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Setting eyes on new travel trends

With a focus on the growing travel, tourism and hospitality trends in the region, attendees at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) share their insights on emerging market movements, and how well it will benefit the trade in the region as it heads for Expo 2020.

SHEHARA RIZLY



Abdulla Al Dah
CEO
Al Shaab Village

“Housing the largest ice rink in the emirate of Sharjah, Al Shaab Village is the perfect family destination which preserves the culture of Sharjah yet caters to the many requirements of today’s local and international travellers. ATM is a very important event in our calendar as it is one of the most close-to-home platforms where we can participate and network to provide destinations with more opportunities. Our partnership with Sharjah Tourism Development Authority enables us to build and strengthen agreements with many feeder markets that prefer to visit the destination of Sharjah. Residents from Sharjah, GCC and other emirates are regular visitors who help in the rising number game. Over the past few years, we have witnessed over 250,000 visitors and this year we are working on a new refurbishment plan which will position us at an even higher level as there is nothing similar in the emirate.”



Mohammed Khoori
General Manager, Golden Sands
Hotel Apartments

“We are continuously working towards fortifying our presence as a market leader in the hospitality industry by attracting new and wider markets from the GCC, India, China, Russia, UK and other European countries. One way to do this is by making a strong presence at leading trade exhibitions where we meet new suppliers and discover the latest industry trends, innovations, research and insights particularly about the region. We are planning to open our doors to serious buyers and give them the opportunity to promote and sell Golden Sands Hotel Apartments to their customers. With the correct strategy in place, we will remain to be the preferred accommodation of long and short term stay guests, business and leisure travellers and family, groups or individuals.”

“With the transformation of the organisation of Ministry of Tourism into a customer centric strategy, the structure is now based on the needs of travellers in terms of creating tourist-friendly products. It is hoped with this new strategy we can reach our target this year. Despite a decline in tourist arrivals from Middle East in 2017, the Middle East market continues to contribute in spending and helping generate revenues more than any other market. Out of 9.2 million people in UAE, 8.8 million are active internet users, and 6.3 million are social media users. Therefore, our promotion strategy is now focused towards digitalisation as most people tend to make bookings of flight and hotels through their smartphones. Besides, adventure and responsible tourism have a double function to play for economic benefit to the community and visitors.”



Nia Niscaya
Deputy Minister of Tourism
Indonesia

“The airline industry is evolving at an unprecedented rate with rising customer demands. These demands have evolved from passive to proactive, and this redefines the engagements and competitive landscape for both airlines and travel industry players. Being a leading global event, this is a grand opportunity for RwandAir to showcase itself to an international audience both as an airline and the strategic link for Rwanda with the outside world. Our key highlights include our service, latest destinations and entry into new geographical markets. These exhibitions are key drivers for creating industry networks, opportunities and commercial success. My most valuable networks originate from these exhibitions I have attended across the world. Our delegation will have the General Consulate of the Republic of Rwanda in Dubai and Northern Emirates, and Rwanda Development Board amongst others.”



Timothy Njihia
Country Manager—UAE
RwandAir

Contd. on page 3 ▶

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Building brands on trust value

► Contd. from page 1



Markland Blaiklock
Deputy Chief Executive
Officer, Centara Hotels &
Resorts

“We’re approaching the end of the first full year of operation at Centara Muscat Oman and we’re very pleased with the performance in exceeding targets regularly. The volumes are not yet huge but they are growing in leaps and bounds with many new flight routes and increase in the volume of flights from both flagship and low-cost carriers. Our Dubai-based regional team will be present at ATM this year,

joined by senior executives from our corporate headquarters and key General Managers. Centara Residences & Suites will open a luxury branded hotel and a themed family resort in Dubai in 2020. The Middle East is a key region of focus for us. In addition to projects mentioned, we expect to open at least two more properties in Dubai besides exploring opportunities in Abu Dhabi.”



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

“Our stand will include demo pods that allow visitors to experience how we help agents drive revenue by providing real-time access to a vast array of products and services. These include high quality content, delivering powerful business and competitor insights using our analytics tools, and engaging travellers throughout their travel journey. As the only travel commerce platform to achieve IATA’s highest certification as an NDC Level

3 Aggregator, we will also have experts on the stand discussing how we are extending our leadership in this area by industrialising our NDC capability and incorporating NDC content into our suite of products for airlines and travel agencies. Our experts will discuss how we are using our merchandising solution to help travel agents boost sales by displaying, gaining information and selling branded fare families and ancillary products.”



Samir Mehta
General Manager
Arabian Adventures

“Experiential travel together with sustainability of the environment are being increasingly sought-after by tourists. The growth of millennial tourists is contributing to an increase in the late booking trends, thereby making strong digital presence vital. The diversification of product offerings and tourist segment mix is indeed supporting growth in adventure tourism to UAE. From dune buggies,

zip lines, jet-ski, snow-ski and helicopter rides, safety standards are essential to ensure the sustained growth in this segment. ATM is a key tourism trade event, with increasing number of buyers and exhibitors from this region and beyond. Arabian Adventures will be at the Dubai and Abu Dhabi stands to meet trade partners and showcase our products and services.”

“Central Hotels will be unveiling two new properties this ATM which is set to double its inventory of keys with the opening of two spectacular hotels namely Royal Central The Palm (207 keys) and Canal Central in Business Bay (280 keys). Central Hotels’ impressive growth in Dubai is fuelled by the city’s extensive expansion of tourism infrastructure in preparation of Expo 2020. Our expansion strategy demonstrates our commitment to support the growth of the destination and its envisioned potential. We look forward to being a part of this incredible success by contributing positively to the hospitality sector in the UAE.”



Ahmad Al Abdulla
Chairman
Central Hotels

“We are extremely proud of the success and development of The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah since its opening in 2016. From the time when we officially launched the property, we have welcomed an array of guests, both local and international alike who, have seemingly all held the property in the same favoured regard. The overarching feedback from our guests supports our conceptual aim to offer a unique 360-degree resort experience with a perfect balance of sun, sea, nature and design, as well as upholding the worldwide standard of The Oberoi brand’s exemplary services. We continue to receive exposure and recognition in regional and international markets and look forward to a prosperous ATM and year ahead.”



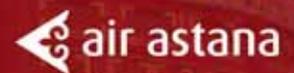
Christophe Mousset
General Manager
The Oberoi, Al Zorah

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Shurooq for bespoke visitors at ATM

Arabian Travel Market is the most exclusive networking platform in the Middle East. Sharjah's investment arm, Shurooq participates every year to display its myriad offerings targeting the niche clientele. **HE Marwan Al Serkal**, CEO, Shurooq, talks about their plans with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau

How important is ATM for Shurooq?

Shurooq has been participating at ATM for the past 11 years, and has shown growing support to the exhibition as it provides the ideal target audience for Shurooq in terms of international experts and investors. Last year we launched our luxury 'Sharjah Collection' brand which includes Al Badayer Oasis, Kingfish-

er Lodge at the Kalba eco-tourism project and Fossil Rock Lodge at the Mleiha Archaeological and eco-tourism project, in addition to the luxury and hospitality projects we previously launched Al Bait Hotel at Heart of Sharjah.

ATM's bespoke visitor profile is the right target for all our destinations and year-long activities, where each year we host and organise a series of events,

exhibitions and festivals across all our destinations, delivering unique experiences to a diversified set of crowds, tourists and residences in Sharjah and the UAE. These destinations include Al Qasba, Heart of Sharjah, Al Majaz Waterfront, Al Montazah Parks, Mleiha Archeological and Ecotourism Project, Al Noor Island and The Flag Island.

As Sharjah's flourishing tourism industry continues

to play an ever-increasing role in the emirate's economy and firmly establishes itself on the global tourism map, we will be looking to maintain and grow our status on this worldwide industry platform and highlight our developments in the years to come.

What is Shurooq's role at ATM?

Like every year, Shurooq participates under the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, contributing to the emirate's integrated and unified efforts to drive its tourism to new horizons, and introduce international visitors on the distinctive tourism and hospitality infrastructure

Sharjah has long sustained over the years.

What are the expectations from this year's ATM?

A recent article published by Arabian Business unveiled that Sharjah has been named as one of the world's best holiday destinations to enjoy five-star luxury. It ranked fifth on the research compiled skyscanner.ae/hotels, the global travel search engine, which aims to make luxury stays even more attainable for travellers. We expect this to be a key driver for interest by local and international investors, hotel and tour operators, who are exploring unique market penetra-



HE Marwan Al Serkal
CEO
Shurooq

tion into UAE and Sharjah's tourism sector. This will also play a key role in allowing visitors at ATM to explore diversified expansion options through unique offerings that reflect the emirate's rank as one of the top tier destinations for luxury, culture and authentic tourism experiences.

“ATM's bespoke visitor profile is the right target for all our destinations and year-long activities, where each year we host and organise a series of events, exhibitions and festivals across all our destinations, delivering unique experiences to a diversified set of crowds, tourists and residences in Sharjah and the UAE”

Now, secure a career in travel

Research shows that tourism employment in the UAE is expected to grow to 394,000 by 2026 and 781,000 by 2027 in Saudi Arabia. At Arabian Travel Market, the maiden student conference titled 'Career in travel' will be hosted as part of its special events lined up for the exhibition.

TT Bureau

The two-hour conference, scheduled to take place on April 25 in the Showcase Theatre, will feature three interactive seminar sessions including how to gain a career in the industry, developing tourism skills and employment opportunities in travel and tourism; and how to create a job in the travel and tourism industry.

The tourism sector will continue to play a vital role



Simon Press
Senior Exhibition Director
Arabian Travel Market

in UAE's economy, with the employment in the industry to increase from 317,300 in 2016 to 394,000 in 2026,

“Designed to increase student and graduate opportunities within the travel and tourism sector, the programme will allow attendees to learn from the sharpest minds in the industry”

according to a World Travel and Tourism Council report. **Simon Press**, Senior Exhibition Director, ATM said, "Career in Travel has been an integral part of WTM London for the last ten years. Following this success, we are proud to introduce the exclusive student conference to ATM 2018. Designed to

increase student and graduate opportunities within the travel and tourism sector, the complimentary programme will allow attendees to learn from the sharpest minds in the industry. A line-up of key travel experts will share their invaluable knowledge of the sector, as well as their individual career experiences,

while providing advice on how to launch a career in the travel and tourism industry.”

A special panel featuring Alessandro Cabella, General Manager, Jumeirah Group and Abdo Basmaji from Travel Counsellor, will share their experiences while offering advice on the current job market in the region.

The second panel will focus on training the next generation of travel, tourism and hospitality graduates and

professionals. This session will be moderated by Chris Warren, International Director for Responsible Tourism – Australia and the Middle East.

The third and final panel session will explore how to create a job in the travel and tourism industry. Hear from Rana Dababneh, Founder, Pomalo Travel and Tourism and Heba Bin Redha, Co-founder, Emirati Kashtas on their experiences and how they went about setting up on their own.



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African market on Dubai's radar

Considered as one of the most efficient chambers in the world, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry stands out from the rest and contributes towards the emirate's economic growth and diversification. Its recent venture to the African market is a continuation of its success story.

 TT Bureau

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry perceives the African market as a lucrative investment destination and one of the key trading partners for the UAE. **Atiq Juma Nasib**, Senior Vice President-Commercial Services, Dubai Chamber, noted that Africa has been a key focus on Dubai Chamber's expansion radar. Since the Chamber opened its representative office in Nairobi in 2016, it has seen non-oil trade between Kenya and Dubai increase steadily to exceed over \$1 billion in the first nine months of 2017. The number of Kenyan companies has grown steadily over the

years and now exceeds 300. Nasib spoke with top Kenyan journalists who visited the UAE to understand how the Middle Eastern country has succeeded in driving tourism growth and foreign investment. The journalists representing key media houses in Nairobi were led by UAE-based Kenyan investor, **Jalal Balala**.

Balala who is also the Executive Director of Al Azizah

General Trading commended Dubai Chambers, adding that it is one of the most efficient and investor-centric Chambers in the world. He revealed that he is an active member of Dubai Chamber, having joined almost two decades ago, when he first introduced the business of Kenya tea and coffee into the UAE and the Gulf region, under the name Al Azizah General Trading. The journalists conveyed a general mes-

sage to Dubai Chamber's top brass that Kenya has plenty of opportunities to offer UAE businessmen and investors, especially in the field of agriculture, logistics, transport, finance, ICT, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. Nasib took the journalists on a tour of the Dubai Chamber headquarters, and explained how effective the Chamber and its international offices have been in providing value-added to businesses in the UAE and abroad.

"Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry services over 217,000 members in all areas of Dubai including free zone companies, thus making it one of the world's largest membership-based



chambers of commerce. It is also considered as one of the leading chambers in the world in terms of the number of Certificates of Origin issued with an average of 3,000 certificates being issued daily," said Nasib.

Nasib noted that the Chamber is aiming to deliver smart services to 80

per cent of its members in the near future. He explained that the Chamber also aims to eventually make its services accessible 24 hours a day and seven days a week. He said that Dubai Chamber also offers ATA Carnet, an international customs document for some goods that do not require payment of customs duty. 

“Dubai Chamber services over 217,000 members in Dubai including free zone companies, making it to the world's largest membership-based chambers of commerce”

Atiq Juma Nasib

Senior Vice President-Commercial Services, Dubai Chamber



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New markets take centrestage at ATM

The Arabian Travel Market, the much-anticipated event of the year in the Middle East, once again brings together the world on one stage with myriad opportunities on offer for its clientele. Professionals in the industry share their insights for this year's show with **TRAVTALK**.

 TT Bureau



Iftikhar Hamdani
Cluster General
Manager—Ramada Hotel
& Suites Ajman, Ramada
Beach Hotel Ajman and
Wyndham Garden Ajman
Corniche

“ATM is a key platform for us to promote our hotels, especially the new Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche, and reinforce our status as the preferred best-value accommodation in the emirate. The property had been received remarkably in the previous exhibitions we have attended. We are confident to receive full support from our partners and hope that the new hotel will attain the same level of success as our Ramada properties in Ajman.”



Muhammad Haider
General Manager, Ibis
Styles Dubai Jumeira

“As a young property opened just two and a half years ago, we have been able to be consistent in our occupancy levels at an average of 79 per cent since its opening. Our brand is confident about reinventing the image of mid-scale hotels and ATM is an excellent platform to expand our reach and generate new business from all markets.”



Mohamad Awadalla
CEO
Time Hotels

“We will be sharing the expansion plan of our brand till 2020. We are always looking forward to a positive ATM with increase of visitors and more buyers to be present during the event, having the opportunity to set stepping stones with new associates. We have done well for 2017 even with the challenges and resistance. We have managed to pull through with our development plans across the UAE and GCC.”



Ammar Kanaan
Group General Manager,
Central Hotels

“We aim to magnify on widening the reach of our brand by securing new business partners and, manage existing and upcoming projects. We are keen on strengthening our relationships with travel agents, OTAs, tour operators, DMCs and wholesalers. The expectations are high for 2018 especially with the two new properties we are launching in The Palm and Business Bay.”



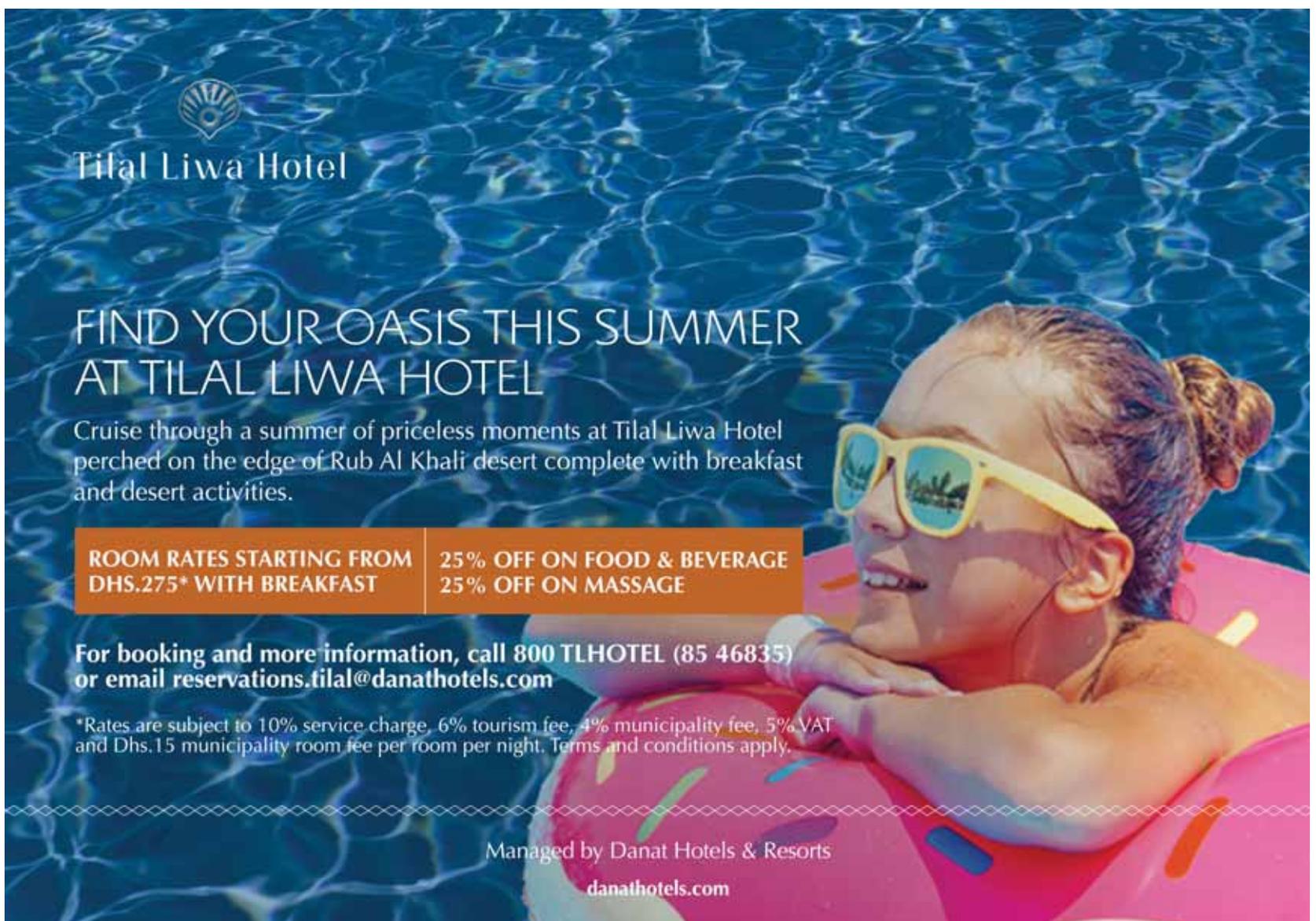
Samer Rafie
Hotel Manager, Hawthorn
Suites by Wyndham JBR

“The GCC markets still top the nationality mix at Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham JBR, and ATM is one of the key events we attend to increase our market share in the region. Our property will showcase deals that are ideal for the Arab travellers. We are also eyeing to reinforce our strategic location and benefit from the upcoming attractions and developments in JBR.”



Karim Bizid
General Manager
The Oberoi, Dubai

“ATM is an opportunity for us to showcase the latest developments of The Oberoi, Dubai. We are expecting to meet top travel industry professionals who are looking to partner with a five-star luxury hotel that provides high quality experience and service that is consistent and reliable for their discerning travellers.”




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Marriott expands portfolio in EMEA

Marriott International has ambitious growth plans for its Middle East and Africa region following signings for more than 30 properties and over 5,000 rooms in the last 12 months. In the next five years, the company plans to increase portfolio in the region by 50 per cent and debut additional brands.

TT Bureau



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

Marriott is set to increase its portfolio in the region to nearly 370 hotels – an increase of more than 50 per cent over the next five years. This will amount to more than 80,000 rooms across 21 brands, including

“Our long-established presence in the region, global footprint, compelling portfolio of brands and strength of distribution platforms continue to position us at the forefront”

the introduction in the region of brands such as EDITION, Element and AC Hotels by Marriott. In line with its development plans, the company and its property owners expect to add 30,000 new jobs across the region in the next five years. Marriott International’s planned growth over the next five years underscores the substantial emphasis that regional governments are placing on growth and investment in the travel and tourism sector. The company estimates that the

30 projects signed in the last 12 months will drive investment of about \$1.8 billion by property owners.

“With clear visions set out by regional governments to grow and invest in the sector, the industry is thriving more than ever,” said Alex Kyriakidis, President and Managing Director, Middle East and Africa, Marriott International. “At Marriott International, we are proud that our owners are opening a range of jobs, as well



as contributing to the ongoing growth of the region’s economy,” he said.

Marriott International’s announcement of its growth plans in the region comes ahead of the Arabian Hotel Investment Conference, which has centered its 2018 theme on ‘Focus on the Future’. The conference is taking place under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah; and founding patron His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Airports, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Chairman and CEO of Emirates Airline and Group. During the annual event, Kyriakidis will join the regional leaders in the panel session to discuss how hotel operators are supporting owners and adjusting to a maturing and shifting regional market.

“Marriott International’s growth in the region is a result of consistently delivering value to our owners. Our long-established presence in the region, global footprint, compelling portfolio of diverse brands, award-winning loyalty programmes and

Growth and expansion plans

❖ Across its seven luxury brands, Marriott International operates over 30 hotels with more than 10,000 rooms across the Middle East and Africa and plans to nearly double the number of hotels in the next five years. That growth will begin with the launch of its EDITION brand in Abu Dhabi later this year.

❖ The company is also expanding its portfolio of upscale brands across the region where there is strong demand for stylish, smart and affordable hospitality. The company’s upscale brands such as Courtyard by Marriott, Aloft, Element and Residence Inn by Marriott, represent over 40% of the properties expected to open in the next five years across the Middle East and Africa.

❖ The growth of Marriott International’s upper-upscale brands, spearheaded by Marriot Hotels, Marriott Executive Apartments and Sheraton, remains steady – accounting for 30 per cent of its hotels expected to open in the next five years.

strength of our distribution platforms continue to position us at the forefront, enabling us to leverage trends to benefit our stakeholders in the region,” added Kyriakidis.

Strong growth for luxury brands

“This region continues to present immense development opportunities for the company to strengthen its competitive position across fast-growing markets,” commented Samir Baidas, Chief Development Officer—Middle East and

Africa, Marriott International. “Our growth plans across the Middle East and Africa not only reflect the high demand for our brands, but also the trust ownership groups have in Marriott International.”

Historically featuring a portfolio of hotels primarily in the upper-upscale segment, Marriott International’s robust development pipeline in the region also highlights strong growth opportunities for its luxury and upscale brands. 📈



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Be assured of travel adventures

Today's travellers engage in adventures ranging from mountaineering, hiking, golfing or even shopping. **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager, Tune Protect, EMEA, talks about a specialised service or coverage which these activities may require, otherwise not included in a traditional travel policy.

TT Bureau

Q Do travellers need a specific travel insurance for a winter destination or should the conventional plan work?

Let's take the example of the most sought-after winter sport at a winter destination – skiing and snowboarding. It's important to think about the traveller having a thorough winter sports insurance policy, which will not only cover in the event of an accident or injury on a ski slope but will also cover personal or hired ski or snowboarding equipment in case of loss, theft or damage. If a traveller has

invested time and money to reach a ski slope only to discover the track closed due to weather conditions, that shall be covered too.

Q For shopping items to be checked during travel, what are the benefits associated with Travel Shop Assurance?

Be it for business or leisure, shopping is in the genes of today's travellers. A lost credit or debit card or an ATM withdrawal or theft is the last thing that a traveller would think of. Considering that such mishaps can occur, having a travel insurance cover is



Arijit Munshi
General Manager
Tune Protect, EMEA

always a saviour. The Travel Shop Assurance plan is to secure the traveller to avoid financial problems or loss of shopping items that can ruin the trip. Unfortunate events of fraudulent usage on credit card and ATM thefts are covered under this plan.

Q For golf lovers, how will a travel insurance benefit the traveller when traveling to play golf at a destination?

A passionate golfer knows it is an expensive sport. In the case of damage to a private or public property, the Travel Golf Assurance plan would cover the traveller and put his mind at ease. Whether the traveler is the next Sam Snead or a mere grassroots golfer, travel misfortunes can happen to anyone, anywhere and even on a golf course. The Travel Golf Assurance, with the help of local insurance partners, have enabled additional benefits covering, golf

“ The Travel Shop Assurance plan is to secure the traveller to avoid financial problems or loss of shopping items that can ruin the trip. Unfortunate events of fraudulent usage on credit card and ATM thefts are covered under this plan **”**

equipment stolen or damaged including hired equipment as well as covering a hole-in-one celebration.

Q As an adrenaline junkie, should a traveller look at a conventional travel protection plan?

With an increasing number of young and old generation of travellers showing interest in adventure sports, insurers foresee

the adventure travel market segment growing globally. Besides accidental death and permanent disability, Travel Adventure Assurance covers the traveller with peace of mind apart from the standard coverage such as medical reimbursement, follow-up treatment in home country, compensation, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of mortal remains while indulging in adventure activity. 🇦🇪

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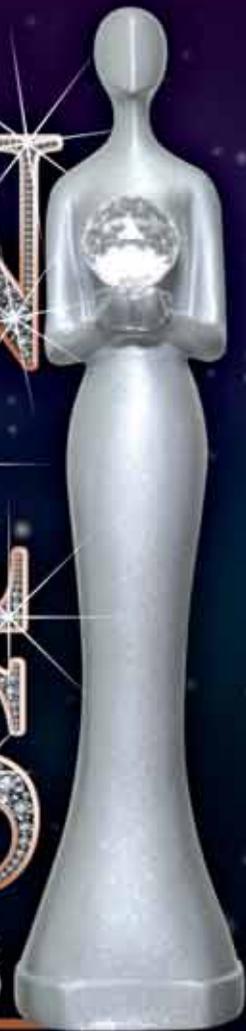
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ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS

20th September 2018
JW Marriott Hotel Dubai



ME gains prominence at ITB China

The second edition of ITB China will open doors from May 16-18, 2018 in Shanghai. With 31 new exhibitors from the Middle East participating in this networking event, **David Axiotis**, General Manager, ITB China talks about how the fair is soon becoming a lucrative source market. shares with **TRAVTALK**.

 Shehara Rizly

Q What is the focus at this year's ITB China?

Packed with networking, information and business, ITB China is designed as a B2B show focusing solely on the Chinese travel market. Visitors and exhibitors can initiate excellent business dealings and generate meaningful contacts. We offer our Chinese top buyers an international portfolio of exhibitors. Around 700 companies, destinations, organisations and travel service providers from some 70 countries and territories will be represented. Over one-third of the exhibitors are coming from Europe, and another third from all over Asia and China. The Americas and the Middle East are also strongly represented. More than 800 buyers will attend the show this year. The diversity will again be very high as the buyers will come from over 300 different companies and from all over China, thereby representing the full range of China's largest industry players.

Q How will this year's show be different from the last?

We have extended our hosted buyer programme this year. With more than



David Axiotis
General Manager
ITB China

“ We have observed an increase in demand from ME this year. Abu Dhabi and Sharjah have already secured their places. We are pleased to welcome Etihad Airways as a new exhibitor. Sharjah even expands its booth space and is the biggest exhibitor among UAE ”

800 buyers, we will have an increase of more than 30 per cent in the number of buyers at this year's show as compared to 2017. This year's partner destination is Finland and ITB China 2018 is an official partner event of the EU China Tourism Year, an initiative that has been jointly announced by the Chinese government and the EU Commission promoting touristic and cultural

exchanges between China and Europe. Wyndham Hotel Group has become the official partner hotel for the second edition of ITB China. ITB China also brings up two strategic partnerships in 2018 to mutually promote each other as well as to enhance business opportunities and raise global awareness for the



Q Could you share some numbers from last year? How many are expected this year in terms of media, buyers and exhibitors?

In 2017, the first ITB China marked its premiere and proved its importance as China's new marketplace for the travel trade industry. Some 600 exhibiting companies from nearly 70 countries and regions met with a total of over 10,000 attendees and buyers in the 12,000 sqm area of exhibition space.

In 2018, exhibitor demand for the second ITB China is undiminished, as bookings are coming off expectedly well. That clearly shows the industry acceptance of the show concept. Many of our exhibitors coming from China are going to leverage our new travel trade fair to develop the distribution network. With an expected attendee number of 15,000, including approximately 700 exhibitors and far more than 800 buyers, ITB China will show significant growth after its world premiere last year. Last year, over 10,000 pre-scheduled appointments between exhibitors and hosted Chinese buyers were realised during the show; we expect this number to grow significantly in 2018. 

Chinese tourism industry including the China Tourism Academy and the China Tourism Association.

ITB China Conference will offer an ideal platform for training and networking at the new Business Travel Day. The last day of the exhibition will be dedicated to the Education and Job Day in partnership with Fudan University and Hong Kong Polytechnic Univer-

sity. Qyer and ITB China will co-organise 'It's My World Travel Awards 2018', honouring key Chinese opinion leaders as well as global destinations. This year ITB China is launching a completely new matchmaking system perfectly catering to the needs of both exhibitors and buyers. Participants of the matchmaking are able to conveniently choose the buyers or exhibitors they would like to meet in our brand-new system using desktop, mobile, APP or Wechat interfaces.

Q Could you share the participation from Middle East with special focus on UAE?

The Middle East is strongly represented at this year's ITB China (UAE, Turkey, Oman, Israel, Iran, Egypt). We have observed an increase in demand from

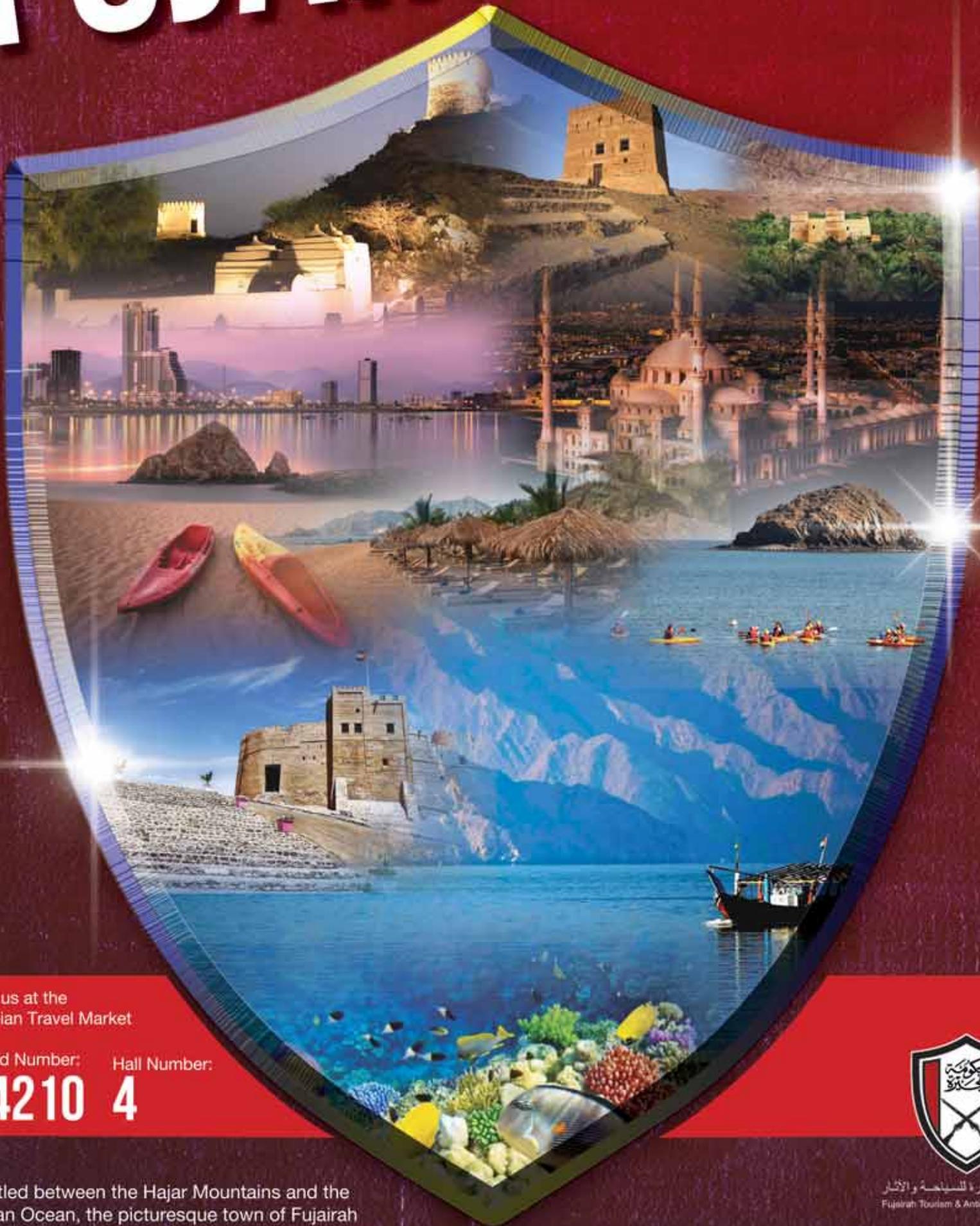
the Middle East this year. Countries such as Abu Dhabi and Sharjah have already secured their places. We are pleased to welcome Etihad Airways as a new exhibitor. Sharjah even expands its booth space this year and is the biggest exhibitor among the UAE countries. Dubai represents itself with hotels and travel providers.

Q What are your expectations at this years' event?

Our goal is to deliver and maintain the same high show quality in terms of business opportunities, matchmaking and content that attendees are used to from our Berlin and Singapore shows. We would like to expand both in format and size, and most importantly establish ITB China as the leading B2B show for the Chinese travel market in the long run.



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Nestled between the Hajar Mountains and the Indian Ocean, the picturesque town of Fujairah is the perfect holiday destination for nature lovers. Indulge in countless activities, from water sports to flying lessons and spas in Fujairah. With business, tourism and infrastructure developments steaming ahead, the region's transformation into a twenty-first century city is certain.



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Plan your weekend at Fujairah

Fujairah is an emirate situated on the east coast of the United Arab Emirates. Nestled between the Hajar Mountains and the Indian Ocean, this picturesque town is the perfect holiday destination due to its location overlooking the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean.



Fujairah has become a popular destination for anyone looking to enjoy the beauty of nature and having a relaxing break. With countless activities, from water sports to flying lessons and spas, Fujairah is guaranteed to keep you busy. Fujairah is all set to meet the expectations of becoming a globalised city. With business, tourism and infrastructure developments steaming ahead, Fujairah's transformation into a twenty-first century city is certain. His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi is the current ruler of the

emirate. The main cities and villages in Fujairah are Dibba, Murbeh, Qidfa, Al Bidiyah, Masafi, Al-Siji and Al Bithna.

POPULAR ATTRACTIONS

► **Al Badiyah Mosque**
Also known as Ottoman Mosque, Al Badiyah Mosque was constructed in the 15th century and is situated in a small village in north of Fujairah. It is considered as one of the oldest mosques of United Arab Emirates. This historical mosque provides great delight and memories of ancient Arab culture and civilisation to tourists.

► Fujairah Corniche Bull Fighting

Every Friday, a cultural heritage show for Arabian Bull Fighting is arranged in a fenced muddy field opposite to the Fujairah Corniche by locals. Arabian bull fighting should not be mistaken with Spanish bull fighting as there is no animal cruelty, blood and human involved. Arabian bull fighting is a just a tug-of-war contest between two bulls, where one bull pushes the other bull outside the circle. Whoever succeeds in pushing, is rewarded in the shape of increased value and respect. This attraction is entirely free of charge.

► Fujairah Fort

Fujairah Fort is the oldest historical fort in United Arab Emirates built in the 16th century. Historical records show that it was some kind of a defense building for ruling royal family of that time.

► Fujairah Museum

Fujairah Museum was established in 1991 by the Ruler of Fujairah and expanded in 1998 by the Department of Heritage and Antiques. The museum provides visitors with an image of its cultural background and archaeological evidence to prove its inheritance since 3rd millennium BC.

► Ain Al Madhab Garden

This a popular relaxation spot located near the foothills of Hajar Mountains. It is more than just a mineral spa where people come for swimming in the warm sulphuric water. There are two pools, one for men and another for women. These pools contain special mineral water springs mixed with the warm sulphuric water.

► Fujairah Friday Market

Fujairah's Friday Market is situated at Masafi. It is a great place for tourists to stop by and buy fresh fruits

and vegetables grown by the locals. Tourists can also buy cultural art pieces of Fujairah stalls from of carpets and pottery shops.

► Snoopy Island

Snoopy Island is an incredible rocky marine island replete with natural beauty and abundant sea life. It is situated about 100 meters offshore from the Sandy Beach Hotel & Resorts at Al Aqah in Fujairah. It is a place where you can find many beautiful species of fish and sharks. Here people can encounter many species of sharks. It is a tremendous place for snorkelling. Scene



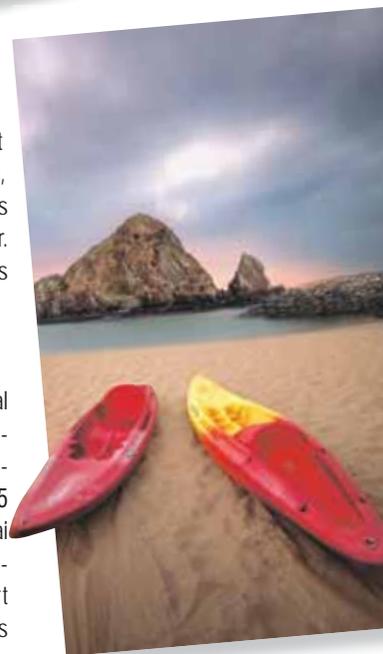
Peninsula and runs through both the UAE and Oman. The highest named point in the UAE is located here, measuring 1,527 metres high and is called Jabal Yibir. This mountain range stands to the west of Fujairah.

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS

With an international airport, Fujairah offers seasonal flights and daily domestic flights. It is just 45 minutes away from Dubai and Sharjah by road. Fujairah is an important port which provides all services enjoyed by the major ports of the world, in addition to receiving cruise ships during the tourism season.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The Kandura, or a dishdash, is a long white cloak worn by UAE national males. This is often accompanied by a headscarf called a Guthra and is held in place by an Egal, their head. Women wear a black cloak or abaya



that covers the body from head to toe.

DINING

The food in this region is somewhat similar to Lebanese or other Arab cuisines. Meals comprise mostly lamb, fish and rice. One of the most popular dishes is Biryani with other popular authentic Emirati dishes including Raqaq (flat) bread, yeast bread, Al Harees, Al Majboos, etc.

of marvellous natural beauty and different colours of fish is sufficient to make the trip memorable.

► Tennis & Country Club Fujairah

Tennis & Country Club Fujairah is situated against Hajar Mountains in Fujairah. The Club has five international floodlight tennis courts and a tennis stadium with a seating capacity of 2,000 persons.

► Century Mall

Century Mall is the biggest mall in the eastern emirates of UAE with an area of 300,000 square feet. This

mall is situated on the New Al Anjimat Road next to Al Shabab Club in Al Mazmar Area of Fujairah.

► Wadi Wurayah

Wadi Wurayah is an area of 12,700 hectares situated between Masafi, Khor Fakkan and Bidiyah in UAE. It is the first mountain protected Area in UAE and origin of more than 100 species of mammals, birds, insects, fish and more than 300 species of plants.

► Hajar Mountains

The Hajar Mountains are the highest mountain range in the eastern Arabian



New high-end destinations for GCC

A special round-table discussion was held recently with **Saleh Said**, Managing Director, Pennyroyal Gibraltar, which is a master developers of five-star property Blue Amber Zanzibar, Tanzania, offering premium hospitality with leisure facilities along with private residences.

TT Bureau

Q Please share more details about the project.

Blue Amber Zanzibar is the largest mixed-use development in East Africa. We are going to market with our initial offering of private residences which will allow foreign buyers the opportunity to purchase property in Zanzibar for the first time in history. There will be a mix of five-star resorts, an Ernie Els championship 18-hole golf course, and a mix of branded and non-branded private residences. The community we are creating will allow our residents and guests to explore and enjoy Zanzibar like never before. It's a pioneering development and has been created with great consideration for the environment. The project will see the creation of around 1000 jobs in the first phase. Our CSR initiative - Best of Zanzibar is already active in the implementation of programmes focused on healthcare, skills transfer and women's empowerment.

Q Could you explain the importance of the Middle Eastern market in the East African tourism sector?

The Middle East and East Africa share a long

history of trade dating back to many centuries ago, thereby creating important ties between our regions. We share a similar culture and religion and are only five hours away from each other. Carriers such as flydubai offer direct flights from Dubai to Zanzibar and given Zanzibar's benefits of perfect weather year-round makes for a great escape from the cold winter nights and blistering heat. For the Middle Eastern buyer and tourist, Zanzibar offers spectacular beach locations and luxury tropical island living within easy reach.

Q What the new developments in the area in terms of tourism?

We are excited to welcome the first Ritz Carlton in East Africa and hope that this would be a game changer whilst boosting the current five-star room stock available in Zanzibar. The arrival of such a prestigious brand to our shores will benefit the entire tourism market in Zanzibar bringing in visitors from across the region and globally. Additionally, the introduction of our 18-hole championship golf course designed by

Ernie Els will help attract a new clientele, allowing us to open the market to sports tourism on a scale never seen before in East Africa. We plan to host international tournaments and further develop the sport of golf by including a training academy. The development will provide the perfect getaway, catering to multiple passion points, offering a wide array of activities ranging from water sports,

“Carriers such as flydubai offer direct flights from Dubai to Zanzibar and given Zanzibar's benefits of perfect weather year-round makes for a great escape from the cold winter nights and blistering heat. For the Middle Eastern buyer and tourist, Zanzibar offers spectacular beach locations and luxury tropical island living within easy reach”

sailing, diving as well as golf, duty free shopping as well as world-class array of restaurants and entertainment.

Q What is Blue Amber's role in the development of tourism in the region?

Through the introduction of international high-end beach resorts as well as luxury branded residences providing five-star services, we aim to strategically position Zanzibar in the same category as established markets in the

Indian Ocean by responding directly to the increased demand in the region. Home to the first duty free shopping experience in East Africa, we will offer a unique holiday experience that fuses the authenticity and culture of Zanzibar without running the risk of overdevelopment, alongside world class amenities, leisure and luxury lifestyle. The Government of Zanzibar is a strong supporter of quality

and strategic developments and Blue Amber is the first project to be awarded Strategic Investor status. This allows us attractive concessions and incentives which we pass on to our owners, putting us on par with neighbouring countries like Mauritius with regard to tax benefits further attracting investors, buyers and tourists to our shores.

Q Will you be working with the tourism arm of the East Africa/Tanzania tourism board?

We work closely with Zanzibar Commission for Tourism and Zanzibar Investment Promotion Agency (ZIPA) in promoting Zanzibar as a secure place for investment as well as luxury travel. With a projected growth of 27 per cent for 2018, tourist arrivals in Zanzibar have been on a steady increase over the years. The estimated arrivals is expected to soar to one million passengers per

year with the introduction of a new airport in 2020. Our development has been strategically planned to provide the much-needed room stock to accommodate these new visitors as well as creating additional leisure activities and facilities for guests, attracting an ever wider pool of tourists and making Zanzibar a competitive alternative destination in the region.

Q What is the expected number of visitors to Zanzibar over this project?

On completion of phase 1, we look forward to having The Ritz Carlton with 180 keys and Anantara with a further 200 rooms operational in addition to our private residences of circa 150 homes. The project will develop in stages and respond to market demand.

Q Are you expecting any investors from the Middle East region?

There is strong interest from the ME region in



Saleh Said
Managing Director
Pennyroyal Gibraltar

Africa. Zanzibar and Blue Amber are particularly interesting to these clients as the potential return and offering supersedes the neighbouring Indian Ocean destinations. There is a strong interest, from Dubai based buyers, in purchasing holiday homes in our private residences given the cultural nuances that we share, preferable climate and luxury leading amenities we will offer.

Q How do you plan to work with both the nations in promoting a reciprocal relationship between the two?

We understand that room stock is a major factor for airlines when considering routes. Our goal is to improve this exponentially, further opening up this tropical destination to travellers from Dubai. Our dream is to have direct flights on Emirates to Zanzibar. Visitors from the UAE are welcomed to our shores as they qualify for visa on arrival.

Number Game

➤ With a projected growth of 27 per cent for 2018, tourist arrivals in Zanzibar have been on a steady increase. The estimated arrivals is expected to soar to one million passengers per year with a new airport in 2020



Sharjah Airport's expansion plans

As Sharjah prepares to receive 20 million passengers by 2027, its billion dirham expansion plan is underway to make it one of the most unique airports in the region. **His Excellency Ali Salim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Airport Authority shares the plan for ATM this year.

TT Bureau



HE Ali Salim Al Midfa
Chairman
Sharjah Airport Authority

and international industry professionals. Sharjah Airport Authority will highlight the unique components of the airport and its key services and expansion plans, including the AED1.5 billion plan where the airport capacity is forecasted to handle 20 million passengers by 2027.

QWhat are your expectations at this year's ATM?

We are looking forward to attract airlines, travel and tourism industry key players to come and discover the unique offerings of Sharjah as a destination, and the facilities and services of Sharjah International Airport as one of the gateways to UAE.

QWhat will be product offerings for this year at ATM?

ATM is the ideal platform for Sharjah International Airport to showcase its services, facilities and B2B endeavours to local, regional

QCould you share the final numbers from last year at Sharjah airport?

2017 showed an optimistic increase in both aircraft and passenger movements; with passengers crossing the 11.365 million mark and aircraft movements reaching 77,627. The increase in new routes, flight frequencies and holiday season at Sharjah International Airport contributed to the positive airline and passenger traffic. The continued steady rise in passenger traffic, aircraft movements and cargo operations are indicators of a positive and upward trend within the UAE economy and tourism growth.



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

Sharjah International Airport is coping with the ever-growing demands of the airport users by continuous

developments, investments in airport infrastructure, equipments and technology to cater Sharjah tourism's vision as Sharjah Airport is the first point for tourists visiting Sharjah. Tour operators and travel agents are an integral part within the chain of the aviation industry. The achieved growth rates in the UAE travel market

had proven that the future of aviation industry will witness an increasing demand on this sector. This demand is driving us at Sharjah International Airport to constantly increase our capacity and develop the level and diversity of our services offered to the airline operators and our passengers. 



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Personality of the month

Setting pioneering ideas in travel

Having been named after one of the most popular names in the Arab world, Indian-born **Jamal Abdulnazar**, Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel, pioneered the travel agency sector in the emirate of Sharjah. Today, the company runs a diversified travel business with a staff of 900 people and turnover of 1.2 billion over 100 branches spread across seven countries.



“Being the pioneer travel agency in the region, our role was to interface the point of sale to the back office. Today Cozmo pays major importance to technology and automation as they can completely transform business for good. We are one of the few agencies in the region that spends considerable resources by investing in the latest technology”

Shehara Rizly

Inspired by his brother-in-law in the field of travel, Jamal Abdulnazar graduated university and flew in to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in search for a position in the travel sector. Walking into the office of the Country Manager for Air France in Jeddah, Jamal was offered a position in Dammam and this marked the beginning of his career in the field of travel and tourism.

With a passion for travelling, Jamal always wanted to gain experience in this trade. His breakthrough to the industry in KSA gave him the knowledge and expertise required to make a mark in the competitive travel world. He recalls, “My brother-in-law was my mentor as he was working in the airline industry at the time and

travelling around the world. I enjoyed meeting new people and attending international travel events. One of the most challenging tasks was one in which we had to evacuate almost 1000 stranded western expats from Sana, capital of Yemen to USA within a short notice of four hours. I was then heading an evacuation mission in Riyadh in 1991 during the Gulf War. We were commended for our efforts and awarded certificates of appreciation by Former US President Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright, then Secretary of State.

Birth of Cozmo Travel

Jamal joined the Air Arabia group in Sharjah in 2007 to manage a travel agency for Air Arabia Group



owned by the department of Civil Aviation of Sharjah. Few years later when the project was nearing completion, the group CEO of Air Arabia entrusted Jamal with the task of opening an agency for the emirate. With all his experience in the travel and tourism trade in KSA, Jamal made his initial plans and invited some of his close acquaintances from finance, operation and

IT. He then initiated the mission and vision of a four-member Cozmo Travel team on January 1, 2010. The aim was to cater to everyone who needs to travel irrelevant of rich, middle class or poor; to cater to the individuals, corporates, budget and luxury seekers around the region; and spectrum of the GCC. As the name suggests, Cozmo appeals to the universe and

is not limited to a particular country, culture or nationality. The agency began its operation in Rolla Sharjah with four people onboard.

Growth and expansion

Cozmo Travel received its IATA certification by April 2010. With a fast-paced growth plan, the agency soon ventured into different verticals. “When we started off, we found ample opportunities in the Northern emirates with huge catchment areas for communities who were underserved when it comes to travel. We then focused on expanding our branch network into the suburbs of Sharjah to Dhaid, Kalba, Khorfakkan, Dibba and Halawan districts and even the industrial areas to cater to the needs of many communities who were

not tech savvy. Thereafter, we expanded to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and today we have about 40 locations in seven emirates. Internationally, we have branched out to Qatar in 2011, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2012, Kuwait in 2013, Bahrain in 2014, India in 2015 and two cities in China in 2016-17,” Jamal shared.

Technology takes over

Having started off with manual submissions, Jamal has walked on every possible path in travel and tourism. He recalls, “At that time in the industry, the ratio was 2:8 in terms of front and back office. During one of my Fam trips in France in 1996, I walked into an agency and inquired about the methods they deployed. To my amaze-

ment, I found that there was no concept of front and back office as everything was processed through the point of sale using an interface mechanism. I then ventured into exploring latest technology available worldwide that can help us reduce cost on operation. Being the pioneer travel agency in the region, our role was to interface the point of sale to the back office. I then witnessed how technology and automation can change business for good. Today Cozmo pays major importance to technology and automation. We are one of the few agencies in the region that spends considerable resources by investing into the latest technology. IT no longer acts as support services for Cozmo; it rather drives our business.”

Jamal believes that three integral factors driving business forward are people, technology and innovation. Cozmo Travel’s B2B platform, ‘Travrolley’, supports an individual or company to start its own agency. All contents are plugged in such as hotels, visas, global car rentals, etc. The agency has also diversified its business last year to car rentals by introducing ‘Sayara’ with a fleet of over 500 vehicles. With businesses being challenged every year, technology plays a pivotal role to ensure profits.

Branching out

➤ Finding opportunities in the Northern emirates, we focused on expanding our branch into the suburbs of Sharjah to Dhaid, Kalba, Khorfakkan, Dibba and Halawan districts

Travel more to know India: Indiatourism

A special seminar was held for the trade partners airlines, travel agents and tour operators in the UAE to share the latest offerings from India tourism to the clientele in Dubai. **IRV Rao**, Assistant Director, Indiatourism, Dubai, shared the numbers and growth of the tourism industry in India.



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Rotana adds lustre to Dubai Creek

Home-grown brand Rotana's latest offering is the lush five-star scenic property overlooking the Dubai Creek in partnership with Al Ain Ahlia Insurance Company. The 280-room property houses rooms and apartments to suit the business and leisure clientele visiting Dubai.

 Shehara Rizly

It was quite an exciting moment when two home-based companies joined hands to bring in a new lavish address to the creek area in Dubai. The modern, architecturally-striking five-star hotel Al Bandar Rotana, and the luxurious hotel apartment complex Al Bandar Arjaan by Rotana will be managed by Rotana on behalf of Al Ain Ahlia Insurance Company, one of the region's largest insurers. Al Bandar Rotana consists of 190 uniquely-designed rooms and suites in addition to Club Rotana rooms with additional benefits including an Executive Lounge and personalised services. Designed to suit the needs of long-stay visitors, Al Bandar Arjaan by Rotana offers 90 fully-furnished studios and apartments with options ranging from spacious studios to three-bedroom apartments. The spacious rooms, suites and apartments, which offer expansive views of the creek, the thriving waterway running through the heart of the city, and Burj Khalifa, are all equipped with modern technology and home comforts.



Guy Hutchinson
Chief Operating Officer
Rotana

In addition to a Business Centre, the properties offer six state-of-the-art meeting and conference facilities equipped with the latest audio-visual equipment to cater to a wide range of occasions - from board meetings, workshops and seminars to conferences and social gatherings.

Mohammed Al Badie Bin Youan Al Dhaeri, Chairman, Al Ain Ahlia Insurance Company, said, "With its solid business growth and strong portfolio, Rotana has established its name as the bellwether of the region's hospitality industry. It gives us immense pleasure to partner with the company. We believe this is a major milestone in our growth journey and a unique addition to our diverse investment portfolio."

“In 2017 alone, the emirate welcomed 15.8 million travellers and expects to attract 20 million visitors per year by 2020. With these solid credentials, Dubai remains our key focus market for expansion to contribute towards Dubai's Tourism Vision 2020”

This partnership will benefit our shareholders and the local economy, and strengthen our position in the domestic and international markets. We look forward to further collaboration with Rotana in the future to achieve our shared vision of contributing to the sustainable growth of the UAE while thriving in our business."

Strategically located in Dubai's booming business and leisure hub on Baniyas Road, and in close proximity to major attractions and landmarks in the city, including the Dubai International Airport, and the Dubai World Trade Centre, the two connecting towers offer a range of world-class facilities that suit the distinct needs of modern day travellers, families and corporate visitors.

Nasser Al Nowais, Chairman, Rotana Hotel Management Corporation,

said: "With the ever-growing number of properties, Rotana has been playing a major role in driving the sustainable development of the tourism and hospitality sector, thereby contributing to the economic and employment growth in markets where we operate. The new hotels are reflective of our continued success and a testament to the robustness of our long-term growth strategy. We are thankful to the Board of Directors and the top management of Al Ain Ahlia Insurance Company for the unmatched support we have received from them during the pre-opening phase, and for their trust and confidence in our abilities to manage these stunning properties."

Making a significant addition to Rotana's inventory in Dubai, the two new properties have added 280 keys to 3142-strong operational rooms across nine hotels in

the city. As part of its global expansion, the company has planned an additional 2888 rooms currently under various stages of development in the emirate.

"With its vibrant economy and thriving tourism sector, Dubai has always been a highly favourable market for the hospitality sector to flourish and it still promises a brighter future for the sector with occupied room nights forecasted to reach 35.5 million annually in 2019 by advancing at a solid compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the next 24 months. Similarly, the anticipated growth in the number of visitors to the city presents new opportunities for investors and hotel operators. In 2017 alone, the emirate welcomed 15.8 million travellers and expects to attract 20 million visitors per year by 2020. With these solid credentials, Dubai remains our key focus market for expansion to contribute towards Dubai's Tourism Vision 2020," said **Guy Hutchinson**, Chief Operating Officer, Rotana.

"The opening of Al Bandar Rotana and Al Bandar Arjaan by Rotana is

a remarkable achievement and we remain on track to achieve our goal of operating 100 hotels by 2020," Hutchinson added.

Guests at the hotels will be spoilt for choice with two signature restaurants and three casual dining outlets in addition to an extensive in-room dining menu, featuring a wide choice of dining options to suit every taste and occasion, day and night. The unique dining venues include Salt & Pepper, an all-day dining restaurant offering an international buffet; Gusto Italian Restaurant, offering a wide range of authentic Italian delicacies, with stunning views of Dubai Creek; Vanilla Lobby Lounge, an ideal spot for formal and informal gatherings over coffee and light snacks; Morgan's Gastropub, the only gastropub in the area, and The Deck, a pool lounge for tropical cocktails and delicious snacks. Al Bandar Rotana and Al Bandar Arjaan by Rotana also house Bodylines Fitness & Wellness Club, featuring a fully-equipped gymnasium, outdoor swimming pool and sauna, steam and massage rooms. 🏠



Indulge in luxury onboard Al Wasl

ATM is the perfect platform for Al Wasl Dhow to network with global partners as the cruise has taken off to great heights over the years under the leadership of Ishrat Khan with its many offerings from cultural and heritage tourism to yachting, cruising and even desert safari for the clientele.

 TT Bureau

Cruising & heritage tourism

UAE's popular traditional heritage dhow cruise with Al Wasl Dhow is definitely attracting huge numbers this season. The Dhow is a traditional cruise vessel entirely made up of wood and is beautifully festooned. The tourists here get several locations options here, out of which the creek or the marina are the most popular in Dubai for enjoying the dhow cruise ride. Our Dhow Cruise is in Marina because it is better in comparison to the creek and provides guests with some breathtaking views. The ride will be taking guests through the

spectacular canals and give them a chance to observe some of the best views of Dubai. Along with this, there will be delectable cuisines and entertainment activities onboard. These prove to be a perfect location for making their celebrations special. The best part is one gets to dine on an open deck!

Sun & beach tourism

If the visitors of ATM want to explore the warm waters of Dubai and simultaneously wish to

experience owning a luxury yacht for a while, the best pick is to rent a yacht. Al Wasl Yacht provides a wide variety of yachts to choose in different sizes from 33 feet to 85 feet with different passenger capacities. Although these yachts are mostly preferred by people who want to enjoy on a luxury yacht with friends and family, they are also the first choice of people who love fish-

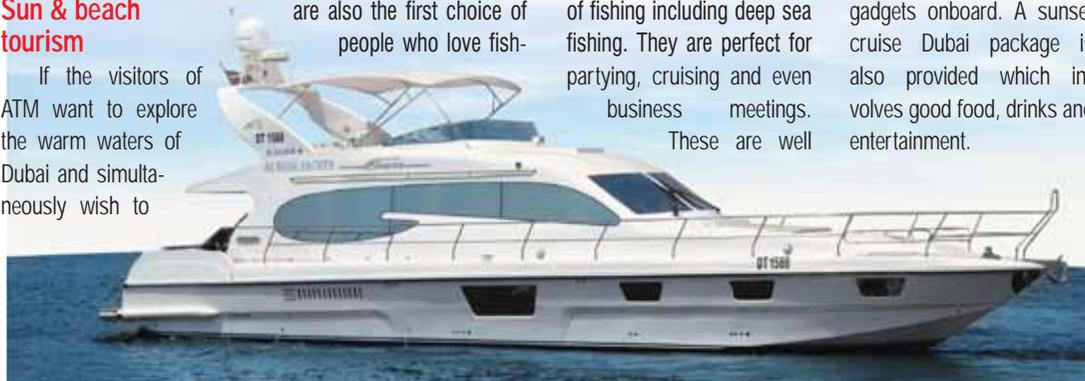
Al Wasl Yacht provides a wide variety of yachts to choose in different sizes from 33 feet to 85 feet with different passenger capacities. Although these yachts are mostly preferred by people who want to enjoy on a luxury yacht with friends and family, they are also the first choice of people who love fishing

ing. Guests can book a yacht and experience several types of fishing including deep sea fishing. They are perfect for partying, cruising and even business meetings. These are well

equipped with all the modern amenities and latest gadgets onboard. A sunset cruise Dubai package is also provided which involves good food, drinks and entertainment.

Desert safari

Coming back on land, there is a great opportunity to explore the desert through a desert safari trip with Oasis Palm Tourism. Guests can enjoy desert sports and adventure activities like dune bashing, sand surfing, quad biking, camel riding, jeep riding and a lot more. All these activities are accompanied by food, henna art, drinks, entertainment, bonfire and shisha smoking to make one's trip an unforgettable one. The best part about the desert safari is the deserts in the evening with a spectacular sunset. Have an unforgettable vacation in the pearl of the Persian Gulf! 



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

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Tech innovations to define travel

Sabre Corporation has released the Sabre Labs 2018 Emerging Technology Report, its latest forecast on evolving technology trends that will impact travel over the next decade. The 2018 report evaluates automation, authenticity and blockchain as three major areas for consideration.

TT Bureau

People are coming to understand that the travel business is indeed a technology business, said **Philip Likens**, Director, Sabre Labs. He says, "Even the simplest journey generates huge amounts of data. Collecting, indexing and understanding that data – and how we apply that understanding to improve travellers' experiences is what will drive innovation across the entire travel ecosystem. Tech is going to reshape the entire travel experience - whether it is AI and machine learning to automate and optimise tasks, the counter-intuitive ability to deliver authentic experiences

digitally, or using new protocols for travellers to head to the airport and leave their wallet and ID at home."

The report offers an extensive analysis of three major areas Sabre Labs believes will have the most significant impact on the industry:

Automation

Automation is not a new idea. However, advancements in AI and machine learning offer the potential for step-changes in how one may be served in the digital environment. Awareness and cognitive capacity for machines suggest a huge range of opportunities for those serving the travel space to

completely rethink when and what to sell, how to staff and operate their businesses, and how to anticipate and exceed their own customers' needs.

Authenticity

In our current age, trust is in low supply – so authenticity and authentic experiences are more valuable than ever. At the same time, businesses need to rely on technology and digitisation to interact with their customers at scale. But is technology in tension with authenticity? Is digital the enemy of the real? And how can one reconcile augmented and virtual realities with authenticity? The report examines and unpacks these complex issues.



Philip Likens
Director
Sabre Labs

Blockchain

Huge volatility in the price of cryptocurrencies has been dominating headlines but serve to overshadow the value in the underlying blockchain technology. Separating crypto hype from the actual potential of distributed ledger technology – which enable

“Tech is going to reshape the entire travel experience - whether it is AI and machine learning, the counter-intuitive ability to deliver authentic experiences digitally, or using new protocols for travellers to head to the airport and leave their wallet and ID at home”

secure transactions to take place – can be hard to do. But there is significant promise for blockchain as it relates to travel, not the least of which is this - imagine heading off on a round-the-world trip without having to bring your passport or wallet. Likens concluded, "Tomorrow's travellers have expectations fuelled by access to information, smooth experiences and personalised offers. There is

tremendous opportunity for companies to begin thinking about how their brand can be agile enough to interact with tomorrow's travellers. This report explores how technology can mediate and enhance these interactions."

Sabre Labs is the innovation team within Sabre devoted to exploring how new capabilities will impact travel over the next decade. 

New tech trends in travel and tourism

Over the past few years, technology has revolutionised the travel, tourism and hospitality industries. This has become a key driver to enable smooth operations in the backend, thus ensuring revenue on a rapid growth. Industry leaders share their ideas with **TRAVTALK**.

TT Bureau



Maher Koubaa
Vice President—Airlines
MEA, Amadeus

“Airlines in the Middle East remain among the most successful in the industry. With further movement of air transport's centre of gravity from West to East, the potential for growth in the Middle East's aviation market is one of the best of any region globally. Nonetheless, the industry is still changing as it becomes truly customer-centric. Connected devices, artificial intelligence and

smarter data analytics are giving people more ideas and control over their journey. Airlines are made to rethink their business more drastically than ever before – from cost leadership to digital merchandising. Technology has always been a critical enabler to expanding global travel, both in terms of scale and access. Programmes such as IATA's NDC and ONE Order standards are accelerating the pace of this change, opening up greater value to airlines and their customers alike. At Amadeus, our purpose is to shape the future of travel and enhance technology that makes travel simple, rewarding and enjoyable. Moreover, we continue to play an active role in industry working groups focused on distribution industry standards, passenger disruption, simplifying the airlines business and transparency in payments.”



Michele Iozzo
Managing Director—
Middle East & Africa
Criteo

“Shoppers in the Middle East are increasingly booking their travels from apps and smartphones due to the flexibility and accessibility of these platforms. However, with the holiday booking period approaching, online travel agencies and suppliers need to ensure that convenience doesn't come at the price of a great user experience. Connecting all of those touchpoints across platforms and devices, and providing the shopper with a unique and seamless booking experience is thus key for a successful booking season.”



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

“The travel industry is moving increasingly towards connecting futuristic tools. Adapting is a condition within the group to continue being competitive and responding to customers' demands by providing an advanced technology platform that increases reach, revenue and yield for both the provider and the seller. Seasonality drives different trends to the Middle East region. However, in 2017 we noticed an increase in demand for eco-friendly (green) tourism, looking for undisturbed natural areas around South East Asia, reaching new destinations which Middle Eastern travellers have never explored before. Additionally, we all acknowledge the vast progress of the UAE passport. Today someone from the Emirates can now explore 140 countries with far less restrictions.”

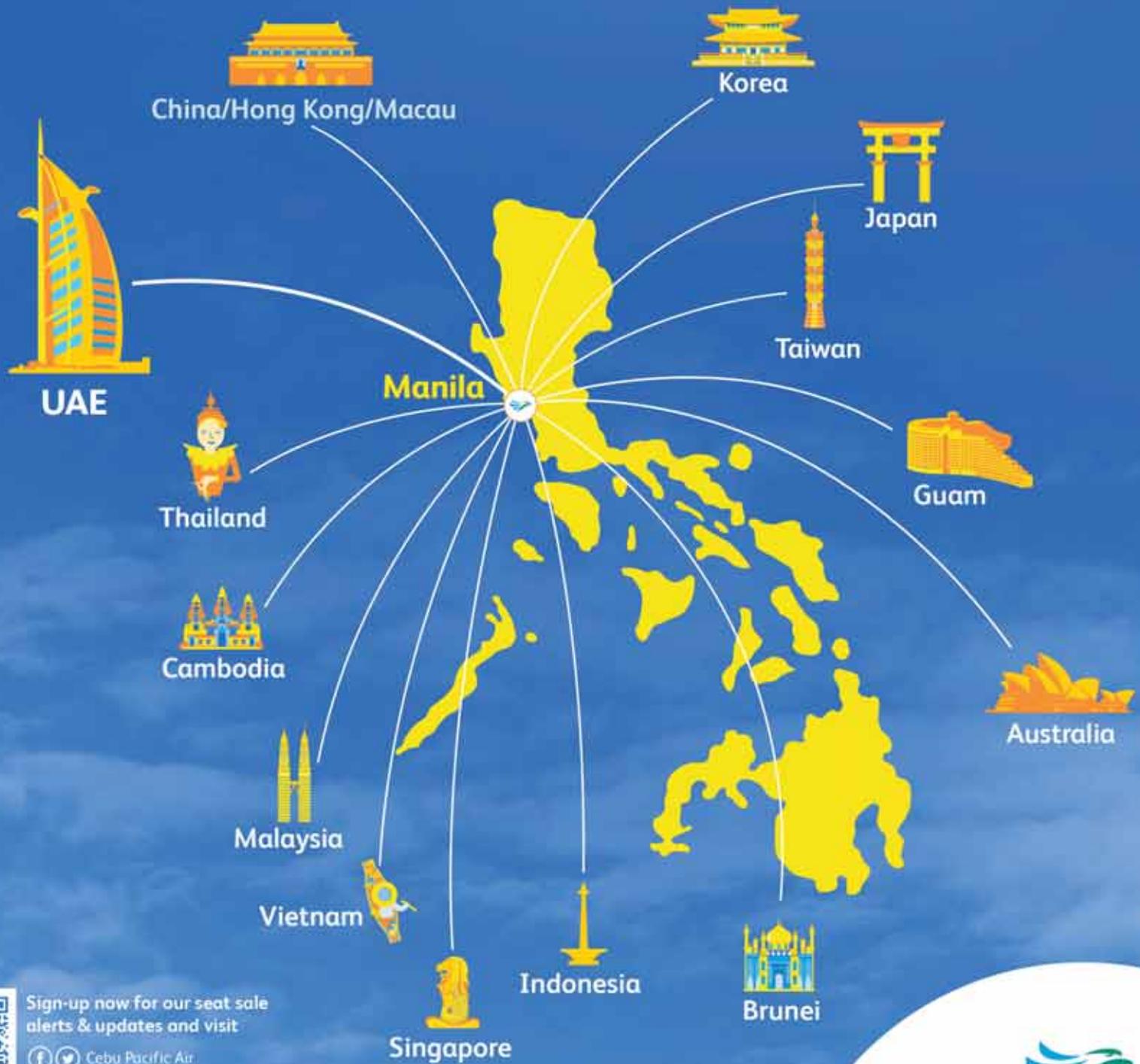


Stewart Smith
Regional Director—
MEA, Sojern

“The economies of GCC regions are experiencing a huge shift towards digitalisation and we at Sojern, see this first-hand when it comes to digital media. The region has 100 per cent smart phone penetration and 70 per cent social media adoption, even higher than the US. The MENA region still lags behind the rest of the world in digital advertising spend amounting to less than \$1 billion in 2016 but the opportunity and willingness to close this gap is taking place at both government and corporate levels.”

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3.3 million visitors make it to DWTC

Dubai World Trade Centre Authority (DWTC), the region's largest trade venue, witnessed 3.3 million delegates, and attendees participated in 353 MiCE and business events in 2017. This was a strong 10 per cent increase from 2016 on the back of proven participant ROI for foreign firms.

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The top performing events reflected strong sectoral alignment with the UAE's economic diversification strategy that targets creation of an optimal balance between industries. The noteworthy year-on-year footfall increase has been driven by the calendar's ability to attract high quality visitors, delegates and attendees from 185 countries, and participating exhibitors with 56,360 exhibiting companies from 154 countries. With 39,202 exhibitors from overseas markets, DWTC registered a strong 10 per cent increase in this base over 2016 on the back of proven participant

ROI for foreign firms. The 2017 results are testament to DWTC's ability to consistently attract increased and repeat foreign participation, and are a strong endorsement of the organisation's reputation as a world-class business catalyst amongst the global community. DWTC's impressive results further reiterate the impact of its diversified content-rich calendar of MiCE and business events, as it continues to grow its contribution to Dubai's economy.

"DWTC is driven by the future-focused vision of the UAE's leadership, which has implemented the ambitious UAE Vision 2021 and UAE



HE Helal Saeed Almarri
Director General, Dubai World Trade Centre Authority (DWTC) and Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM)

Centennial 2071 to diversify the country's economy and develop a competitive knowledge-based society to guarantee sustainable prosperity for its citizens. The strong increase in the number of key MiCE and business events reflect sectors that are strategically aligned with Dubai

"The strong increase in the number of key MiCE and business events reflect sectors that are strategically aligned with Dubai Plan 2021 and the goal of building an innovation-led economy that contributes to the development of the UAE and Dubai"

Plan 2021 and the goals of building an innovation-led economy that contributes to the development of the UAE and Dubai. Our strategic innovation agenda is propelled by the vision set by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to transform Dubai into a global platform for industries. We are committed to future-proofing DWTC's business by sourcing smart solutions and integrating smart technolo-

gies that offer safe, secure and seamless experiences, setting the gold standard in digital innovation to attract new and repeat international business visitors to Dubai, as the city accelerates towards the 20-million-tourists target by 2020," said His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai World Trade Centre Authority (DWTC) and Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM).

International participation also posted a steady increase, as DWTC hosted over 1.1 million foreign business travellers in 2017, representing 42 per cent of overall participant volumes and 6 per cent annual growth. The rise in number of international exhibiting companies and the continued efforts to market Dubai's MiCE proposition in key visitation markets contributed to the rise in international business visitors to Dubai. China, Germany and Turkey made their debut in the top 10 source markets, while dominant mainstays Saudi Arabia, India, Oman, United Kingdom, Kuwait, Iran and Egypt completed the list of top 10 business visitor markets.

Link ME offers hospitality solutions

Link ME, a Dubai-based hospitality and tourism advisory specialist, marked its entry into Asia with the signing of a joint-venture agreement with Mandirijaya Bumi Sejahtera, a subsidiary of Indonesian real estate developer Paramount Enterprise International.

TT Bureau

The partnership agreement was signed in Jakarta, resulting in the formation of a joint venture company, Link ME Indonesia, which will provide specialised hospitality advisory and education services for the Indonesian market and Asia at large.

Asia is an exciting market for the hospitality, travel and tourism industries, and Indonesia is fast emerging as one of the top destinations for leisure and business tourism, believes Bassem Terkawi, Co-Founder and CEO, Link ME said. He said, "Partnering with Paramount Enterprise is a big step for us as we embark on our international expansion journey in

Asia. As a provider of end-to-end specialised advisory services, Link ME certainly has the ability, drive and passion to deliver bespoke hospitality solutions to, and for, the Indonesian market."

Esther Yuanita, Speaker of the Board, Mandirijaya Bumi Sejahtera said, "Building a solid foundation to facilitate a thriving hospitality industry in Indonesia that benefits generations to come, is one of our core objectives. Identifying strategic partners such as Link ME with specialised expertise across the hospitality spectrum, is a key part of our growth and expansion strategy."

"With the phenomenal tourism growth that Indone-



Bassem Terkawi, Link ME and Johannes Hutaeruk, Parador Hotels and Resorts, sign agreement

sia is witnessing, the need for local and international, skilled and qualified, resources becomes a necessity. From circa 6.7 million jobs in 2016 to circa 9 million jobs in 2027, the travel and tourism industry's contribution to employment is expected to grow at 2.9 per cent p.a. Our

Centre for Hospitality Leadership (CHL), offering state-of-the-art interactive education programmes across all levels within the hospitality industry, will soon be expanding to Indonesia and directly cater to this growing demand for competent talent," said Georges Chakar,

Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Link ME.

Further entrenching its presence in the country, Link ME also signed an agreement with Parador Hotels and Resorts, a business unit of Paramount Enterprise International providing one-stop

hospitality management services. Link ME will provide hospitality portfolio design strategy and asset management services including strengthening the brand positioning and value proposition, increasing profitability and market share, and developing local and international business expansion models.

Link ME Indonesia will provide a range of hospitality services including development consultancy and advisory, F&B advisory, destination development and education. These services will be provided from Link ME Indonesia's Jakarta office, slated to open in the fourth quarter of 2018 in Indonesia and across other Asian markets.

Horse racing enthusiasts, rejoice!

For the first time, VisitBritain launched a series of luxury horse racing itineraries especially curated for the discerning GCC horse racing aficionado. Partnering them in this venture is American Express Middle East who will provide access to premium travel concierge services to its exclusive members.

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VisitBritain aims to promote the luxury horse racing itineraries to enthusiasts in the region and inspire them to book these experiences. Their recent 'I Travel For...' digital marketing campaign uses short-films and story-telling to shine the spotlight on unexpected experiences and destinations in Britain, alongside its globally renowned landmarks.



VisitBritain Team (L-R): Tricia Warwick, Wiltrud Matthes, Rachel McQueen, Graziela Martins, Kirk McDonald

Horse racing is a major sport in England with a long history. For centuries, horse racing has been linked with the English monarchy. There is no experience more quintessentially English than a day at the races, at the most

iconic, historic racecourses that the country has to offer.

Embedded in British culture and history, it is no surprise the United Kingdom is home to some of the

most famous racecourses in the world who have all collaborated for this one-off partnership. The itineraries allow the individual to create a bespoke package to suit their individual needs.

The surrounding offering is equally impressive, from luxury hotels and the best dining options in the world, to Premier League football, luxury spa facilities, stud farms and falconry.

Rachel McQueen, Director for Horse Racing – Sport of Kings, said, "We are delighted to introduce these bespoke horse racing itineraries to the GCC. Through the partnership with American Express, we are able to offer GCC residents the opportunity to be the first to experience the luxury itinerary series."

Commenting on the partnership, Julia de Souza, Vice President—Customer Services & Operations, American Express Middle East said, "We have built long term relationships with our card members, besides have a deep understanding of what they value most about their member-

ship – access to exclusive experiences, uniquely crafted travel journeys and superior service. We're delighted to work with VisitBritain to provide unique luxury itineraries for our card members."

Tricia Warwick, Interim Director—Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa, VisitBritain, said, "The GCC is one of the most valuable inbound markets for VisitBritain, hence we have chosen this region to launch these bespoke luxury itineraries for the first time. Our aim is to build on the growth we have seen, showcasing that Britain is blooming with unexpected experiences that visitors can't get anywhere else."

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Our experience is of 25 years in assisting clients in Feasibility Studies, Conceptualization, Employee Strength, Marketing, Staff Sourcing and Training. By ensuring the quality in services and products we make our SPA look great and functioning profitable. With our extensive experience in planning, design and pre-opening services, Zarya is prepared to realize the vision of wellness and beauty.

Zarya wellness classify themselves as EMINENCE, EXPERIENCE, ELEGANCE AND NAYANA SPA BRANDS.

The Eminence is the premium Spa concept developed by Zarya Wellness that gives a safe haven for your guest's mind to rejuvenate itself and find harmony with the body and soul through eminent treatments. You feel enlightened.

The Experience Spa is a place for quiet contemplation and celebration of self and the senses. This is a well-grounded Spa concept that nurtures guests into gaining an experience of physical wellbeing and Success which gives soothing nurture.

The Elegance Spa caters to physical and spiritual wellness. Here, holistic, traditional and modern treatments and packages are provided under the expert hands of skilled therapists were our guest sense lightness.

Nayana Spa defines as EYE of wellness is under a blissful ambience and gentle hands. An enchanting world waits where the body will know a stress-free, light sensation of the total care and essence of traditional Ayurveda treatments. Zarya spas can be seen and experienced in the most prestigious hotels and resorts, across U.A.E like Ramada properties in Ajman, Coral Beach Resort Sharjah, Golden Tulip RAK, Ewan Suites Ajman. Our upcoming opening with Wyndham group Ajman and Ajman Beach Hotel.



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Sharjah trains local tour guides

The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has launched a set of new training programmes to improve the skill and knowledge of local tour guides.

 TT Bureau

According to the SCTDA, the training programmes are expected to keep tour guides updated about the latest developments covering Sharjah's tourism sector. The offered courses include practical lessons and field visits to many cultural, tourist and recreational sites in the emirate. The training programmes demonstrate SCTDA's commitment to place key importance on the significant role that tourist guides play in the continuing development of the emirate's tourism industry—acknowledging their presence as key pillars in promoting the growth of tourist activity in the country and increasing the attraction of tourists

and visitors to learn more about UAE's heritage and culture. The SCTDA revealed that the series of training courses will be available to its strategic partners from the tourism and cultural sector. In fact, the authority has already organised a tour for the Sharjah Museums Tour Guides to 'Mleiha,' which will give them the opportunity to see and learn more about the rich cultural heritage of the region.

The SCTDA has also developed a series of training courses under the umbrella of the 'Marhabtain' initiative, with an aim to train and award certification to tour guides under the supervision of tourism experts and professionals. The courses

are primarily aimed towards throwing the spotlight on Sharjah's many tourism landmarks, especially after the continuously growing attention and interest in the country's archaeological, tourism and cultural sites. The new training programmes aim at helping reinforce the emirate's tourism industry, now a major contributor to Sharjah's economy in light of the increasing number of tourists.

These courses are expected to attract the participation of several local tour guides, which will help enhance their knowledge and skills. This initiative is part of SCTDA's continuing efforts to enhance the human resources capabilities



in the tourism sector in the emirate, aimed to train and assist the guides via comprehensive courses that will also be offered in English, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, French and Italian—giv-

ing them the advantage of introducing Sharjah's history and culture to tourists, in line with the objectives of Sharjah Tourism Vision to attract 10 million tourists by 2021.

Courses on offer

 The courses include practical lessons and field visits to various cultural, tourist and recreational sites in the emirate of Sharjah



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Enjoy iconic views from Vida Za'abeel

Home-grown brand Emaar Hospitality Group has expanded the portfolio of hotel projects under its upscale lifestyle hotel and serviced residences brand, Vida Hotels and Resorts, with the new Vida Za'abeel, set centrally in Zabeel, a mega-development by Emaar as a joint venture with Meraas.

 TT Bureau

Expanding the portfolio of hotel projects under its upscale lifestyle hotel and serviced residences brand, Emaar Hospitality Group recently unveiled Vida Hotels and Resorts, with the new Vida Za'abeel. The property is set centrally in Zabeel, a mega-development by Emaar as a joint venture with Meraas. Overlooking the Zabeel Park, Za'abeel is

a mixed-use development in the heart of Dubai and will feature world-class residences, commercial offices, hotels and leisure attractions. Vida Za'abeel is at the heart of Za'abeel, with direct views of the Dubai Frame, the iconic new attraction in the city, as well as 360-degree vistas of the city including its famed landmarks, namely,

Burj Khalifa in Downtown Dubai and the upcoming Dubai Creek Tower in Dubai Creek Harbour. It is only ten minutes away from the Dubai International Airport, and offers effortless proximity to Downtown Dubai as well as Bur Dubai, home to the Al Fahidi historical neighbourhood that celebrates Emirati heritage in all its glory.

Olivier Harnisch,
Chief Executive Officer,



“As a home-grown brand offering a refreshingly different experience for the new generation of business executives, entrepreneurs and leisure travellers, Vida Hotels and Resorts has set a distinctive niche in Dubai's hospitality sector”

Emaar Hospitality Group, said, “As a home-grown brand offering a refreshingly different experience for the new generation of business executives, entrepreneurs and leisure travellers, Vida Hotels and Resorts have set a distinctive niche in Dubai's hospitality sector. Vida Za'abeel is a significant addition to our portfolio of hotel projects that stands out for its central location and spectacular views of

the city's landmarks. With its focus on convenience, creativity and connectivity, Vida Za'abeel will add to the choice of hotel guests and discerning customers who are seeking a vibrant and social hub where inspiring minds can create and connect.”

An elegantly designed twin-tower development of 70 and 68 storeys, Vida Za'abeel will be home to



Olivier Harnisch
Chief Executive Officer
Emaar Hospitality Group

the 220-room Vida Za'abeel Hotel and Vida Residences Za'abeel, a collection of serviced apartments in one, two and three-bedrooms. Vida Hotels and Resorts will operate the hotel and serviced residences, bringing its brand essence of warmth, simplicity and creativity in design-led spaces.

Mandarin opens doors for summer

Mandarin Bodrum has already opened with expanded facilities for guests, especially from the GCC. New villas and suites overlooking idyllic Paradise Bay will be available, and more butlers will be on hand to maintain the resort's reputation for excellent service.

 TT Bureau

Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum is located at a 60-hectare waterfront site on the northern side of the Turkish peninsula at Paradise Bay, offering panoramic views of the Aegean Sea. The resort's 129 rooms, apartments, suites and villas provide the largest accommodation in the area, all with

sun decks, balconies, and many with private gardens and infinity edged pools. Eight restaurants and bars showcase innovative cuisine, while the 2700 sq m spa introduces the group's award-winning spa concepts together with a range of wellness programmes. In addition, the diverse event spaces, two sandy beaches and extensive

The Bougainvillea Suite features a single bedroom and private swimming pool overlooking the Aegean Sea. The sea-view Royal Suite, with seven rooms and swimming pool is the largest on the Bodrum Peninsula

leisure facilities will bring sophistication and elegance, making this the perfect luxurious hideaway retreat for discerning travellers.

Guests staying at Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum now have three new villas and the Bougainvillea and Royal Suites to choose from in addition to the existing selection of guest rooms, apartments, suites and villas. The Bougainvillea Suite features a single bedroom and private swimming pool overlooking the Aegean Sea. The sea-view Royal Suite, with seven rooms, private garden and swimming pool is the largest on the Bodrum

Peninsula with 533 square metres of space.

Gourmet cuisine

One of the hotel's eight restaurants and bars, Italian eatery Assaggio will host guest chef Arnaud Dunand-Sauthier, head of Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok's two Michelin-starred restaurants, from August 14-18. Using his 15 years of experience, he will present a special seven course dinner menu to Assaggio diners. In addition to presenting traditional Turkish cuisine made with fresh seasonal ingredients, chef Murat Taşdemir will introduce diners to tantalising new flavours at the restaurant this summer.

Award-winning spa

The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum, winner of the Spa category at The 2016 World Luxury Spa & Restaurant Awards, offers the Bodrum Peninsula's range of wellness, beauty and massage treatments. From within this luxurious setting, therapists use natural ingredients, including sage, lavender and olive oil grown in the resort's own garden. Internationally acclaimed podiatrist Bastien Gonzalez and his team will be available at The Spa from June to the end of August to provide treatments for feet, hands and nails. Centuries-old Turkish bath rituals and Moroccan-style Hammam therapies can be experienced at The Spa.





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