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Over 40k attendees at ATM 2018

The Arabian Travel market opens doors from April 22-25, 2018 at Dubai World Trade Centre. Over 2,500 exhibiting companies with around 40,000 attendees from over 150 countries will ensure a steady network with the most important B2B clients from around the world on a single platform.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

“Sharjah is putting a spotlight on some of its most successful tourism offerings at the upcoming 25th edition of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM). The exhibition will lay emphasis on responsible tourism and sustainable trends. The emirate is strategically positioned to capitalise on this growing sector supported by the diversity of our heritage which is visible in our cultural, natural, archeological and historical sites, combined with our advanced efforts in experience-led tourism as well as our popularity in the family travel segment.

Following the increase in tourists in 2017, we are also keen to introduce new offerings and explore opportunities in key markets, including GCC, India, Europe, Russia, China, among several others. Some unique developments are underway in Sharjah including The Sharjah Collection, Anantara Resort, Novotel Sharjah Expo, Hilton Group, Accor Group and we are confident that our participation at ATM this year will be significant to support our vision to attain 10 million visitors in the emirate by 2021.”



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA)

“SIA's success is achieved due to the continuous support of HH Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and the close coordination of HH Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Bin Sultan Al Qasimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah, and Chairman of Sharjah Executive Council. This has resulted in various programmes to enhance customer satisfaction by upgrading the services provided by SIA. Adaptation of the latest technology have led to continued growth in passenger traffic, aircraft movements and cargo operations.”



HE Ali Salim Al Midfa
Chairman
Sharjah Airport Authority

“Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq) will be highlighting a host of its leading leisure, family, authentic, cultural and ecotourism destinations to drive the emirate's positioning as a leading destination in the region. It aims to exhibit Sharjah's investment potentials and climates in relation to its travel and tourism sector, and the unique offerings it provides to tourists in Sharjah. We are excited to showcase the latest developments across all our destinations, such as Al Majaz Waterfront's recent launch of its new phase hosting popular restaurant chains for the first time.”



HE Marwan Al Serkal
CEO
Shurooq

“Fujairah will introduce diversified tourism products and present the latest hotels. The exemption of the citizens of the Republic of China and the Russian Federation from travel visa has had a significant impact on the increase in the number of visitors from these countries. The Fujairah Tourism and Antiquities Authority has always sought to implement innovative ideas that serve the tourism sector. We are aiming to enter new markets as well as using modern technology to implement targeted tourism promotion programmes.”



Saeed Al Samahi
Director General
Fujairah Tourism and Antiquities Authority

Contd. on page 3 ►

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Network & discover at ATM

► Contd. from page 1

“We will be focusing on our partnership with flydubai this year to educate trade about the benefits the partnership will be bringing to travellers. Seen as the new game changer, Emirates’ new First Class private suites have impressed our passengers and the feedback has been tremendous. Our investments put us in a strong position to embrace the future and all of the possibilities and challenges that come with it. We look forward to productive meetings and panels at ATM, and welcome the opportunity to network and cultivate stronger relationships with our trade partners. Our partnership with flydubai provides enormous synergies on a network level, offering consumers a breadth of travel options to, from and via Dubai.”



Sheikh Majid Al Mualla
Divisional Senior Vice
President—Commercial
Operations, Emirates



Olivier Harnisch
Chief Executive Officer,
Emaar Hospitality Group

“We will present our operational hotels under the premium lifestyle brand and upcoming portfolio of hotel projects in international markets in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Maldives and more. We have seen a significant increase in the number of Chinese and Russian guests, including repeat guest and MICE clientele, further supporting the robust performance of our hotels in Dubai. Geographic expansion to key markets globally is part of our growth strategy. We have expanded to several destinations and this will continue to be our priority this year. We expect significant engagement with industry stakeholders, and hope to foster our partnerships and raise the profile of Emaar Hospitality Group.”

“Last year sparked the announcement of another exciting year for GTA, joining Hotelbeds Group. Now we can focus on realising our ambition of becoming the very best travel trade partner by providing access to the best teams, products and data analysis in the industry, all backed up by an innovative technology platform. ATM has always been a major regional and international business-to-business (B2B) travel exhibition to showcase the development of travel, tourism and hospitality industries. This year, our participation will be under one umbrella of the entire group, including Tourico Holidays. This has always been an opportunity for us to launch new products, present new services and introduce key partnership programmes.”



Rami Mashini
Vice President—Sales and
Marketing for Middle East,
Africa, Turkey and India, GTA

Louvre attracts visitors

The Louvre opening witnessed growth from new key markets. **HE Saif Saeed Ghobash**, Director General of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi talks about increasing tourist arrivals.

TT Bureau

QHow has Abu Dhabi fared in terms of visitor numbers after the launch of Louvre?

The opening of Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2017 was a key driver of tourism growth last year, with nearly 9.8 per cent more people visiting Abu Dhabi in 2017 as compared to the previous year.



HE Saif Saeed Ghobash
Director General of the Department of
Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi

a year by 2021. From January to August 2017, Russian hotel guests jumped by 49 per cent compared to the same period in 2016.

QWhat will your focus at ATM?

Our participation at this year's ATM along with our partners, will serve to further reaffirm Abu Dhabi's position as a destination of distinction built on unique experiences and rich heritage. We will be showcasing diverse offerings across all three regions of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Dhafra, with stand visitors getting the opportunity to enjoy a hands-on experience of the emirate.

QAfter the ease of visa facility for Chinese and Russians, what are the trends in tourism trade in Abu Dhabi?

With the recent lift of visa restrictions, we have witnessed an upsurge into

the emirate from China and Russia, two of our top source markets. China is now the leading overseas source market for Abu Dhabi hotel guests, with an increase of 83.6 per cent in February compared to the same period in 2017. DCT – Abu Dhabi is targeting 600,000 Chinese hotel guests

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Road to digital experiences

Celebrating Arabian Travel Market (ATM) has become the most anticipated event of the year. As a flourishing business hub, Dubai will once again experience a full house of over 40,000 industry professionals with 150 countries coming together in 12 different halls. Travel Tech Theatre has organised special sessions that involve a social media specialist panel to explore the USPs on social media and how it can be a successful driver of business sales. Another declaration is that 72 per cent of travellers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia with an Instagram account purchased an overseas trip during the past year. A session will highlight how powerful visuals can inspire potential travellers and drive business.

According to the latest figures by Colliers International, the average 300-room hotel in Dubai will be faced with a bill for AED2.45 million over the coming five years, as bandwidth capability is multiplied to meet the rising guest demand. Adding to this pressure, the data further reveals that hotels failing to maintain current standards will jeopardise guest loyalty, as 68 per cent of guests reveal they would not return to a hotel with poor internet access.

As Dubai prepares for Expo 2020, the upcoming properties mostly cater to millennials as they have found the niche to be a lucrative strait to their business. Free Wi-Fi and areas where millennials can be occupied with their social media apparatus is soon becoming a game changer in the region. The rapid increase of virtual payments in the region is also becoming a trendsetter. According to Colliers International, half of hotel payments will be made using either mobile or virtual payment platforms by 2021.

On the show floor, attendees can meet exhibitors such as TravelClick, Travelport, GT Beds, The Booking Expert, INPLASS, XML Holiday and DidaTravel Technology. Exhibiting for the first time at ATM will be Travelflex, a cryptocurrency that aims to solve scalability issues which other coins are facing at the moment. Another notable prediction is the introduction of chatbots across hotels to deal with common guest queries before, during and after booking is expected. About 79 per cent of all B2C interactions will be performed by these bots within Middle Eastern hotels by 2020.

Offering customised products

Hoteliers must focus on making properties accessible by driving value. Who needs a concierge in the lobby when you have the tech-savvy consumer who is seeking answers on his/her mobile device?

The key is to identify the value drivers and elevate enhancer elements. This happens when customisation kicks in. Hotel offerings must evolve with evolving tastes and habits of today's novel consumers. Customisation is at the core of most businesses nowadays. The automobile industry was a first mover on that front, allowing the consumer to select the colour of the car, engine type, interiors, etc. That trend shifted further to consumer goods and even pharmaceuticals. We must now introduce this retail operating model in the hotel space. It is best to start understanding the differences between guest needs and wants. The needs must serve as the entry point to your offering supplemented by

“The hyper-connected consumers who are making purchasing decisions on mobile phones or tablets by learning everything about your property will know how relevant you are before they even visit your hotel”

a laundry list of on demand wants. For instance, “I need a comfortable bed, don't you worry, we have it. I want turn-down service, no worries, we can make it available for an incremental nominal cost to you.” Needs and wants need to be relevant, it is your job to know what that means.

Irrespective of the loyalty programmes, you need to introduce and ensure that your services and products are relevant. They need to speak to the needs and wants of today's consumers.

The hyper-connected consumers making purchasing decisions on mobile phones by learning everything about your property will know how relevant you are before they even get to your hotel. They have access to pricing, pictures, videos, guest reviews, location, etc, all of which will indicate your relevance to them. Novel consumers want ‘experiences’.

There are numerous overarching trends circulating in our industry such as ‘everything mobile’, block-

chain technology, IoT, etc that are equally important, irrespective of your achievements to integrate various applications, if you are not accessible, customisable and relevant, you may need to revisit your customer retention strategy.

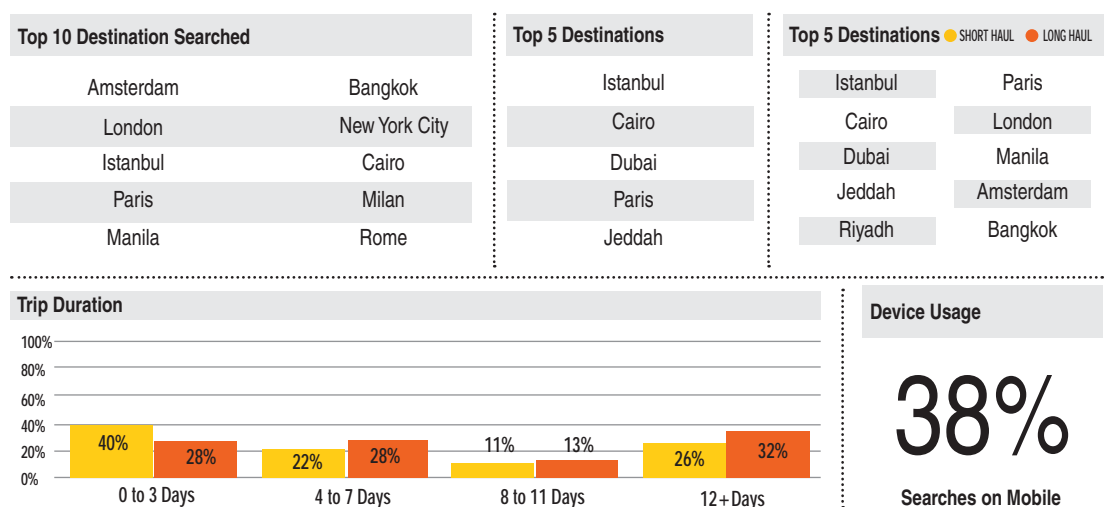
(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Tarek M Daouk
Founder
FORM Hotels

MEA ranks high in tech use

As per Q1 2018 Global Travel Insights Report by Sojern, almost 40% of travel searches by ME travellers in Q4 were on mobile devices.



Source: Sojern



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Innovation is key at Riyadh Travel Fair

Riyadh Travel Fair (RTF) 2018, Saudi Arabia's leading travel industry showcase, concluded its tenth edition at the Al Faisaliah Hotel, Riyadh held from April 10-13, 2018. **Bander' Al Gryni**, General Manager, ASAS Exhibitions, shares highlights of the event with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau

Q Could you share a brief about this year's RTF?

Having received over 30,000 visitors this year, RTF continues to be Saudi Arabia's largest domestic and outbound tourism promotion event. The four-day event focused on business networking opportunities, seminar sessions, discussions and recognition of the industry's achievements.

Q Was this year's event any different?

The 2018 edition has been the largest on record with an increase in both the number of exhibitors and visitor arrivals. More than



Bander' Al Gryni
General Manager
ASAS Exhibitions

270 exhibitors were present representing more than 50 countries. Over 50 national and regional pavilions had

a prominent presence with the show floor space also increased by 10 per cent compared to the 2017 event.

Q What was the theme of the event?

The theme for this year was 'Innovation'. Last year, RTF featured 270 exhibitors with visitor attendance at 27,329. That was an increase of 30 per cent compared to the 2016 edition. This year continued our year-on-year growth as exhibitors

“For the first time, RTF 2018 hosted Scandinavian tourism boards like Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland as well as Greece. Tanzania and Spain also debuted, joining European and African tourism boards”



hit over 270 and visitor numbers increased to over 30,000.

Q What were the new features this year?

For the first time this year, RTF 2018 hosted Scandinavian tourism boards such as Denmark, Sweden,

Norway and Finland as well as Greece, among others. Tanzania and Spain debuted at RTF 2018, joining other European and African tourism boards including Czech Republic, Poland, Bosnia, Greece, Turkey, South Africa, Egypt and Tunisia. While Asian markets appeared

to increase its presence in this year's show floor, North and South East Asia featured prominently during RTF 2018 too with the participation of Japan, Korea, The Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore.

Q How would RTF contribute towards Saudi's 2030 vision?

We fully support all travel and tourism industry players here in KSA to strengthen their inbound tourism products whilst empowering them by providing insights and platform to exchange business with other nations that could potentially lead to a progressive business development. 🇸🇦

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Cruising is all about relaxing - right from the booking process to enjoying the most pampered vacation. CruiseXplore combines its professional cruise expertise and dedicated service to ensure that guests have the perfect cruise holiday.

Cruising is a fast-growing holiday choice, particularly in the Middle East. It is one of the most preferred vacation options amongst the people of this region for its sheer convenience and luxury that it provides at an affordable price. Cruising takes holidaymakers to multiple destinations - something which other travel options

cannot simply offer with such ease and convenience. It is an ideal choice for families since it has something to offer to each age group. Precious holiday time is saved by unpacking just once on

that you have everything you need for the entire duration of your vacation.

Integrated with all the features of e-commerce, the platform www.cruise-



board the ship and then enjoying the rest of the vacation without having to repack at each and every destination. Booking a cruise ensures

explore.com makes it extremely comfortable for travellers to plan and book a cruise for the next vacation. With such an exclu-



sively designed cruise-only platform, the brand aims to facilitate the unmatched experience of a cruise vacation. CruiseXplore is a powerful source of knowledge about cruises across the globe. It is a 'one-stop-shop' to dig into multitude of options to choose from. They are the cruise specialists promoting and selling

the following cruises in the Middle East - Norwegian Cruise Line, Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Disney Cruise Line, Costa Cruises, MSC Cruises, Holland America Line, Seabourn Cruises, Crystal Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Azamara Club Cruises,

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Tilal Liwa unveils summer campaign

Arabian-inspired hotel destination, Tilal Liwa Hotel has announced its return for this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM) at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

 TT Bureau

The year 2018 has paved way for more advancements for the four-star hotel with the installation of the first electric car charging station in the property, the first-of-its kind in the Al Dhafra region. During the four-day event, Tilal Liwa Hotel will see the exclusive launch of its summer promotions, which indulges guests to a luxurious over-



night stay, access to culinary and wellness discounts and unique recreations for families for only AED 277.

Families are treated to this luxurious offer from May 15 to August 31, 2018.

Commenting on the announcement, **Khaled Sharabassy**, General Manager, Tilal Liwa Hotel, said, "We delighted to participate at the Arabian Travel Market 2018 together with our hotel group, Danat Hotels & Resorts, and the country's leading hotel and travel

beverage concepts targeting families, we have managed to achieve an increase of more than 10 per cent by the end of 2017. The first quarter of 2018 has also been busy for the hotel, in which we have participated in several programmes, school tours and festivals in the region."



Khaled Sharabassy
General Manager
Tilal Liwa Hotel

Tilal Liwa Hotel has pioneered several promotions, including staycation offers for the Al Dhafra Festival, Year of Zayed Initiative and the Liwa Date Festival, and global offers celebrating Eid, Holi and Chinese New Year. Vacations at the family-friendly destination promises an escape that takes the best of the signature Danat hospitality and fun-filled desert activities in one venue.

Now on its 25-year run, ATM stands as the region's leading travel and tourism exhibition, showcasing insightful exchanges, product launches and new offers for the season courtesy of the world's holidaymakers. The team of Tilal Liwa Hotel will be exhibiting at along with Danat Hotels & Resorts. 

“We delighted to participate at the Arabian Travel Market 2018 together with our hotel group, Danat Hotels & Resorts, and the country's leading hotel and travel companies. For our special partaking, we have prepared a variety of seasonal offers that highlights the capital's highly acclaimed desert experiences”

Relax in your private jet

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts recently unveiled three private jet itineraries set to take flight in 2019. Latin Escape, a 16-day adventure is for those looking to explore cultural offerings.



 TT Bureau

Just over two weeks in duration, this new journey is shorter than the 24-day around-the-world journeys, and takes travellers to Miami, Costa Rica, Buenos Aires, Bogotá. It includes an escape to the Galápagos Islands, all in the care of Four Seasons.

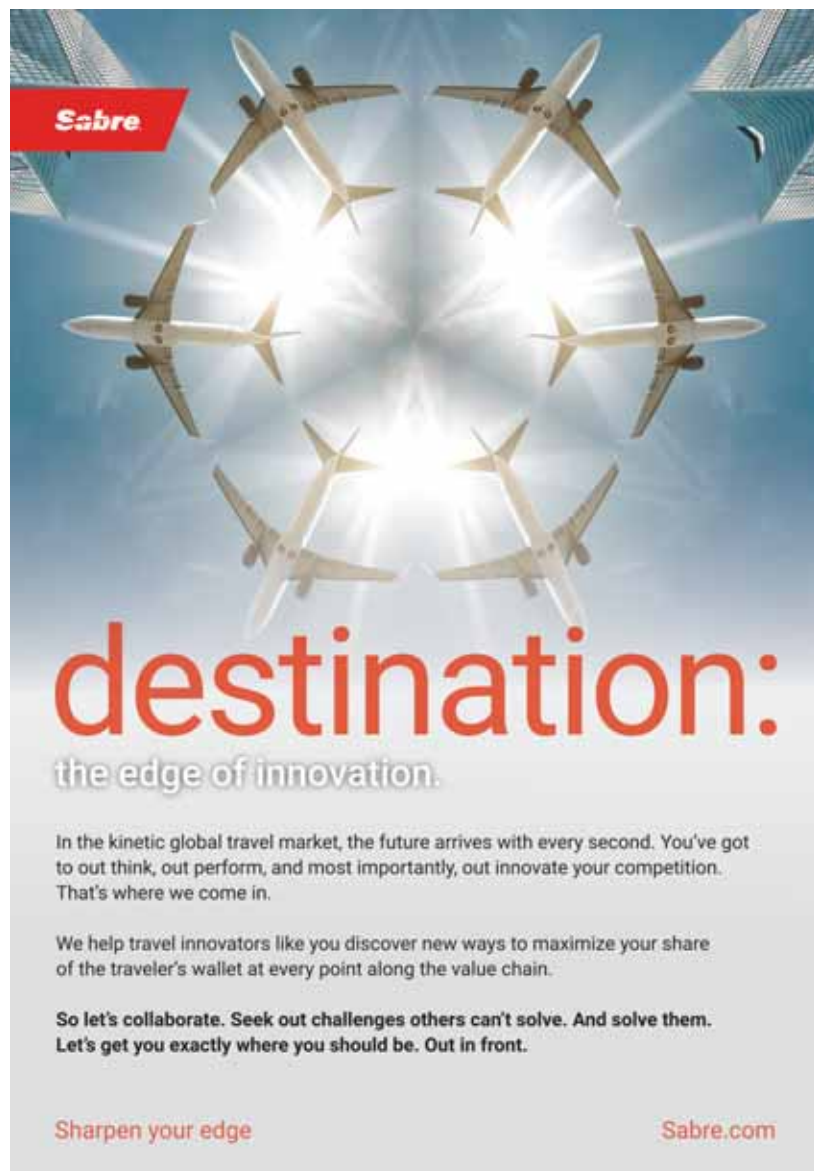
The Four Seasons Private Jet allows travellers to fulfil their most extraordinary travel dreams aboard a custom designed aircraft. Guests can opt for a wide range of experiences in each

destination, tailor their trip according to their interests, discover authentic flavours and connect with local cultures and communities without the stress of planning. The team on each Private Jet journey takes care of everything, including all air travel, ground transportation, planned excursions, meals and beverages, and luxurious accommodations.

"Each year, we expand our Private Jet offerings, pushing the boundaries of curated travel and bringing together like-minded

adventurers with a desire to explore the world. Our new itinerary offering, 'Latin Escape' was devised in response to increased interest in the Four Seasons Private Jet programme by a wide range of travellers," says **J Allen Smith**, President and CEO, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts.

Two of the most coveted Four Seasons itineraries are featured on the 2019 roster. Timeless Encounters is a 24-day exploration and International Intrigue, a journey across nine destinations. 



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Wego focuses on content marketing

In the technologically advanced world of today, content marketing has become a game changer in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. **Craig Hewett**, Co-Founder, Wego discusses opportunities to achieve strategic marketing approach in ensuring valuable, relevant and consistent content.

TT Bureau



Craig Hewett
Co-Founder
Wego

Q What are the new content marketing trends for 2018?

All formats of videos, personalised messages and localised content tend to resonate with today's tech-savvy generation.

Brands are also increasingly engaging with micro-influencers for content creation. In the near future, we might even see the usage of Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence for greater content personalisation.

Q What is Wego's role in destination marketing campaigns?

Wego's local expertise within core markets like the MENA region, APAC and India allows us to connect tourism boards with audiences that have the highest travel intent. Thus, the likes of VisitBritain, Tourism Australia, Visit Dubai, German National Tourist

“Wego's local expertise within core markets like the MENA region, APAC and India allows us to connect tourism boards with audiences that have the highest travel intent”

office and France Tourism are increasingly partnering with Wego for strategic and tailor-made online destination marketing campaigns.

Q How does Wego support DMOs to be more relevant to their audience?

Wego's co-marketing campaigns come with a portfolio of multi-device and multi-channel engagement tools that include the following:

❖ Display advertising (web

and mobile banners) shown on websites, mobile sites and mobile apps; as well as in games and social media.

❖ SEM increases search engine visibility and traffic to the Tourism Board's site. This involves search engine optimisation (SEO), keyword research, competitive analysis and paid listings.

❖ Targeted e-mails and push notifications are some of the most popular digital marketing channels to communicate directly with users.


❖ Additionally, we generate creative and localised content marketing activities for all social media channels.

Q What parameters are used to make the campaigns more effective?


Wego prides itself in being able to deliver extensive market insights from different geographies. This helps tourism boards effectively connect with travellers through outreach campaigns that are tailored-to-fit. Traveller data, collected from 60 of our localised websites, enables us to build a detailed audience profile featuring demographics, travel geography,

trip details, device type, airline details and hotel details. Such user behaviour insights can be used to determine optimum campaign timing and even the objective of the campaign.

Q What are the platforms preferred by the MENA region to conduct a successful campaign?

Our destination marketing campaigns have a 360 degree approach, encompassing everything from research and insights, social media, PR, retail product offering, specific tactical campaigns with an impact at every stage of the consumer journey. 

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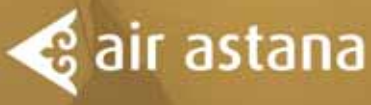
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Personality of the month

Nasir Khan heads above the rest

With a career spanning over 30 years, with nearly 20 having been spent in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism has been recognised as one of the most influential travel and tourism industry players in the region due to his vast knowledge and experience in the two key markets of KSA and UAE.

 Shehara Rizly

As General Sales Agent (GSA) for 11 major airlines such as Air Canada, Cathay Pacific Airways, Turkish Airlines, SaudiGulf Airlines, to name a few, Nasir Jamal Khan heads Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism, the travel and tourism business of Al Naboodah Group Enterprise (ANGE).

Talking about his passion for travel, Khan shared, "As a child, I used to frequently travel with my father as we had family living in the US, UK and other European countries. I used to enjoy the entire process of travelling - the aircraft, the air hostesses, meals and candies served onboard. At a very young age, I was hired by the travel division of American Express and within six months, I was promoted to be a supervisor of one of its branches 'Implant in UNDP' in Islamabad, the largest revenue generating unit of American Express."

Scaling new heights

As Chief Executive Officer, Khan has been successful in placing Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism as a leading travel company on the tourism map of the UAE. His accomplished business intelligence has been much applauded in terms of getting the right travel apparatus to suit the clientele according to time and relevance. The recent GSA of SaudiGulf Airlines was awarded to ANGE which was an addition to their portfolio.

Passion drives success

It is no secret that some of the most successful leaders

in the world are those who thrive on their passion. Khan shares, "I have seen many of my colleagues at American Express switching to other industries. Travelling

"Travelling has been my passion since childhood. If you enjoy your job, you are bound to excel. My career spans nearly 34 to 35 years in travel trade, and I assume that I will retire too when in travel"

has been my passion since childhood. If you enjoy your job, you are bound to excel. My career spans nearly 34 to 35 years in travel trade, and I assume that I will retire too when in travel."

Backed with strong foundation

Khan was well groomed and trained to face various challenges in life. "My father brought me up well on both fronts - academic and

me to be happy and contented in life, and limit my wish-list within the resources."

Turning point

Meticulous in his dealings, Khan stands out as

a master in the field of travel and tourism in the region due to the many skills honed throughout 20 years in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and 13 years in the UAE.



next 10 years. At this point he managed to establish Emirates GSA setup in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Eventually, after serving the most renowned travel company in KSA, he was head hunted by Gulf Air to be the Area Manager for the region. His next venture was Dubai where he was

After completing his tenure with American Express, Khan, on his visit to KSA, was offered an irresistible package and position which kept him hooked on for the

once again selected to head one of the most prestigious companies in the UAE. Today, as Chief Executive Officer of Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism, Khan has built a rich network of strong relationships between the UAE and KSA through his life experience.

No looking back

➤ On his visit to KSA, Nasir Jamal Khan was offered an irresistible position which kept him hooked on for the next 10 years.

➤ Khan managed to establish Emirates GSA setup in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Eventually, after serving the most renowned travel company in KSA, he was head hunted by Gulf Air to be the Area Manager for the region.



Networking for new markets at ATM

The Arabian Travel Market, that kicks off in Dubai from April 22, once again brings together the world on one stage with its myriad opportunities for the clientele and all the attendees. Professionals in the industry share their insights on their expectations from this year's show with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau



Mamoun Hmedan
Managing Director—MENA
and India, Wego

“ATM is the perfect opportunity for the best of travel and tourism businesses to showcase latest developments, offers and technologies. It also enables us to connect with top professionals from within the industry. We are excited to participate in another edition of this travel event. Since Wego works closely with several airlines, hotels and tourism boards, we look forward to exploring more cross-business synergies at ATM.”



Angela Christodouloupoulou
Director of Sales and
Marketing, Sofitel Abu
Dhabi Corniche

“Our property will showcase a great choice of stay for travellers due to prime location at Corniche. All rooms and suites have breathtaking views over the Arabian Gulf. This will be our focal point coupled with food, beverage choices, meeting venues, etc. We would like to renew our existing partnerships and look out for new opportunities that will come our way at this networking platform. ATM is special as the world comes together for us to mingle close to our home.”



Salih Gozcu
Managing Director
BTB Tours

“As BTB Tours, we grew more than 200% as pax and revenue in the last one year, especially after the UAE government decided on no-visa policy for Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. We hope this ATM will be more effective for us as partners can visit UAE without visa. I believe we will have fantastic summer business this season from CIS and Europe countries because of summer destinations like Turkey, Greece and Spain.”



Olwin Desouza
General Manager
Ghaya Grand

“With the hospitality industry evolving faster than ever, ATM is an ideal platform for us to announce our summer packages. Our packages are linked to popularising Dubai's growing range of attractions as a shopping and leisure destination with something in store for everyone. Our special focus is on the upcoming Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS), the region's summer entertainment and shopping fiesta. We highlighted our proximity to the Jumeirah Golf Club and other renowned courses to promote Dubai for a golfing holiday. In fact, we targeted Germany as one of our main feeder markets, tying up with many of the country's travel agents during ITB earlier this year. Both business and leisure travellers are increasingly expecting more from their accommodation, and our fully serviced apartments will give us a competitive advantage in the market.”



George Titus
Cluster Director of Sales,
Ayla Hotels & Resorts,
Al Ain

“We will be focusing on displaying our properties at Al Ain. As a destination for leisure and tourism, various facilities and packages of Ayla Hotels and new hotels are in the pipeline. Maintaining a strong relationship with existing partners and finding new markets, new tour operators and travel agents will be focus at ATM.”



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Qantas-Emirates extend ACCC partnership

■ Qantas and Emirates welcome the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) reauthorisation of their partnership until 2023. The joint business will deliver expanded services, greater schedule choice, increased frequent flyer benefits and

leverage the latest aircraft technology and maximise new routes. With three options to get to Europe via Perth, Singapore and Dubai, and greater frequency across the Tasman, the ACCC's decision allows us to continue to jointly provide the best network, the best service and the best



an ongoing commitment to world-class products.

Alison Webster, CEO, Qantas International, states, "The ACCC's reauthorisation of our joint business is an important milestone in helping us continue deliver benefits for travellers and Australian tourism for the next five years. The evolution of our partnership will allow us to

frequent flyer programmes for customers travelling between Australia/New Zealand and the UK and Europe."

Thierry Antinori, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates said, "We look forward to progressing on the plans that will take our successful partnership to its next phase."

Seamless booking process

With presence in five continents, and offices in nearly 100 countries, **Gaurav Bhatnagar**, Managing Director, TBO Holidays, shares how the company grew from ME to become a truly global brand.

TT Bureau

Please share the launch of TBO Air at ATM.

With nearly \$1 billion in air ticketing turnover, TBO is already the leading B2B consolidator in India. Set to launching at ATM this year, TBO's comprehensive airline product will be available to TBO Holidays' customers in the Middle East as well. With the ability to book all regional, global low-cost carriers as well as full service carriers in a single screen, TBO Air makes it seamless for travel agents to book a complete travel itinerary for guests without having to leave the TBO platform. TBO Air will allow travel agents to book

hotel and air in a single PNR, find attractive SOTO fares and local consolidator fares, pay for LCCs in their local currency and avoid maintaining several deposits with various low cost airlines.

What will you present in terms of ultra-luxury stays?

We will launch the first edition of its collection of 25 ultra-luxury stays at the ATM. The limited-edition book featuring 25 ultra-luxury stay options at the most opulent hotels across the world will be distributed to select travel agents in the region. The idea is to help begin conversations around luxury stays with the travel agents' most elite guests.

A page turn of this book can be great starting point for VIP customers to start thinking about what kind of experiences they are looking for in their holiday. Each hotel showcased here has collaborated with us to highlight the best they have to offer.

Do tell us more about the e-learning platform.

TBO Academy is a new e-learning platform that will allow travel agents and bookers to enhance their knowledge and skills. Using a new proprietary learning format, TBO Academy allows travel bookers to learn about new hotels, destinations and experience in just minutes. This mobile-friendly learn-



Gaurav Bhatnagar
Managing Director
TBO Holidays

ing tool is aimed at the busy travel agent, who is keen to continue learning but is short on time. In the coming year, TBO will be collaborating with tourism boards, hotel chains and experienced providers to bring new courses and content which would be freely accessible to all TBO customers worldwide.

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NDC Level 3 for Zeeyarah

Zeeyarah.com becomes the first online travel agency and B2B reseller in the MENA region to receive the highest level of IATA NDC certification on PADIS Publication 16.2 Schema.

TT Bureau

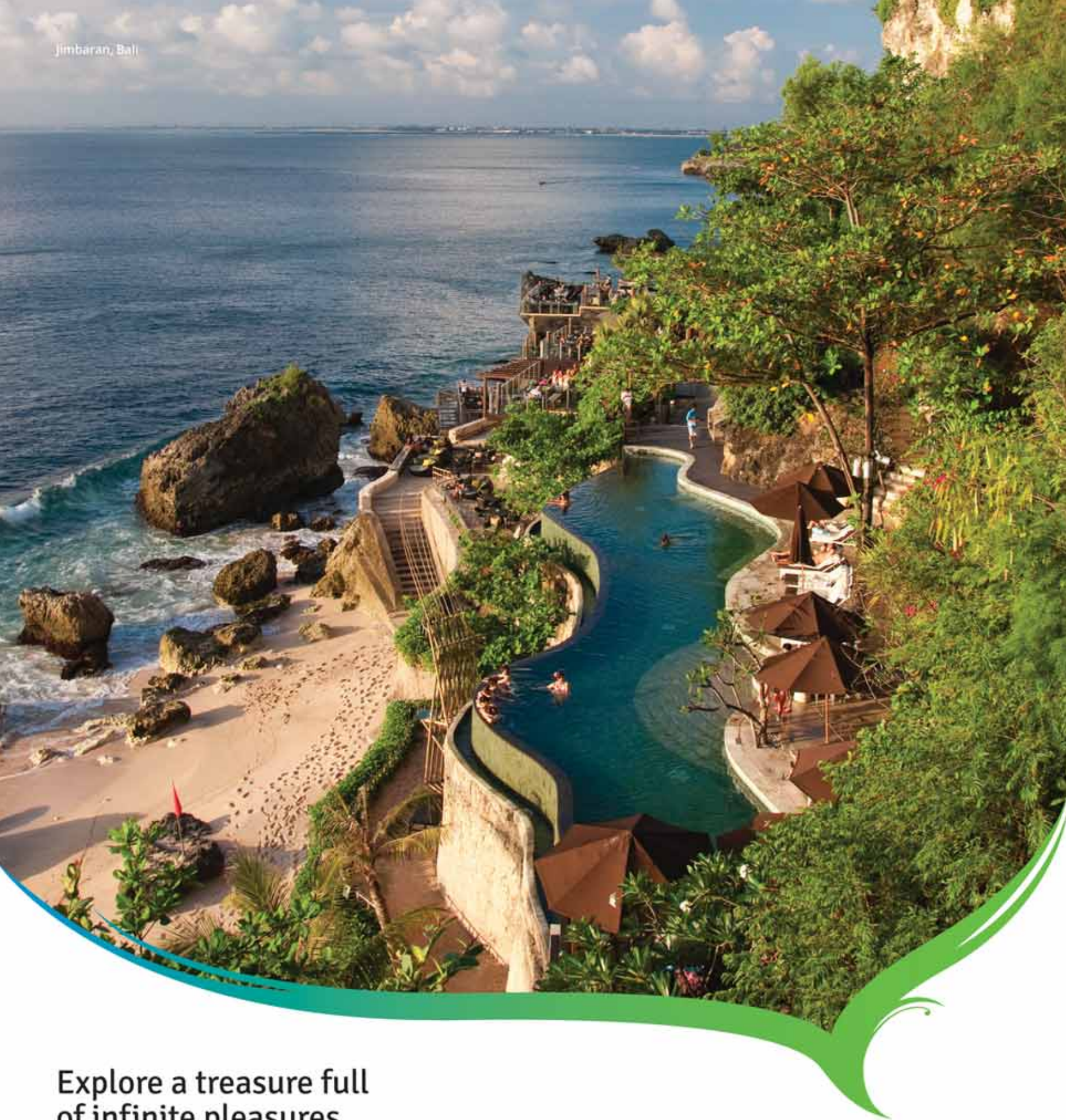
The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has awarded New Distribution Capability (NDC) Level 3 certification to zeeyarah.com, managed by Superior Tracks Travel and Tourism Agency based in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As part of NDC certification, Zeeyarah had commenced direct connection with major Middle Eastern and European carriers, Saudi Airlines being one of the pilot carriers in the region to partner NDC with zeeyarah.com. **Dr Abdulaziz Khayat**, Assistant Vice President—Sales Strategies, Saudi Arabian Airlines, said, "In

keeping up with the new advancements in the airlines reservation technologies, Saudia is proud to announce the successful completion of its NDC pilot project. We sincerely thank our partners at Amadeus, TPconnects and Zeeyarah.com for their excellent work and dedication throughout the implementation of this project. Saudia is proud to be the first carrier in the region that secured NDC level 3 certification from IATA."

Mohammed Gaus, CEO and Founder, Zeeyarah, commented, "This is a great achievement for us to start



up in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia because generally such innovative projects commence outside the Kingdom and then try to penetrate into the country. We have done the opposite by starting the project into the Kingdom and then moving out to other parts of the region with an aim to become a global brand.



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Hospitality takes spotlight at Raviz

Participating for the fourth year at Arabian Travel Mart (ATM) in association with Discovery Travels, **Manoj Padhi**, Group General Manager, Raviz Center Point Hotel and Versailles By Raviz Hotel, talks about the hotel's exceptional competency in hospitality services.

TT Bureau

QHow did last year fare for Raviz Hotel in terms of business?

We have been in the hotel business since June 2006 when we acquired Versailles Hotel in Al Rigga in Deira. Growing from strength to strength, last year Versailles By Raviz did an average occupancy of 85 per cent. Since the inception of the award-winning Raviz Center Point Hotel, Bur Dubai in November 2015, we have been growing by leaps and bounds. Last year, the average occupancy was 89 per cent.

QFrom which markets did you see maximum tourist influx?

The source markets for Dubai hotels are dynamic and shift of source producing countries keep occurring. Our major markets are India, Europe, US and the African subcontinent. Since last year, we have made deep inroads to Vietnam, Cambodia,



Manoj Padhi
Group General Manager
Raviz Center Point Hotel and
Versailles By Raviz Hotel

“Our major markets are India, Europe, US and the African subcontinent. Since last year, we have made deep inroads to Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, Myanmar and South America”

Philippines, Myanmar and South America.

QDo you have more leisure or business tourists?

We have a mix of 60 per cent leisure arrivals and 40 per cent of busi-



ness visitors at both our four-star hotels primarily because of our strategic location-proximity to metro stations.

QWhat sets Raviz Hotels apart from others?

The Bur Dubai property has 109 rooms and suites

which include Family Suites and Diva Rooms for solo female guests. The hotel has a 24*7 all day dining, a Pan Asian restaurant, a coffee shop, sports bar and a conference and banquetting venue. The Versailles by Raviz Hotel has 85 rooms and suites along with Interconnecting rooms for families. For dining and entertainment, the hotel has Flavours By Palm Court and Lucky Dragon Coffee Shop. The Pan Asian restaurant also has an attached bar. Mahek, the Asian night club and Zodiac, the conference and social event venue entertains guests. Both hotels have rooms and facilities for the differently-abled also. Visitors can rejuvenate themselves at the roof-top swimming pool and gymnasium. My team and I are guest-focused and

guest centric and ensure that guests not only have a wonderful time but remember the experience for times to come because we believe "With Us, You are Always at Home!"

QHave any event or activity been planned for this year to lure more tourists to the property?

We are constantly doing theme-based events whilst keeping the local community in mind. Every month, we conduct special evenings like Salu Salo Night, Zaika e Hind, Utkal Night, Sri Lankan nights and Comedy Nights. Post Ramadan, we shall be adding Hanoi Nights and TukTuk Nights with the induction of our new chefs from Vietnam and Thailand respectively.



SalamAir's Dubai office opens doors

SalamAir's recent partnership with Smart Travel was celebrated in a ceremony attended by **Captain Mohamed Ahmed**, CEO, SalamAir. The cost is to be kept at minimal rates for travellers' affordability.

 Shehara Rizly

SalamAir started off operations about 14 months ago with flights to Dubai, Karachi, Salalah, Multan, Sohar, Doha, Shiraz and Jeddah. They started with the preferred aircraft Airbus A320 for its economical standard and comfortable boarding for passengers. Captain Ahmed stated that over the past year, they carried over half a million passengers aboard the aircraft with current operations to nine destinations. In terms of Dubai, two flights operate with one in the morning and another in the evening.

Ahmed further stated that although the flight has the capacity to carry 186 passengers, it only accom-



Captain Mohamed Ahmed
CEO
SalamAir

“Over the past year, we carried over half a million passengers aboard the aircraft with current operations to nine destinations”

modates 174 to provide comfort for passengers. A certain amount of baggage

allowance does come in free but the main point is to ensure that cost is kept at minimal so that it is affordable for more travellers to take advantage. Meals on board, seats and all extra items can be tailor-made by travellers as per their requirement.

Oman is one of the most popular destinations amongst the locals and expats in the UAE. The launch of this new office premises within Smart Travel will be an advantage for any queries. Today, low cost carriers are performing well as they deliver a service that is more custom made to suit the travellers'



really matter for seamless travel.

During the festive months in Islamic calendar, SalamAir has special flights to suit the needs of pilgrim tourists who would fly to Mecca or Medina. The airline offers special services and allowances for tourists from

various parts they currently operate from. Other new destinations on the cards are Baku and Tbilisi which constitute popular outbound destination areas for the GCC as they have a visa on arrival policy for certain GCC countries. As a new entrant, SalamAir is steadily en route to becoming one of the leading airlines. 



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If you are looking to soak up some culture, old-world charm and sunshine, look no further! Sharjah is the place for you. This historic old emirate, declared as the cultural capital of the Arab world by UNESCO in 1998 and endorsed as the capital of the Islamic culture in 2014, offers a variety of attractions to please everyone.



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman
SCTDA

Sharjah is your gateway to authentic Arabic art, culture and ancient heritage. In the recent years, the emirate has reaffirmed its position on the global tourism map as one of the favourite destinations for millions of holidaymakers from all over

the world, with its historical and cultural landmarks that include several award-winning museums.

Along with a clear focus on the restoration and preservation of important heritage sites, mosques and traditional old souks,

a wealth of natural landscapes makes this emirate a premier outdoor activity tourism destination as well. Thrill seekers can indulge in activities such as sandboarding in the desert, desert adventure safaris that involve dune bashing, quad biking, camel rides and exploring wildlife. Unique tourist attractions like the ancient archaeological site of Mleiha, Al Majaz Waterfront, Eye of the Emirates wheel plus the captivating east coast, add to the emirate's perfect mix of cultural, archeological landmarks and desert adventures.

Be sure to enjoy the tranquil beauty of the Arabian desert, wander through the dunes on a camel trek, taste a cup of authentic Arabic coffee as the sun rises

over the sands or have exciting and unusual adventures in pristine seas, ancient historical sites and challenging mountain ranges.

In Sharjah, you get to enjoy the authentic Arabian atmosphere which is rare to find in some of the Gulf region's ultra-modern cities. Visitors can also experience the stunning natural treasures of Kalba and Dibba Al Hisn, both within Sharjah, where they can enjoy the emirate's natural beauty and participate in outdoor activities at mangroves, mountains and wadis. For the adrenaline junkies, the emirate's east coast offers water sports like snorkelling and diving. Families exploring this coastline can also enjoy a wide range of accommodation from beach

camps, motels, hotels and resorts, most with access to beaches, seas and pools.

Sharjah's focus on historical and cultural preservation is most evident in the Heart of Sharjah area, where the region's most extensive restoration project gives visitors a glimpse into life as it used to be in the Gulf. Carefully restored merchant's houses, public squares and working souks surrounded by coral brick walls and carved wooden doors allow visitors to step back in time.

Visitors will surely want to click few pictures around the Sharjah Fountain, located in the Khalid Lagoon, one of the biggest fountains in the Gulf region, sending jets of water soaring up to



Central Souk

adventure



Adventures on sand dunes

100 meters high in the air. Nearby, the piazza overlooks cybernetic fountains spanning more than 220 meters wide, allowing visitors to enjoy fountain shows that combine lasers, light, video, audio and movement.

Mleiha is a major tourist hub in Sharjah that captivates outdoor enthusiasts, history buffs, families and explorers seeking a relaxing experience away from the hustle and bustle of the city. The centre unites archaeological, eco and adventure tourism while there are also spa and resort tourism projects in the pipeline. Begin your day at Mleiha with an informative tour that includes a short video explaining the history of the landscape and the details

of artefacts discovered over the years. Bolstering its position as one of the UAE's premier destinations for sightseeing and outdoor pursuits, Mleiha has an array of activities designed to satisfy tourists' passion for adventure during the winter season. The destination also offers trekking or Polaris buggy rides across sand dunes and gravel plains.

The well-known Al Qasba entices visitors with a plethora of multi-cuisine restaurants and cafés with outdoor seating overlooking the canal. The 'Eye of the Emirates' is to be found here, a giant Ferris wheel that offers an aerial view of Sharjah Corniche, lagoons and landscape, extending its horizons as far as neigh-

boring Dubai. Capable of carrying 336 passengers simultaneously in 42 air-conditioned cabins that go up to 60 meters high over Sharjah, 'Eye of the Emirates' will easily be one of the most memorable parts of your Sharjah experience.

For those interested in learning more about Sharjah's flora and fauna, The Wasit Wetland Centre, located on the Sharjah-Ajman border, is a flourishing natural hub that allows visitors to take a closer look at rare birds and other wetland species. The natural lagoons of this reserve attract around 150 species of birds throughout the year.

Sharjah is also home to a number of private and public well-preserved, picturesque beaches. Al Khan Beach is the first public beach in Sharjah with various amenities designed for sports enthusiasts as well as guests who prefer relaxing on the beach. Located near Al Khan historic area, you will find a range of activities like kayaking, kite surfing, parasailing, banana boat rides, fly board rides and much more.

Khorfakkan, which also houses one of the world's leading container transshipment ports, is a top spot for divers and offers a chance to see many unusual marine species. Shark Island here is a famous diving spot, with

many sites in the coral outcroppings. Boats can also be hired here for a cruise along the coast. Other attractions in the region include Rifaisa Dam, souks, Al Wurrayah Falls and Hajar Mountains.

Kalba, a quaint fishing village on the seashore, is yet another major tourist attraction famed for the intriguing Khor Kalba creek, sandy beaches and the oldest natural mangrove forest in Arabia. The nature reserve of Kalba is also a bird-watcher's paradise, especially during spring and autumn migrations. Rare Arabian-collared kingfishers, reef herons and booted warblers are often spotted here.

Step out of the daily monotony and seek the serenity of a destination housing old-world charm along with rich Islamic culture and traditions. Sharjah calls you!

For the history buff

➤ Begin your day at Mleiha with an informative tour that includes a short video explaining the history of the landscape and the details of artefacts discovered over the years

➤ The Mleiha Archaeological and Ecotourism Project is replete with archaeological discoveries, thereby making it worthy of its tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site status



Sharjah Aquarium



Al Arsa Souq



AlHisn Fort



Ferris Wheel



Umm An-Nar Tomb

Taste a slice of Singapore in Dubai

Singapore Airlines along with Singapore Tourism Board conducted an interactive event recently to promote the destination and the airline to many visitors at City Walk. They put together an immersive journey of Singapore for a better idea about the destination and its offerings beyond a stop-over destination.



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Ayla preserves traditional flavours

Strategically located in the lush green areas of the United Arab Emirates, Ayla Hotels & Resorts scores higher precisely due to the environs in attracting not only the GCC but the rest of the world. **Mohamed Soussan**, Group General Manager of the hotel group, shares details with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau

Known as the Garden City with the maximum number of roundabouts, Al Ain is one of the most picturesque destinations in the region. Last year, Ayla Hotels showed remarkable improvement in terms of leisure segment compared to previous years from different markets. There was an increase in tourists from



Mohamed Soussan
Group General Manager
Ayla Grand Hotel

GCC, Europe and Korean with a great mix of markets. The five-star Ayla Grand Hotel comprises 220 rooms, four-star Ayla Hotel has 153 rooms and Ayla Bawadi houses 90 rooms. Meeting and function rooms are also available for events.

Mohamed Soussan,
Group General Manager,

“Since it is a non-liquor concept hotel in adherence to local traditions, our properties are mostly preferred by GCC families. The concept has also found wide acceptance and popularity among the target group as well as foreign tourist and business executives”

Ayla Hotels & Resorts said, “Since it is a non-liquor concept hotel in adherence to local traditions, our properties are mostly preferred by GCC families. The concept has also found wide acceptance and popularity among the target group as well as foreign tourist and business executives.”

On participating in ATM, Soussan said, “The exhibition is a chance to meet major players of the tourism in-

dustry and establish contact with many suppliers.”

Ayla Hotels is set to promote its properties to national and international business partners and guests all around the world

besides announcing upcoming projects. Talking about the strategy adopted to stay ahead in the market, Soussan comments, “Maintaining a strong relationship with our existing partners and finding new markets, new tour operators and travel agents is at the fore of our game plan. We also have various

packages for Al Ain attractions and staycations such as Camel Market Tour, Wadi Adventure and Al Ain Zoo.” Driven by the goal of becoming the preferred business and leisure hotel operator in the Middle East, Ayla has chalked out an elaborate expansion plan to increase the company's portfolio to 10 properties within the next 10 years.



Park Regis marks debut in Bahrain

StayWell Holdings announced the expansion of its Park Regis brand into Bahrain with the opening of the country's first Park Regis hotel in the city of Manama. The 19-storey hotel offers 164 guest rooms, an onsite fitness centre with 24-hour gymnasium and lap pool, and state-of-the-art business facilities.

TT Bureau

With entertainment at the front of mind, Park Regis Lotus Hotel boasts an array of premium onsite restaurant and bar options including buffet breakfast and casual dining, a patisserie and tearoom, and a roof top café, which offers panoramic views of the Juffair Sea. **Simon Wan**, President and Director, StayWell Holdings, said, “This new property is

an exciting opportunity to expand Park Regis' brand presence in the Middle East. Alongside our parent company, Prince Hotels & Resorts, StayWell Holdings is in the midst of an exciting rapid development programme with plans to expand both brands internationally and a current focus on the Middle East.”

“Opening the Park Regis Lotus Hotel in Bahrain is an exciting achievement for



Simon Wan
President and Director
StayWell Holdings

StayWell to further cement its Park Regis brand in the region, with two Park Regis hotels already operating in Dubai and a further two under development for the Middle East,” he said.

Dr Varghese Kurian,
Owner, Park Regis Lotus

Hotel, said, “We are excited to have partnered with StayWell Holdings to open the first Park Regis hotel in the coastal city of Manama.”

The hotel's business facilities offer a superior accommodation and conference solution for corporate travellers, including two fully equipped meeting rooms, offering spectacular views of Bahrain and a range of facilities and services. Centrally located in Bahrain's capital of Manama, Park Regis Lotus Hotel has easy access to the diplomatic area, financial centre, Bahrain Bay in Manama, major shipping centres and the Al Fateh

Mosque, Bahrain's largest mosque. All Park Regis Lotus Hotel's guest rooms are lavishly equipped with air-conditioning, 24-hour personal butler service, high-speed Wi-Fi and superior marble bathroom amenities including a free-standing

bathtub and frameless glass shower. Additionally, guests can access housekeeping, laundry, valet and baby-sitting services, airport drop-off and pick-up, full time security and ample parking during their stay.



“Opening the Park Regis Lotus Hotel in Bahrain is an exciting achievement for StayWell to further cement its Park Regis brand in the region, with two Park Regis hotels already operating in Dubai and a further two under development for the Middle East”

Travelport enters into content deal

A new multi-year technology and content agreement was recently signed between Travelport and Airtrade Holland BV, the Dutch leader in the field of travel technology.

 TT Bureau

Under the new agreement, Airtrade will utilise Travelport's open platform and Universal API technology to deliver its customers informed content in real-time from over 400 airlines, 650,000 hotel properties and 35,000 car rental locations. With 250 airlines signed up to

use Travelport's unique merchandising technology, Airtrade will also be able to display, gain powerful information around, and sell branded fare families and ancillary products (such as paid seat assignments, baggage fees, priority boarding, etc) from these airlines. As the first and only global distribution system (GDS) to



Erik van Markus
Country Manager—Netherlands
Travelport

“We believe that Travelport's edge in technological innovation and wide choice of content will ensure our customers get relevant and personalised information they need to create truly memorable trips”

Jeroen Martron
CEO, Airtrade

be certified by IATA as a Level 3 Aggregator under its New Distribution Capability (NDC) initiative, Travelport will soon further benefit Airtrade by creating NDC connections with airlines as they become available.

“Our partnership is testament to our in-depth knowledge of the travel industry and best-in-class technology that travel leaders like Airtrade continually choose us to power their solutions.”

Erik van Markus

create memorable trips.”

Jeroen Martron, CEO, Airtrade, commented, “We are delighted to sign a strategic technology agreement with Travelport to power our travel products. We strongly believe that the company's edge in technological innovation and wide choice of content will ensure our customers get relevant and personalised information they need to

Erik van Markus, Country Manager—Netherlands, Travelport, said, “We are looking forward to working closely with Airtrade to achieve its business goals and expansion strategy. It is testament to our in-depth knowledge of the travel industry and best-in-

class technology that travel leaders like Airtrade continually choose us to power their solutions. I look forward to seeing the business and its customers reap the many benefits this partnership will provide.”

What it entails

With 250 airlines signed up to use Travelport's unique merchandising technology, Airtrade will be able to display, gain powerful information around, and sell branded fare families and ancillary products

Travelport, Priceline extend partnership

Long time partners and travel industry leaders, Travelport and Priceline recently renewed their long-term agreement to continue providing pricing, booking, ticketing and content to Priceline.

 TT Bureau

The renewal of the two companies comes approximately after 20 years when they signed their first agreement for Price-

line to process reservations through Travelport's GDS. Throughout the past two decades, Travelport and Priceline have worked together to make the process of buying and selling

travel easier for customers seeking great travel deals. “Travelport has proven to be a valued partner over the last twenty years in helping Priceline customers find and book the best deals,”

said Brigit Zimmerman, Senior Vice President—Flight, Hotel and Packages, Priceline.com.

Jason Clarke, Senior Vice President and Man-

aging Director—Agency Commerce, Travelport added, “Travelport is proud to continue our long-standing relationship with Priceline. We are committed to supporting Priceline with our

industry-leading search and pricing capabilities, as well as offering Priceline new technologies that offer faster connections, greater content and more relevant choices.”

Show your
difference

Convert prospects into
customers with more
personalized, relevant
travel choices.



travelport.com/showyourdifference

Sabre is driven by travel evolution

Sabre Corporation will release the latest technology forecast, Sabre Lab Report 2018 at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM 2018) and sponsor the technology theatre from April 22-25, 2018. The 2018 report evaluates automation, authenticity and blockchain as three major areas for consideration.



Demonstrating its latest technology, Sabre will launch the new Sabre Red Workspace (nSRW), a modern platform built around its core GDS infrastructure to provide more services and faster value to customers. The system is considered to be the next-generation travel agency platform, with new decision support tools, predictive data insights and merchandising capabilities that bring agents and suppliers together to create personalised experiences for travellers. It is developed to help customers meet the new, more empowered traveller who increasingly wants personalisation and choice.



Jorge Vilches



Raymond Vrijenhoek



Ross Veitch



Antonio Fellino



Muhammad Chbib

The travel industry is driven by high advanced technology infrastructure and adoption of consumers' technologies backed with an increased appetite for travel. The landscape of the travel industry is transforming and so are the roles of travel players. Industry stakeholders including providers, intermediaries and sellers need to work together to complement each other's roles. Sabre is bringing together industry experts to discuss how they can work together towards a less fragmented ecosystem and recognise how data can be used to achieve personalisation whilst recruiting emerging

technologies to improve traveller experience.

Join another discussion by Sabre and Dnata executives about the travel landscape between online and offline and ways to succeed in a competitive market. The speakers include **Raymond Vrijenhoek**, Vice President, Sabre Travel Network—Middle East and **Antonio Fellino**, Vice President, B2C Retail & eCommerce, dnata Travel. The next session involves 'Beyond NDC: The Evolution of Travel Retailing and Distribution' with Madhavan Kasthuri, Senior Director—Technical Support, Sabre Travel Network, EMEA on April 24. With IATA NDC, the next generation of airline distribution has begun. 



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Personality of the month

Game changer in the industry

The passion for travel and an earnest desire to provide affordable travel experience to customers inspired **Anil Chandirani** to establish a travel management company three decades ago. From humble beginnings in Kigali, Rwanda, he is now the owner of one of the largest conglomerates spread over over 60 countries with 100 offices across the world.

 TT Bureau

After completing graduation from India, Anil Chandirani flew to Africa to join his father in his import-export business. "I am not from a travel background but was travelling quite often with my father to support him in business and, in the process, was always in search for the best fares.

Later, I decided to start my own venture and that was how Satguru Travel came into being. While I had to struggle during the initial years, I saw opportunities in West Africa by setting the office hours from 8 am to 8 pm. Travel agencies there were then operating from 9 am to 12 noon, and resuming from 3 pm until 6 pm. I believe the long opening hours and dedicated

staff has been our keys to success."

Tale of two industries

Chandirani intended to join his father's business but was destined to build an empire in the travel trade. He recalls, "Besides supporting my father in his export ventures, I managed to grow side by side in travel too. As I started in Rwanda, no IATA organisation existed then.

I had to apply from Congo and it took me about four years to achieve my first IATA license which at the time, was considered as an achievement for one's beginning in the trade. My idea was to explore opportunities in West Africa and launch about 10 branches."

Trending with technology

Sharing his outlook on technology, Chandirani says, "Digitalisation has taken the world by storm. Our corporate clients are looking for more transparency, independent approach, more reports and more conveni-

ence to arrange their budget. We recently held an event for our corporate clients to introduce a corporate booking tool to enhance business growth for corporates at Satguru. It will give complete freedom to the corporates to book their tickets, hotels and all other services online. The industry is evolving, distribution channels are being looked as competition and airlines are reaching out to customers directly. With these conditions coming into play, travel agents have to invest in the latest travel technology to be a step ahead of airlines to provide services."

Chandirani's travel management company has become one of the formidable names in global travel business mainly due to its unique service and fully dedicated staff. With reference to the motto of the company, Anil Chandirani says, "We always strive to provide the best services to our corporates and customers. We have a great sense of satisfaction when our customers appreciate our services. As digitalization has changed the world, we are also converting most of our operations to technology and will continue to keep investing in technology."

“With conditions like increasing competition and evolving industry methods coming into play, travel agents have to invest in the latest travel technology to be a step ahead of airlines to provide services”

New booking tool for corporates

Satguru Travel organised a networking event to present its latest booking tool for corporates, enabling them to book their tickets, hotels and all other services online. The tool will also provide complete transparency to its corporate customers.



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Oman Air shines bright in Dubai

Dubai is one of the most growing markets for Oman Air due to the relationship between the two countries and the borders they share in several areas. **Shahzad Naqvi**, Country Manager–Dubai and Northern Emirates, Oman Air shares details about how the carrier has steadily been benchmarking Dubai as an important hub.

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Q How did Oman Air fare in terms of business last year? What were the strong sectors?

Oman Air has been performing extremely well in Dubai in all its segments as it has grown its market share which now stands at its all-time best. The growth comes with the support of award winning premium products to Europe and Far East routes where Oman Air operates state-of-the-art 787 Dreamliners and A330 aircrafts. With nine daily flights between UAE & Muscat, guests get an excellent connecting time in Muscat before they continue their onward journey. The new airport will add to our guest's already seamless experience whilst in transit.

Q Were any new codeshares or products introduced last year? Are there any in line for this year?

Whilst there has been an emphasis on keeping costs down, the fleet and network has continued to grow. Oman Air has invested in its award-winning on-board ex-

perience, website and Sindbad loyalty programme. In 2017, Oman Air introduced codeshares with Malaysia Airlines, Gulf Air and Royal Jordanian Airlines. So far this year, the airline has entered into similar agreements with Bangkok Airways and Kuwait Airways, thereby opening up more international destinations to guests.

Air and are committed to the benefits of technology and its development. A crucial part of our recent technological change has been to undertake a comprehensive mapping of processes throughout the company. Recent digital innovations include the introduction of an electronic flight bag and iPads for all our pilots. The use of iPads is set to be extended to a

Crew Reporting Building at the airport. The new OMR7.6 million facility is scheduled to be completed soon.

Q How do exhibitions such as ATM contribute towards the promotion of the airline?

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) is the region's

leading and mostly visited during the summers. Oman Air runs special campaigns aimed at maximising visitor inflow to Oman during the Kharif sea-

“The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) is the region's leading trade fair tailored for the travel fraternity. Exhibitors use this platform to showcase their newly launched products and services, place new orders and network with professionals. Oman Air has long been a participant at ATM. The travel show is attended by our senior management to meet suppliers and customers not only from the UAE but from across the globe”

Dreamliner is a new aircraft which is a crowd-puller for certain sectors. Please shed light on this.

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner offers industry-leading technology and an excellent inflight experience. This innovative and comfortable aircraft is a crowd-puller for all sectors, but particularly comes into its own on longer flights due to its unparalleled fuel efficiency and ability to fly further without stopping.

Q How does Oman Air cater to the market trends in technology to be above the rest?

We have a detailed digital strategy at Oman

number of areas within the airline's operations, including cabin crew, engineering teams and ground handling. Another digital innovation has been the introduction of online in-flight meal and drinks reservations for First Class customers.

Q What was the role played by Oman Air in the recently-opened Muscat International Airport?

As a key stakeholder in Muscat International Airport, Oman Air was involved in the redevelopment, new lounges and dedicated check-in areas, which was designed to match our requirements. We have signed an agreement to develop and construct a new

leading trade fair tailored for the travel fraternity. Exhibitors use this platform to showcase their newly launched products and services, place new orders and network with professionals. Oman Air has long been a participant at ATM. The travel show is attended by its senior management to meet suppliers and customers not only from the UAE but from across the globe.

Q Do you have any new campaign for the GCC?

Oman Air works closely with the Ministry of Tourism on various campaigns for these markets. Salalah is a key destination which is popular in the GCC mar-

ket. Besides Salalah, other interesting places in Oman include Khasab known for its scenic beauty; Jebel Akhdar, a nature reserve known for its biodiversity; Ras Al Jinz, a nesting place for the endangered green turtle, and Nizwa, Sur and Sohar, to name a few.

Q Does Oman Air have the possibility of catering to the visa requirements of passengers?

Visas for international visitors to Oman are now only available online, and

Oman Air fully supports this new process that was put in place by the Sultanate from March 2018.

Digital innovations

➤ Oman Air recently introduced an electronic flight bag and iPads for all pilots. The use of iPads is set to be extended to a number of areas within the airline's operations, including cabin crew, engineering teams and ground handling

➤ The airline also launched online in-flight meal and drinks reservations for First Class customers



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PALM DUBAI

Sustainability to drive business

Apart from the usual global stage and travel tech seminars, the special emphasis on Arabian Travel Market Student Conference is a way to ensure the sustainable tourism future of tomorrow, believes **Simon Press**, Senior Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market.

TT Bureau

What will be new at ATM this year?

This year, ATM has partnered with the International Hotel Investment Forum (IHIF) to present the inaugural destination investment panel. Taking place on the ATM Global Stage, the session will discuss what drives investment in travel destinations across the Middle East and neighbouring regions.

Also new this year, is the ATM Student Conference, 'Career in Travel', a programme clearly aimed at students and graduates. Taking place on the final day of ATM, this programme will allow aspiring travel profes-



Simon Press
Senior Exhibition Director
Arabian Travel Market

sionals and hoteliers to listen to guest speakers and travel industry leaders. It will also help provide a greater understanding of the industry and potential career paths.

How many new exhibitors have been confirmed?

This year's show will

welcome over 2,500 exhibiting companies and an expected 40,000 attendees with over 150 countries represented, 65 national pavilions and more than 100 new exhibitors set to make their ATM debut. ATM 2018 will also showcase the largest exhibition

from April 22-25, ATM 2018 will feature 68 main hotel stand exhibitors, including eight new brands over an area of more than 5,000 sqm, in addition to over 100 Middle East hotels featured alongside their respective national tourism organisations.

“This year's show will host a series of seminar sessions looking back on the tourism revolution in the MENA region over the last quarter of a century, while exploring how the industry will shape up over the next 25 years”

What is the theme and focus for this year's ATM?

ATM 2018 has adopted Responsible Tourism, including sustainable travel trends,

as its main theme and this will be integrated across all show verticals and activities, including advice clinics and focused seminar sessions, featuring dedicated exhibitor participation. Running throughout the event, professionals from across the industry will demonstrate how, with the correct strategy in place, the tourism industry can expand its responsible credentials. In celebration of its 25th year, this year's show will host a series of seminar sessions looking back on the tourism revolution in the MENA region over the last quarter of a century, while exploring how the industry will shape up over the next 25 years, in light of geopolitical

tensions, economic uncertainties, huge technological advances and, of course, the increasing trend of responsible tourism.

What are the new seminars on travel tech?

Hyperloop and future travel experiences will kick off proceedings on ATM's global stage with a host of high-profile panellists lined up to discuss the revolutions we can expect to see in the travel industry. Themes for other seminars during the show will include future travel experiences, aviation, travel technology, entrepreneurship, halal tourism, Virgin Hyperloop One, luxury tourism and Instagram.

Share live experiences from Atlantis

On reaching one million fans on Facebook, Atlantis The Palm, Dubai rewarded followers with free stays as they launched the world's first social media suite. Facebook fans were invited to book a free one night's stay in the Atlantis Fan Suite with bookings taken every day until December 2018.

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The unique room will offer breathtaking views of The Palm island and will be adapted to suit the desires of every social media user. Upon check in, guests will have to enter their Facebook log in at the door of the suite to unlock the room and can sit back and tune into the special Facebook Fan channel on the in-room TV. For those who need assistance during their stay, can 'poke' their personal butler using a special in-room intercom system. For those who want to share every moment of their stay with friends and family, guests can place their handset on a stand at the special Facebook Live



Lounge, and relax on the thumbs up shaped chair to record their messages. Exciting additions extend to the bathroom, where a social media mirror is in prime position to message

friends as one put indulges in make-up.

In addition to the complimentary stay, all guests to the Atlantis Fan Suite will receive a host of additional

VIP experiences including unlimited complimentary access to The Lost Chambers Aquarium and Aquaventure. Guests will also receive Atlantis Imperial Club benefits worth over AED 3000 per

day, including VIP check in, breakfast, access to the Imperial Club lounges for daily afternoon tea, evening drinks and canapes, as well as a personal Concierge service, besides much more.

Ravini Perera, Senior Vice President—Sales, Marketing and PR, Atlantis The Palm, Dubai, comments, "Having achieved the one million fan mark on Facebook, we felt it was time to give back and thank all our fans for their continuous support and sharing content with us over the years. Atlantis, The Palm's social media platforms receive an average of 2,500 posts tagging the resort every week and 147,762

uses of #AtlantisThePalm every year."

Atlantis, The Palm is no stranger to excellent social media content and popularity. In 2017, the iconic destination resort situated on The Palm Island in Dubai took the official title as Instagram's most photographed hotel in Dubai and The Middle East, and fourth most snapped hotel in the world.

Stay connected

For those who want to share every moment of their stay, guests can place their handset on a stand at Facebook Live Lounge, and relax on the thumbs up shaped chair to record messages

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Movenpick Hotels and Resorts

Middle East & Africa

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has promoted **Marc Descrozaile** to President—Middle East & Africa (MEA). He joined Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts from Carlson Rezidor where he was Area Vice President for the firm's Africa and Indian Ocean operations. He has significant experience working in the Middle East, having also been employed as Regional Director, UAE, Egypt, Jordan and Oman for the hotel group. He has also held key executive positions at several major hospitality companies including Hilton, Compass Group and London's Claridge's Hotel.



Address Dubai Marina

Dubai

Emaar Hospitality Group has appointed **Riad Abi Haidar** as General Manager of Address Dubai Marina. He is mandated with strengthening the strategic positioning of the hotel, delivering creative initiatives and focusing on enhancing operational efficiency and productivity. Joining from Manzil Downtown, where he was General Manager, Haidar has a proven track record in delivering industry-leading innovation and setting benchmarks in hotel performance. He has extensive experience across the industry, having worked in several senior managerial positions at international hotel chains in various global markets.



Four Seasons

Abu Dhabi

Four Seasons Hotel Abu Dhabi at Al Maryah Island welcomes **Olivier Thomas** as General Manager. With over 20 years of experience in the luxury hospitality industry, Thomas joins the team in the UAE capital from Four Seasons Hotel Casablanca where he held the same position from 2014 to 2017. Prior to this, Thomas has served at the company's properties in Amman, his first Four Seasons assignment, as well as in Prague. In his new role, Thomas will ensure that the property demonstrates a keen sense of commitment to the dynamic growth of Al Maryah Island as the capital's financial hub and a sought-after luxury shopping destination.



Baros

Maldives

Baros Maldives appointed **Ahmed Jihad-Jay** as its new General Manager. Having worked at Baros Maldives in 2010 as Operations Manager, Jay is 'coming home' to Baros as General Manager, after gaining a wealth of experience in the Maldives. He began his hotel career at Full Moon Maldives. He started as Front Office Manager, working his way up to Resident Manager. This was followed by a stint at Sheraton Maldives, before he joined the team at Baros for the first time in 2008. His career took him to Niyama Maldives in 2011, followed by Huvafenfushi, where he remained Resort Manager for the past five years.



Meydan Hotel

Dubai

Meydan Hotels & Hospitality announced the appointment of **Anne Liyanage** as Director of Sales for The Meydan Hotel and Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa. Liyanage, in her new role, will provide leadership and strategic direction for the cluster sales team and will oversee the sales operation and business development of Meydan Hotels & Hospitality portfolio featuring The Meydan Hotel and Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa. She holds more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality and travel sectors in Sri Lanka, Australia and United Arab Emirates.



Sheraton Grand Hotel

Dubai

Sheraton Grand Hotel, Dubai has designated **Hagop Tchaparian** as new Director of Sales and Marketing. Tchaparian joined the property from Marriott Hotel Al Jaddaf and Marriott Executive Apartments Al Jaddaf, Dubai, where he was multi-property Director of Sales and Marketing for three-and-a-half years. Tchaparian has worked for several properties within the Marriott International group, including Dubai Marriott Harbour Hotel & Suites, where he was Director of Sales and Marketing from 2012 to 2014. The 41-year-old has also worked under the Sheraton brand previously, as Sales Manager at Sheraton Kuwait Hotels & Towers.



InterContinental

Abu Dhabi

InterContinental Abu Dhabi has announced the appointment **Karam Al Mordaa** as Director of Rooms to oversee the room division and guest experience for the hotel. Al Mordaa has more than 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Having worked at InterContinental Abu Dhabi since 2008 as a Guest Service Supervisor, he brings expertise and proficiency in Guest Experience within the hotel. Al Mordaa will undertake responsibility of the rooms division through a team of 216 members including recreation, marina, housekeeping, front office, and health and safety departments.



Shaza Hotels

Dubai Corporate Office

Ali Ozbay has been designated as the Director of Marketing & Communications of Shaza Hotels. Ozbay will be leading the launch campaigns across the group's pipeline while creating Shaza's brand assets, communication channels and digital strategies. Having had a distinguished career in London, Istanbul, Dubai, spanning over 18 years at international and multi-national brands such as Malmaison & Hotel Du Vin, Virgin Holidays, Cisco, Rixos Hotels, Ali presents invaluable cross-sectoral experience to the Shaza team.





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by mantis

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