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Where are travellers going?

Whilst London and Europe remain popular, there is a need for the Middle Eastern traveller to explore emerging destinations. **TRAVALT** gathered information about new vacation spots for this year and key points on requirements by locals and expats to drive to these sites.

SHEHARA RIZLY



Zeljka Radak Kukavičić
Managing Director, National
Tourism Organisation of
Montenegro

“Our quality tourism and mild climate is something which tourists from the Middle East mostly prefer during their stay. Montenegro attracts many visitors with its medieval towns and mountain landscapes whilst boasting of one of the most beautiful coastlines of Europe. As the Montenegrin

coast is 293 km long with 73 km of beaches spread over 117 locations, it offers a wide selection of beaches - from secluded intimate bays to family orientated resorts, from spectacular sandy stretches to quaint rocky coves, accessible only by boat. With already good air accessibility and improved portfolio of tour operators, we expect to receive much more tourists in the next period. ”



Salih Ozer
Culture and Information
Attaché of Turkey to the UAE

“The UAE is one of the growing tourism markets for Turkey tourism. As the year of Troy declared by Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2018 has been witnessing heavy promotion of the Canakkale region in several international destinations. Besides the availability of daily flights, highway connections are smooth and easy to access in three and a half hours.

Several international press visits and tours operator visits are also on schedule. Troy Museum, set to open in August 2018, is going to attract thousands of tourists. Canakkale and Troy region, with its endless touristic opportunities, perfect nature and rich history, is the rising star of Turkey Tourism. The area covers Dardanelles strait, beautiful beaches, water sports, diving, sailing, wind and kite surfing activities, and its thousand springs. ”



Yasmin Amri Sued
*Chargé d’Affaires, Consulate
of the Republic of Rwanda*

“This year, more and more travel agencies have prepared Eid packages for the residents of the UAE to discover Rwanda. Rwanda is a destination for travellers in search of a unique experience. Visit the Mountain Gorillas, walk on a canopy suspended at 50m high above the Nyungwe Rainforest, and witness the Big 5 at the Akagera National Park. The

hospitality sector in Rwanda has laid special emphasis in growing the Halal offering. Last year, Rwanda received 1,020 GCC visitors. However, we expect a drastic growth due to the visa relaxation that started early 2018, where all visitors will be able to receive their visa upon arrival. We focus on increasing awareness around Rwanda as a 'bucket list' destination. ”

Contd. on page 3 ►

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Discerning outbound travellers

► Contd. from page 1



Ivonna Kezberē
Director
Spare Travel Latvia

“The picturesque medieval Old Town in Riga offers travellers architectural gems, artisanal shopping and gourmet experiences that can all be accessed on foot. airBaltic, the national carrier of Latvia, offers direct flights from Abu Dhabi to Riga during the winter season (starting late October) with exceptional value. For this summer, we have launched attractive packages exclusively for the Middle East market that include Old Town highlights, chocolate factory visits with chocolate making experiences, and even stays in castles. We are looking to partner with the region's travel trade by creating bespoke itineraries that can be promoted directly to their clientele, be their helicopter transfers and tours to numerous castles, or generic Latvia

highlight tours. Groups, MICE travel and sports groups for training camps will be the focus of our promotional activities.”

“With Emirates introducing A380 in October to Kansai/Osaka, the gateway airport for Kyoto, the UAE market has become more important to Kyoto. You can find information on Halal and Muslim-friendly restaurants, prayer spaces and accommodation in designated websites. The number of UAE nationals who stayed at least one night in Kyoto in 2017 increased 18 per cent. A new experiential travel package specifically designed for Middle Eastern guests, 'I'm Turning Japanese!' includes a two-night stay at a four-star or five-star hotel with breakfast, city tour, authentic traditional kimono wearing experience and original noodle cooking class at Kyoto's certified Halal Ramen restaurant.”



Kazuya Fukuhara
Director, Tourism and
MICE Office—Industry
and Tourism Bureau,
City of Kyoto



Alejandro Bernabé Navarro
Vice President—Operations,
AVANI Hotels and Resorts

“Each AVANI is unique with its own characteristic that makes it an ideal hotel for the Middle East traveller. The flagship AVANI Riverside Bangkok Hotel is located on the beautiful Chaophraya, where all the rooms and suites feature uninterrupted panoramic view of the river with mesmerising sunrise or sunset. The newly opened and the first AVANI+ Luang Prabang is located in a UNESCO World Heritage Town with a private boutique hideaway that was formerly the French officer quarters. The hotel is also located at the heart of the city; and last but not least, AVANI Quy Nhon Resort & Spa is a private beachfront resort where each room or suite features coastal views and dedicated connecting rooms for extended family stays.”

“From the beginning of this year, we have a dedicated representative in the UAE. Finland is a family-friendly destination with lots to offer in all seasons and all of its four main regions - Greater Helsinki, Lakeland, Coast and Islands and Lakeland region. As a source market, Middle East is still small for Finland but there has been a steady growth from UAE during the past years. In UAE, we see Finland's strengths as family, adventure and active holiday destination as well as education travel, health travel and wellbeing travel destination. We are targeting families, adventurous travellers, travellers interested in educational travel and those seeking healthcare treatments in safe and highly functional environment.”



Heli Mende
Director—Global Sales
Promotion, VisitFinland

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

World Cup fever hits GCC

Outbound travel, this year, started off extremely early with the FIFA World Cup currently underway in Russia. Various travel monitors reported that Russia has been receiving a very good inflow of traffic from the GCC due to the games. Whilst the majority of locals and even expats follow the games, Dubai has turned into a game zone altogether with various travel companies organising packages for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Concurrently, travellers are also exploring new destinations that are more suited for families. For the past two years, Georgia and Armenia did hold on as the new destinations, but this year there is a whole new range of areas that are promoting their destinations to the clientele of the Middle East region.

As Turkey seeks to open its new airport later on this year, they have earmarked this year as the year of Troy. Popular mainly due to the movie and of course for the legend itself, Turkey is attracting more visitors especially from the United Arab Emirates. Montenegro is another destination which has taken over from the likes of Georgia and Armenia, scoring a good number of tourist arrivals from the Middle East region. Japan's Kyoto has become another new outbound favourite, especially among the locals from the GCC with an influx of visitors from the United Arab Emirates. Latvia, Rwanda and Finland are others on the board this year for the Middle East region.

Although one would find travellers from GCC glued to Russia for outbound for the next few weeks, they have already made plans from beyond the point of Russia and the World Cup. It is refreshing to see the new areas develop with many Muslim-friendly facilities in each destination. The world prefers the clientele from the Middle East due to their high spending capability for enabling economic growth in any destination.

So come summer with new destinations that are set to define the new traveller seeking adventure, exploring diversification of cultures and engaging in various activities.

Data revolution for airlines

Maher Koubaa, Vice President—Airlines MEA, believes that airlines cannot evolve without an accurate analysis of big data in an age of connected solutions and tech-savvy customers.

In the past decade, the cross-border data flow connecting the Middle East to the world has increased by more than 150-fold, according to a McKinsey report.

Moreover, carriers in the region have faced significant headwinds over the past year. Middle East passenger demand in early 2018 has been mixed at best. That demand has registered a considerable drop compared to previous years and to other international markets, according to recent IATA figures.

Data is the key to unlocking opportunity for airlines. However, it requires an adjustment in mindset. Airlines in the region today face challenges they've never come across before. Traditional competitors remain rivals, and there are emergent contenders who, being newer, are nimbler as well as more up-to-date in their approach than many established carriers. Moving from a process-driven to a data-driven mindset is itself a profound transformation.

To stay competitive, airlines must start by using data to drive personalisation techniques and intelligent merchandising in their operations. Airlines who will succeed in this environment will be those who harness data and analytics for customer experience excellence. One of the success factors in becoming data-driven is creating a company culture that places

data at the heart of the customer experience journey.

Looking for new ways to create value from data is an important consideration. A great example of this is with

“In the race to stay competitive, airlines must start by using data to drive personalisation techniques and intelligent merchandising in their operations for enhancing customer experience excellence”

schedule recovery—a recommendation engine that uses big data analysis to automate a certain number of actions, making better decisions faster. These solutions can help airlines predict passenger outcomes so they can effectively recover disrupted schedules. Airlines can replace ad-hoc processes with ones that automatically pinpoint conflicts. The result is quicker coordination between everyone involved - from passengers to crew.

Another area where data analytics is creating value is in determining where to seat passengers. Combining multiple data sources, such as mapping passenger booking behaviour against the highest spenders or even social media sentiment analysis will help to maximise revenue. It will enable personalised offers specifically targeting those most likely to be interested in that back-window seat or special upgrade.

Now is the time for action. When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle penned the words for Sherlock Holmes that “it is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data”, he would have had no clue just how relevant they would be today.

Innovation, as opposed to invention, is the key to propelling regional airlines into a competitive future. With a data-driven mindset, airlines can achieve transformational success that will lead them to the top of the game.

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



Maher Koubaa
Vice President—Airlines MEA
Amadeus

Giving back to the community by Iftar



In observance of the holy month of Ramadan, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira gave back to the community by handing out Iftar boxes to approximately 100 labourers. The meal included Ramadan staples like dates, fruits, biryani and water. **Muhammad Haider**, General Manager, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira, commented, “This occasion is a time for sharing, reflection and appreciation. Handing out Iftar to the labourers is our simple way to express gratitude for all the hard work of our brothers.”

Investing in human capital

Per Vidar Lundberg, Client Partner, Hyper Island, analyses a recent study by The World Bank which urges GCC countries to develop a system that can transform growth-inducing innovations for knowledge-based economies.

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How does human capital investment contribute towards travel and tourism in UAE?

When we look at emerging markets such as the UAE and the Middle East, several recent reports consistently suggest that the GCC should focus on the development of talent and invest more in its human capital. However, fact remains that a high percentage of the workforce is made up by influx of expats from around the world. This makes investing in the human capital even more challenging in an expat driven economy, where everyone is temporary. Hence, in the GCC, it is important to consider the multicultural backgrounds of the population and work towards

setting a solid foundation for this unique yet dynamic economy.

What are the key areas that need attention by stakeholders in talent growth sector?

Having a clear idea about the core of the business is vital. Young talent requires a bigger picture and bolder ideas than just making a profit. The hype around visionary leaders like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg is spreading as a general requirement and selection criteria. Companies also need to have a vision and talk about their culture in a way that feels attractive to young talent. The systems in the workplace need to be adapted according to the way they prefer to work, collaborate and balance their lives.

“In the GCC, it is extremely important to consider the multicultural backgrounds of the population and work towards setting a solid foundation for this unique yet dynamic economy”

What skills and jobs will Middle East and North Africa be looking at?

Being a part of a global community (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc), I don't think the requirements will be different in this region. In a global environment, history, heritage and culture will be even more important, and in that sense travel, tourism and hospitality are great areas for young talent to work in.

Will the travel sector be challenged by technology?

Yes, technology will for sure disrupt travel, tourism and hospitality, and it already has to a large degree. However, in a digital era, the need for profound experiences, feelings and fascination is more evident than ever. As travel and tourism is in a great position to provide those experiences, the opportunities are far bigger than the threats. In the culturally rich areas of EMEA, the opportunities for success are end-



less. The mix of heritage, culture and new technology should make the travel and tourism industry particularly interesting for young talent.

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Dubai unveils living green wall

In keeping with its bid to promote sustainable living, Dubai Properties officially unveiled the Middle East's largest living green wall at Dubai Wharf, located in the heart of Culture Village overlooking the historic Dubai Creek.

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Extending 210 metres in length and rising six metres high, the impressive vertical garden spans 1,260sqm and features over 80,000 plants forming a leaf canopy area equivalent to around 200 trees, capable of offsetting an estimated 4.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) annually. Building upon the scientifically proven benefits of greenery within communities, the master developer sought to create a microclimate that enhances the aesthetic appeal of Dubai Wharf. The stunning green wall provides a perfect backdrop for pictures and invites nature lovers for an idyllic stroll along the Dubai Creek shoreline. Living green walls are vertical gardens that are particularly useful in urban landscaping, where space can



Green Wall at Dubai Wharf

be a constraint. Plants naturally remove carbon dioxide and produce oxygen while filtering the air around them through absorbing pollutants. This beneficial effect is compounded by the sheer number of plants in living green walls.

Raed Al Nuaimi, Group Chief

Executive Officer, Dubai Properties, said, "At Dubai Properties, we design our projects with a focus on the communities that will inhabit them. As part of this priority, we consciously integrate elements that are not only environmentally sustainable but also make our residents happy. The Dubai Wharf

Green Wall is a prime example of our holistic approach to well-being in our communities, as it instils a sense of serenity throughout the neighbourhood while supporting the local ecosystem."

Developed by landscaping experts Gover Horticulture, the



Raed Al Nuaimi
Group Chief Executive Officer
Dubai Properties

Dubai Wharf Green Wall is made using geotextile grow bags filled with peat substrates enriched with nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK). This allows for better root growth, irrigation and drainage in the UAE climate that can often get quite harsh during the long summers. 🌱

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Eyes on varied markets

As Dubai opens out to new markets, Roda Hotels and Resorts added a new four-star property to its portfolio with 114-roomed Roda Links Al Nasr.

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Roda Links Al Nasr is the new talk of the town with 114 rooms and suites, hip bars, fine dining outlets with contemporary décor and state-of-the-art amenities. The hotel is situated in close proximity to Dubai International Airport, Oud Metha Metro Station, Downtown Dubai and other local attractions. The dining outlets in the hotel include 1971, an all-day dining restaurant serving international cuisine for breakfast,



Yahia Idris
Chief Hospitality Officer,
Roda Hotels & Resorts

lunch and dinner and Brugges offering guests a selection of delicacies such as sharing platters, burgers and nachos. Guests can sip their drinks in a sophisticated atmosphere and simultaneously enjoy a great view of the city from Anees Pool Bar located at the rooftop of the hotel.

Yahia Idris, Chief Hospitality Officer, Roda Hotels & Resorts said,

"Our seventh property in Dubai is a fantastic addition to our portfolio of existing hotels and resorts serving varied market segments. Roda Links is our contribution to the mid-market sector which is a fast-growing segment in the industry. The property is an ideal option for business travellers, families and couples who demand comfort and personalised service at affordable rates. Our focus will remain on delighting our guests with Arabian hospitality and intuitive services." 🌟



Roda Hotels and Resorts' swimming pool

Celebrating true spirit of Ramadan

Under the leadership of **Roxana Jaffer**, CEO, Holiday Inn Dubai – Al Barsha, the hotel recently hosted children from Eduscan Institute. The event was graced by HH Sheikhha Hend Faisal Al Qassemi, a philanthropist.



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Waterfront to personify Dubai

With a steady growth in various projects to feature the rich culture and heritage in a modern setting, one of the latest developments in Dubai is the Waterfront Market. **Lachlan Gyde**, Executive Director—Asset Management, Ithra Dubai, shares more details with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau

Could you share a brief about the importance of Waterfront Market to tourists?

The attraction plays a central role in bringing together the richness of Emirati traditions and the inventiveness of modern-day convenience under one roof to offer a unique blend of culture and commerce. Markets serve as meeting places for people which bind them into

woven by communities past and present."

Apart from that, the Waterfront Market is designed to promote the concept of fresh food shopping in the region where butchers, vegetable traders, dried goods merchants and fishermen are at the forefront of all exchanges between the consumer and seller. Visitors can find an

“Food, culture, shopping and cosmopolitan living are some of the best ingredients globetrotters are looking for in their search for new experiences. Waterfront Market encapsulates all these factors”



a more convenient venue for recreation.

How will it benefit the hotels that will be coming up soon?

The unique combination of a retail and cultural destination is highly attractive to tourists. Accessibility to a wide variety of activities which is continuously happening at the Waterfront Market gives hotels an edge to attract tourists seeking for convenience and proximity to local cultures, apart from meeting tourists' essential needs during their stay. The Waterfront Market's array of services and retail shops complement hotels' offerings and can further enhance their business as a choice accommodation for many tourists.

Will you be partnering with the properties for a win-win situation?

The Waterfront Market has been designed for the community and is all about the community. We are continuously working to promote its offerings that could further enhance the services of neighbouring businesses, including hotels within the com-

tels sector will benefit tourists seeking for a unique flavour of Dubai's Deira community.

What does it entail for domestic tourists to frequent the market?

The Waterfront Market is an ideal venue for global food explorers in Dubai. Auctions for fresh fish and meat are also an exciting scene to witness here every day, a lively tradition that has been inherited for generations by local traders. Moreover, the seaside view at the Waterfront promenade offers a relaxing atmosphere for families and tourists alike while they choose from a diverse array of restaurants and cafes. Our food fest campaign for two weekends which featured food trucks and pop-stalls of a range of cuisines have been a huge hit. A cruise restaurant at the iconic dhow or Arabic sailing vessel is also an attraction for many tourists looking for a weekend activity with family and friends.

What is your target for the first year of operation?

Eyeing an average of 35,000 visitors per day, our target outlook for the first year is mainly to attract a strong composition of vendors



Waterfront market

the cultural and social fabric of a community. We wanted to capture these elements whilst giving a refreshing new experience to residents and tourists alike. We want to provide tourists with an authentic Dubai lifestyle to get a slice of that daily experience with vendors. This project is part of the Deira Enrichment Project, which seeks to transform Deira into a "bustling hub of life that will add to the already rich tapestry

exotic array of fish, seafood and fresh produce from not just the local community but also from all corners of the globe.

How can the tourism sector benefit from such a market?

Food, culture, shopping and cosmopolitan living are just some of the best ingredients globetrotters are looking for in their search for new experiences. Food, for instance, is

becoming part of a global trend in tourism. At the same time, shopping is also an essential element in driving tourism growth in Dubai. The emirate has all the perfect features that make an ideal venue for global foodies given the multicultural communities that have evolved and grown within it over the years. Waterfront Market encapsulates all these factors while ensuring modern amenities and facilities provide the support structure that makes it



munity and capitalise on our unique advantages as a modern hub for shopping. There are many opportunities which can be explored to complement our services with the hospitality sector and we are keen to tap those avenues. We are positive that partnerships with the ho-

offering unique products and services for visitors. We are now home to more than 500 retailers of fresh, dried and live fish and vendors continue to increase with an average of 4-8 new shops opening monthly. We also aim to establish regular market goes living in Dubai. 🌟

Digital marketing setting the trend

Digital marketing strategies are known to drive more business in travel, tourism and hospitality. **Salah Mustafa**, Digital Marketing Director, Wego, ensures that travellers are kept abreast with the latest trends of travel.

TT Bureau

How important is the digital marketing strategy in today's context for travel and tourism?

More than ever before, MENA consumers are relying on brands' digital messaging to guide them through purchase journeys. At Wego, we advise travel service providers and destination marketing organisations to adopt a 360-degree approach, engaging users at different stages of the purchase funnel, across various channels such as performance marketing, social media, native and content marketing. Brands should also adopt a solid user segmentation strategy for optimal budgeting and marketing communication to stay relevant and capture the attention of new-age

“Brands should adopt a solid user segmentation strategy for marketing communication to stay relevant and capture the attention of new-age travellers”

travellers. More so, as businesses are looking to cut costs, strategic digital marketing offers a cost-efficient way to expand audience base and geographical reach.

What are the new findings from this part of the world? What do the users require?

The sales volumes of the e-commerce industry in the Middle East is expected to hit \$4.3 billion in 2020, according to a report by BMI Research. This statistics shows a real appetite in the region for shopping online, be it for fashion or travel. Interestingly, mobile

traffic has rapidly overtaken desktop for internet usage, creating a mobile-first generation of shoppers. This is where Wego comes in to provide a portable shopping experience to the user.

Has social media become an accepted norm in the corporate field?

Social media seem to be driving customer behaviours. About 48 per cent consumers are seen to be engaging actively in online promotions through social media while a large subset of consumers use these platforms to read

product reviews. Keeping with this customer behaviour, at Wego, we utilise our social media channels to engage with travellers across the globe.


What are the latest trends in travel and tourism?

User generated content, video content and localised content appear to be the biggest digital media trends in the travel and hospitality sector. To that effect, we recommend that hotels, OTAs and airlines boost audio-visual content promotions and also encourage guests to share their authentic travel experiences online.

What will be the future of digital platforms?

In the next two to five years,



promotions for travel brands will become far more localised. We also see real potential for disruptive technologies such as big data analytics, AI and IoT to help deliver top-notch travel retail experience. 

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Personality of the month



Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Bur Dubai - Chutney's Restaurant

T Shehara Rizly

Managing both hotel and apartment is no easy task. It is a task which involves a balance of various kinds of guests coming from different countries and backgrounds; the hotel witnesses more European guests while the apartments cater to larger families, especially in the GCC region.

Quest for a demanding career

Chesnais, a French national, was quite indecisive about choosing his career path. After being acquainted with the hotel trade, he knew that there was no looking back. He states, "The hotel environment can be stressful and demanding at times but it gives me immense pleasure to wake up every day to go to work." Chesnais began his career in food and beverage operations

and has worked in Africa, Middle East and Europe. He joined the Mövenpick Group 11 years ago. Having worked with Mövenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea for four years in Jordan as Executive Assistant Manager since 2007, he moved to Mövenpick Hotel Doha, Qatar for his first General Manager role. Chesnais states, "As General Manager, what pleases me most is actually being able to bring so much positive impact in my daily environment when it comes to people, efficiency at work, guest satisfaction and quality improvement. These, for me, are achievements on a daily basis."

Changing industry trends

The past few years have witnessed many changes in the hospitality industry. Chesnais

mentioned, "Guest behaviours have been the biggest change for me. Hotel brands need to be able to react to changes in customer needs and trends very fast to stay competitive and relevant." Talking about his property, he shared, "We have a variety of segments, each with different expectations and needs. It is therefore, challenging to be able to satisfy all of them consistently. Nevertheless, it all comes back to basics, like offering a hassle-free stay from reservation to check-out whilst ensuring that basic needs are fulfilled, such as offering guests a good sleep, an assorted breakfast, reliable Wi-Fi and friendly employees."

Mövenpick signatures

Highlighting guest satisfaction as the hotel's ultimate goal, Chesnais

Ensuring maximum guest satisfaction

Having been promoted as General Manager at a young age, **Fabien Chesnais** was entrusted with a task to drive sales & ensure a high quality of service through guest satisfaction, at the Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Bur Dubai.

says, "Our brand offers some unique signatures to guests that mark memorable moments to their stays. It starts from our Mövenpick Chocolate Hour in the hotel's lobby where our chefs present the best Swiss chocolate in the world. Secondly, the Mövenpick Go Healthy concept is designed to showcase the best of regional and seasonal products and provide a nutritious energy boost throughout the day. Moreover, we present signature dishes, traditional Swiss recipes revisited by Mövenpick to entice the modern palate, marrying tradition with culinary innovation. For children, we provide them the Power Bites menu, an array of nutritious meals prepared using healthy cooking methods that are presented in an entertaining way."



He further elaborates, "It takes a lot of effort to ensure that the staff is kept informed of the need to deliver good results so that guests are content with their stay. We monitor employees' performance through guest feedback through several tools to enable us to deliver the best. I truly believe that the entire Bur Dubai team is driven by the same genuine desire to provide a pleasant and enjoyable stay to guests."

Millennials & technology as game changers

Technology and millennials have already stolen the show in travel. "Millennials are definitely taking centre stage in many industries primarily because their behaviours as customers are different. Our corporate office has actually

“Hotel brands need to be able to react to changes in customer behaviours, needs and trends very fast in order to stay competitive and relevant”

ensured long ago that this is being addressed by creating a corporate Xcom Y, made of millennial executives recruited externally and internally. Olivier Chavy, our CEO and President, mentions that seven out of 10 decisions by the company are being influenced by the Xcom Y. Technology obviously plays an important role in our behaviour but I believe that it cannot replace human factor and guest contact," Chesnais asserted.

Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Bur Dubai Hotel Staircase



Emerging markets on radar

The three-star property located close to the business precinct in Ras Al Khaimah is on its new mission for 2018 - to attract new markets which seek a different kind of experience.

 TT Bureau


Tulip Inn Ras Al Khaimah provides myriad offerings to guests which include 102 spacious and modern rooms and suites along with state-of-the-art business facilities and an elegant selection of restaurants and cafes to meet the needs of families and business travellers alike. The property also offers a comprehensive range of business facilities including three meeting rooms equipped with the latest audio and video technologies, complemented by top-quality dining options and impeccable service. With facilities and services that go beyond segment standards, Tulip Inn Ras Al Khaimah is poised to enhance the mid-scale value proposition as guests now have a modern and affordable hotel that ticks all the boxes for a comfortable stay.



Rabih Abdo
General Manager
Tulip Inn Ras Al Khaimah

Rabih Abdo, General Manager, Tulip Inn Ras Al Khaimah shares, "Our figures speak for themselves. Our multilingual hotel staff makes it easier for the guest to communicate which in turn, helps us understand the guest require-

ments better. We rank well on social media and would strive hard to always lead the charts. I am confident that with the help of my team, we will scale all heights."

The hotel is well equipped with high-speed Wi-Fi internet connection and all other standard amenities to cater to business travellers. He further reiterated that they are constantly working towards innovation. Guest history is important to know the likes and dislikes of guests. Sharing his views on new trends in the industry, Abdo said, "The entire world is going through a low budget hospitality transformation. We are trying hard to capture the new millennial market through our new mid-market brand." 

Envisioning a new game plan



Omega Hotel

■ Almost a year after it opened in last July, 238-key four-star luxury property Omega Hotel in Bur Dubai has become a hub in the area, especially for leisure travellers. The state-of-the-art property with plush interiors, spacious rooms comprising over four different categories of rooms and suites, will satisfy the much-needed four-star deluxe brand in the area.



Ramit Mandhwani
Cluster Director—Sales and Marketing, Omega Hotel

Leading the sales and marketing arm of the newly opened Omega Hotel in Bur Dubai, **Ramit Mandhwani**, Cluster Director—Sales and Marketing, will focus on key markets that will work for the property. He states, "It'll be exciting to plan, organise and market our

property to a varied clientele. Researching, analysing future business opportunities, and market movements in the region will be a priority over the time. The need to stay sharp and organised, initiate digital marketing activities and ensure a great mix of markets will be our key focus at Omega Hotel."



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NEW HOTELS

TRAVTALK brings you some of the latest and upcoming properties operational in 2018.

★ **Zabeel House by Jumeirah, Al Seef**

Location : Dubai

Rooms/Suites
inventory : 200

Expected opening:
Opened in June 2018



The second hotel in Jumeirah's new 'Upscale Casual' collection offers a loft-style vibe on the south banks of Dubai Creek and a rooftop pool with great views. With rooms categorised in three different sizes for solo travellers, couples or families; a vast lobby filled with a collection of contrasting art and design pieces and bookcases; and a restaurant that stretches out over the waters of Dubai Creek, Zabeel House by Jumeirah, Al Seef provides a completely new experience.



★ **Emerald Palace Kempinski Dubai**

Location : Dubai

Rooms/Suites
inventory : 389

Expected opening:
Q4 2018

Located on the West Crescent of Dubai's exclusive Palm Jumeirah, the 100,000 sqm beach resort pays homage to the palaces of 18th century Europe. With 389 rooms and suites in eight categories, eight world-class restaurants and bars, 3,000sqm Cinq Mondes Spa, state-of-the-art fitness centre and yoga studio, 500m private white sand beach and 80-seat private cinema, Emerald Palace Kempinski Dubai provides a gateway to palatial living.

★ **Aloft City Centre Deira, Dubai**

Location : Dubai

Rooms/Suites
inventory : 304

Expected opening:
Opened in June 2018



As the first hotel in the region to offer one-of-a-kind movie-themed suites, Majid Al Futtaim and Marriott International opened Aloft City Centre Deira, the company's design-led Aloft brand's third property in Dubai. Directly connected to City Centre Deira, Aloft features 304 loft-inspired rooms and suites – including four cinema-themed suites including Bollywood, Hollywood, Agent House and a specially created Dubai superhero suite.



★ **Address Downtown**

Location : Dubai

Rooms/Suites
inventory : 220

Expected opening:
Opened in June 2018

With several rooms opening to spectacular views of the iconic Burj Khalifa, innovative restaurant choices and world-class The Spa, the flagship hotel under Emaar Hospitality Group's premium lifestyle Address Hotels + Resorts brand, has opened its doors to hotel guests. Well-equipped for commercial events, the property features six meeting rooms, each with an extensive relaxation area and equipped with the latest audio-visual, video conferencing and collaborative equipment.

Head to a chic address at Marina

Located in the business and leisure precinct of Jebel Ali Free Zone and Dubai Marina Mall, the latest addition to the Marina area is Stella Di Mare Dubai Marina Hotel, slated to open by September 2018.

TT Bureau

Centrally located at just half hour's drive from Dubai International Airport, the 369-roomed property will be one of the most sought-after destinations by both business and leisure guests due to its convenient setting. The property offers 45 suites, 72 twin rooms and 252 king rooms with modern facilities required for a luxurious stay.



Althea Ayoub
Vice President
Stella Di Mare Dubai Marina Hotel

Personalisation is a key element in today's hospitality. Every guest desires to be treated with a very high level of service, and Stella Di Mare guarantees this experience with its standards of service. **Althea Ayoub**, Vice President, Stella Di Mare Dubai Marina Hotel stated, "Stella Di Mare is a five-star urban oasis hotel for the modern traveller. We are excited to welcome guests from all over the world to our 31-storey tower designed by Italian designers and architects, who have been involved to provide a chic and sophisticated Art Deco look. As soon as you enter the hotel, you are transformed into the magical atmosphere of the Renaissance with museum pieces of Leonardo da Vinci's machines."

In terms of MICE, this could be the next venue for that important event one needs to plan. "Our 500 m2 banquet hall, fitted with high-speed Wi-Fi and accommodating up to 500 people, is perfect for any type of meeting or event," Ayoub shared.



5 reasons

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20th September 2018
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1

Reputation

Appreciation and recognition from industry peers

These exciting awards are brought to you by the DDP Group and TravTalk Middle East, the leading business-to-business travel newspaper in the UAE and GCC. TravTalk Middle East is a well-established and highly respected publication that has been running for 14 years. It is read by 600,000 people, every month.

2

Exposure

Opportunity to tell your story and elevate your profile

Getting shortlisted for an award can improve brand awareness and promote your business to new customers. All winners will appear in the supplement issue of TravTalk Middle East. In addition, coverage will be provided in other media including TravelTVMiddleEast.News.

Being nominated for Arabian Travel Awards will help you gain PR exposure, throughout the year, through special print magazines, newsletters, email broadcasts and website promotions.



3

Competitive edge and bragging

Stand out from the crowd

An award is a seal of approval for your hard work and is a sign of quality for potential customers. It's a great way of differentiating your organisation from competitors.

4

Access to industry leaders

Connect with the best

Arabian Travel Awards offers a great opportunity to network with senior industry professionals and government officials, away from the strenuous business environment.



5

Motivate and reward

Boosting team morale

Attending an award ceremony in itself creates a buzz. The team looks forward to a good night out with colleagues and industry peers, and if they win an award it is even better. Getting back to office with a shiny trophy is recognition of the hard work put in by the team and is highly motivating.

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MOVEMENTS

SriLankan Airlines

► United Arab Emirates

Asiri Wickramasuriya has been appointed as Country Manager of SriLankan Airlines for United Arab Emirates. Representing the national carrier of Sri Lanka, Wickramasuriya brings over 18 years' experience in the airline industry. Having joined SriLankan Airlines in 1999, he received comprehensive training on the airline business. His primary responsibility is to enhance the airlines' position in the region as the preferred choice of travel, through systematic sales and marketing initiatives, thereby serving as a vital link between the airline and the market.



IBTM World

► London

IBTM, part of leading global exhibition organiser Reed Travel Exhibitions, appointed **Shane Hannam** as Portfolio Director. Hannam began his career with Reed Exhibitions and has over 16 years' experience in the international events industry. His most recent role as Sales Director—Key Accounts for Reed Travel Exhibitions, saw him managing a team looking after the division's top 15 clients as well as assuming responsibility for Commercial Projects across the division in a senior leadership capacity.



Dusit International

► Thailand

Dusit International has appointed **Marc Hediger** as Senior Vice President—Development, responsible for overseeing the development team's global operations except China. Hediger brings to his role more than 30 years of development and operational experience. Prior to joining Dusit, he was CEO of Lanson Place Hospitality Management, Hong Kong, where he successfully doubled its number of luxury hotels from six to 12 properties. During his career, he has worked as General Manager for Hyatt Hotels and spent eight years as Senior Vice President and Director of Development Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, Hong Kong.



Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts

► Dubai

Maria Lamarche, former Hotel Manager at Mövenpick Resort & Residences Aqaba, Jordan, has been promoted to the designation of General Manager of Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai. She will be responsible for leading the pre-opening teams of the property scheduled to open this year. Lamarche's hospitality career spans more than three decades and several continents having worked for international hospitality names including Starwood, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), Millennium & Copthorne, Hilton and Rotana.



Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq Thalassa Sea & Spa

► Bahrain

Mehdi Hanayen has been appointed as General Manager of Sofitel Bahrain Zallaq Thalassa Sea & Spa. In this role, Hanayen will bring his strong attention to detail and his years of experience of leading teams to drive hotel performance. He first joined AccorHotels in 2008, working for Sofitel El Gezira in Cairo, Egypt as Food & Beverage Manager till 2011. He then moved to the United Arab Emirates, and became Assistant Director of Food & Beverage at Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche.



► Dubai

Alfio Bernardino comes on board as General Manager (GM) of Mövenpick's upcoming hotel in Dubai Media City, moving from his previous role as General Manager of Radisson Blu Dubai Media City. He will be responsible for leading the pre-opening teams of the property due to open this year. Bernardino is an Italian national with more than 20 years of industry experience in Europe, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. A graduate of Cornell University, his move to Mövenpick marks his fourth GM position. He will oversee the successful opening of a property located in Dubai Media City.



Mercure Gold Hotel Al Mina Road Dubai

► Dubai

Manuel Garcia has been appointed as General Manager at Mercure Gold Hotel Al Mina Road Dubai, part of the AccorHotels' portfolio. Garcia has 16 years' experience within the region working with brands such as Starwood, AccorHotels and Marriott International. With a background in Sales & Marketing, Garcia is looking forward to driving forward the strategic and financial success of Mercure Gold in this new and exciting challenge.



Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel

► Ajman

Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel designated **Mahmoud Saffarini** as Director—Sales and Marketing. In his new role, Saffarini will be responsible for the continuous development of the hotel's sales and marketing strategies to establish the property as the most coveted destination in the Northern Emirates. Saffarini joined Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel in October 2016 as the Director of Sales. In this role, he enabled the hotel to compete with international brands by accomplishing volume business for the hotel. Saffarini brings a wealth of experience to the position with a career spanning over 17 years in the hospitality industry.



TASTY AND TASTEFUL EXPERIENCES

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ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira
2nd December Street,
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