine the best of fun and learning, in a safe setting."

Versatile Dynamic Experts

A team of connoisseurs in travel, event management, MICE, leisure and hospitality has initiated one of the leading event management companies in the region with a sharp focus on the MICE industry.



The name of the organization — Dynamic Experts Events Management — describes the expertise of the team. It is a one-stop shop for the clientele who seek consultation on a variety of aspects related to travel, hospitality, MICE events, corporate functions etc. Their mission is to ensure that they leave behind a positive impact on society through their hard work and dedication. Their 17 years of expertise in event management is an additional strength which could come in useful with group travel itineraries. In terms of FIT and group leisure they can tailor-make packages or organise different types of event management solutions. They can also organise sight-seeing trips, adventure tours, theme parks; indoor and outdoor, gala dinner, annual staff parties, birthdays, weddings and other services related to travel and hospitality.



Denis Hicban
Managing Director
Dynamic Experts

By CY 2017, we are expecting a 25% increase in MICE business with approximately 130,000 rooms supply

Denis Hicban, Managing Director, Dynamic Experts, shares plans for the next quarter. "Dubai and Abu Dhabi is a niche and unique destination. It caters to different segments and source markets especially for Meetings, Incentive,

Conference and Events and Leisure (FITs and Groups). As of 3rd quarter of CY 2016, MICE increased by 20 per cent compare to CY 2015 and the last remaining quarter we are expecting increase not only in MICE but also in FITs and Groups leisure. By CY 2017, we are expecting a 25 per cent increase in MICE business with an approximate of 130,000 rooms supply (Dubai room inventories)."

Between October 2020 and April 2021, Dubai will host the next World Expo which will bring together more than 180 nations and an international audience of 25 million visitors.

Some of the other noteworthy services offered by these experts include wedding events, anniversaries, recreation, hospitality, creative live communications, parties and private function filming, parties and entertainment services. In terms of incentive travel they offer excursions, sight-seeing,

theme parks (indoor and outdoor), adventures tours, gala dinners, UAE visa and any other services related to travel and hospitality. Their expert pool of staff is experienced, young, energetic, with ability and knowledge to deliver innovative and insightful experiences that go straight to the heart.

Various programs are undertaken to keep their clientele content. In event management, the expertise will be share at affordable rates, good quality and personalised services.

Some of their core values include operating ethically and transparency, delivering on time and in budget, offering the best return on investment, and improving themselves, services and systems. Working enthusiastically and creatively by perceiving challenges as opportunities. The company's vision statement explains the importance of being admired for its values and standards. 🌟

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سكان SOMEWHERE HOTELS

The brand of SOMEWHERE hotels was established in 2013, with its first operating property currently located in Dubai, UAE.

The essence of the brand was founded and continues to base its foundation on the conceptual plan to create a hotel experience that combines the modern needs, desires and demands of a contemporary society.

Our philosophy: *"Hospitality is taught in colleges... We learned ours at home"* spurs from the ideology of reaching beyond standards towards making hospitality a personal experience. To achieve this objective, we continuously seek innovation through carefully investing in our team.

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SOMEWHERE Hotel
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KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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GREECE

SOMEWHERE Boutique Hotel
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