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TravTalkMiddle



Prospective hub for art and culture

With the recent opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, UAE has successfully attracted the niche market of art and cultural tourism. This will be a stepping stone to ensure the region becomes a hub for authentic Arab art and culture. **TRAVTALK** delves deeper into similar art havens in the emirates.

SHEHARA RIZLY



His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak
Chairman, Department of Culture & Tourism, Abu Dhabi

“Abu Dhabi's cultural identity is shaped by a balanced consideration of the need to preserve our history, but at the same time create a progressive cultural hub that inspires, engages and educates. A major moment in the 2017 international arts and culture calendar was the opening of Louvre Abu Dhabi, as the world was introduced to this most highly anticipated universal museum. This is a key component of our strategy, triggering increased

awareness of the emirate's 'authentic Arabia' experience and its position at the 'crossroads' of global intellectual and behavioural exchange. By stimulating visitation to the Louvre Abu Dhabi, to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, as well as to the museums and World Heritage Sites of Al Ain, these cultural attractions act as a driver of economic growth and diversification.”



Manuel Rabaté
Director
Louvre Abu Dhabi

“Louvre Abu Dhabi's vision is to be a place where we stimulate imaginations and open minds to new connections while redefining the concept of an art museum. Our inaugural exhibition indeed captures an extraordinary story – the birth of the world's most important museum. The opening of the Musée du Louvre was a significant transformational milestone

in history. It's importance as a world treasure cannot be underestimated. This prescient first exhibition is timely as it essentially captures our own values and principles of hope and collaboration. Following the museum's historic recent opening, we are moving into a new period and offering our visitors an exciting programme of exhibitions and events. We are a place of incredible vitality which is also creating its own reputation of all that is good in art and culture.”



Abdulla Al Dah
Chief Executive Officer
Al Shaab Village

“Al Shaab Village was specially designed to preserve the cultural heritage of Sharjah yet offer something unique to our visitors who seek novel ideas and facilities. Our fully-integrated state-of-the-art facility which is currently a permanent exhibition center is to be enjoyed by residents and tourists right throughout the year with interesting activities. Al Shaab Village has been established as a family destination with products

from different countries with additional products from India, China, among others. Food wise the delectable offerings include Arabic, Indian, Italian, etc. We have a special discount booklet specially designed for tourists with our travel agents, hotel partners and tour operators and this has lured more visitors to leave with many interesting purchases with a very positive attitude. I have a very efficient, proactive and supportive team that partakes in strengthening the facility.”

“Founded in 2015 by Ahmad Bin Eisa Bin Nasser Alserkal, the foundation is an art hub that offers a platform to support Emirati and local emerging artists, designers with an aim of highlighting the Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood. ACF promotes its 115 artists on platforms such as art maps, travel apps, travel magazines, hence bridging the gap between artists, creative minds, art lovers and art enthusiasts. We receive visitors from all over the world, especially from Germany, Switzerland, UK, France, the USA, Japan, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, China, GCC countries, Korea and as well local UAE art lovers. Most art tourists visit us to experience the heritage drenched atmosphere of Al Fahidi for the marriage of old and new, historic and contemporary unique art pieces, but locally made with a touch of the Arabic culture, souvenirs and Arabic traditional clothing. Alserkal Cultural Foundation is in collaboration with individual tour guides, tour operators and companies, hotels. We recently held a tour operators' day out at the foundation which was aimed at creating more awareness of the foundation activities to the tour guides and eventually to the clients.”



Annamarie Bersani
Director, Al Serkal Cultural Foundation

“As one of the world's oldest permanently inhabited settlements, and home to the UAE's only UNESCO World Heritage sites, Al Ain is a beacon of culture and heritage in the UAE. Al Ain promotes historic sites and celebrates the UAE's heritage. The Al Ain Cultural Programme launched in 2016 has attracted an audience of over a quarter of a million visitors with a variety of artistic and cultural initiatives for residents and tourists alike. The array of events in Al Ain includes musical performances, visual arts workshops and exhibitions as well as a diverse selection of activities that immerse participants in UAE culture and tradition. The cultural programme has been significant in both reinforcing our national pride within the local community and also in giving visitors a unique insight into the heritage of UAE. Al Ain is home to the oldest museums in the UAE; and the curatorial narrative of these museums and cultural sites are integral to their development that will be located in the Saadiyat Cultural District. Visitors to the museums on Saadiyat Island will see artefacts that were discovered during the archaeological excavations in Al Ain which unearthed Bronze Age burial sites and settlements.”




Sumayya Al Suwaidi
Community and Events Manager
Department of Culture and Tourism
Al Ain

“Over the past nine years, Abu Dhabi Art's programming and participating art galleries have evolved the fair into a dynamic and engaging event for all – drawing over 20,000 visitors from across the globe last year. Expanding beyond the notions of a traditional art fair, the exhibition's global reach expands significantly every year. Art enthusiasts who visit Abu Dhabi Art are undoubtedly attracted to a range of artistic and cultural offerings in the capital and Al Ain region. Abu Dhabi seeks to promote, celebrate and foster Emirati and Arab artistic and cultural endeavours, thereby helping develop Abu Dhabi develop as a global hub for cultural tourism. Abu Dhabi Art 2017 presented art works by emerging and established artists through 48 participating galleries from 18 different countries, including a new 'Galleries' section curated by Dr. Omar Kholeif. The artistic programme included curated sections by Mohammed Kazem and Cristiana de Marchi, Maya Allison, Munira Al Sayegh, Fabrice Bousteau and Tarek Abou el-Fetouh who all conceived dynamic cultural content for the fair.”



Dyala Nusseibeh
Director
Abu Dhabi Art



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Dawn of a new era of adventure tourism

Adventure and responsible tourism seem to be the most trending travel segments. This is evident in PATA's annual Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2018 at Al Ain from February 21-23. **Dr Mario Hardy**, CEO, PATA shares more details with **TRAVTALK**.

TT BUREAU

What will this year's tourism conference entail?

The PATA Adventure Travel and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart 2018 (ATRTCM 2018) is Asia Pacific's leading travel trade event dedicated to the adventure travel industry. The three-day event comprises a one-day travel trade mart and one-day conference, along with other value-added activities that facilitate networking and relationship building. The conference and mart is held annually with past events held in Thimphu, Bhutan; Chiang Rai, Thailand, and Luoyang, China. The event's choice of host destination reflects the growing importance of dispersing tourists to emerging destinations.

What is the aim and objective of the event?

During the day-long travel trade mart, adventure product buyers and sellers from across the world have the opportunity to meet face-to-face through pre-matched appointments. Sellers include state, regional and local tourism agencies from established and emerging markets, unique accommodation providers and tour operators. At the one-day conference, delegates will explore the nuances, trends and dynamics of one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors. The year's programme, under the theme 'Adventure in a New Era', brings together international experts at the forefront of the adventure travel industry from both private and public sectors to discuss the sector's issues and opportunities.



Dr. Mario Hardy
CEO
PATA

The event brings together leading international experts at the forefront of the adventure travel industry

We expect approximately 200 delegates from over 20 countries in Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East.

What was the reason to select Al Ain for this event?

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority is one of PATA's newest members. One of their current strategies is to diversify their product offerings and promote Al Ain as an adventure destination. ATRTCM is the perfect opportunity to showcase to the world what Al Ain has to offer. As one of the world's oldest permanently inhabited settlements, the destination has attractions and activities to suit travellers of all types, from its green oasis, archaeological sites and forts to its adventure activities such as white water rafting, kayaking and go karting.

More and more travellers are looking for authentic and unique experiences. Lesser-known destinations, such as Al Ain, have the po-

tential to attract visitors who are seeking 'off-the-beaten track' experiences.

Why was adventure travel chosen as the theme or subject of the event?

The adventure travel market has been growing rapidly in the last decade as tourists worldwide seek new adventures and experiences. In 2015, the adventure tourism industry generated revenue of \$7.88 trillion. Furthermore, the definition of tourism is changing rapidly. The beachside vacation or regular sight-seeing holidays are losing its market to adventurous activities such as skydiving, surfing, rock or mountain climbing, caving, and deep-sea diving that involve high risk. ATRTCM is a niche event for the adventure travel market and one of our signature annual events.

What is the expected business during the two-day event?

Seller and buyer delegates will conduct face-to-face business meetings facilitated through pre-matched appointments during the travel mart day. Further networking opportunities will also be available during social functions and networking breaks.

How will this be applied later on by agents and other stakeholders?

By joining the event and experiencing Al Ain, travel agents and tour operators will have first-hand knowledge of the activities and attractions the destination has to offer. They will then be in a better position to help sell the destination to their clients. 🌍

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EDITORIAL

Winds of change in ME

The Middle Eastern region has several standouts in terms of tourism infrastructure and offerings. There is a very strong presence of high-spending millennials in this part of the world and their tourism needs and requirements keep evolving by every minute. The millennials are high spenders in entertainment, adventure, ecotourism sites and authentic experiences. Last year, the United Kingdom drove a special programme for millennials in the Middle East to promote their destinations. This segment of tourists have very minimal requirements but are high contributors to the economy of the countries they visit.

Entertainment tourism as a key segment has been steadily promoted mainly in Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia, Georgia and some of the other European countries. This segment of tourists have been growing in pockets of Europe as well. Since last year, Dubai has been steadily gaining more entertainment seeking tourists in their drive to welcome more tourists to the destination.

Adventure tourism too is going 'viral' in this part of the world. The UAE boasts of all necessary activities to give you an adrenaline rush – from sky diving, zip lining, to a host of other adventures either on air, land or sea. The emirates of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah have set their own agenda in promoting adventure and marine tourism. Whether it is a gentle cruise along the mangroves, a pearl diving tour to learn the fast facts of a bygone era or to simply fly around on a seaplane to get a close overview of all the emirates, each of them has what it takes to offer an exciting experience.

Among the many tourism events, PATA's annual Adventure and Responsible Tourism Conference and Mart, being held in Al Ain from February 21-23, 2018, will give tourists and tour operators alike immense opportunities to network with stakeholders in this segment. Concurrently, the Ace of MICE exhibition will also take place from February 21-23 in Turkey, Istanbul. WTM Latin America will slowly begin its journey from April 3-5 in Sao Paulo followed by AHIC and ATM in Dubai. Although it is just the beginning of the year, it looks to have started off on a very positive note.

GCC travel trends to watch out for

The world of travel is constantly evolving and the GCC travel and tourism sector is no different. This particular segment has witnessed a rapid transformation characterised by an increasingly youthful and technologically-savvy demographic.

The Arab outbound travel market is incredibly important and one that shows no sign of slowing, with GCC residents spending more and more on expensive and long-stay travels. The market is also becoming increasingly discerning in their tastes, showing appetite for off-radar destinations with a focus on seeking out unique and memorable experiences across the globe.

Some of the key travel trends to look out for the year will be:

Hyper Personalisation

The advent of digital and social media channels has opened new avenues for businesses to collect customer data and deliver the right message to the right person at the right time. Hyper-personalisation is a critically important concept in the luxury travel market because it allows experiences to become highly personal and tailored based on real data and insights. Travellers can be provided with authentic experiences they can relate to, enriching moments that are meaningful and significant.

Ultra Romance

Whether for loved-up new couples or those looking to commemorate a lifetime of togetherness, holidays away from the usual monotony can work

Social Media

Technology and social media will continue to play an important role when travelling. In addition to the above mentioned trends, the strong influence of social media in decision-making with regards to travel is yet another trend that has emerged in the recent past. GCC travellers are now relying heavily on word-of-mouth through various social media channels to select a destination, hotel or even other activities. Businesses are expected to keep investing heavily in their online presence. This is particularly true in the GCC, a region known for its prevalence of digital natives.

Some of the new popular emerging GCC outbound markets will not include London, Paris, the Cote D'Azur, New York and Los Angeles, instead these four new destinations are predicted to be on the radar for those in the know in 2018:

- Amsterdam
- Bali
- Singapore
- Turkey (Istanbul and coastal resorts)

wonders. Ultra-romance travels are being sought out for those looking for something beyond the traditional declarations of love and intent, and are also ideally suited for a surprise proposal.

When Cold Becomes Hot

Winter is the new summer and the arctic is the new playground for the jet-set as bold and adventurous travellers seek to get away and carve out newer experiences in extremely colder climates. For those who have been there and seen it all, the frozen tundras of the Arctic and the Northern lights of Iceland represent the new cool.

Multi-Generational Travel

Travelling with parents, siblings, kids, grandkids and assorted family members can be an enchanting and educational assortment of shared experiences. Not without its challenges, multi-generational travel is a goal for families who seek togetherness in faraway places and is an enduring trend for the GCC market.

Ultimate Adventure

Traditionally known to stick to the beaten path and favour gentle leisure pursuits, GCC travellers are showing enthusiasm for this exciting strand of niche tourism, involving

exploration or travel with a certain degree of risk (real or perceived), and which may require special skills and physical exertion. Be it jungles, volcanoes and desert treks – the new generation wants to live life to the fullest.

Longer Breaks

City-breaks are all well and good, but GCC travellers are increasingly looking to travel for longer periods, with honeymoons of over two months in vogue for the affluent class. The longer the better, as globe-trotters set their sights on multi-continent, crossing borders and international time zones for experiences that mark water-shed moments and truly transform.

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



Saurabh Rai
Vice President
Preferred Hotels and Resorts

Ramada Ajman hosts inauguration of Blind Cricket World Cup 2018



As part of its continued initiatives on empowering people with disability, Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman hosted the inauguration of the 5th Blind Cricket World Cup. The inauguration was attended by Saleh Al Geziry, Director General, Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD); Mahantesh GK, President, World Blind Cricket; and other top officials. Ifikhar Hamdani, Cluster General Manager, Ramada Ajman, Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche, commented, "We are happy to welcome the delegates of the 5th Blind Cricket World Cup, as part of our longstanding commitment to reach out and help various sectors of the community. Engaging in sports is just one of the many ways to empower visually impaired individuals and people with disability. We want to make them feel an important part of the society and encourage them to pursue different hobbies and interests."



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Better ROI with Oneview IT Solutions

Travel agents are busy developing their web portals for B2B interactions these days, through various project management solutions. Oneview IT Solutions recommends that they can take the Agile approach to ensure better return on investment and accommodate client's requests to stay ahead in competition.



According to statistics, Agile projects increase the efficiency of teams to 16 per cent in terms of productivity and deliver a 37 per cent faster time to market, compared to the industry average. This is the approach recommended by Oneview IT Solutions for various business models developed as B2B travel portals.

Today, these portals have become a buzzword in the travel industry. Few companies get their travel portal prepared internally with an in-house team and some opt for professional travel portal development companies. Big chunk of travel players also wish to enjoy the technological advancement of the era and can ride the bandwagon. Most travel agencies are either planning

to or are associated with many giant IT technology players in the market to get the right kind of portal for themselves. Some leading technology companies connect with travel agencies to apprise them of the readily available features and facilities as a package. So if more agents advise and use Agile concepts, they can act as a catalyst and add value to address their basic needs and provide remedies to mitigate their pain areas.

Agile is relatively a project management process which implies an interactive and incremental method of management. Travel players are involved throughout the projects, which gives them a better visibility and flexibility to modify their requirements at an early stage, reducing the project failure risks. This raises confidence and satisfac-

We collaborate along with travel players as their IT solution partners to take them through all the phases of product development. Features are prioritised in the product backlog as per Agile methodologies and delivered within the defined sprints

tion level of the travel agency management, wherein they co-operate to minimise hurdles or constraints of their IT partner team.

To have a better online travel business, one has to have the right mix of different XMLs and GDS system to draw the best content on the travel portal. Apart from search and bookings, stakeholders are gearing up for innovative and cost-effective solutions for exploring the technological approach to market their products and retain their

customers. This increases the agility level of the travel industry as each travel player has their unique/personalised set of ideas or requirements via which they wish to serve their own customers by maintaining the security level of their ideas.

"Oneview IT Solutions collaborates and establishes the platform where travel players can visualise the comfort of their own in-house IT department developments," comments **Brijesh Agarwal**, Director-



Brijesh Agarwal
Director-Operations
Oneview IT solutions

Operations, Oneview IT solutions. "We collaborate along with the travel players as their IT solution partners to take them through all the phases of their product development. Features required are prioritised in the product backlog as per Agile methodologies and developed and delivered within the defined sprints."

For customer collaboration, a healthy communication

mechanism is set whereas KANBAN portrays the daily development to each stakeholder. "An Oneview IT expert ensures the secrecy and security of their customised idea of get to go market within specified sprints," assures **Fazil AH**, Product Head, Oneview IT Solutions.

Going the Agile way

- Agile is relatively a project management process which implies an interactive and incremental method of management
- Travel players are involved throughout the projects, which gives them a better visibility to modify their requirements, reducing the project failure risks
- If more agents advise and use Agile concepts, they can act as a catalyst and add value to address their basic needs

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ME's outbound connection with Canada

In its efforts to position Canada among the top 10 tourist destinations in the world by 2025, H.E. Emmanuel Kamarianakis, Consul General of Canada in the UAE, reveals that tourists from the Emirates will play a major role in achieving this feat.



Q How important is the UAE market to Canada?

Tourism is an important part of the excellent relations between Canada and the UAE. Canada is a natural destination for visitors from the UAE. It offers the perfect mix of top-notch urban and cultural experiences in cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver as well as some of the most unique natural environments in the world – from mountains, lakes, forests to oceans.

Like the UAE, Canada embraces diversity, and with diversity comes great food! Visitors to Canada will have the chance to sample cuisines from the world made with the freshest Canadian ingredients – from seafood and meat to produce

and grains. I am confident that visitors from all backgrounds will feel at home in Canada's multicultural and welcoming society.

Q Are there any ME countries exempted from obtaining visa? If not, what is the method of obtaining visa for Emirati or ME/GCC passport holders and how long does the process take?

The list of visa exempt countries is subject to change. We encourage all individuals interested in visiting Canada to consult Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's website to find out the most up-to-date information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada.html>. Visitors to Canada can either

apply online (if eligible) or visit Canada's Visa Application Centres. There are two locations in the UAE (VFS Global in Abu Dhabi and Dubai) as well as locations in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Q Could you share the number of visitors from the UAE to Canada over the past year?

Some 40,000 Canadians live and work in the UAE alone. With great connectivity between Canada and the UAE (nine direct flights every week, three each on Air Canada, Emirates and Etihad), it's never been easier to travel between Canada and the UAE.

Q Does the Consulate undertake the issuance of tourist visas?

While the Consulate General of Canada does not undertake the issuance of visitor visas, applications can easily be made online (for eligible visitors) or at one of Canada's many Visa Application Centres.

For Canada travel and hospitality organisations interested in exploring opportunities and partnerships in the UAE, please contact Canada's Trade Commissioner Service, which has offices in the Consulate General of Canada in Dubai as well

innumerable shopping and restaurant possibilities, and thousands of live music and cultural events throughout the year.

For the adventure seeker, Canada is your playground: you can surf on Can-

“Canada is a natural destination for visitors from the UAE. It offers the perfect mix of top-notch urban and cultural experiences in cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver as well as some of the most unique natural environments in the world – from mountains, lakes, forests to oceans.”

H.E. Emmanuel Kamarianakis
Consul General of Canada in the UAE



Q Can travel agents apply on behalf of their clients? What is the recommended procedure?

Only authorised representatives may submit an application on behalf of clients. For more information, please refer to: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigration-citizenship/representative.html>.

Q What is the most visited emirate by Canadian tourists?

Although the Consulate General of Canada does not collect this information, we imagine that it is similar to visitors from other countries to the UAE. According to the UAE Government, Dubai is the most popular Emirate for international overnight visitors, followed by Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Ras Al Khaimah.

Q Does the consulate act as a tourism board in the UAE?

Destination Canada is Canada's national tourism marketing organisation and an important partner of the Consulate General of Canada to Dubai and the Northern Emirates. For travel professionals interested in learning more about promoting travel and tourism to Canada, I encourage you to take advantage of Destination Canada's Canada Specialist Pro-

gramme. For Canada travel and hospitality organisations interested in exploring opportunities and partnerships in the UAE, please contact Canada's Trade Commissioner Service, which has offices in the Consulate General of Canada in Dubai as well

Q What do Canadian tourists look for in a destination?

Canadians are attracted to many things as they plan their international travel. For the UAE, Canadian tourists are attracted to the warm weather (especially during Canada's winter!), world-class amenities and safe environment. Canadians are, in general, outdoor people. Some of the most popular activities include desert camping, snorkelling on the UAE's East Coast, shopping and hiking the many local mountains and wadis.

Q How should the hospitality partners attract the Canadian market?

The best way is to visit Canada and get to know Canadians first-hand! Canada is a highly diverse country of 36 million people. Canadians are adventurous and curious about other cultures and countries, and hospitality partners should keep this in mind.

Q What are the main areas promoted in Canada for tourism?

Canada offers a multitude of experiences for every type of tourist. For the urban explorer, Canada's vibrant, diverse and safe cities offer trendy neighbourhoods,

as the Embassy of Canada in Abu Dhabi. ada's West Coast, hike or ski in the Canadian Rockies, explore the golden fields and farms of Canada's breadbasket in the Canadian Prairies, canoe through hundreds of thousands of lakes across the Canadian shield, get up close to beluga whales in Quebec, enjoy beaches and scenic drives through East Coast, and catch the Northern Lights in the Canadian Arctic.

For the cultural traveller, the possibilities are truly endless - visiting craft breweries and vineyards, sampling the freshest seafood on Canada's East and West Coasts, discovering indigenous art and Canada's heritage across 18 UNESCO World Heritage sites, and attending world-renowned festivals such as the Toronto International Film Festival, the Montreal International Jazz Festival, and the Celebration of Light international fireworks competition in Vancouver.

Q Do explain the recommended itinerary and length of stay for visitors in the UAE to visit Canada?

It all depends on what visitors seek; Canada can offer a short escape to a year-long trip. I encourage visitors to visit <https://us-keepexploring.canada.travel/> for some excellent suggestions and sample itineraries for all types of travellers. 🇨🇦

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Capturing the West African MICE market

Known for its rich history and culture, Ghana is on a mission to position itself as West Africa's favourite MICE destination. **Hon. Catherine Abelema Afeku**, Member of Parliament, and Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Government of Ghana, shares with **TRAVTALK** the efforts taken to increase inbound tourism.

TTT BUREAU

Located in the West African region, Ghana holds a very strong position not only due to its imperial background but also for a destination renowned for adventure tourism. It is a very unique destination for many reasons. To begin with, the 540 km undisturbed beach area, the longest canopy walk known as 'Kakum canopy walk' where one can indulge in adventure activities like hiking, mountain climbing or even paragliding, also witness the longest man-made lake in the world.

Over the past few years Ghana has been steadily strengthening its presence in the West African region in terms of hosting MICE events as currently, it can host nearly 1000 participants in the properties around the

country. In order to further consolidate their efforts to position themselves as a leading MICE destination, they have launched an iconic project named as 'Marine Drive' which will be completed by 2021 to accommodate over 3000 participants in one large exhibition and convention area.

Last years' World Tourism Forum Africa Summit held in Accra, Ghana, attracted over 600 participants from 54 countries. Connectivity to Ghana is quite an ease with the daily flight by Emirates from Dubai to Accra and a total of 37 international flights arriving at the destination.

According to Afeku, Ghana is on a rapid search for interested investors in all the projects aimed at developing and strengthening the



Hon. Catherine Abelema Afeku
MP Minister, Ministry of Tourism
Arts and Culture Ghana

We would like to invite all trade investors and tourists to enjoy the heritage, nature, culture and hospitality of our country

MICE tourism sector. "We are open for business to those who are willing to in-

vest as we are in a position to offer great benefits. We had 1.5 million inbound tourists from various countries and 3.5 million in domestic tourists. Our focus is to attract 2 million tourists by the end of this year," Afeku says.

The Marine Drive project is to ensure that there are enough hotel rooms to cater to the requirements of the expected visitors. Currently there are five-star brands from international hotel chains like Kempinski and Movenpick and we know that Marriott is also working on some new projects to establish their presence in Ghana. "We have seen many investors with great interest, especially from the Middle East region, as we have a good combination of food, halal, Lebanese, or any others that could soon attract visitors. We are also looking

at boutique hotels that can cater to the high-end tourists we attract," she adds.

Ghana is considered as one of the most friendly nations in Africa. The country is renowned for its warm, hospitable people with natural vegetation, year-round sunshine, just two months of rain with rest of the months on summer weather. "The most important thing is our culture. We have heritage, fortresses, rich culture of people, then in terms of activities we have safari, adventure tourism, very strong Muslim and Christian community with religious co-existence since 4th BC for which we take pride in. For tourists from the Middle East these are key attractions," says Afeku.

Ghana's rich culture and history dates back to when they were colonised. This has left them as an educated

nation with lots of possibilities for development.

"Ghana is a very safe, secure, civil and literate country with a very advanced society and the presence of a very strong expat community. UK has been our number one source market for many years with other Middle East countries following but now we are investing our efforts in ensuring more traffic from all over the world to show the amount of rich tapestry, architecture, historical and religious sites in the country. We have one of the oldest mosques in Africa along with the oldest Quran (over 600 years) which is a Middle East tourist attraction. We would like to invite all trade investors and tourists to enjoy the rich heritage, nature and culture of our country and relish in the good food, cordial relations and Ghanaian hospitality," she concludes.



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Middle East to shine at WTM Latin America

The sixth edition of WTM Latin America will be held between April 3-5, 2018, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil at the Expo Center Norte convention centre. **Luciane Leite**, Director, WTM Latin America, shares an insight into the exhibition and what one can expect while attending the event.



Q Could you give us a brief of the event?

WTM Latin America inaugurates the calendar of tourism events in the region. It is the travel industry's main event in Latin America, commemorating its sixth edition in 2018 and consolidating itself as a business-to-business event which brings the world to Latin America and promotes it to the world. This event generates business and relationship opportunities for exhibitors, buyers and professionals in the industry. In 2016, WTM Latin America represented a 6.5 per cent increase by comparison with 2015. In 2017, we grew by 18 per cent vis-à-vis the previous year and the largest increase in our entire portfolio.

Q Why is it important to attend the event? Who all should attend it?

With a focus on both leisure and corporate tourism, WTM Latin America also



Luciane Leite
Director
WTM Latin America

For 2018, we are working with the goal of 5 per cent growth in the number of visitors, which will enable us to exceed the mark of 8,000 people

eas, the Destination Pavilion, designed to enable private companies from destinations which are not represented at the event to be present at this edition, as well as the area reserved for independent, small and medium-sized



WTM Latin America's identity is also supplemented by Speed Networking Sessions and WTM Buyers' Club which are responsible for providing buyers with knowledge about major destinations and tourism companies.

We will also have the theme 'Responsible Tourism' on the agenda of subjects, following on from the agenda that we worked on at the last editions. It is an extensive agenda involving innovations in the technological field with names that are a reference in the market. Our partnership with the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has been growing stronger with every passing year.

In other words, all the professionals who are connected to the travel industry find relevant networking and business during the



in the number of the industry's professionals taking part. In 2016, WTM Latin America received 6,540 visitors, and in 2017, we registered 7,748 visitors. Taking into account the total number of participants, including both media and exhibitors, the event attracted nearly 10,000 people. It is important to bear in mind that we are audited and our visitor count does not include entries and exits during the days of the event.

For this edition, the United States once again returns in force and we already have confirmed exhibitors from a number of countries, such as Portugal, Greece, South Africa, Germany, Palestine, Peru and Argentina among many others on various different fronts such as hospitality, technology, travel operators and hotels, etc. For 2018, we are working with the goal of a 5 per cent growth in the number of visitors, which will enable us to exceed the mark of 8,000 people at our event.

Q What is the role played by Middle East in this event?

The Middle East's participation at WTM Latin America shows how much the region is interested in

showcasing its potential to the Latin America market. We aim to help Middle East tourism numbers to grow by taking Latin America tourists to this region.

Since last year, UAE and Brazil have been facilitating the tourism visa for both countries. Under the agreement, holders of common passports, diplomatic and special passports from both countries are exempt from visa requirements. The exemption is expected to expand tourism and business travel between the two countries, mainly to Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Moreover, according to figures from the World Travel and Tourism Council, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in the Middle East was \$227.1 billion (9.1 per cent of GDP) in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 4.8 per cent pa to \$381.9 billion (9.7 per cent of GDP) in 2027.

There are exciting times ahead for the Middle East, not least with the UAE set to host Expo 2020, with Dubai alone forecasting 160,000 hotel rooms in the emirate ahead of the world showcase opening.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see exhibitors as Palestine and Emirates signing up for WTM Latin America. It's a reflection of the burgeoning growth in that part of the world and how the travel trade there recognises that WTM Latin America is an important platform to both conduct business and boost awareness.

Q How will this event benefit agents and other stakeholders?

Our objective is to generate business and this is achieved by pre-event networking - at which we provide 'My Event' platform offering the possibility of scheduling strategic meetings, making prior contact with other strategic participants, in addition to other possibilities that the tool permits.

We believe that this is an assertive strategy which effectively contributes to the sector's development. In fact, this is an edge that the participants have, at an event such as this one, that brings together main players in the market, with 80 per cent of the participating public being proven to be professionals with some business decision-taking power. 📈



contributes to the professionalisation of the industry. Participants are offered debates about technology with experts in the area, who at every edition of the event have come together at the Travel Tech Show, with an unprecedented area for the sixth edition, bringing the Travel Tech Pavilion - an area which increases the access and inclusion of small and medium-sized companies of technology applied to tourism. Two other new developments are the destination ar-

hotels, who will have the opportunity to be physically represented during the three days of the event.

The Inspire Theatre (called the Conference Theatre in 2016) continues for another year repeating the success of the last edition. This space has themes that discusses new developments, news and innovations in the industry, as well as promotes a significant reflection in relation to issues that are topical for the industry.

event, including professionals connected to technology, gastronomy, events, travel operators, travel agencies, hospitality and land, air and sea transport, and management among many other topics related to tourism.

Q How many participants do you expect at the event? Which countries will be participating?

In terms of the number of visits, over the years, we have registered an increase



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Turkish soars high in European skies

Achieving a net profit of \$939 million in Q3, 2017, the highest in the airline's history, Turkish Airlines is on its way to become the paramount leader in the European sky.

TT BUREAU

Turkish Airlines has become one of the most resilient and dominant airlines in the European sector connecting over 300 destinations, including 49 domestic destinations, 251 international destinations in 120 countries. With the addition of Samara and Phuket in the third quarter of 2017, Turkish Airlines is also known to have one of the youngest fleet in the world. Last year, the airline recorded a total fleet comprising 223 narrow body planes, 90 wide body planes and 16 cargo planes, a total of 329 aircraft servicing its customers.

According to the 2017 Skytrax survey, Turkish Airlines was named

'Best Airline in Europe' for six consecutive years from 2011 to 2016, and has now been chosen as the 'Best Airline in Southern Europe' for the ninth consecutive time. The year 2017 was an equally good year for Turkish Cargo. The company increased its number of destinations from 55 to 72 as of Q3, 2017, reaching to 294 thousand tons of cargo with 29 per cent increase. Turkish Cargo also increased revenues by almost 40 per cent reaching \$343 million in Q3, 2017. All the efforts and year-long hardwork of Turkish Cargo resulted in the company receiving the award of the 'Best Air Cargo Carrier in Asia' in 2017.

Last year, Turkish Airlines also witnessed sev-

and offering to passengers. To strengthen ties with the Middle East region was a priority for Turkish Airlines in 2017. With open and direct routes from the Middle East to the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions, the Middle East has become one of Turkish Airlines' most profitable regions to date. The company has signed successful code-share agreements with Middle East Airlines, Royal Jordanian and Gulf Air. After completing 2017 successfully, Turkish Airlines has now set its targets for 2018, the year in which the carrier will move its hub to the third airport of Istanbul.

According to the non-consolidated 2018 budget that was approved by the Board of Directors under the



TK - USA Washington

Launch of new Turkish Airlines' Toy Set 2



As Turkish Airlines' aim to become one of the leading five-star airlines in the world, we will continue this growth trend without ever compromising on our service quality. As largest exporter of Turkey, our march will continue to position Istanbul as a major hub for international airport

M. İker Ayçi

Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, Turkish Airlines

eral code-share agreements in the Middle East. Code share has been a positive and strategic step forward for Turkish Airlines through which the company has been able to strengthen and enhance ties

Presidency of **M. İker Ayçi**, Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee of Turkish Airlines, the guidance regarding the Incorporation's targets and expectations for the year 2018 are as follows:

Traffic Development

- Total number of passengers carried is targeted to reach 74 million including 33 million on do-

mestic routes, 41 million on international routes.

- While passenger load factor is expected to be in the band of 79 per cent and 80 per cent, total Available Seat Kilometers (ASK) will approximately reach to 183 billion with an increase of between 5 per cent and 6 per cent compared to 2017. Capacity (ASK) increase is expected to be 10 per cent in Turkey, 9 per cent in Middle East, 6 per cent in Europe, 6 per cent in Far East, 4 per cent in America and 3 per cent in Africa regions.
- In 2018, cargo/mail carried is expected to increase by 21 per cent reaching 1.3 million tons.

Financial Development (Unconsolidated)

- In 2018, jet fuel consumption is expected to increase by 9 per cent compared to 2017.

- Average jet fuel (including fuel hedge) is expected to be \$633/ton in 2018.
- The Incorporation is targeting to generate \$11.8 billion of sales revenue.
- Cost per available seat kilometer (CASK), excluding fuel is expected to increase by between 3-5 per cent.
- Unconsolidated EBITDAR margin is targeted to be between 21 per cent and 22 per cent, whereas consolidated EBITDAR margin is targeted to be in the

band of 23 per cent and 24 per cent.

"The net profit recorded in Q3, 2017, clearly demonstrates our capacity to generate cash," said **İker Ayçi**, Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, Turkish Airlines. "As the Turkish Airlines family's aim to become one of the leading five star airlines in the world, we will continue this growth trend without ever compromising on our service quality. As the largest exporter of Turkey, our march will continue to position Istanbul as a major hub for international airport," he added. 🇹🇷

An ideal business and leisure abode

Located in the heart of the city, the 242-room M Hotel Downtown by Millennium is one of the most distinctive properties that exhibits modern elegance and contemporary design in a perfect mix for both business and leisure travellers.



MHotel Downtown by Millennium is a modern upscale property that is conveniently located in close proximity to the bustling Downtown centre and 10 minutes away from the Dubai International Airport.

Guestrooms

The 242 guestrooms include 127 standard rooms, 75 business class, 18 executive rooms and 22 suites offering great views of the Dubai skyline and water canal. The modern spacious rooms range from a standard size of 30 square meters to an even bigger space of

78 square meters for a one bedrooomed suite. Depending on your vacation, you can decide the type of room that would best suit you; for business or leisure with small or big families.

Standard and service

It is cliché to say that the level of guest services is at an all-time high level but truth be told it is an excellent service by all those in the guest contact areas starting off at the reception. The lobby is small and very cozy yet there is an actual short wait time to check in and out. Their state-of-the-art key system allows guests the chance to check in with ease. Another reason for a short duration at the reception is the careful allocation and proper planning for each guest. Once a guest walks in, within a very few minutes

the room key is provided which is really an excellent service standard. If you are to wait your turn, then there is a coffee shop where you can indulge in a cup of hot cappuccino or a refreshing tall glass of iced tea and not forgetting the quick switch on to high speed internet which continues even in every room. Apart from providing you the key, you will also receive a small guide to the free shuttle services to the nearest shopping destination, Dubai Mall or to indulge on a beach outing with rentals of towels, beach umbrellas all in one package at Kite Beach Jumeirah.

Dining and entertainment

One of the most spacious dining outlets is the 'Lemon Pepper' where you will find all day dining with international cuisine either

buffet style or a la carte. Shoko is their bistro offering light snacks, coffee, confectionaries, etc. Their terrace has some amazing theme nights which should not be missed.

Meetings on the go

When you have come on business and you need privacy with a small gathering of directors or a larger meeting for a company training, M Hotel Downtown by Millennium has the ideal space to suit your style. There are five conference rooms and three boardrooms with smart and trendy spaces with not just natural daylight engulfing the room but with awe-inspiring views of



or a large meeting setting; the officers will take care of the rest.

At leisure or keep fit

If fitness is your day breaker, then you can spend some time on the machines or just start off your day with a dip in the pool. The steam and sauna rooms dedicated to men and women with their



Dubai's most talked about skyline. The largest meeting room can accommodate up to 140 guests whereas depending on the requirements the settings can be arranged. One can have an extravagant social gathering for a few close friends

own locker rooms is something that you can't miss out. If you have a room with a Jacuzzi, then you are all set to have a relaxing evening sipping your favourite drink. 🍷

Fact File

- Take the elevator up to the top to witness the best views of the city's skyscrapers



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Rose Park, Al Barsha: Redefining luxury

The 168-room luxury four-star property, Rose Park Hotel in Al Barsha is the latest addition to the portfolio managed by Rose International Hotels. **TRAVTALK** speaks with **Thameem Razick**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Rose Hotels and Hotel Apartments, about their various offerings.

TT BUREAU

QWhat is the USP of this property?

Rose Park Hotel, Al Barsha seeds out from its years of experience providing exceptional services to ensure guest satisfaction. Our centralized location and accessibility to metro gives us an edge over others. Our 168 units consist of Deluxe Rooms, Junior Suite and Executive Suite (connecting rooms). Some of our unique features include: a spacious lobby, three elevators, 24-hour reception/concierge service, 24-hour room service, underground parking, separate health clubs for women and men, fully-equipped gymnasium, temperature controlled rooftop pool, spa, laundry service, conference facilities, free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, business center, non-

smoking rooms, facilities for special needs guests. Culinary wise we have the Bombay Urban Café which is an Indian fusion restaurant serving a delectable array of dishes and very soon a Turkish restaurant will also be available to your luscious taste buds.

QWhich feeder markets will you be looking at to promote the property?

Our main feeder markets are GCC, CIS countries, Eastern Europe, Far-East and we would like to explore Latin America as a new market to promote the property.

QWhat strategies do you use to gain more business?

Among the various strategies we use to gain more business is to boost

online reviews, create promotional strategies, identify our target markets, and ensure guest satisfaction. We participate in International Trade Exhibitions and Roadshows to make our presence felt, like the recent India roadshow. We have also registered to exhibit at ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin) and we're looking forward to attend more exhibitions in the future to showcase our properties.

QThere are many new properties coming up in Dubai. In your opinion, what should hoteliers do to have their share?

As expected new properties will come up in Dubai, which is a positive development for us. Our opinion is to continue providing best services to guests. Satisfied



guests will tremendously patronize wherever they experience good service. In this way, we contribute our share by increasing the number of visitors coming to the Emirate addition to this share is our preparedness for upcoming Dubai Expo 2020.

QAre you expecting more business or leisure travellers?

Our hotel is designed to cater to all types of travellers to ensure all our

guests' needs are accommodated. We have invested in our business lounge, conference room and offer a private butler to serve our guests who are here on business. For our leisure guests we are providing an exclusive shuttle bus service, a memorable dining experience, spa, sauna and gym to refresh the mind and body to ensure that all our guests consider this property a home away from their home.



Thameem Razick
Director of Sales & Marketing
Rose Hotels and Hotel Apartments

We participate in international trade exhibitions and roadshows to make our presence felt. We have also registered to exhibit various properties at ITB Berlin

WTM Latin America creates hotel hospitality lounge

The next edition of WTM Latin America will feature a hospitality lounge that will be created especially to promote independent undertakings, which include hotels, inns, resorts and hostels that work on an individual basis in the Brazilian and international markets.

Located in an area of 32 square meters and with capacity to receive up to eight independent projects, the lounge was created to encourage the world hotel sector to seek opportunities and get closer to Latin American buyers, with the aim of generating new business with small and medium players in the segment. It is being supported by the Brazilian Hotel Industry Association (ABIH), an entity that has more than 3,200 associates nationwide. The partnership comes

about thanks to the increase in the demand from undertakings and visitors who identify how important the event is as a starting point for prospecting for and winning new business. In 2017 alone, more than 3,500 visitors to WTM Latin America chose hospitality facilities as an interesting product when contacting exhibitors at the event.

Among the benefits offered to lounge participants is access to the My Event platform, which allows exhibitors to identify their main contacts and promote their products and services by way of directed messages and the organization of a prior meeting and conference diary, and participation in Speed Networking sessions that bring together more than 800 exhibitors and 200 senior buyers in five-minute meetings, based on the purchase requirements of each buyer.



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Ready for data protection regulation?

The European Union will enforce the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from May 25, 2018. **Finn Schulz**, Principal, Schulz Consulting, and an active consultant member of Hospitality Technology Next Generation (HTNG), shares insights on regulation for the travel industry in the Middle East.



The purpose of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is to provide a standard set of data protection laws across all member countries for EU citizens to clearly understand how their data is being used. The GDPR builds upon the 1995 Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC, which governed the processing of personal data, and refreshes the legislation to suit the modern day. Failure to comply with the GDPR can cost organisations up to 4 per cent of annual global turnover or €20 million in fines.

Speaking at the HTNG Middle East Conference 2018, held at the Jumeirah Mina A'Salam from January 23-24, **Finn Schulz**, Principal, Schulz Consulting, explains that one of three subjects need to be in the EU in order for a company to abide by the GDPR—the data subject, the data controller

or the data processor. The data subject is the individual whose personal data is being pulled (name, IP address, etc.). The data controller is the body determining the purpose for the information. Finally, the data processor pulls and stores the actual data. It's important to note an outsourced data processor is now subject to direct scrutiny by the EU Data Protection Agencies, where in the past the data controller was responsible for the adherence of engaged processors.

Schulz advises the travel industry to expect the biggest impact of this regulation to be made over the internet, with call centres and print advertising to follow. Consider an EU citizen booking a hotel room online; they initiate the transaction and create a contract

with the hotel. The hotel now automatically acts as a controller and processes the individual's data until check out. At that point, the

religious indicators. Do note that certain local regulations may require hotels to retain traveller data, which can supercede these rules.

toric data as the main privacy issue for the travel industry. "Best practices include having as little data as possible, justification for what is necessary and proof of consent," said Schulz.

Schulz expressed that the time of retention is the most overlooked aspect of the regulation. A company should first research to determine if they are in scope and understand that one of three elements (data subject, data controller or data processor)

must be in the EU for the regulation to be applicable. If your company does fall in scope of the regulation, establish what personal data is collected and where it is stored. Evaluate and reduce this data to only necessary fields, and instill this moving forward. "My advice for companies is to take this seriously, do your re-



Finn Schulz
Principal
Schulz Consulting

Best practices include having as little data as possible, justification for what is necessary and proof of consent

search and make sure your processes are in place," said Schulz. "The regulation is not meant to fine as many organisations as possible, but to build openness and trust between customers and business."



contract is complete and the hotel cannot hold any information without consent from the individual; this scenario complies with the GDPR. However, the hotel could fall out of compliance if they hold on to the guest's information afterward or if other personal data unknown to the guest was indirectly collected, such as racial or

Some hospitality experts believe inherent consent is given by enrolling in a loyalty programme. A loyalty programme can serve as a joint controller throughout a brand, but the data being stored, the purpose of collection and the length of retention needs to be made public to the individual when signing up. Schulz views his-

Expedia's Wanderlust Summit held in Dubai

Expedia organised Wanderlust Summit in Dubai which talked about latest technology trends in travel and prepared stakeholders to anticipate the needs of travellers.



Over 300 delegates and partners across Expedia's network in the Middle East attended the annual Wanderlust Summit. The Expedia Lodging Partner Services (LPS) presented the latest technologies

available for their hotel partners through Expedia Partner Central that allows them to connect to customers.

Expedia also shared trends in the Middle East region highlighting growth opportunities. The summit was hosted by **Johan**

Svanstrom, President, Hotels.com and Expedia Affiliate Network (EAN), **Ait Voncke**, Vice President Europe Middle East Africa Market Management and **Paula de Keijzer**, Senior Director Market Management - Middle East, Africa, Greece and Turkey at Ex-

pedia. Keijzer said, "We are thrilled to host our annual Wanderlust conference in the presence of our Dubai hotels partners. With the sharing and exchange of knowledge we believe we can help our hotel partners better leverage trends and plan to anticipate and re-

spond to travellers' needs."

Expedia comprises Expedia.com, Hotels.com, Expedia Affiliate Network (EAN), trivago, HomeAway, Egencia, travel.com.au, Orbitz and CheapTickets, Travelocity, CarRentals.com among other brands.



Paula de Keijzer
Senior Director Market Management - Middle East, Africa, Greece and Turkey
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'Tying the knot' in exotic milieus

Destination weddings have not only become a trend but a very profitable contributor to the tourism sector. In the Middle East, people have been focusing on Europe and Asia for their dream wedding destination. TRAVTALK spoke to some of the popular outbound wedding destination providers to gauge the latest trends.

TT BUREAU



Alice Gentils
Director of Sales
Monte Carlo Société des
Bains de Mer

“Middle East travellers have a thousand desires to accomplish during their wedding. It is exactly why we love to offer all the magical possibilities of the resort Monte-Carlo SBM. It is all extravaganza, luxury and intimacy, from a family welcome lunch to a flamboyant dinner for 1000 guests with several pop stars! Our guests want to experience the best in life and our resort is the perfect scenery with ballrooms, show venues, gardens, beaches, private lounges and world renowned discotheques.”



Anna Gricini
Regional Director of
Sales & Marketing Italy
Rocco Forte Hotels

“All of our Middle Eastern clients, who organise weddings with us, have witnessed an ultimate demonstration of our capacity to offer exceptional service and a truly luxury experience. Outdoor celebrations in our Secret Garden or on the picturesque terrace of our Presidential Suite, the Nijinsky Suite, are the most popular choices, and our menus and flowers are completely tailored to the client's needs.

Starting from the stay in one of our unique signature suites, offering panoramic views and dedicated service, to our couple spa treatments or a romantic dinner in our garden.”



Harry Fernandes
General Manager
Assila Hotel

“The exquisite design of our ballroom, combining Arabian heritage with the warmth of Europe, attracts Middle East guests to have their weddings at our property. Assila Hotel balances traditional Arabic authentic service with individual flair of European hospitality which makes every wedding an unforgettable event. Some of the popular wedding related requests made by the ME travelers is ladies private wedding, complimentary suite overnight for the bride and groom with late check-out, bridal suite arrangements for pre-function, the full package for the wedding from buffet dinner, welcome drinks and Saudi traditional hospitality.”

“Hotel Amigo is the perfect venue for Middle East weddings as it offers a unique location in the heart of Brussels right next to the Grande Place. The hotel offers a cozy atmosphere with refined function rooms and exquisite decoration inspired by Olga Polizzi. We are truly committed to create memorable wedding experiences for our Middle East guests. Hotel Amigo in Brussels can create a tailor-made destination trip of Belgium including a romantic trip for Brugges and unforgettable dining experiences in Michelin star restaurant or in a magnificent castle in the Wallonia area.”



Valeria Melchiori
Business Development
Manager
Hotel Amigo

“Verdura Resort is a perfect match for guests from the Middle East wishing to celebrate their weddings, offering an elegant and unique backdrop to stage a traditional, family-oriented celebration. Attention to detail, the art of wrapping our guest into simple luxury, capture the imagination and aspirations of our Middle East guests. ME travellers ask for and appreciate the sense of exclusivity Verdura Resort has to offer. The Rocco Forte Verdura's team, with its professionalism and personalised service, focuses on staging wonderful and memorable celebrations.”



Marco Truffelli
Manager
Verdura Resorts

“At Sun Siyam Resorts, Maldives we have experienced a move away from 'standard' weddings toward the choice of carrying out the dream wedding even if that entails a bigger budget. Tailored ceremonies and personalised activities for the entire wedding party such as sunset cruises, seven-course dinners on the beach, fireworks etc. In our experience, it is imperative to be able to offer the combination of an exotic location alongside traditional Arabic elements such as Middle Eastern cuisine, absolute privacy and comfort in the form of spacious villas with private pools.”



Zulaikha Manik
Executive Director
Sun Siyam Resorts

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MICE experts in Turkey

The 5th ACE of MICE Exhibition by Turkish Airlines is set to be held from February 21-23, 2018 at Istanbul Congress Center. Volkan Ataman, President, Tourism Media Group shares details with TRAVTALK.

TT BUREAU

Q What is the focus and new features of the exhibition for 2018?

During the exhibition, while B2B meetings are going to be held, you will be able to find solution partners all together to design innovative and attractive events under the umbrella of Ace of MICE Exhibition by Turkish Airlines. World's well-known exhibition and festival designer Valerio Festi, guru of the event technology Corbin Ball, live experience strategist and owner of White Fox Consultancy Mat Johnson's sessions are going to be performed simultaneously three days in a row. In addition, package of educational programmes 'Return on Investment (ROI)', 'Digital Innovation' and 'Integration of the New Generation' will take place during the exhibition.



Volkan Ataman
President of Tourism Media Group
Share with TTME

We are open for registrations for exhibitors, press and others. You can visit our website, <http://ameistanbul.com/> and can always contact us on info@turizmmedya.net.

Q What are the steps taken by the Turkish government to encourage MICE tourism in the country? How is the MICE market in Turkey?

Turkish government encourages MICE tourism by making collaborations,

providing the expanses of international media partners. The government has funded industry members and speeded up the marketing activities.

Q How important is the Middle East market for Turkey?

Middle East and Gulf Countries have been very similar to Turkey in countless aspects. Religion, sociocultural dynamics and geographical location are the factors that bond Turkey with Middle Eastern countries since many years. In respect to this, Turkey and especially Istanbul stands as the modern statue of Islamic community. As a result of these connections, the demand for the Turkish destination from these countries have been enormously increasing year by year. Currently, for Turkish industry players, this demand becomes the major force for income.

Cyprus all set to win UAE, GCC tourists

Cyprus has been attracting many a tourist from the UAE and wider GCC region. These are important source markets as Cyprus offers a multitude of tourism products to accommodate all kinds of tourists, says **Marinos Menelaou**, Acting Director General, Cyprus Tourism Organisation.

TT BUREAU

Q Do share the plans for 2018 in terms of tourism developments for UAE?

Cyprus Tourism Organisation has maintained a presence in the region through its representation office in Dubai, supporting its role in promoting tourism within the Republic of Cyprus. Last year, we invested in a number of resources and implemented a comprehensive strategy to raise awareness about the destination and its offerings.

An integral part of our promotional activity in the region is to sell the island appeal for families, friends and couples looking for a quick getaway from the hustle-bustle of city life. Whether looking for a retreat in the mountains, a relaxing break on some of Europe's cleanest coastline, or

a cultural exploration, Cyprus really does have it all.

Q How many tourists did you receive from the UAE in 2017 and what is the expected growth for 2018?

Overall visitor arrivals during the first three quarters of 2017 grew by 14.7 per cent, compared to the same period in 2016. It is encouraging to see similar growth from across the GCC region. Combined numbers from GCC countries increased by 20.1 per cent during the first nine months of this year. Visitor numbers were led by the UAE, which registered a 24.2 per cent growth. The largest growth was witnessed from Saudi Arabia, which delivered 38.7 per cent more visitors than in 2016. As we step up our presence and promotional activity in the region, we are confi-

dent that these numbers will continue to grow.

Q What is the marketing strategy and budget to attract UAE market?

Through a combination of press, consumer and trade activities, Cyprus Tourism Organisation is harnessing the potential of all promotional platforms across the UAE and wider region to ensure that Cyprus is top of mind for travellers from the region. Our trade activity in the region is evolving through targeted training sessions with key travel agencies, in addition to an annual workshop which recently concluded in Dubai in partnership with Emirates and a number of Fam trips to allow agents to get a hands-on experience with the destination. We will also be returning to Arabian Travel Market next year, and



Marinos Menelaou
Acting Director General
Cyprus Tourism Organisation

As part of our promotional activity in Cyprus is to sell the island appeal for families, friends and couples

participating in a number of similar exhibitions across the region, in collaboration with major tour operators.

Q Are you encouraging MICE? If so, what are the plans for this sector?

Cyprus is a destination that offers a multitude of tourism products, including numerous opportunities for MICE and business tourism market. Supported by the island's portfolio of luxury hotels, meeting facilities, and unique destinations, we have witnessed considerable growth across incentivised travel, exhibitions and meetings.

Q What is the recommended general itinerary that would interest UAE travellers both locals and expats?

A key interest for UAE travellers is the Troodos Mountains, providing a wealth of active adventure activities such as hiking, cycling and even skiing in the winter.

Travellers can immerse themselves in local culture and traditions, sampling the finest delicacies that vary from village to village. Being a small island, you can reach the coast from the mountains in a little under an hour, allowing for any holiday to be as varied as a traveller wishes.

Q Are there any new hotels opening up?

2018 will see a number of additions to Cyprus' accommodation portfolio. Following a year-long refurbishment, Columbia Beach Resort, the luxurious five-star resort nestled along Pissouri Bay has reopened. A new addition will be the Park Lane Resort & Spa Limassol, formally Le Meridien, which will be opening in March following renovations. Additionally, Rezidor will be opening its first Radisson Blu in Cyprus next year, with a second to follow in 2019.

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Home-grown brands: Force to reckon with

In the race up to Expo 2020, the United Arab Emirates is witnessing a surge in hotel brands – international as well as local – setting base in the region. The stand-alone, local brands are emerging as a real force to reckon with, giving tough competition to the existing hospitality giants.

Local and independent hospitality brands can compete effectively with major international management companies. As the number of hotels in the emirate continues to grow unabated, with the government's target of providing 160,000 hotel rooms in time for hosting Expo 2020, international hotel management companies such as Hilton, IHC, Hyatt, Accor and Marriott feature heavily throughout Dubai's skyline.

However, stand-alone local brands are emerging as a real force in the market, providing hotel owners and investors with a real alternative. We have seen a proliferation of new hotel brands being launched to serve specific market segments, while

still operating under major international companies. For example, Hilton operates Waldorf, Doubletree, Conrad, Canopy etc; while Accor operates Fairmont, Pullman, Novotel, Ibis and so on. The strategy is to cover as many market segments as possible, while maintaining the relevant standards of quality in the pertinent categories.

Despite recent merger and acquisition (M&A) deals such as the Marriott International/Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide combination, the hotel industry remains highly fragmented without a single player having significant global market share.

Interestingly, market analysts estimate that major hotel chains only account for

In a bid to operate more efficiently and compete with 'local' brands, international hotel brands have consolidated to maximise economies of scale and launched numerous stand-alone brands under an umbrella brand to cover maximum market segments

less than 35 per cent of traditional hotel rooms on a global basis. This fragmentation will probably continue to drive more M&A activity in the hotel brand sector in the years to come.

The benefits of large chains are obvious. Beyond strategic value drivers (such as broader customer offering, penetration into key existing markets, opening new markets, etc.) and operational value drivers (such as consolidation of corporate teams,

expanded loyalty programs, improved marketing budgets and reservation systems, etc.), three other key items drive value of a hotel brand - global trademark portfolio; value of potential management and/or franchise agreements; and value of existing management and/or franchise agreements.

However, independent luxury hotels tend to outperform the chain hotels. Going through offers on popular travel websites, many are

focused on authentic experiences. Millennials, a growing market segment, also seems to appreciate experiential holidays, as opposed to cliched packages.

Independent hotels in the mid-market sector are making in-roads with flexible concepts. So, what are the advantages that independent brands bring to the table? Well, there's more focus on what the guest actually wants versus a focus on international branded guest satisfaction standards, more flexible space for creative design, local identity, far less bureaucracy, less overhead costs in terms of management and marketing fees, as well as flexibility in distribution strategies.

Certainly, locally home-grown hospitality brands paints a promising landscape for aspirational owners and investors looking for a viable and sustainable alternative to the classic international hotel management contract.

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



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
TIME Hotels

Mohamed Awadalla, CEO, TIME Hotels, is a gold sponsor of the upcoming Arabian Hotel Investment Conference 2018. Awadalla is speaking at AHIC, being held from April 17-19, 2018, at the AHIC Village, Waldorf Astoria, Ras Al Khaimah - on the topic, "Focus on value engineering: How can you build ROI into the foundations?" To register, log on to: www.arabianconference.com

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Luxury has a new address: Oberoi Al Zorah

Flanked by pristine beaches and unique nature reserves, The Oberoi Beach Resort Al Zorah in Ajman offers the most exquisite experience for discerning travellers from around the globe. The five-star beach resort boasts a sophisticated design caressed by the gentle sea breeze and in harmony with nature.



Ajman has packed pleasant surprises for travellers seeking unique luxury experiences. Nestled within 247 acres (one million square metres) of protected forest, Al Zorah has long, white sand beaches, azure lagoons and lush, green mangroves. It boasts exceptional biodiversity, and is home to almost 60 species of bird. Al Zorah also offers a championship golf course, kayaking and much more. The newest of luxury resorts in Ajman, Al Zorah is situated just 25 minutes from Dubai International airport and is entered on private roads. A new marine and adventure tourism deck has also come up just a few meters from The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah. Travellers can either drive up or even take a sea plane to the property from Dubai. For the shopping buffs, the newly-refurbished Ajman City Center is also in close proximity to the resort.

From the time of its opening last year in April, The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah has been running on high occupancy attracting various nationalities from around the globe. Multi-lingual speaking staff and 24 hour butler service are some

of the other services available at this resort. The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah has spacious rooms and suites with private terraces, while the villas have private, temperature controlled pools. In the hotel's chic indoor and al fresco restaurants, guests can enjoy the finest, nutritional, international cuisine while taking in panoramic ocean vistas. With floor to ceiling windows, indoor and outdoor seating areas, and a carefully selected collection of literature, the chic, modern library is a wonderful setting to relax and unwind beside views of the nearby olive trees and ocean.

The Oberoi Spa in Al Zorah offers Western, Eastern and signature Oberoi massage therapies, hammams and Ayurveda. The resort also has a children's activity area, a sand box and shallow swimming pools for toddlers and young children. Indoor and outdoor recreational activities are available at the resort to refresh the mind and re-energise the body, as well as modern conveniences and intuitive service.

The property consists of 113 keys, rooms and suites comprising 25 twin bed units and 88 king bed units. Every room and suite has its own private terrace, bath, shower

The resort is a place where luxury meets nature and where our guests can relax in tranquility. The facilities are world class and there is an attention to detail in design, from the immaculate landscaping to the layout of the rooms that takes the property to a level that is unrivalled in the region

Christophe Mousset
General Manager
The Oberoi Beach Resort Al Zorah

and toilet. Other amenities such as hairdryer, telephone, TV, minibar, coffee/tea making facilities, safe, Wi-Fi, Media Hump and Oberoi Enhance system with which guests can access everything from entertainment to in-room dining. In addition to the terraces, the villas offer a private sundeck with a temperature controlled swimming pool.

Culinary Escapes

The resort has two main restaurants and three bars at the resort which cater to your different taste buds. 'Vinesse' is an all-day dining restaurant serving international cuisine. Adjoining it is the bar that complements with a wide range of spirits and exquisite cocktails. Aquario, is their signature seafood restaurant that serves from grills to various scrumptious seafood delicacies either from local or international waters.

Here again, there is an attached bar where guests can indulge in some relaxing music coupled with a wide array of beverages. If you are on a healthy diet, poolside bar will be your best bet as they will cook up a healthy snack within no time. For those who want to really relax and laze around in their own villa or suite or even the room, the ideal way is to call up the 24 hour room service.

Corporate Meeting Venues

The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah, will be your perfect venue to host that next special meeting with your clients or even an event to promote your new brand. Try out their state-of-the-art modern business center and private meeting rooms which can host up to about 220 people. This will be a perfect way to start off your staff outing bonding sessions, product launch, private parties, even pool parties with the infinity pool in open air, or host some of your business delegates for a weekend outing coupled with meetings and excursions right at the venue.

Unwind Yourself

The Sensoi Spa by Oberoi Spa has eight treatment rooms and two hammams offering world renowned treatments from Ayurveda to Oberoi signature treatments. The choice of the spa room is your own as you can opt for indoor or outdoor treatment room. If you want to indulge in other fitness related activities you can try out the special yoga or meditation pavilions or even go out for a traditional Turkish bath to purify your body and soul or just visit the state-of-the-art fitness centre



with all modern equipment to suit your requirements. A dip in the pool will be quite relaxing and according to your requirement it will be either the private pool in your villa or take a quick dip in the sea which will be a special treat. If you are passionate about jogging then your options will be the special jogging track at the resort or just jog on the beach in your own space and time.

Golfing holidays

The property is ideal for those passionate golfers looking out for a world class golf course as just a few yards away is the Al Zorah Golf Course. It is an 18 hole, par 72 championship golf course, designed by Nicklaus Design.

Adventure in your veins

If you have checked in to the property with some of your friends who would like to indulge in some interesting adventure activities or even curious to learn about the pearling techniques of yesteryear, then a few minutes away is the marine and adventure sport hub. You

can book your own pearl tour, sea plane tour, Jet Ski, fly board, boat trips or any other water sports tour or even a quiet boat ride through the mangroves witnessing the many species of birds around the area or maybe even a fishing trip and catch some fresh fish. Whatever activity you have in mind they are available a few minutes away so speak to the desk at the Oberoi and they will advise the best way forward.

Treating the young ones

It is Oberoi's signature service that could facilitate the special services to keep your young ones happy right throughout the journey. Their special kids club, separate kid's pool and even playground is an ideal treat to ensure that you relax while the 24 hour babysitting service will take care of the rest.

If you are still making plans on where you need to add to your bucket list, then Oberoi Al Zorah should be one of those places that you must visit to enjoy the true Oberoi hospitality! 🌺





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Personality of the month

Anne at the helm of W Dubai, The Palm

Armed with 25 years of hospitality experience, **Anne Scott** has been entrusted with the task of being at the helm of affairs at W Dubai – The Palm as its General Manager, making her the first woman to hold this position for the W brand in the Middle East.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Premiering this June, on the iconic Palm Jumeirah's East Crescent, is the first W Escape that will disrupt the idea of traditional luxury offering amazing experiences to its guests. Of Scottish descent and having worked in the industry for 25 years, Anne Scott is brimming with excitement about this luxurious gem, W Dubai – The Palm.

Achievements

Scott has spent eight years working in Asia Pacific, where she held the role of General Manager at the St. Regis Kuala Lumpur Hotel & Residences, St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay, The Andaman, a Luxury Collection Resort and Le Meridien Chiang Rai Resort.

Prior to Asia, she also held the role of Hotel Manager of The Park Tower, Knightsbridge, London – a member of The Luxury Collection.

Her efforts in Asia earned her the laurels 'Asia's Leading Woman in Hospitality 2011' at the Women in Leadership Forum, as well as Starwood President's Award 2012 for 'Outstanding Team' on the launch of a coral nursery. On being asked about why she left London for Asia, Scott says, "I have lived in London all my life. One of my birthdays, I realised it's time to take on a big adventure and that's when I accepted the first stint in a totally different part of the world –

Northern Thailand. I was the only foreigner in that community."

Inspiration

Scott derived inspiration for her career at a very tender age. "When I was eight years old, friends of my parents invited us for lunch at one of the hotels. As I was the youngest, nobody was talking with me, so I remember sitting there and swinging my legs, observing all the nice things that surrounded me at the restaurant. I remember running my hands along the table linen and thinking how nice it felt, how pretty the flowers were on the table, how handsome the waiters were and how everything was so clean, neat and smelled lovely. In that moment I remember thinking that I will somehow become an hotelier and this is where I am. In my fam-



ily we have a doctor, lawyer, accountant and even a church minister and I am the official hotelier. So we are very well sorted out in to different fields," she comments.

From an Operations point of view, I can say that because of technology we have more time to interact with the customer. Technology cannot replace what is fundamental to what a customer expects. As a guest of a luxury hotel, I still want you to concentrate on my needs, expectations and personalised offerings and solutions

ily we have a doctor, lawyer, accountant and even a church minister and I am the official hotelier. So we are very well sorted out in to different fields," she comments.

Trends

Highlighting the importance of technology in all spheres of life, Scott says it has transformed the way in which we do business and operate. "So our ability to communicate with each other and directly to the end user and connect with the clients has changed. What has not changed is the service expectation that people would still like personalised services and something which is thoughtful and not mass marketed. People still expect a luxury hotel to be about 'me and what I want.' It is just how we embrace technology as a better way of doing what we want to do. From an Operations point of view, I can say that because

ised offerings and solutions," Scott states.

Passion v/s Challenges

As a passionate and experienced hotelier, Scott has been putting in new ideas into the launch of the property. "We are writing creative action plans about launching the hotel to tell the market place about W Dubai – The Palm. The opportunities to communicate with people are twelve-fold than what they were before but also much more complicated as it is simple. I still believe that if you are exceptional at what you do and if you provide the guests with amazing experiences, people will find a way to hear about it, know about it and become part of it – that is the service connection," she says.

'W' on focus

W Dubai – The Palm will consist of 350 sea facing guest rooms and going

of technology we have more time to interact with the customer. Technology cannot replace what is fundamental to what a customer expects. As a guest of a luxury hotel, I still want you to concentrate on my needs, expectations and personalised offerings and solutions

Fabulous and Spectacular replacing the regular Classic, Superior and Premium. For the suites there are seven different categories; W Suite, Cool Corner, Fantastic, Marvelous, Mega,



Wow and e-Wow. In terms of culinary offerings, world renowned chef **Massimo Bottura** will turn up something exceptional, so it will be a treat to have him prepare his magic in Dubai

than wait for a period of six months to grab a seat in his exclusive 3-star Michelin restaurant in Italy.

"We are targeting June this year for the opening and I'm really excited. We will give ourselves a summer to create fantastic experiences and to let everybody experience all of the services. We will continue to polish our own offerings and understand a little better the opportunities that we have, so by September or October we will do a full-fledged launch. We have some incredible offerings for culinary experiences and weekend escape. At the heart of the W is the Wet Deck which will be the heart and soul of the property, where the DJ

will keep the excitement levels high with fantastic music and entertainment, amazing cocktails, fabulous food making it the place to be on the Palm on weekend," Scott concludes. 🍷

Anne Scott
General Manager
W Dubai - The Palm



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Czech Republic: Land of stories

Celebrating the centenary of Czech Republic's independence, the country's tourism department is running various campaigns to lure tourists, especially from the Middle East.



A popular destination Among many UAE nationals for medical tourism, Czech Tourism Authority in collaboration with VFS Global organised a roadshow campaign titled 'Czech Republic – Land of Stories' in Kuwait and the UAE. It was a house full as travel agents, tour operators and other travel partners received first-hand information to promote the destination.

UAE is the number one tourism source market for the Czech Republic in the Middle East followed by Saudi Arabia. In 2016, Czech Republic

between Czech and Emirati companies in the tourism sector. VFS Global is a reliable partner in the visa area and I am convinced that the partnership of Czech Tourism with this company will lead to a further increase of interest about the Czech Republic," commented Sporyš, Ambassador, Czech Republic to the United Arab Emirates.

"Czech Republic is already very well known in the Middle East as a spa and medical destination. However, our objective through this roadshow is to promote various other leisure and MICE products of the Czech



received 23,831 and 18,180 visitors from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, respectively, amounting to more than 171,000 room nights.

His Excellency Alexandr Sporyš, Ambassador, Czech Republic to the United Arab Emirates, together with **Monika Palatková**, Managing Director, Czech Tourist Authority–Czech Tourism, interacted with the media at the exclusive event held in Dubai.

"I'm pleased that Czech Tourism regularly promotes the Czech Republic as a tourism destination in the UAE and in other countries in the Middle East market. For a long time, I have personally supported strengthening of the Czech presence in Middle East, which is one of the world's fastest growing markets and I am glad to see the vast development of the business relations

Republic, which should also greatly appeal to travellers from the Middle East. We have presented mainly a wide range of cultural programmes, nature stays, all-year-round events and festivals for families, individual travellers and groups," stated Monika Palatková, Managing Director, Czech Tourism.

Palatková reiterated that next year, the country marks a significant milestone of 100 years for Czech Republic as an independent country and they will have a special campaign which presents stories related to the period. She further stated that they will be participating at Expo 2020 in Dubai to further strengthen the relations among the two countries. The local Emiratis are privileged as it is visa free for them and this is a great driver to promote tourism. 🇨🇪

Atlantis, The Palm

Dubai

Atlantis, The Palm has appointed **Timothy Kelly** as General Manager and Senior Vice President, Operations. With over 25 years of international experience, Kelly joins Atlantis, The Palm from Wynn Resorts where he managed multiple property portfolios in Las Vegas, Macau and Cotai as well as being instrumental in the successful opening of Wynn Palace Resort and Casino in Macau in 2016. Prior to joining Wynn Resorts, Kelly was the Vice President of Hotel Operations at MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Nevada. Kelly graduated from the University of Nevada Las Vegas and is expecting to receive his Master of Hospitality Administration (MHA) from the University of Nevada Las Vegas in 2018.



INTEREL

Dubai

INTEREL has appointed **Alana Witte** as its VP Global Key Accounts, responsible for leading INTEREL's strategic relationships with global hotel brands and driving large-scale projects. Prior to this, Witte led the global growth of a SaaS start-up, where she launched Revinate's Dubai and Cape Town offices. Focused on optimising an operator's energy and water consumption, INTEREL's system philosophy is driven by their responsibility towards the environment – seeking to deliver sustainable operations by building on the efforts of hoteliers who are focused on reducing their properties' energy consumption and costs.



Mandarin Oriental

Hong Kong Corporate Office

Christoph Mares has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer and will be responsible for global hotel operations as well as overseeing the operational functions of Food and Beverage, Rooms and Quality, as well as Spa and Wellness. Christoph will be moving from his current position in London as Executive Vice President, Operations Director, Europe, Middle East, Africa and India (EMEAI). Mares has over 25 years' experience in luxury hotel management around the world. He first joined Mandarin Oriental in 2000, and held senior management positions in the London, Paris and Munich hotels. In 2008, he joined Emaar Hospitality Group LLC as Chief Operating Officer.



Hakaya Collection and RAK Hospitality Logistics

Ras Al Khaimah

RAK Hospitality Holding (RAKHH) has appointed **Ziad El Masri** as Managing Director of two of its subsidiaries, Hakaya Collection and RAK Hospitality Logistics. He brings with him over two decades of experience in Food and Beverage (F&B) across the MENA region. Prior to taking on his current position, Masri was Head of F&B Operations at Meraas F&B. He also held key positions at the leading retail enterprise, Alshaya/Starbucks. Masri earned his Bachelor's degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management from The Lebanese University.



Sabre Travel Network, Middle East

Bahrain

Sabre Corporation has appointed **Raymond Vrijenhoek** as Vice President for Sabre Travel Network Middle East (STNME). In his new role, Vrijenhoek will lead customer engagement and business development across the Middle East and accelerate Sabre's growth in the region. Vrijenhoek joins Sabre from Otravo, where he served as CEO. He previously held senior positions at Travix International, Beins Travel Group, Amadeus and airlines like Canada 3000 and Transavia.com where he gained extensive experience in commercial operations, digital marketing, e-commerce, online travel, aviation, and distribution.



IHG

MENA

Matthew Tripolone has been elevated to the post of Vice President, Development, Middle East and Africa (MEA) at IHG. Tripolone has successfully led IHG's strategic growth and development across Australasia, over the past three years. He helped build a strong pipeline for IHG in the region and played a key role in securing growth of new brands into the region, including Hotel Indigo and Even Hotels. In his new role, Tripolone will be responsible for strengthening IHG's development pipeline and accelerating growth across the Middle East and Africa.



Mandarin Oriental

Hong Kong Corporate Office

Richard Baker has been appointed Group Chief Relationship Officer at Mandarin Oriental. In this new role, Baker will continue to be responsible for The Residences at Mandarin Oriental portfolio. He will also coordinate internal projects. Baker has over 30 years of experience in luxury hotel management, holding senior management positions with Rosewood Hotels and Resorts and Four Seasons, before joining Mandarin Oriental in 2006 as General Manager, Corporate in the Americas. He was promoted to Executive Vice President, Operations Director – The Americas in 2008, before moving to Asia in 2013 to take up his current role.



Movenpick

London

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Amir Lababedi** to spearhead its expansion strategy in Europe and North Africa. He has assumed the newly-created Vice President Development Europe & North Africa role. He has relocated from Mövenpick's Middle East regional office in Dubai. Before joining Mövenpick, Lababedi was Associate Director at leading global hotel consulting and valuation firm, HVS, based in Dubai, a company he also previously worked for in London. Lababedi attained a BSc in Hotel Management at Surrey University and an MSC in Global Banking and Finance at London European Business School.



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