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# Wave of change marks 2018

This year proved to be far more productive primarily because most projects in terms of hotels and infrastructure were finally unveiled. There has been an upward trend in the travel, tourism, hospitality and MiCE sectors. Industry experts talk about the developments of the year that was...

Shehara Rizly



**Mahir Julfar**  
Senior Vice President—  
Venue Services  
Management, Dubai World  
Trade Centre

“Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) has served as a catalyst for the growth of the region's MiCE industry. Our position as an iconic venue in terms of size, event diversity and economic impact has held us in excellent stead, contributing 3.3 per cent to Dubai's GDP in 2017. Our events and exhibitions alone drove AED 12.7bn in economic value for the emirate and we are proud to continue to support the UAE's growth and development as a leading business destination. In line with the UAE's Vision 2021 to make the UAE among the best countries in the world for priority sectors such as healthcare, education, technology and sustainability, we are continuously enhancing our events portfolio across a myriad of sectors. Dubai is where global businesses come to explore new markets and create new connections, and DWTC aims to play a key role in furthering 'Destination Dubai' by creating powerful platforms for business development, networking and showcases.”



**Shahzad Naqvi**  
Country Manager UAE –  
Oman Air

“In addition to three new routes and increasing fleet, Oman Air will have taken delivery of five new MAX aircraft and three 787-9s by the end of 2018. The airline has increased its ancillary sales channels and continued to win awards for its unbeatable product and service. A new codeshare agreement with Turkish Airlines offers two flights a day from Muscat to Istanbul and vice versa, and an expanded codeshare with Lufthansa gives a greater choice of European routes. The online visa system provides a more efficient way for guests to enter the country. The new airport will also improve efficiency and facilitate growth with its capacity to handle 12 million passengers per year and its runway being able to run independent parallel operations. Increased facilities include more check in desks and lounges contributing towards a seamless experience.”



**Matthew Powell**  
Managing Director—Africa,  
Middle East and South  
Asia, Travelport

“We remain on course to meet our global growth targets and continue to perform well across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, with India being a particular highlight. We're also delighted to have become the first GDS operator to manage the live booking of flights using the IATA NDC technical standard. In August, we introduced IBM Travel Manager, an industry-first AI platform designed to help businesses manage corporate travel spend. The platform is delivered via the IBM Cloud and uses IBM Watson capabilities to intelligently track, manage, predict and analyse travel costs in one place to change how companies manage and optimise their travel programmes. We have also built an extension to the easyJet app, in collaboration with creative agency VCCP, that allows travellers to find and book destinations based on pictures shared on Instagram. Finally, we're proud to have secured more than 20 Trip Assist customers across the world since the product was launched in May 2018.”

Contd. on page 3 ►

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# High-octane year for travel trade

► Contd. from page 1



**Tom Thrussell**  
Vice President—Brand,  
Marketing and Digital,  
Centara Hotels and Resorts

“This year, we expect to have added 15 new hotels to our portfolio which will include the newest COSI in Chiang Mai, 10 hotels co-located with Central brand lifestyle malls, and three hotels in Laos and the fourth property in Krabi, Centara Ao Nang Beach Resort & Spa Krabi. One of the highlights at the moment is the opening of Centara West Bay Residences & Suites Doha in December, our debut in Qatar. Thailand remained our best performing market in 2018, but the Middle East is a key region. Well under the development is a Centara Grand hotel in Doha which is set to open in 2019. Following Muscat and Doha, we expect to open two more properties in Dubai whilst exploring opportunities in Abu Dhabi. This year, we see our properties in Maldives and Vietnam continue to perform well. Our first property in Oman, Centara Muscat Hotel, is already exceeding targets.”



**Olwin Desouza**  
General Manager  
Ghaya Grand Hotel, Dubai

“This year has been immensely rewarding as Ghaya Grand Hotel received the prestigious honour of being recognised as luxurious hotel apartments by Arabian Travel Awards. In this busy year, we have witnessed tremendous growth in the Chinese market, in addition to our strong appeal from our global markets such as Germany, Russia, the UK, Europe and Asian markets. Our presence at various international travel exhibitions saw us attract and retain newcomers. Our growth has partly been enabled by our proximity to the Expo 2020 venue. I am proud of our achievements as our service standards, customer focus and dedication have enabled us to close the year on a positive note.”

“This year, we have structured our ‘Beyond NDC Program’ to enable the retailing vision that will bring value to airlines and agencies, enlisting travel industry giants to collaborate on development of NDC-enabled solutions. Furthermore, we are ending this year with a great step acquiring Farelogix which will further allow the company to accelerate delivery of our end-to-end NDC-enabled retailing, distribution and fulfillment solutions. As the industry becomes more fragmented, travel companies need to become better retailers and invest in new technology and industry standards to offer travellers what they want based on their unique profiles. The appetite of consumers for a personalised shopping experience characterised by agility and speed seems insatiable. A traveller is a consumer who will demand the same customisation needs of our industry. It is necessary to be able to offer dynamic packages, display more details on flights, hotel rooms, ancillary services, as well as to offer flexibility on the choice of alternative dates for the same itinerary.”



**Raymond Vrijenhoek**  
Vice President  
Sabre Travel Network  
Middle East

“We are an attractive option for guests in the UAE to experience either the individual properties, or for twin-centre visits. This is due to the unique combination of desert conversation area and beach location across the two resorts which combine to create a special staycation. We are fortunate to welcome a mix of local and expatriate guests from the UAE coming to stay for business and leisure activities. In addition, we have seen an increase from the core European markets including Germany and the UK. MICE business has been great in 2018 as we have a completely unique offering. We have focused on offering exceptional experiences alongside unparalleled service for guests, whilst being committed to providing traditional Arabian hospitality. The Ritz-Carlton Al Wadi Desert is a stylish Arabian retreat and has a new conference centre and outdoor venues in breathtaking settings. We are a leisure and MICE resort and have welcomed an international mix of business, leisure and bleisure guests.”



**Ross Park**  
Director of Sales and  
Marketing, The Ritz-Carlton,  
Ras Al Khaimah  
Al Wadi Desert and  
Al Hamra Beach



## GHAYA GRAND HOTEL

The Ghaya Grand Hotel with 765 rooms features a range of multi cuisine restaurants, a beautiful pool, full equipped gym and superb spa, state-of-the-art meeting rooms, ball room and exceptional banquet facilities. For long stay guests and families, our deluxe hotel apartments offer a range of accommodation solutions including Studio, One-Bedroom and Two-Bedroom units.

All apartments are fully equipped with the latest technological amenities from LED TV screens, to individual safety boxes, individual thermostat control, a guest room management system and wireless internet connection. In addition they are fitted with a full kitchen with all utensils, laundry facilities and a comfortable living area.

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# TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

### Year of progression

As Dubai gets closer to achieving its 20 million tourists in just two years at Expo 2020 Dubai, the progression has not yet come to a close. Instead, there is a further vision for 2030 and beyond. The greatest strength here is the bonding of the seven emirates complementing each other to promote each of these with something different. With just two years away from the biggest expo in the region, more infrastructure development and planning takes place almost on a daily basis, so that every minute detail is taken care of.

Summer 2018 was remarkable for some emirates as they witnessed a steady growth of German tourists occupying their properties and the considerable increase in the number of days to stay. Winter also seems to have a good start and is predicted to be the same until the end of March.

In terms of investment, every emirate is sharpening its strategies to ensure that they will be able to enjoy a good return on investments made over the year. Mid-market hotel segment and apartments seem to be making a lot of progress over this year as many have opened to cater to the growing demand of the region. The rise of the mid-market clearly shows that the United Arab Emirates is still the first choice for many families and friends to visit. The new programme by Dubai Commerce and Tourism Marketing (DTCM) to attract close family and friends is another way to increase tourism arrivals to the seven emirates.

The United Arab Emirates is one of the best places to do business as the government, along with the rulers provides necessary support to carry out a successful business. Furthermore, strong government initiatives enable cooperation between public and private sectors, smoothening every step on the way.

# 'Synchronised for success'

If you want to be part of the future of the Middle East's hospitality industry, you ought to be at Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) 2019, believes AHIC Founder **Jonathan Worsley**.

Quarter four is always busy for the AHIC team, as we meet hotel investors, owners and operators from across the Middle East to help shape the programme as our annual event. For us, the discussions and debates start now, as we uncover the most pertinent issues impacting the future of hospitality development in the region.

We're thrilled to be back in Ras Al Khaimah for our 15<sup>th</sup> edition to be held from April 9-11, 2019 at an all-new purpose-built AHIC Village being developed in partnership with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA). Building on the success of this year's forum, the venue is designed to facilitate deal flow

sentiment among the AHIC Advisory Board to bring about harmony among hotel investment stakeholders. We expect one of the most contentious conversations to revolve around how to rewrite hotel management contracts, following the shift in operating models we are currently witnessing. F&B will be an integral topic and we are pleased to partner with our sister event, Global Restaurant Investment Forum (GRIF), and offer a dedicated workshop to help investors better understand how to drive ROI from their restaurants. We will also be hosting sessions from our SPACE event, including 'A practical look at efficient building'. As energy management, design technologies and operational efficiencies become

This edition will also have an enhanced focus on Saudi Arabia, with the support of our Saudi Arabian sponsors giving us increased representation in the Kingdom. Bringing all of these topics together are over 100 leading industry speakers with Sébastien Bazin, Chief Executive Officer, AccorHotels, as one of our headliners.

We're delighted to once again work with Stephen Sackur, host of BBC's HARDTalk, who will be bringing his no-nonsense question style back to AHIC, stirring up speakers to get the answers the industry requires.

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

“Our theme, 'Synchronised for Success', was born out of the shared sentiment among AHIC Advisory Board to bring about harmony among hotel investment stakeholders”

and networking opportunities, enabling more than 900 delegates to interact and discuss business outside of the typical conference environment. We have even planned a super car experience in partnership with Edel & Stark for delegates, enabling them to see more of the emirate in less time!

Our theme, 'Synchronised for Success', was born out of the shared

more important, we will highlight their environmental and business impact.

Technology and its potential to reshape the hospitality sector is high on the agenda too, so AHIC 2019 will feature our second annual 'Day of Disruption'. We will be bringing leading minds in Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Blockchain to share their insights on what these mean for hotels.



Jonathan Worsley  
Founder  
Arabian Hotel Investment Conference

## flydubai to re-launch flights to Shymkent

flydubai will operate flights to three points in Kazakhstan following the relaunch of its Shymkent service. The twice-a-week service will be offered from December 28, 2018. flydubai has been flying to Kazakhstan since 2014 and together with the re-launched service to Shymkent and existing flights to Almaty and Astana, the airline will operate 13 weekly flights to three points in the country.

Commenting on the recommencement of flights, **Ghaith Al Ghaith**, Chief Executive Officer, flydubai, said, "We are pleased to see the strengthening of direct air links between the UAE and Kazakhstan, which provide more opportunities for the development of tourism and trade flows. flydubai has been flying to Kazakhstan since 2014 and we have seen over the years a positive demand from the region."

With flydubai, Business Class passengers can enjoy comfortable spacious seats and a variety of dining options onboard, as well as a priority check-in service and lounge access. The carrier offers its Economy Class passengers numerous features onboard including comfortable seating, snacks to purchase, in-flight entertainment system with more than 1,000 hours of films, television, music and an extensive range of Arabic, English and Russian content, among others.





# Stay abreast of the latest food trends

Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy PM, Minister of Presidential Affairs & Chairman, Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, the 9<sup>th</sup> SIAL Middle East, the regional food, beverage and hospitality trade event, is set to be held at ADNEC from December 10-12.

TT Bureau

Expected to draw participation of over 1,000 exhibitors, above 30 country pavilions and more than 20,000 industry experts from over 50 countries, the upcoming edition of SIAL Middle East is set to mark a significant growth in terms of participation from leading local, regional and international food organisations.

Thamer Al Qasemi, Chairman—Organising Committee, SIAL Middle East, said, "Within a short time span since its inception, SIAL Middle East has become one of the most anticipated industry events in food-related sectors within the region and beyond. In organising this annual platform, we seek to highlight the promising investment opportuni-



ties in this vital sector at a time when food security and food supply chain sustainability are high on national and international agendas."

Al Qasemi added, "SIAL Middle East also serves as an ideal opportunity to highlight the compelling quality proposition and competitive advantages

of various local products that meet the highest international standards. The event also helps the local food industry, especially small and medium enterprises

(SMEs) in the UAE in general and Abu Dhabi in particular, to expand their business operations into new markets."

Joanne Cook, Managing Director, SIAL Middle East, said, "SIAL Middle East has witnessed significant growth over the past editions, becoming one of the most important events and an ideal platform for showcasing investment opportunities in the region's fast-growing food industry. In addition to providing opportunities for networking and interaction with key representatives from major food producers and exporters from across the globe, the event offers an ideal platform to build strategic partnerships with industry peers."



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# Abu Dhabi as a cruise destination

Abu Dhabi Ports has partnered with Abu Dhabi Airports and Etihad Airport Services (EAS) via Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal to create a seamless cruise passenger journey experience from plane to sea, thereby meeting their expectations.

TT Bureau

With the beginning of the 2018-19 cruise season, the ongoing partnership will witness a full streamlined turnaround for passengers of the Boudicca cruise ship under the Fred Olsen cruise line. Also, Thomas Cook Airlines UK will be the first airline to land in Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) as a fully dedicated charter for cruise ship. Disembarking cruise passengers will be checked into airline check-in counters operated by Etihad Ground Services at Abu Dhabi Cruise.

**Captain Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi**, CEO, Abu Dhabi Ports, said, "We are delighted to partner with two of Abu Dhabi's key aviation entities to focus on innovative

ways to excel in our services offering at our cruise facilities, in line with Abu Dhabi's long-term strategic plans. Our ongoing partnership with Abu Dhabi Airports

**“All partners have invested in resources and facilities to ensure the delivery of a great product, as we are constantly looking into initiatives that will attract more operators to Abu Dhabi Airport”**

and EAS creates a seamless transition from plane to ship meeting passengers' expectations.”

**Bryan Thompson**, CEO, Abu Dhabi Airports, commented, "We are pleased with this partnership as it cements the position Abu

Dhabi is acquiring regionally and globally as a prominent tourism and transportation hub. All partners have invested in resources and facilities to ensure the deliv-

ery of a great product, and from Abu Dhabi Airports' perspective, we are constantly looking into initiatives that will attract more operators to AUH.”

**Noura Rashed Al Dhaheri**, Cruise Terminal Manager, Abu



**Bryan Thompson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Abu Dhabi Airports

Dhabi Ports, added, "Abu Dhabi Ports has invested heavily in developing state-of-the-art cruise infrastructure facilities. Our streamlined check-in services

further cement our commitment to deliver distinctive services for cruise passengers.”

**Jubran Al Breiki**, Head—Hub Operations, Etihad Airport Services (Ground) said, "Etihad Airport Services is delighted to provide its unique Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal check-in and secure baggage transfer solution to Thomas Cook Airlines for their charter flights to Abu Dhabi, operated in conjunction with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines. Etihad has worked closely with Abu Dhabi Ports and Abu Dhabi Airports during the past three years to ensure that the Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal exceeds all expectations for airlines and cruise lines.”

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## Crusing and dealing

Cruisehost is the first technology provider to realise a direct connection to the booking system of AIDA Cruises, with its full implementation by the end of this year.

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Cruisehost Solutions — operator of the booking systems Cruisea and Cruisec for cruises — has agreed to a cooperation with AIDA Cruises. Accordingly, Cruisehost may connect its systems with the booking system of AIDA Cruises via the cruiseline's XML interface. Travel agencies working with Cruisea or Cruisec thereby obtain seamless access to the entire range of AIDA's cruise offers, including all cabin categories,

additional offers and various other information. The technical implementation is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The newly-formed agreement applies to all countries where Cruisehost is active. To make use of this new feature, travel agencies only require an additional agreement with AIDA Cruises.

**Akhil Kapur**, Founder and MD, Cruisehost Solutions, explains, "We are happy about this agreement because over 9,000 agencies in more than 20 countries now have the possibility to optimally access the offers of AIDA Cruises and present them to their customers via our systems.”





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# New brand identity for Air Arabia

Air Arabia celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> year of success by unveiling its new livery in the latest Airbus A320 with an innovative approach for millennial travellers predicted to exponentially grow over the next few years.

TT Bureau

Air Arabia has experienced solid and sustained growth since the launch of its first flight on October 28, 2003 when the carrier introduced a new way of taking flight for the Arab world. From the earliest days of serving just five routes with two aircraft, the airline has grown to currently serving over 155 routes from multiple hubs spread across the UAE, Morocco and Egypt, served by a fleet of 53 aircraft, with plans for further expansion in 2019. More importantly, Air Arabia group has grown to become a leading publicly-listed company consisting of airlines and businesses providing travel and tourism services across the globe. Setting new benchmark in operational excellence, innovation and profitability, Air



Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohamed Al Thani  
Chairman, Air Arabia

Arabia's new brand identity grows from the idea 'Now, more than ever' reflecting the airline's ambitious, customer-relevant and eager personality while positioned to provide customers

with true value and accessible air travel options.

Commenting on the occasion, **Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohamed Al Thani**, Chairman, Air Arabia said, "It was 15 years ago that Air Arabia and the low-cost airline concept were just an idea in the region, an idea of connecting

great travel experience for over 80 million passengers to date. We commemorate 15 years of success with the launch of Air Arabia's new brand identity that reflects the carrier's successful journey and echoes the future with a fresh perspective while mirroring its ambitions and the next phase of international growth. We

with greater travel opportunities and true value."

The new brand identity is derived from the creative idea of 'Modern Nomads', reflecting the positioning of Air Arabia as an airline of true value that connects with the young, adventurous, and those who are eager to travel, discover new places and collect new experiences. The new logo has evolved to reflect a more modern, simple, versatile and global brand, with a promise to offer true value, reliable services and provide customers with greater travel opportunities. The airline has maintained its symbol, the seagull, modernising it and further spreading its wings reflecting the carrier's growth and outlook while staying true to its original look. 

**“We commemorate 15 years of success with the launch of Air Arabia's new brand identity with a fresh perspective while mirroring its ambitions and the next phase of international growth”**

people at affordable cost. Today, we are gathered to celebrate the great success story that Air Arabia has become, redefining air travel in the region and providing

stand proud of where we have gotten today, but above all of where we can go in the future as we remain focused on connecting customers from all walks of life

## 300+ ME exhibitors at WTM 2018

Over 300 exhibitors from the Middle East marked their participation at WTM London 2018. Some of the key exhibitors from this region included Dubai Corporation for Tourism & Commerce Marketing (DTCM), Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, Ajman Tourism Development Department, Oman Ministry of Tourism and Jordan Tourism Board.





# Transforming travel digitally

In an era of big data, constant connectivity and digital workforces, travel sector too is no stranger to technology, explains **Shafeekh Azeez**, Director Sales – Dubai, Northern Emirates & Bahrain, Amadeus.

TT Bureau

**Has the UAE's travel industry been making significant headway in terms of digitisation?**

The travel industry has naturally been caught up in the transformative wave. The destination caters to a young population, who are tech-savvy and expect to receive services online or via their smartphone. Generational demands have ensured the continued technological evolution of the travel industry, not only in 'customer-facing' operations like online travel agencies, but also in the back-end processes that power these sites. Airlines, hotels and other travel industry sectors now realise that they must pick up pace in terms of innovation.

**Amadeus has seen notable growth in 2018 within the UAE, and Dubai in particular. What market forces do you attribute to this rise?**

Some of our products like Touchless, Quotation Management and Fare Optimiser are being called upon as solutions to increase efficiencies and save costs. Amadeus Online Corporate Traveller is another tool that travel agencies can benefit from, as it enables corporate customers to easily book travel and follow-up on expenses, through a management module.

Data is the key to unlocking opportunity for airlines in particular, and they are coming around to the fact that they must embrace

**“With the prevalence of connected devices, it's easier for customers to make a purchase whenever, wherever they want... a bonus for travel companies”**

a data-driven approach in order to keep up with consumer preferences. Established airlines especially are being challenged by newer, more nimble competitors, and they are adopting smart data to deliver the experiences that today's passenger demands.

**Amadeus recently spoke about a repositioning from a GDS to a 'Live Travel Space'. Can you elaborate on it?**

The 'Live Travel Space' philosophy comes from our mission to drive growth for both Amadeus and our customers. We will do so by helping travel providers to

connect easily and work together to address the needs of travellers around the world, providing them with exciting travel offers at any given time. This is inspired by the dynamic nature of today's consumer base. From technology to experiences, customers have varied demands.

**The region's travel industry is at a tipping point in terms of payment innovation. How can this help travel companies?**

With the prevalence of connected devices, it's easier for customers to make a purchase whenever,



**Shafeekh Azeez**  
Director Sales – Dubai,  
Northern Emirates & Bahrain, Amadeus

wherever they want... certainly a bonus for travel companies. Today, you can log onto an app and buy your dream holiday, visit a website and book tours. It's convenient, quick, and secure. 📱

## AFRICA'S LEADING BUSINESS TRAVEL AGENCY 2018

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# Connect, network and engage

Face-to-face is a vital form of personal business interactions and emergence of new relationships. How else can there be targeted sales meetings presenting your brand to thousands in your core markets? **Danielle Curtis**, Exhibition Director – Middle East, Arabian Travel Market & IBTM Arabia, tells more...

In a world swamped by easy-to-ignore marketing and advertising messages, businesses are constantly looking for new ways to engage customers. Yet, those in the Middle East who have embraced the oldest form of business communication – face-to-face – are increasingly achieving some of their biggest successes at trade events.

## Advances in accurate business pairing

At IBTM, we've spent the last 30 years as the events industry's trusted 'right-hand', helping conference and event organisers from around the globe make connections, discover new technologies and learn about the cutting-edge innovations they need to create world-class events. We

have developed considerable expertise in pairing our suppliers with businesses they can help, and the recent rapid advances in technology have enabled a step change in our capabilities. Over 2,700 meetings took place during the three-day event at IBTM Arabia 2018, between a select one-to-one buyer-to-supplier ratio of 150 attendees. Returning in March 2019, the event features a full programme of pre-planned business meetings as well as a series of knowledge sessions on the latest industry developments.

## Making connections

Trade events are filled with potential clients and partners — people who can help your business in different ways. To develop, progress or become more promi-

nent are popular reasons why businesses choose to engage the market through trade shows. Through our research, we have identified distinct motivations driving seven behaviours. Understanding these different behaviour types can help you tailor your strategy to reach as many people as possible during an event. These include targeting, fishing, building, reconnecting, learning, socialising and exploring.

## Meeting Influencers

The speakers at the event are among the most active professionals in the industry. A trade event gives you a good opportunity to meet, connect and develop mutually-beneficial long-term relationships and partnerships with them.

## Beyond trade benefits

People come to trade events with open minds. They come to discover new ideas, new venues and destinations, cutting-edge technology, equipment and software, inspiration from suppliers and knowledge and skills from expertise-led conference sessions. With so many industry professionals from different backgrounds, trade events are abuzz with thoughts and opinions on hot topics, trends, opportunities and challenges.

With demand for greater Return On Investment (ROI), we've worked hard to make exhibiting at IBTM Arabia cost-effective to display your products, generate international sales leads, develop relationships,

gain valuable exposure and discover new business opportunities.

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



**Danielle Curtis**  
Exhibition Director – Middle East, Arabian Travel Market & IBTM Arabia

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# SHARJAH

focuses on

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) promoted the emirate's unique tourism attractions during its participation at the recently-concluded WTM London.

 TT Bureau

As a leading global event, WTM London 2018 provided a unique platform for tourists and visitors looking for exceptional experiences to enjoy. This year's exhibition focused on the emerging global trend, 'bleisure' which includes the combined experiences from business tourism and leisure. SCTDA participated at WTM London for the 16th consecutive year, bringing its distinctive tourism product offerings to the UK market featuring Sharjah's family, culture, soft adventure and ecotourism destinations. The initiative is in line with SCTDA's



**HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**  
Chairman  
SCTDA

commitment to meet the targets set within the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021 to attract 10 million

visitors in the emirate by 2021.

H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, SCTDA, said that the authority's participation at the global event for the 16th year reflects its continuous efforts to achieve its strategic goals and objectives aimed at targeting major global tourism markets. "SCTDA continuously works towards attracting a greater number of visitors from the UK and Ireland with unique offerings while showcasing a wide range of outstanding experiences and continuing to increase our international network in line with Sharjah's tourism goals. The exhibition is an important addition to



our ongoing efforts to provide the most important experiences and tourist products and provide new experiences to our visitors while

capitalising on Sharjah's diverse heritage. SCTDA's programmes will showcase Sharjah's unique tourism environment,





## experiential travel at WTM London



which is naturally rich in biodiversity and the various tourism developments taking place in the emirate," he elaborated.

Al Midfa further emphasised on the importance of international exhibitions in promoting Sharjah's tourism hotspots to the international market and attracting tourists and investors to the emirate, saying, "We have seen the growing appeal of Sharjah as a destination

**“We have seen the growing appeal of Sharjah as a destination for ‘bleisure’ travellers as business executives learn to optimise long weekends to spend time with their families”**

for ‘bleisure’ travellers as business executives learn to optimise long weekends to spend time with their families and take advantage of the emirate's popularity as a family-friendly destination.”

SCTDA will deliver a comprehensive education and engagement

programme for WTM London visitors in close collaboration with its key partners on tourism packages focused on delivering overall experiential travel as more holidaymakers seek for more valuable and deeper experiences. As part of the promotion of the

tourism sector, the authority will announce several hotels and tourism products set to open next year to ensure competitiveness and excellence on par with other tourist destinations in the region.

SCTDA was joined by Sharjah Museums Authority, Sharjah



International Airport, Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA), Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA), Sharjah Women

Sport Foundation, Al Bait Hotel, Al Shaab Village, Royal Tulip, Sheraton Beach Resort and Spa and Ramada Hotel and Suites. 🇦🇪



# Al Hamra's world-class clubhouse

As the UAE strengthens its capabilities to attract sporting events, Al Hamra Golf Club celebrated European Challenge Tour with the completion of several enhancements to the clubhouse and surrounding areas.

TT Bureau

As part of the improvements, Al Hamra Golf Club has witnessed major refurbishments — a members and VIP lounge adjacent to the stunning 18<sup>th</sup> hole as well as a complete upgrade within the locker rooms, including fit out and furnishings. Event spaces have also been introduced, which are complemented by new landscape surrounding the clubhouse. A new viewing and swimming deck on Al Hamra Bay and an upgrade of the F&B outlets, including Pesto Ristorante and The Bay Sports Bar, are adding to the club's recreational facilities away from the course.

**Benoy Kurien**, CEO, Al Hamra, said, "The upgrades and enhancements mark an exciting new chapter for Al Hamra Golf



Club as we add to the quality golf, recreational and hospitality facilities we already have in place. Our mission, both on and off the golf course, is to become the most respected and admired real estate developer and services

provider in the northern emirates, something we will achieve by continually developing and improving our assets to world-class standards. We celebrated the 10-year anniversary of Al Hamra Golf Club last year and

since its opening in 2007, we've invested significantly to be able to showcase one of the most celebrated sporting venues in Ras Al Khaimah. We're confident the investments made will have a lasting impact on our market

leading position and will be a key driver when attracting events and increasing membership to the golf course."

**Frederic Savoye**, President — Hospitality Business, Al Hamra, said, "Maintaining our position as a five-star destination across every vertical of our business is imperative to our ongoing success. From the Waldorf Astoria and The Ritz-Carlton to Al Hamra Marina, to the newly enhanced clubhouse, luxury international standards are at the cornerstone of everything we do. The timely completion of the club house further endorses our decision to appoint Troon Management and we now look forward to another exciting golf season."

# Gold Medal forays into Abu Dhabi

With Gold Medal's expansion into Abu Dhabi, trade agents there will now be able to promote and sell Gold Medal's wide range of travel products offering more options to their customers. Gold Medal has already been catering its services to over 500 agents in Dubai and the Northern Emirates. The company is one of the leading providers of air and non-air products to the travel trade.





# EXHIBITIONS

## 1,150+ at ICCA Congress

The recently-concluded 57<sup>th</sup> ICCA Congress, one of the most prestigious events in the international association meetings industry calendar, took place in Dubai with more than 1,150 senior industry professionals from over 75 countries in attendance.

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Congress delegates have descended on the city from across the world to experience a dynamic four-day programme of education, networking and business opportunities. ICCA and Dubai Business Events have collaborated to create an exciting offering of forward-thinking education sessions, site visits to Dubai's most innovative enterprises and a social programme showcasing the best of Emirati cultural delights and local hospitality. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry. It represents the world's leading suppliers in handling, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events, and now comprises over 1,100-member companies and



**Helal Saeed Almarri**  
*Director General  
Dubai Tourism*

Congress Solutions International, Emirates and Dubai Business Events, the congress brings together senior meetings industry professionals to exchange knowledge and ideas about the latest trends in international association meetings and business events.

Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, said, "Business events are a crucial part of not only our tourism strategy, but also of our wider economic development. Whether through the year-round calendar of home-grown trade shows or major congresses like the ICCA Congress that we successfully bid for, we understand and use the power of meetings and conferences to facilitate the rapid transition to a knowledge economy, and to grow scientific advancement and key industry sectors in Dubai and the UAE. I would like to once again thank ICCA for selecting Dubai to host this congress and all the stakeholders involved for their role in planning."

Nina Freysen-Pretorius, President, International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), said, "The number of international




organisations in almost 100 countries worldwide. Since its establishment 55 years ago, ICCA has specialised in the international association meetings sector, offering unrivalled data, communication channels and business development opportunities.

The 2018 edition of ICCA's annual flagship event has achieved record attendance figures for any ICCA Congress held outside Europe. A total of 1,156 industry experts from 79 countries have travelled to Dubai for the meeting. Organised with the support of key local partners including Dubai World Trade Centre,

Business events are increasingly being recognised as a crucial driver of Dubai's economy and positioning as a global business centre. As a global knowledge hub with a strong reputation for innovation, hosting the ICCA Congress offers Dubai a unique opportunity to present its extensive meetings infrastructure to business events heavyweights from across the globe, and in turn optimise international expertise to drive the development of the region's rapidly-evolving meetings industry.

Welcoming delegates to the congress, His Excellency Helal Saeed




association meetings has doubled every ten years since the establishment of ICCA 55 years ago, and we have identified the Middle East as an important growth area. In fact, we now have a dedicated seat for the region on our board, a permanent regional director, and this is our first annual congress in the Middle East. We have also noted that the Dubai Association Centre is playing a significant role in growing global associations. In addition, we look forward to Expo 2020 Dubai, because when new ideas and people connect, our industry grows." 




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# Sharjah Airport scales new heights

As the first airport in the UAE, Sharjah enjoys an entire range of destinations and passenger access. With the launch of phase one of the airport, TRAVTALK interviewed HE Sheikh Faisal bin Saoud Al Qassimi, Director, Sharjah Airport Authority, on further strategies and developments.

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**Can you tell us about Sharjah Airport's key performances for the first half of this year on passenger volumes, new routes, flight frequencies, existing services, developments and so on.** Sharjah is well known in the MENA region as being the cultural hub of the Middle East and a growing industrial hub. With the diverse culture of Sharjah and the rest of the UAE, Sharjah has managed to create a niche market with cultural tourism and the airlines that operate through Sharjah embrace and encourage the multiculturalism. There was an overall increase in both aircraft and passenger movements for the three quarters of this year 2018, with passengers crossing the 8 million mark with an increase of 6 per cent and aircraft movements reaching 35,128 with an increase of 5 per cent in comparison with the same period of last year. The increase in new routes, flight frequencies and holiday season at Sharjah Airport contributed to the positive airline and passenger traffic.

Sharjah Airport in co-ordination with the various stakeholders of the airport, besides our



HE Sheikh Faisal bin Saoud Al Qassimi  
Director, Sharjah Airport Authority

strategic partners are committed to ensure a pleasant travel experience for our passengers, while simultaneously maintaining the excellent reputation of the airport's efficient, hassle-free and speedy procedures.

**To what extent does Sharjah Airport serve as a growth engine for Sharjah and the region? How influential has it been in developing the emirate as a centre of trade, commerce and tourism?**

The aviation sector has established itself as a vital contributor to the UAE's economy, contributing around 14 to 15 per cent to the national gross domestic

product. This contribution is projected to grow further in the coming years and as such justifies the country's huge investment in airports and airline networks. Aviation provides the only rapid worldwide transportation network, which makes it essential for global business. It generates economic growth, creates jobs, and facilitates international trade and tourism. Aviation and logistics have had a major impact on other economic sectors such as tourism, hospitality, trade and finance, with activity in one spurring growth in the others. The air transport sector had proven its positive contribution to the national and local economy.

The last 15 years had shown an increasingly growing segment in terms of passenger movement, aircraft movement and cargo handled with an average 7 to 12 per cent annually. This was mainly driven by the state-of-the-art infrastructure facility of the airport, high level of services rendered to the airline community and the end users of passengers and cargo handled. This was also combined with easy and user-friendly legislations, practical procedures and processes to ensure smooth and hassle-free operations in Sharjah Airport.

**What is the airport's long-term objective and development plan? What will you do to contribute to Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021?**



Sharjah Airport is coping with the ever-growing demands of airport users by continuous developments, investments in airport infrastructure, equipment and technology to cater to Sharjah tourism's vision as Sharjah Airport is the first window for tourists visiting Sharjah.

Tour operators and travel agents are an integral part within the chain of the aviation industry. We believe that it is vital for our success to have mutual

beneficial partnerships between Sharjah Airport and the global travel agents, especially that we are witnessing a growing trend of mergers and acquisitions between the charter airlines and global tour operators.

This in result is creating new entities in the travel market that we are looking forward to attract to come and discover the unique flavours of Sharjah as a destination and the facilities and services of Sharjah Airport as one of the gateways to UAE. 🇦🇪

“In 2018, passengers crossed the 8 million mark with an increase of 6 per cent and aircraft movements reaching 35,128 with an increase of 5 per cent in comparison with the same period last year”





# Digital travel tools on demand

According to recent findings by Travelport, 61 per cent of the UAE travellers are using voice search to research travel while 70 per cent of them state that good digital experience is the key when choosing airlines. **Kathryn Wallington**, Country Manager—UAE, Travelport shares details with **TRAVTALK**.

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Innovative, tech-savvy travel capabilities are essential for residents of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as four out of five UAE travellers (83 per cent) are now open to offering their biometrics to reduce waiting time in security lines, according to an independent global study commissioned by Travelport. Leading the region in innovative aviation offerings, Dubai International airport has already taken the cue by setting up biometric technologies instead of human checks to allow certain travellers to complete passport control in just 15 seconds.

Launched recently, the annual Global Digital Traveler Research surveyed more than 16,200 travellers in 25 countries who took at



**Kathryn Wallington**  
Country Manager—UAE, Travelport

least one return flight last year, and revealed that over half (61 per cent) of the UAE travellers now use voice search to research their next trip and one in five (17 per

cent) believe it has the greatest influence over their choices. The findings also highlight that UAE travellers are now most reliant on

**“For those who are in the global travel industry, providing relevant and timely digital tools is no longer an option, but essential to be able to reach and satisfy the travellers of the modern age.”**


their smartphone when researching their trip (76 per cent). Furthermore, 64 per cent admit they feel lost without their smartphone when travelling and nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) express worry about their technology failing or running out of battery. The results of the study also revealed more than half (58

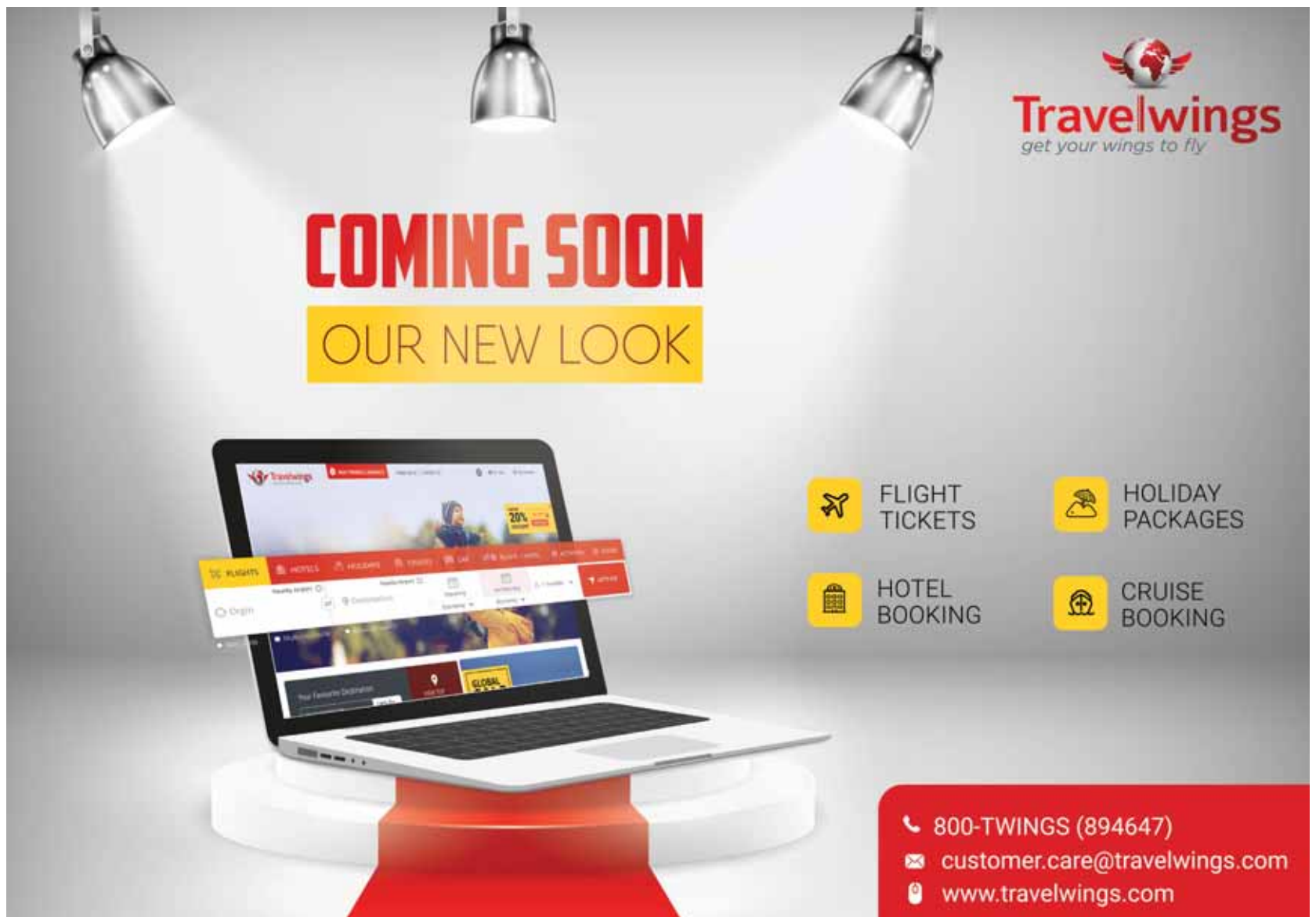
per cent) of the UAE travellers now tend to research and book all travel arrangements via smartphone, and use an average of 14 different

types of apps when researching and booking their trip.

**Kathryn Wallington**, Country Manager—UAE, Travelport commented, “Our research findings underpin how important digital tools, such as smartphones, biometric screening and voice

search, have become for the UAE travellers. For those in the global travel industry, providing relevant and timely digital tools is no longer an option, but essential to be able to reach and satisfy the travellers of the modern age.”

The research also showed that flight-related mobile app features are critical to the UAE travellers, mainly the capabilities to search and book flights (73%), receive flight alerts (67%), mobile check-in (68%), and buy extras like WiFi, baggage allowance and priority boarding (64%). Despite high use of digital channels, including smartphones, tablets and computers, the study revealed the UAE travellers faced obstacles while booking trips online. 



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# Air Canada awards top agents in Dubai

Celebrating another year of success, Air Canada held its annual networking event at Renaissance Downtown Hotel, Dubai. The event was graced by **Her Excellency Marcy Grossman**, the new Consul General for the Consulate of Canada in Dubai; **Margaret Skinner**, Director—Sales, Europe, Middle East, Africa, India (EMEA) and **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel.





# Oman Air lounge at Muscat airport

With the opening of the new passenger terminal at Muscat International Airport, one of the most important areas to explore is the new premium lounge of Oman Air for discerning travellers.

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The eagerly-awaited new passenger terminal and the new state-of-the-art Oman Air lounge at Muscat International Airport will cater to all its business and First-Class passengers. Oman Air operates 200 flights per day from the new passenger terminal. The airport boasts of excellent facilities including 6,000 square metres of duty-free shopping, 96 check-in counters, 8,000 parking spaces and a 90-room airside hotel.



Oman Air passengers travelling in First Class and Business Class can now take advantage of the airline's new premium class lounge offering a pre-flight oasis of calm. The beautiful interiors of the lounge have been influenced by the truly unique terrain found

in Oman designed to reflect the unspoilt, natural beauty of the desert and the rugged landscape of the mountains. 'Mashrabiya', a traditional element of traditional Arabic architecture has been used to provide privacy in

communal areas and add to the fluidity of the spacing. Spread over two storeys, the lounge offers guests a wide array of food and beverage services including dining areas and bars, luggage room, entertainment area, a

smoking room, prayer rooms, business centre, kids' room, nap area, shower facilities, baby-changing facilities and a wellness area. Covering 429.35 square metres with an overall capacity of 100 people, the area desig-

nated for First Class guests offers exceptional services including a personal chef, limousine service from the lounge to the aircraft and relaxation rooms.

The opening of the new Muscat International Airport passenger terminal has been an exciting addition to the Oman Air services for its guests and the inauguration of the new premium lounge is just another example Oman Air is taking to ensure delivery of the highest level of service to its valued guests. The new terminal will allow Oman Air to offer a thoroughly enhanced service; the check-in process will be seamless for all guests and premium class guests will be able to avail themselves of designated check in areas and entrances.

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## NEW HOTELS

As 2018 draws to a close, more properties are opening in the UAE. A peek into the ones set to open and those already opened...

### ★ Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory: 244

Opening Date: November 2018



The latest 'Homotel' in downtown area opened its doors a few meters from the iconic Dubai Mall. Catering to both leisure and business segments, this new hotel will very soon be the talk of the town with guests being able to club their holidays with leisure. The complex has one, two and three-bedroom apartments in three different colour palettes that would suit the guests' mood. Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai is located within five minutes' reach from Burj Khalifa and The Dubai Mall.



### ★ Bluewaters

Rooms/Suites inventory: 575

Opening Date: November 2018

Meraas aims to pull out all stops to deliver Bluewaters' unique promise of an island luxe vibe, with unparalleled experiences brought to the region for the first time at the Caesars Palace Bluewaters Dubai, The Residences at Caesars Palace Bluewaters Dubai and Caesars Resort Bluewaters Dubai. These five-star accommodations comprising 495 luxury rooms and 80 serviced apartments will be flanked by a 500-seat theatre, The Rotunda, at one end and a state-of-the-art conference centre, Caesars FORUM, at the other. Complementing the glamorous hospitality offerings will be Cove Beach Dubai, a stunning private beach club.

### ★ Royal M Hotel Abu Dhabi

Rooms/Suites inventory: 225

Opening Date: December 2018



To experience a right royal stay amidst the fashionable Al Bateen Marina with a sophisticated waterfront retreat is the new Royal M Hotel which offers the ultimate in luxury and comfort in a perfect royal rendezvous. Located a few minutes away from the shopping malls in Abu Dhabi and other attractions in the emirate, this will be a unique experience for the discerning leisure traveller.



### ★ Courtyard Al Barsha, Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory: 216

Opening Date: October 2018

Featuring flexible spaces to network and relax, Courtyard by Marriott Al Barsha provides the ideal destination for travellers looking to stay connected and balanced while on the road. The hotel's state-of-the-art lobby provides an innovative space where guests can work along with easy access to the latest news, weather and airport conditions via its GoBoard technology. Food and beverage offerings at the hotel include Flavours, an all-day dining outlet which caters to all tastes and moods, and the Star Buzz Lounge for a comfortable setting.

## Live life African style at Nofa Resort

The latest addition to the Radisson Collection in its premium lifestyle collection of iconic hotel properties in unique locations, is Nofa Resort Riyadh.



Located just outside of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the African-style resort has 57 luxurious bungalows and villas overlooking Nofa Wildlife Park, featuring an equestrian estate as well as a world-class golf course surrounded by sand dunes and mountains. **Tim Cordon**, Area Senior Vice President—Middle East, Turkey & Africa, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "We're thrilled to open our first Radisson Collection hotel in Saudi Arabia, and our third in the Middle East region. Radisson Collection brings together hotels that aim to offer the exceptional, and Nofa Resort Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel offers guests a once-in-a-lifetime experience as an exclusive retreat with unparalleled leisure facilities. We also believe this is a positive step in raising the awareness of leisure tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where both domestic and international visitors will enjoy a fabulous experience."

Located 1.5 hours' drive away from Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport, the hotel is nestled in a landscape of golden sand dunes and majestic mountains. Exciting lei-



sure activities include the impressive equestrian resort that features a show-jumping arena, a specialised race track, a polo field and an extensive stable complex. Guests can even test themselves with a round of golf at one of the top courses in Saudi Arabia. The 18-hole course makes use of the natural desert environment to set a challenge for even the most experienced golfers.

**Gary Ellis**, General Manager, Nofa Resort Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel, said, "We look forward to welcoming our first guests to this distinctive and exclusive African-style resort. I'm confident the blend of deluxe accommodation, unique facilities and the service provided by our enthusiastic team will prove to be a compelling reason to visit our hotel."

Nofa Resort Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel features three on-site restaurants — The Tswalu restaurant, with its African-style interiors serving international cuisine; The Butcher's Den that provides an upscale culinary experience and The Al Fresco restaurant which serves Italian classics for a more relaxed and informal dining experience. 



# Battling disruption in flight schedules

Last year, 3.6 million flights around the world were delayed by over 30 minutes or were cancelled, accounting for 16 per cent of all flight departures. However, FlightGlobal's expert market insights help resolve the problems causing these delays, according to its CEO, **Christopher Flook**.

For frequent business and leisure travellers, flight disruption has become unavoidable. However, it is easy to overlook the impact it creates on individuals and the businesses they work for. Research shows that disruption to air travel can damage a passenger's physical and mental health, their productivity at work and even their desire to keep travelling. Thus, to quantify this impact, FlightGlobal recently commissioned a report with Delta Airlines, Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC) and tClara. The survey of over 700 'road warriors' (people who travel frequently for work), found that almost a quarter (24 per cent) were considering a change in role because of disruption and one in two (48 per cent) were

actively seeking to travel less for work. What's more? Of the trips taken by 'road warriors', only 63 per cent were said to be mostly or very worthwhile, which pulls into question the purpose of business travel trips altogether.

To analyse the actual cost of disruption to a company's bottom line, we conducted a case study with PredictX and a US-based pharmaceutical company that spends \$100 million on air travel each year for up to 75,000 flights. In just one year, their employees were delayed for 46,000 hours and experienced 4,700 cancellations. This equated to a huge \$3 million in direct costs and loss of productivity for the business. The cost of disruption is also felt in the airlines, where in T2RL's study

Airline Disruption Management, irregular operations cost airlines an estimated \$35 million and this cost jumps to \$60 billion each year if you consider the impact to travellers and broader ecosystem. We believe that the solution to better managing inevitable flight disruption is in the data. There are three areas of focus to be con-

reach the right people at the right time while they are travelling. And, finally, the impact of disruption must be better managed after it has taken place.

Some airlines are on the front foot when it comes to battling disrupted flights and now offer on-time guarantees in their cor-

Qatar, Copa, Iberia and Japan Airlines.

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

“While addressing travel concerns, a key area of focus to be considered is the empowerment of travellers to make informed choices that will limit the chance of disruption when they buy tickets”

sidered. Firstly, travellers should be empowered to make informed choices that will limit the chance of disruption when they buy tickets. Secondly, the right data needs to

porate contracts. FlightGlobal also recognises carriers at the annual On-time Performance Service Awards. Top performing carriers include Delta,



Christopher Flook  
CEO  
FlightGlobal

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# MOVEMENTS

## Al Habtoor Group - Hospitality Division

### ► Dubai

Al Habtoor Group has appointed **Rahim Abu Omar** as new Chief Operating Officer (COO)– Hospitality Division. With 40 years of experience in hospitality, Omar rejoins Al Habtoor Group's executive team to steer a solid portfolio of 14 luxury hotels — seven in the United Arab Emirates and seven abroad. Omar has played an active role in successfully launching several of the group's landmark properties. Prior to his appointment as General Manager at The Ritz-Carlton Budapest, he served as the CEO of Habtoor Hotels from 1999 to 2011 and led the rebranding of four- and five-star properties under the Habtoor Hospitality brand.



## Crowne Plaza

### ► Dubai

Crowne Plaza Dubai has designated **Bahjat Saade** as Director of Conventions for the Sheikh Zayed Road establishment. Saade brings over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry with considerable expertise in F&B operations gained from a diverse portfolio of outlets and a commitment to strong team management and optimising revenue. He joins Crowne Plaza Dubai from Nassima Royal Hotel, Dubai, where he was accountable for the entire F&B division in his role as Director of Food and Beverage. Saade started his career in 2000 with IHG Beirut and subsequently rose through the hospitality ranks within the GCC working with established hotel and hospitality groups.



## Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts

### ► Abu Dhabi

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has promoted **Ahmed Issa** to the position of Cluster General Manager of both Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi and Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi. Issa has worked in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years, 15 of which have been spent with the Shangri-La group. His extensive experience in food and beverage operations within five-star luxury hotels led him to be a part of the pre-opening team at the Shangri-La hotels in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. At Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi, Issa provided his leadership and strategic planning to all departments in support of its service culture, maximised operations and guest satisfaction.



## Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort

### ► Oman

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort has appointed **Dagmar Symes** as General Manager, who holds experience in both the hotel and luxury retail industries across Europe and the Middle East. Starting her career with the leading hotels of the world, Symes previously worked in various luxury properties in France, Switzerland and Germany. She obtained her first General Manager position at Hotel Chateau Grand Barrail in Saint Emilion, France. Symes' career with Kempinski brought her to the Middle East when she was appointed as the pre-opening General Manager for Kempinski Summerland Hotel & Resort in Beirut, Lebanon.



## Anantara Kalutara Resort

### ► Sri Lanka

Anantara Kalutara Resort has appointed **Darren Darwin** as Cluster General Manager. With over 30 years of diverse experience in the hospitality industry, Darwin began his career with the InterContinental Hotel Group, commencing his learning in sales and marketing department, then moving over to his specialisation food and beverage. From here, he took on various General Manager roles all over England. Having successfully completed a six-year tenure in London on his last position, he moved to his first expatriate role in the Caribbean as Resident Manager for Almond Beach Village in Barbados. His first General Manager position overseas was the InterContinental Sofia in Bulgaria where he overlooked the pre-opening.



## The Ritz-Carlton

### ► Bahrain

**Jeremy Canivet** has been appointed as Director—Sales & Marketing at The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain. A Canadian national, Canivet will oversee the award-winning catering and conference services (CCS) and sales division of the five-star luxury beachfront resort. Bringing nearly two decades of market experience, Canivet rejoins The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company after working with The Ritz-Carlton, Al Bustan Palace as Director—Sales from 2013-16. He began his hospitality career in sales and marketing in Toronto, Canada before moving on to positions in Europe and then the Middle East in 2010. Canivet has worked for brands such as Fairmont Hotel and Resorts, St Regis and Kempinski.



## Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah

### ► Dubai

Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah has recently welcomed **Ahmed Kamel** as Director of Rooms. Joining the team, Kamel brings 18 years of extensive experience in the luxury hospitality industry. This is combined with an unrivalled skill set and substantial achievements acquired from various luxury hotels internationally and in the region including Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts and InterContinental Hotels and Resorts. Kamel's new role includes implementing effective operational management, guest services and overseeing the heads of departments to ensure they achieve and exceed their revenue and guest satisfaction targets. Ahmed will apply his extensive knowledge of the hospitality business to ensure the property continues to provide unforgettable experiences.



## Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa

### ► Ras Al Khaimah

**Helen Jacobe** has been appointed as General Manager of Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa overseeing all commercial and operational aspects of the iconic beachfront property. Jacobe is a seasoned hotelier with over 30 years of experience, notably in large food and beverage operations and in leading development projects. She joins the resort hotel following her role as Cluster General Manager of Myanmar overseeing the openings and operations of Hilton Nay Pyi Taw, Hilton Ngapali Resort & Spa and Hilton Mandalay. Her role included establishing Hilton's first presence in Myanmar.



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# PUBLISHER’S NOTE

The Middle East region is undoubtedly a perfect blend of traditional and modern, it continuously strives to preserve its rich culture and heritage while encouraging contemporary infrastructure development. The region is also developing its tourism products and is fast moving towards becoming a hub for travellers, and this effort is what we acknowledge and render our full support to!

As a tribute, Durga Das Publications Middle East has introduced Arabian Travel Awards to recognise the achievers of the travel and tourism industry, who have worked steadfastly towards enhancing the environment that allows the growth of this business. These stalwarts need to be acknowledged, appreciated and encouraged in every region, and we have started the journey this year from Dubai, UAE.

Our top-most honour, the Gold Maya, is awarded to those stalwarts who have shaped the industry the way it is today and created innovative ways and products to take the industry a notch higher.

The award ceremony is brought to life by a charismatic anchor and singer who makes sure that there is not a single dull moment for the audience. At the black-tie, silver service event, various performers enthrall and amuse the audience. The guests this year were audience to a mesmerising performance, which they not only enjoyed watching, but also participated in, wholeheartedly. Overall, the second edition of the Arabian Travel Awards was a perfect successor to the debut edition and marked a strong bond in the journey of long-term associations.

Arabian Travel Awards will be travelling to various other countries in its subsequent editions. Thus, we take it upon ourselves, in our own small way, to revive and enhance tourism in the region.

SanJeet

## Arabian Travel Awards

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# 'Twas a night to remember at

Over 250 partners in travel, tourism and hospitality sectors recently attended the second Arabian Travel Awards at JW Marriott Hotel Dubai presided over by **His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority.



(L-R): **Sumeera Bahl**, Director, DDPPL; **Chathura Weerasekara**, First Secretary/Head of Chancery of Consulate General of Sri Lanka; **HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority; **SanJeet**, Convener, Arabian Travel Awards and **Kathryn Wallington**, Country Manager—UAE, Travelport





# Arabian Travel Awards 2018

 Shehara Rizly

About 60 award winners were recognised for their efforts and contribution to the industry at the second edition of Arabian Travel Awards held in a glittering ceremony in Dubai. After the maiden event last year, this year witnessed a greater audience. The black-tie closed-door event started off with the ribbon-cutting ceremony graced by Chief Guest **His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority; **Chathura Weerasekara**, First Secretary and Head of Chancery, Sri Lanka consulate in Dubai; **Kathryn Wallington**, Country Manager—UAE, Travelport; **Sumeera Bahl**, Director, DDPPL and **SanJeet**, Convenor, Arabian Travel Awards.

Welcoming guests at the event, SanJeet said, "Arabian Travel Awards aims to recognise and encourage talent in some of the most important sectors such as travel, tourism and hospitality which contributes to the sustainable growth in the economy of the country. From the time we started out in this region over 15 years ago, we have seen the Middle East leapfrog to a much open-minded, tech-savvy society yet thrive on the traditional practices of human elements. This year, we had nearly 60 awards to recognise the giants who have contributed to the country's economy. We thank each one of you for taking the time to vote for your favourite category and hope to see you at the awards next year!"

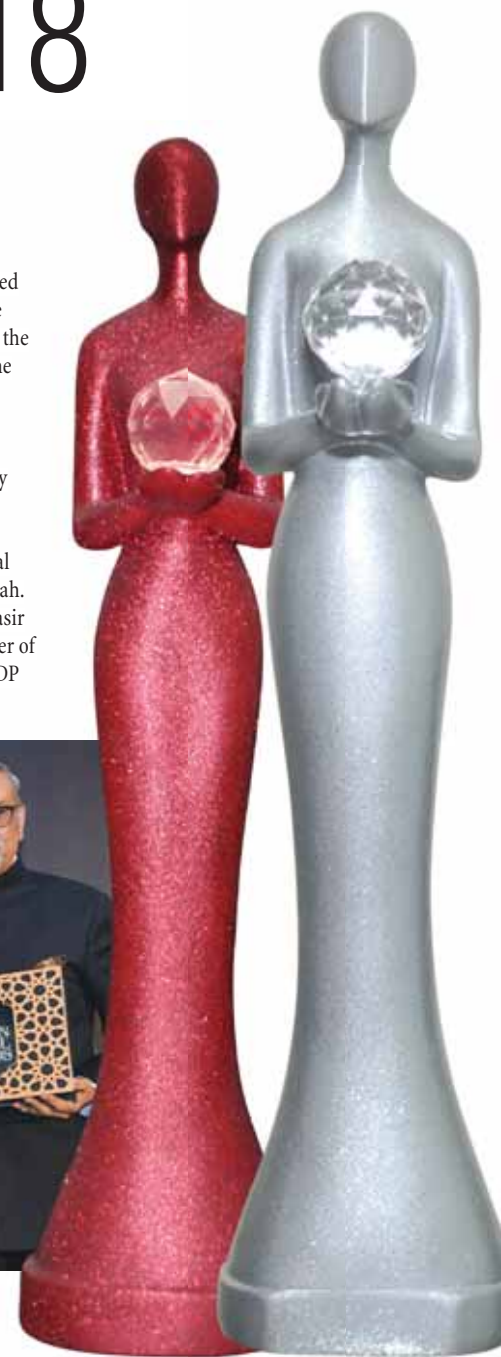
Midfa, in his speech, commended the efforts of the DDP team for recognising those behind the scenes who work tirelessly to ensure a great escape for travellers. He said, "Last year, the number of visitors around the world was around

1.3 billion visitors in terms of movement; 20 per cent of the average world GDP is contributed to the tourism industry. Three years ago, our leader HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed stated that by 2050, we will sell the last barrel of oil from the United Arab Emirates and this is a very strong message to diversify and look at other sources like tourism. As a tourist, we don't really recognise the people behind the scene who are involved in the process of curating holidays for travellers. Arabian Travel Awards recognises those who have been working tirelessly to ensure that tourists enjoy their vacation."

Applauding the efforts of the organisers, Weerasekara, stated, "It was excellent to be present in such an elite forum where the

leaders from travel, tourism and hospitality industry were recognised for their unparalleled contribution towards the enhancement of the UAE as a tourist hub. I sincerely congratulate the organisers of this event for striving behind the scene to bring about such a fantastic night of entertainment."

Two special Gold Awards were given away during the event. **Jamal Abdunazar**, Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel entered the Gallery of Legends and has been instrumental in pioneering tourism in the emirate of Sharjah. Another stalwart in the industry in Dubai, **Nasir Jamal Khan** serving as Chief Executive Officer of Al Naboodah Travel, walked away with the DDP Game Changer title.





Gallery of Legends | **JAMAL ABDULNAZAR**

► **Jamal Abdulnazar**, CEO, Cozmo Travel, won the title of **Gallery of Legends**. He was felicitated by HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority; SanJeet, Convener, Arabian Travel Awards; Sumeera Bahl, Director, DDPPL and Dr Marisha Kaul, Gladrags Mrs India-North 2017

Having been named after one of the most popular names in the Arab world, Indian-born **Jamal Abdulnazar**, Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel, pioneered the travel agency sector in the emirate of Sharjah. "I believe deserving candidates should be awarded year on year, so that there is something to look forward to in the industry. The entire trade should support in organising such an encouraging event that must be done with utmost transparency and efficiency," he said. Today, the company runs a diversified travel business with 900 staff, turnover of 1.2 billion in 2017 with over 100 branches spread across seven countries. Inspired by his brother-in-law in the field of travel, Jamal Abdulnazar graduated university and flew into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) at the age of 21 in search for a position in the travel sector. Walking into the office of the Country Manager for Air France in Jeddah, Jamal was offered a position in Dammam and the year 1981 marked the beginning of his career in the field of travel and tourism. His breakthrough to the industry in KSA gave him the knowledge and expertise required to make a mark in the competitive travel world.

“All deserving candidates in the travel trade should be awarded year on year, so that there is always something to look forward to in the industry”





DDP Game Changer | **NASIR JAMAL KHAN**

► **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel, received the award for **DDP Game Changer**. He was felicitated by HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority; SanJeet, Convener, Arabian Travel Awards; Sumeera Bahl, Director, DDPL and Dr Marisha Kaul, Gladrags Mrs India-North 2017

As the most respected awards programme for the travel and tourism industry in the region, **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel, feels it is a great honour to be presented with the award of 'DDP Game Changer 2018' by the Arabian Travel Awards. "Having dedicated over 35 years to the travel and tourism industry in the GCC, it has long been my ambition to build valuable relationships and develop talent within the industry. Therefore, I believe it is important to recognise the efforts of those in the industry to build a strong platform for growth in the region and ensuring a bright future for all," he explained. His accomplished business intelligence has been much applauded in terms of getting the right

**“ Having dedicated over 35 years to the travel and tourism industry in the GCC, it has long been my ambition to build valuable relationships and develop talent within the industry ”**

travel apparatus to suit the clientele according to time and relevance. Meticulous in his dealings, Khan

stands out as a master in the field of travel and tourism in the region due to the many skills honed throughout 20 years in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and 13 years in the UAE. Today, as Chief Executive Officer of Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism, Khan has built a rich network of strong relationships between the UAE and KSA through his life experience.







## Chief Guest | HIS EXCELLENCY KHALID JASIM AL MIDFA

Arabian Travel Awards, according to **His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, gives an opportunity for recognition of those who have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that tourists are able to enjoy the vacation whether business or leisure. "These awards motivate individuals in the industry to work hard and go that extra mile. I would like to thank the team from Durga Das Publications and Arabian Travel Awards for recognising all the contributors to the travel and tourism industry for their hard work," he said.

► **His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority received the award for **Chief Guest**. She was felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group and Awards Team

## Guest of Honour | DR MARISHA KAUL

**Dr Marisha Kaul**, Gladrags Mrs India-North 2017, believes Arabian Travel Awards is a wonderful platform to recognise all the achievers from the travel industry. "It's good to encourage and motivate people all around India for their successes. The best part is the fact that it is being organised regionwise. This allows people from all parts of the United Arab Emirates to have an equal chance to participate and get nominated and further work harder," she said.

► **Dr. Marisha Kaul**, Gladrags Mrs India-North 2017, being honoured with Pearl Trophy 'Maya' for her support towards Arabian Travel Awards







## Most Promising Area Manager— Airlines | **TIMOTHY NJIHIA**

The importance of winning such an award, according to **Timothy Njihia**, Area Manager, RwandAir, is recognition by the trade, peers and professionals. “This adds up to RwandAir’s credibility firstly within the Middle East, secondly across our entire network and thirdly to all our stakeholders, giving our internal and external customers the confidence to be a part of RwandAir and fly the dream of Africa. Arabian Travel Awards is an award RwandAir will treasure and uphold,” he exclaimed.

► **Timothy Njihia**, Area Manager, RwandAir received the award for **Most Promising Area Manager—Airlines**

## Most Promising General Manager | **SANNE EMBORG**

**Sanne Emborg**, General Manager, JW Marriott Dubai is glad to receive the award for the ‘Most Promising General Manager’ at the second Arabian Travel Awards ceremony. “I congratulate all the winners and thank the team for working hard and making this event a success. Arabian Travel Awards is doing a fabulous job in recognising individuals and travel companies which will in turn help the industry grow. It’s an honour to be associated and be recognised by one of the best in the industry,” he said.

► The award was given to **Sanne Emborg** and received by **Rabih Nicolas**, Director of Sales & Marketing, JW Marriott Hotel Dubai



## Best Sales & Marketing Professional | **ALEXANDER SUSKI**

**Millennium Hotels and Resorts** is dedicated to reaching its goal and delivering unique standards of services and operations, mentions the hotel’s Regional Director — Sales & Marketing, Middle East & Africa (MEA), **Alexander Suski**. “Winning this award and 10 others across our prestigious hotel brands is certainly an indication of the company’s success in the market. We look forward to further growth in 2019 and beyond, with an exciting pipeline including 41 hotels in development,” he said.

► **Alexander Suski**, Regional Director—Sales & Marketing, Middle East & Africa (MEA), Millennium Hotels and Resorts bagged the ‘Best Sales & Marketing Professional’ award

## Best Travel Technology Provider | **TRAVELPORT**

**Matthew Powell**, Managing Director—Africa, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport is delighted to have been recognised as ‘Best Technology Partner’ in the Middle East at Arabian Travel Awards 2018. “Over the years, Travelport has driven not only GDS, but travel agency technology developments too, and this award is testament to our ongoing investments in innovation. It has been a tremendous year for the region and we would like to thank all who recognised the value of our technology and customer-centric solutions by voting for Travelport,” he shared.

► The award was given to **Travelport** and received by its Country Manager—UAE, **Kathryn Wallington**



## Best Arabian Tourism Board | **SHARJAH COMMERCE & TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (SCTDA)**

**HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, SCTDA is honoured for the recognition conferred by the jury members of the Arabian Travel Awards 2018. “Through several major initiatives, SCTDA has strategically positioned the emirate of Sharjah on the global tourism map,” he said.

► The award was given to **SCTDA** and received by its Chairman **HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**





## Best Luxury & MICE Hotel | **BAB AL QASR HOTEL, ABU DHABI**

Arabian Travel Awards celebrates excellence across all sectors of the travel and hospitality industry, believes **Mostafa Tantawi**, Director of Operations, Bab Al Qasr Hotel, Abu Dhabi. "To be selected as one of the most distinguished properties in such a competitive market certainly gives us an edge over the rest. This win further inspires us to raise the bar even higher, and it is only imperative that we continuously innovate our services," he mentioned.

► The award was given to **Bab Al Qasr Hotel, Abu Dhabi** and received by **Nemo Acimovic**, Director — Operations, Millennium & Copthorne Hotels MEA

## Best Travel Management Company | **KANOO TRAVEL**

For **Zaeem Gama**, Acting Executive General Manager, Kanoo Travel, awards and recognitions are a true reflection of the collective hard work and dedication. "On behalf of Kanoo Travel management team, our esteemed directors and shareholders, I would like to highlight that we wouldn't be where we are without the contribution made by each and every one of our valued employees," he said.

► The award was given to **Kanoo Travel** and received by its General Manager —UAE & Oman, **Aubrey Heldt** and Regional Head—AUH & Al Ain, **Sami Saad**



## Best 4-Star Serviced Apartments | **RODA AMWAJ SUITES**

Roda Amwaj Suites has been merited with the best four-star serviced apartment at Arabian Travel Awards 2018, informs its Hotel Manager, **Osama Mamdouh**. "It has been chosen out of hundreds of properties for its 340 luxurious apartments, penthouse and duplex loft facility ideal for long and short stays. We would like to thank Arabian Travel Awards for crediting us with such a prestige accolade," he said.

► The award was given to **Roda Amwaj Suites** and received by its Hotel Manager, **Osama Mamdouh**



## Best B2B Travel Portal | **RAYNA TOURS & TRAVELS DUBAI**

**Manoj Tulsani**, CEO, Rayna Tours and Holidays feels that this award will enable his company to further enhance its stance in the Middle East as one of Dubai's leading destination management companies. "This portrays the team effort and dedication by all those in our group for their tireless efforts and unstinted support to win this award. Our sincere thanks to Arabian Travel Awards team once again for the recognition and trust," he said.

► The award was given to **Rayna Tours & Travels Dubai** and received by its CEO, **Manoj Tulsani** and Director of Sales, **Deepak Hiranandani**



## Best Business Hotel | **JW MARRIOTT HOTEL DUBAI**

JW Marriott Hotel Dubai redefines business hotel experience by seamlessly combining pure luxury and efficiency. The 351 spacious, fully furnished rooms and suites paired with modern meeting and business facilities, make the hotel a popular choice. The hotel also offers variety of dining experiences in its celebrated restaurants. The award indicates the consistent service levels the property has maintained since its inception.

► The award was given to **JW Marriott Hotel Dubai** and received by its Director of Sales & Marketing, **Rabih Nicolas**







## Best Luxury Hotel | **PALAZZO VERSACE DUBAI**

**Sandra Tikal**, General Manager, Palazzo Versace Dubai is thankful for the recognition in a region that is crucial for its business. "This award is a proof that we are a top preference for luxury travellers. This accolade highlights our unique range of elegantly-designed rooms and the commitment to delivering unforgettable experiences to guests," she mentioned.

► The award was given to **Palazzo Versace Dubai** and received by its Executive Assistant Manager, **Sumesh Nair**; GCC & Emerging Markets Sales Manager, **Saad Muneer** and Public Relations Manager, **Ionela Savescu**

## Best Inbound Tour Operator— Oman | **BAHWAN TOURISM**

**Arabian Travel Awards** has grown to be an important recognition in the Middle East's travel and hospitality market, believes **Soumava Mukherjee**, Deputy General Manager, Bahwan Tourism. "This year, we won the 'Best Inbound Tour Operator—Oman' award, which speaks of our pioneering and professional service bringing guests from across the globe for over 40 years in the Sultanate. This award will further strengthen our brand value not only among our trade partners and travel industry, but also among our customers," Mukherjee mentioned.

► The award was given to **Bahwan Tourism** and received by its Deputy General Manager, **Soumava Mukherjee**



## Best Business Hotel Brand | **MILLENNIUM HOTELS AND RESORTS (MEA)**

**There** has been a significant increase in the number of corporate travellers looking for hotels to suit their budgets, without compromising on quality service and stay, according to **Alexander Suski**, Regional Director—Sales & Marketing, Middle East & Africa (MEA), Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA. "We have continuously dedicated itself to become the primary choice for such business travellers coming in to the Middle East. Winning this award is a clear indication of our dedication to strive and achieve higher goals for our consumers," he said.

► The award was given to **Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA** and received by its COO, **Kevork Deldelian** and Regional Director—Sales & Marketing, Middle East & Africa (MEA), **Alexander Suski**



## Best Family Hotel Apartments | **GOLDEN SANDS HOTEL APARTMENTS**

**Arabian Travel Awards** is one of the widely-recognised awards in this region, feels **Mohammed Khoori**, General Manager, Golden Sands Hotel Apartments. "We are greatly honoured to be voted as the 'Best Family Hotel Apartments'. This award is a testament to who we are. We offer accommodation for all types of travellers, especially families as well as business professionals to see and visit the city's attractions," he said.

► The award was given to **Golden Sands Hotel Apartments** and received by its Director of Marketing, **Mirna Tenidis** and Rooms Division Manager, **Islam Behkeet**







## Best Transport Company | NASSER AL RAZOOQI TRANSPORT

Winning an award does not only show a public recognition and acknowledgement of success but also recognises excellence, says **Josh Laurente**, Operation & Business Development Manager, Nasser Al Razooqi Transport. "Having the best travel agency helps us to elevate the status of our tourism industry. This award can raise the credibility of our company, our brand and services. The appreciation can draw new tourists in Arabian Gulf. The recognition can also build motivation within our team. It's a celebration of travel and tourism by its glorious moments," he elaborated.

► The award was given to **Nasser Al Razooqi Transport** and received by General Manager, **Riyas Khan** and Operation & Business Development Manager, **Josh Laurente**

## Best Luxury Serviced Apartments | GHAYA GRAND HOTEL

With competition from new hotels opening up in Dubai, **Olwin Desouza**, General Manager, Ghaya Grand Hotel, says that they had to strive to be at the top of their game. "Winning the 2018 Arabian Travel Award is excellent news and demonstrates that we are providing outstanding service with a smile for our guests as well as a product that delivers everything they require, whether visiting Dubai on business or leisure," he said.

► The award was given to **Ghaya Grand Hotel** and received by its Assistant Marketing Manager, **Sreedevi Shyam**



## Best 4-Star Business Hotel | GLORIA HOTEL DUBAI

For **Freddy Farid**, General Manager, Gloria Hotel Dubai, it is overwhelming to receive the Arabian Travel Awards for the second consecutive year. "We are proud that our guests and partners who voted for us hold us in such a high esteem. This achievement would not have been possible without the dedication of our team. Certainly, these awards will strengthen our commitment to quality service delivery and we promise to gear ourselves up as per the preferences of our clients - and be at pace with the trends that keep changing while maintaining our culture of service, convenience and unlimited comfort," he elucidated.

► The award was given to **Gloria Hotel Dubai** and received by Director of Sales & Marketing, **Bashar Turk**

## Best Family Friendly Hotel | JOOD PALACE HOTEL DUBAI

**Ahmed Badawy**, General Manager, Jood Palace Hotel Dubai believes that the company's success encourages guests to choose and stay loyal to Jood Palace Hotel. "Our associates contribute a lot towards the success of the company. Winning this award would increase the level of their productivity as well as foster a sense of achievement among them. Being able to say that we are an award-winning hotel increases our chance of building and strengthening partnerships. This award is a confirmation that we are successful in a highly competitive industry," he shared.

► The award was given to **Jood Palace Hotel Dubai** and received by its Director of Sales **Mohamed Monem**







## Best 5-Star Family Hotel

### GRAND MILLENNIUM, MUSCAT

**L**uca Medda, Cluster General Manager, Grand Millennium Muscat is delighted to receive such recognition for their family-focused offerings and looks forward to creating new experiences for visitors. He said, "In winning this award, we look to continually improve the offering of our property, our people and our product. Such recognition supports positive growth both professionally and personally, bringing new energy to our associates and colleagues, encouraging us to provide more #MyMillennium moments for our guests."

► The award was given to **Grand Millennium, Muscat** and received by its Cluster General Manager, **Luca Medda**

## Best Rooftop Lounge

### LEVEL 43 SKY LOUNGE, FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON, SHEIKH ZAYED ROAD

**I**t is motivating for **Olga Galiuk**, Restaurant Manager, Level 43 Sky Lounge, Four Points by Sheraton, Sheikh Zayed Road and his team to be recognised by Arabian Travel Awards. "This is the seventh award within four years of our operations. It is a testimony of our team's hard work and the increasing popularity of our venue in a market place such as Dubai, which offers a vast variety of choices. These accolades also inspire us to work harder and exceed our guest expectations," he explained.

► The award was given to **Level 43 Sky Lounge, Four Points by Sheraton, Sheikh Zayed Road** and received by its Restaurant Manager, **Olga Galiuk**



## Best Airline—South East Asia

### PHILIPPINE AIRLINES

**I**t is a matter of pride for **Agnes F Pagaduan** to be recognised by Arabian Travel Awards. "It is something that we were not expecting in this dynamic region. It was a great honour and privilege to be chosen as 'Best Southeast Asian Airline'. We thank all our valued customers who have been continuously supporting us all these years. We assure that we will continue to serve you better with our 'Buong Pusong Alaga' service," he said.

► The award was given to **Philippine Airlines** and received by its Country Manager- UAE International Sales Sub-Dept/Sales - Department - Philippine Airlines Regional Office, Middle East, **Agnes F Pagaduan** and Sales Manager, **Joey Tiberio**



## Best Debut Luxury Hotel

### DUKES DUBAI HOTEL

**I**t is an honour for **Tristan De La Porte Du Theil**, General Manager, Dukes Dubai Hotel to be awarded the 'Best Debut Luxury Hotel Award' at Arabian Travel Awards 2018. "These awards provide a world-class platform to meet the biggest brands across other hotels, restaurants and leisure resorts. It is a privilege to be awarded this title in a city with so many hotels at the same level. For long, Dubai has been a strong hub for both trade and tourism where we see potential continuously. We look forward to being a part of trade shows to work with regional buyers and world's top suppliers to accelerate growth within the industry," Theil mentioned.

► The award was given to **Dukes Dubai Hotel** and received by its team







## Best Corporate Travel Agency |

### NASSER AL RAZOOQI TRAVELS

**R**iyas Khan, General Manager, Nasser Al Razooqi Travels feels that winning this award is another source of motivation to achieve the goals of the company. "Now we have a much clearer idea of what our strengths and weaknesses are and how we can improve them. We feel a sense of responsibility after winning this award and there is a lot more that we need to achieve. Professionally, it means we can connect with more tourists on a bigger scale, help more travellers and potentially grow in the tourism industry," he mentioned.

► The award was given to **Nasser Al Razooqi Travels** and received by its General Manager, **Riyas Khan** and Operation & Business Development Manager, **Josh Laurente**

## Best Online Travel Company |

### WEGO

**A**ccording to **Dean Wicks**, Chief Flight Officer, Wego, such recognitions only go to further validate the fact that Wego really is making a difference in the region. "It is also encouraging for our global team to be appreciated for all their work in the Middle East market — which has been (and continues to be) the main focus for all of our teams. Being honoured in this manner motivates us to keep pushing ourselves and grow significantly by enabling people to shop for travel more often," Wicks revealed.

► The award was given to **Wego** and received by its Chief Flight Officer, **Dean Wicks**



## Best Airport Hotel |

### MILLENNIUM AIRPORT HOTEL DUBAI

**F**or **Simon Moore**, General Manager, Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai, an award does not only acknowledge success but also recognises other qualities of the company such as a strong brand, quality service and excellence. "Awards contribute to the long-term objectives of promoting the brand in the region. It also helps in the growth of trade by strengthening the relationship between clients and the hotel, motivating associates at work to achieve the company's goal and helping build trust with partners and other organisations," he elucidated.

► The award was given to **Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai** and received by its General Manager, **Simon Moore**; Assistant Marketing Manager, **Sheryl Aquiatan** and Director of Sales & Marketing, **Binu Varghese**



## Fastest Growing Mid Market Hotel Brand | PEARL HOTELS

**W**inning an award and its importance will make it easier to market the product, which is the quality of the service rendered to the guest, feels **Ravi K Nair**, Cluster General Manager, Pearl Hotels. "The guest has high expectations in terms of quality service and winning an award is a huge advantage to elevate the potential and credibility of the hotel," Nair said.

► The award was given to **Pearl Hotels** and received by its Cluster General Manager, **Ravi K Nair** and Group Managing Director, **Abdul Rauf Charakla**







# SNAPSHOTS of Arabian Travel Awards







## Best African Airline

### ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES

**A**li Mohammed, Area Manager—Gulf, Ethiopian Airlines believes that winning this award is substantial for the airline as it is an evidence that its products and services are meeting high expectations of customers from the Middle East. “Ethiopian currently flies to 12 destinations in the Middle East and thrice daily from Dubai with ultramodern aircraft, connecting travellers from the Middle East to over 60 destinations in Africa and over 115 worldwide. As Arabian Travel Awards recognises and encourages the talent in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors, its contribution to the growth of the trade is highly significant,” he mentioned.

► The award was given to **Ethiopian Airlines** and received by Area Manager—Gulf, Ali Mohammed

## Best Boutique Hotel

### RAVIZ CENTER POINT HOTEL

**T**he hotel business in the Middle East in general and in Dubai in particular is going through a very challenging phase, reveals **Manoj Padhi**, Group General Manager, Raviz Center Point Hotel. “Awards like Arabian Travel Awards gives recognition to winners and this enables the consumer/tour operator to make the right decision in selecting the hotel for themselves or for their clients. Thank you, Arabian Travel Awards for choosing Raviz Center Point Hotel, Dubai and honouring my team members with this prestigious recognition,” Padhi shared.

► The award was given to **Raviz Center Point Hotel** and received by its Group General Manager, **Manoj Padhi**



## Best Golf Tourism Destination

### TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

**W**inning the title for ‘Best Golf Destination’ at Arabian Travel Awards for the second-year running is a huge achievement for **Pichaya Saisaengchan**, Director—Dubai & Middle East, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). “An honour like this helps raise international awareness of the many wonderful tourist facilities and five-star offerings available to visitors to Thailand away from the country’s world-famous beaches and islands. The golf industry is a rapidly-growing segment of Thailand’s tourism industry and the one we are extremely excited about. This award will act as a catalyst as we look forward to welcoming more visitors to our world-class golf courses, hotels and facilities.”

► The award was given to **Tourism Authority of Thailand** and received by its Deputy Director—Dubai & Middle East Office, **Pairat Sukngam**



## Fastest Growing Travel Management Company

### COZMO TRAVEL

**J**amal Abdulnazar, CEO, Cozmo Travel, revealed that they will continue growing and enter new markets in the next few years. “In the second quarter of 2019, we will be present in two more countries. We will continue to invest heavily on technology which is the industry’s way forward and focus on Robotic Applications and Data Analytics for which we are introducing a new technology brand called Cozmatrix. We have introduced our new brand Cozmo Corporate Travel Management in India,” he shared.

► The award was presented to **Cozmo Travel** and received by the company’s Chief Executive Officer, **Jamal Abdulnazar**







## Best 5-Star Hotel

### MAKKAH MILLENNIUM HOTEL & TOWERS

**L**auding Arabian Travel Awards, **Saad Khayat**, General Manager, Makkah Millennium Hotel and Towers feels honoured to have scooped 'Best Five-Star Hotel 2018' award. "We thank our guests from across the Islamic world for making us their hospitality partner of choice and trusting us with their travel needs. The award serves as a strong motivation for us to continue delivering best hospitality practices and to conform to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to turn the country into a tourism hotspot," Khayat shared.

► The award was bestowed on **Makkah Millennium Hotel & Towers** and received by **Mustafa Ainen**, Director of Operations, Millennium Hotels & Resorts

## Best Travel Insurance Facilitator

### TUNE PROTECT

**F**or all of the Arabian travel industry travel professionals, Maya is the true winner, according to **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager, Tune Protect. "We are all vying for Maya's attention and it is not easy to get it. Grabbing her attention requires the top travel industry professionals within the region who recognise us and that is what makes Maya the extraordinary motivational force driving all of us to excellence. I thank each of the travel industry professionals who voted for us."

► The award was won by **Tune Protect** and received by its General Manager, **Arijit Munshi**



## Best Desert Resort

### TILAL LIWA HOTEL

**F**or **Ahmed Margoushy**, General Manager, Tilal Liwa Hotel, it all begins with recognising his employees, aspirations and nurturing them along with a flexible, family-friendly work environment. "I am proud of my team. Ours is an exceptional location, a private and quite sanctuary, where everyone can experience beautiful oasis of life and where travellers want to come back. I would like to share this award with my team members who incessantly strive to give guests ultimate satisfaction during their stay. Our goal is to ensure superior tourism experience to travellers and this award recognises our effort," he shared.

► The award was presented to **Tilal Liwa Hotel** and received by its team



## Best 4-Star Hotel

### RAMADA PLAZA JUMEIRAH BEACH

**S**tefan Thumiger, General Manager, Ramada Plaza Jumeirah Beach, is honoured to be recognised as 'Best Four-Star Hotel' for 2018. He elaborated, "This award is testament to the team's efforts in driving us to higher standards and raising the bar for customer service across the industry. Recognition and a push to higher standards is crucial for the UAE as the country targets a more diverse audience with vibrant offerings."

► The award was conferred on **Ramada Plaza Jumeirah Beach Residence** and received by its General Manager, **Stefan Thumiger**







## Best GSA | **AL NABOODAH TRAVEL**

Since the first GSA partnership with Air France back in 1973, Al Naboodah Travel has been a trusted partner for airlines in the UAE, shares the company's CEO, **Nasir Jamal Khan**. "Since then, we have expanded our portfolio to 11 leading international airlines – Air Canada, Air France, Air Zimbabwe, Austrian Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, GoAir, Japan Airlines, LATAM, SaudiGulf Airlines, Turkish Airlines and United Airways (BD). It is extremely gratifying to be recognised for our continuous efforts to best serve the interests of these airlines in the UAE by being presented with the award for 'Best GSA Agent 2018' at the Arabian Travel Awards 2018," he expressed.

► The award was given to **Al Naboodah Travel** and received by the company's CEO, **Nasir Jamal Khan**

## Best Corporate Travel Management Company | **SATGURU TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

**JVR Fernando**, Commercial Director—West Africa, ME & Asia, Satguru Travel & Tourism considers the award as a recognition for the dedication and relentless efforts of his committed team. "The award also serves as an inspiration to maintain our standards and strive to live up to the expectations of our clients and customers. We have always walked ahead in terms of adapting new technology and meeting customer needs. Such awards are a constant reminder to stay ahead in the game with constant innovation and improved service," he explained.

► The award was presented to **Satguru Travel and Tourism** and received by its Commercial Director—West Africa, ME & Asia, **JVR Fernando**



## Best Design & Architecture Hotel | **M HOTEL MAKKAH BY MILLENNIUM**

Makkah is an exceptional destination that accommodates 4 million visitors a year, informs **Mohamed Abdel Fattah**, General Manager, M Hotel Makkah by Millennium. He further mentioned, "The level of competition is high when offering competitive prices and services. What we need is a competitive advantage that can add value to our hotel. Arabian Travel Awards offered this leverage not only as an additional value to our hotel, but also added to the associates' self-esteem. Our associates are our reflection to the market. Believing that we achieved something exceptional, will enhance their confidence and will be translated to unique selling point."

► The award was bestowed on **M Hotel Makkah by Millennium** and received by its **Mustafa Ainen**, Director of Operations, Millennium Hotels & Resorts, and team



## Best Emerging Travel Portal | **SHARJAH AIRPORT TRAVEL AGENCY**

**Arshad Munir**, General Manager, Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA) took the opportunity to thank his clients for their confidence to vote for them and enable them to receive the award at Arabian Travel Awards. "In the era of technology shift, we need to stay updated; hence, we at SATA developed an online portal which seemed challenging, yet the team continued to work with expertise on the subject with dedication and commitment leading to the completion of this project in a span of six months," he shared.

► The award was bagged by **Sharjah Airport Travel Agency** and received by its Deputy General Manager, **Thomas P Varghese** and team







## Most Promising Airline

### RWANDAIR

It is the desire of every individual or organisation to achieve excellence and therefore the Arabian Travel Awards by itself is a sign of excellence, according to **Timothy Njihia**, Area Manager, RwandAir. "This will drive players in the field towards excellence, particularly service excellence. Receiving these awards is an acknowledgement that peers and professionals alike agree and that you or your company excel in. They thereby desire to be like you, if not better," he mentioned.

► The award was given to **RwandAir** and received by its Area Manager, **Timothy Njihia**

## Best Corporate Incentive Tour Operator

### KANOO TRAVEL

**Zaeem Gama**, Acting Executive General Manager, Kanoo Travel congratulated all the regions for this achievement and recognition and hoped to continue to strive for nothing but the best. "The experience we deliver, the strength and equity of our brand, and the primary reason for our current and future success is because of all of you (Kanoo Travel team). I have never been prouder to be part of such a wonderful team," shared Gama.

► The award was given to **Kanoo Travel** and received by its General Manager—UAE & Oman, **Aubrey Heldt** and Regional Head—AUH & Al Ain, **Sami Saad**



## Best Airline—South Asia

### AIR INDIA

**Mohit Sain**, Regional Manager—Gulf, Middle East and Africa, Air India, is honoured to receive the prestigious 'Arabian Travel Award Best Airline—South Asia'. "We have received this coveted travel award second year in a row. I would like to sincerely thank DDP Group for conferring this award, along with all the people who voted for us, duly recognising the role rendered by the airline in the Gulf and Middle East Region," Sain expressed.

► The award was presented to **Air India** and received by its Regional Manager—Gulf, Middle East and Africa, **Mohit Sain**



## Best Designed & Well-Maintained Hotel

### HILTON CAPITAL GRAND ABU DHABI

Winning the award for 'Best-Designed and Well-Maintained Hotel of the Year' in the UAE is a tremendous honour for **Osama Ibrahim**, General Manager, Hilton Capital Grand Abu Dhabi. "We are proud of the fact that we achieved the award for being well-maintained with a team of 180 people. A big thank you to all the hotel team members for the award. The success was not possible without you," he mentioned.

► The award was conferred upon **Hilton Capital Grand Abu Dhabi** and received by its General Manager, **Osama Ibrahim**



## Best Sports Bar

### YESTERDAY RESTAURANT & PUB, FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON DOWNTOWN DUBAI

**Manoj Borker**, Restaurant Manager, Yesterday Restaurant & Pub, Four Points by Sheraton Downtown Dubai, believes that these awards are great to earn as the pub strives to stand out in a changing market. "This serves as a testament to our work ethic," he revealed.

► The award was given to **Yesterday Restaurant & Pub** and received by its Restaurant Manager, **Manoj Borker**; Director of Operations, **Nabeel Sheikh** and Public Relations & Marketing Manager Restaurant Manager- Complex, **Anu van der Sande**







## Best Corporate Hotel

### M HOTEL DOWNTOWN BY MILLENNIUM, DUBAI

Winning the award shows that the hotel and its staff endeavour to provide guests with a high level of service, comfort and its facilities, believes **Cornelia Erhardt**, General Manager, M Hotel Downtown by Millennium, Dubai. "To win such a prestigious award is a huge boost of motivation for all staff members at the hotel. It is also a reassurance that we are on the right track with our business strategy and personalised service delivery concept," he said.

► The award was given to M Hotel Downtown by Millennium, Dubai and received by Director of Sales & Marketing, **Hesham Youssef** and Director of Sales—Corporate & MICE, **Sarah Ferry**

## Best Beach Resort

### MARJAN ISLAND RESORT & SPA MANAGED BY ACCORHOTELS

The award has come as a motivation for **Mohamed Al Ali**, Director of Sales & Distribution, Marjan Island Resort and Spa to serve his customers better. "We have won this award after working hard in our area and this success wouldn't have been ours without our guests' trust and interest in our resort services," he mentioned.

► The award was presented to Marjan Island Resort & Spa managed by AccorHotels and received by its Executive Manager, **Carlos Salvatori**; Director—Sales and Distribution, **Mohamed Al Ali** and Marketing Manager, **Nahla Khaled**



## Best 4-Star Hotel Apartments

### PEARL CITY SUITES DELUXE HOTEL APARTMENTS

This award is an assurance that the property is stable by achieving the goals to be committed to the service provided, said **Ravi K Nair**, Cluster General Manager, Pearl City Suites Deluxe Hotel Apartments. "These are the reasons why the customers will keep coming back to us," he said.

► The award was presented to Pearl City Suites Deluxe Hotel Apartments and received by its Group Managing Director, **Abdul Rauf Charakla** and General Manager, **Mohammed Rizwan Butt**



## Best Dhow Cruise Company

### AL WASL DHOW

**Ishrat Ali Khan**, Managing Director, Al Wasl Dhow is grateful to be the recipient of this award. He mentions, "Thank you Arabian Travel Awards for believing in Al Wasl Dhow cruise once again. That's where the role of awards and public recognition comes in. Awards do not only acknowledge success, they recognise many other qualities like ability, struggle, effort, and above all, excellence."

► The award was given to Al Wasl Dhow and received by its Managing Director, **Ishrat Ali Khan**



## Best British Themed Pub

### DOUBLE DECKER, RODA AL MUROOJ

Arabian Travel Awards names the best hospitality organisations across a range of awards developed to distinguish the industry's most vital sectors and offerings, informs **Osama Mamdouh**, Hotel Manager, Roda Amwaj Suites. "The best properties are selected through a rigorous voting system and a panel of jury. The platforms also give a nod to the booming travel and hospitality industry within the Middle East," he said.

► The award was given to Double Decker, Roda Al Murooj and received by **Tarek Kebeish**, Assistant F&B Manager, Roda Al Bustan







## Best 4-Star Corporate Hotel COPTHORNE HOTEL RIYADH

Ayman Sallam, General Manager, Copthorne Hotel Riyadh attributed the victory to the unwavering commitment to meet the needs of his guests by offering exceptional experiences through the outstanding commitment of our staff. He elaborated, "The hotel, located within the heart of the commercial hub of Riyadh, offers business travellers a choice of 143 rooms and suites decorated with contemporary furnishings."

► The award was given to Copthorne Hotel Riyadh and received by its General Manager, Ayman Sallam

## Best Destination Management Company | RAYNA TOURS & TRAVELS DUBAI

Manoj Tulsani, CEO, Rayna Tours and Holidays is humbled to have been honoured as the best B2B travel portal by Arabian Travel Awards. "It is with great pleasure that we receive this award and we will continue to provide the best service possible as a leading travel portal in this region. All credit goes to the brilliant team for their efforts in ensuring that the portal provides comprehensive information to the B2B fraternity," he shared.

► The award was given to Rayna Tours & Travels Dubai and received by its CEO, Manoj Tulsani; Head of Contracting- Hotels, Rinki Tulsani and Director of Sales, Deepak Hiranandani



## Best Serviced Apartments GLORIA HOTEL DUBAI

Freddy Farid, General Manager, Gloria Hotel Dubai, expressed his pride in guests and partners who voted for them and holds them in high esteem. He shared, "This achievement could not have possibly happened without our team dedication. They are the real winners! Certainly these awards will strengthen more of our commitment to quality service delivery and promise to gear ourselves,"

► The award was given to Gloria Hotel Dubai and received by its Director of Sales & Marketing, Bashar Turk



## Best Business Serviced Apartments | MILLENNIUM EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS MUSCAT

Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat delivers the best possible experience to its guests, informs Luca Medda, Cluster General Manager, Grand Millennium Muscat and Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat. "To be recognised for our commitment to delivering 'more than meets the eye' is a true privilege," he said.

► The award was given to Millennium Executive Apartments Muscat and received by its Cluster General Manager, Luca Medda



## Best Guest Services ROSE PARK HOTEL AL BARSHA

For Thameem Razick, Director of Sales & Marketing, Rose Park Hotel Al Barsha, winning the award holds great importance as it will help them increase the status of their properties, raise credibility and performance of the hotel brand, increase visibility, attract new guests and pass the word of mouth information to colleagues, friends and relatives. "This recognition is set to drive good sale and increase the count of repeated guests," he said.

► The award was won by Rose Park Hotel Al Barsha and received by its Director—Sales & Marketing, Thameem Razick & Director—Operations, Yousuf Malimar







## Best Travel Agency | **NASSER AL RAZOOQI TRAVELS**

For Maj Gen Nasser Abdul Razaq Al Razooqi, Chairman, Nasser Al Razooqi Travels, winning this award boosts his employees' morale and makes them feel part of something successful. "The honour from Arabian Travel Awards provides our business credibility enhancement and delivers an approach for promoting our company through marketing and public relations creativities. The award also develops a growth to do business-to-business opportunities when we are looking for prospects to partner with a high-profile organisation. This also helps in improving our networks by raising our profile within the industry globally," he said.

► The award was given to Nasser Al Razooqi Travels and received by its Operation & Business Development Manager, Josh Laurente and team

## Best Family-Friendly Resort | **MILLENNIUM RESORT MUSSANAH, OMAN**

Dermot Birchall, General Manager, Millennium Resort Mussanah Oman, feels honoured to have scooped the award which reflects the great experience of guests in the hotel's facilities. He expressed, "We thank our guests from across the Islamic world for making us their hospitality partner of choice and trusting us with their travel needs. The award serves as a strong motivation for us to continue delivering best hospitality practices on our promise and to conform to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to turn the country into a tourism hotspot."

► The award was given to Millennium Resort Mussanah, Oman and received by its General Manager, Dermot Birchall



## Technology Partner | **TRAVELPORT**

Matthew Powell, Managing Director—Africa, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport feels proud of the work they have done over the last 12 months. "Our travel commerce platform is faster, merchandising and analytics solutions are more powerful and mobile applications like Trip Assist are even more dynamic and in tune with the needs of today's hyper-connected travellers. Our commitment is to continue to work tirelessly to lead the change we want to see for the benefit of our customers and travellers," he shared.

► The award was given to Travelport and received by its Country Manager—UAE, Kathryn Wallington



## Hospitality Partner | **JW MARRIOTT HOTEL DUBAI**

Located just minutes away from the Dubai International Airport, JW Marriott Hotel Dubai offers travellers in the City of Gold a central, accessible location showcasing beautiful accommodations. Besides necessary key amenities such as business centre, health club, high-speed internet, etc, the hotel also provides certified wedding planner, meeting event space and meeting services app, among others. JW Marriott Luxury hotels and resorts provide business leisure travellers with simple elegance and personalised guest service.

► The award was given to JW Marriott Hotel Dubai and received by its Director of Sales & Marketing, Rabih Nicolas









# Nominations are open now



## ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS 2019

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