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November 5-7

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2018

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## World Travel Market 2018

# WTM ushers in hopes

The 38<sup>th</sup> World Travel Market, set to be held from November 5-7 at ExCeL London, will witness a host of innovative business opportunities.

SHEHARA RIZLY



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

“WTM London presents a major platform for Sharjah to reach out to international markets as the event draws more than 50,000 senior travel professionals, government ministers and thought leaders, as well as European tourists, who are the largest visitors to Sharjah in 2017, with over 468,000 guests. Our target is to increase these numbers by showcasing outstanding experiences in our travel campaign in line with our tourism goals. With over 11 key partners, we look forward to generating quality leads and establishing long-term business relations with major industry players.”

“SAA is a regular participant at World Travel Market (WTM), one of the travel and tourism industry's largest international event. Sharjah is strengthening its position as a tourism destination for regional and international travelers, and Sharjah Airport as the gateway is keen on enhancing its service quality and its expanded offerings for both airlines and passengers. WTM offers us the perfect opportunity to showcase our state-of-the-art airport, its services and facilities to industry professionals and representatives from international airlines and the travelling audience.”



HE Ali Salim Al Midfa  
Chairman, Sharjah Airport Authority (SAA)

## Arabian Travel Awards 2018

# Maya dazzles in ME

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Arabian Travel Awards held at JW Marriott Hotel Dubai recognised key industry players in the region for their efforts in tourism.

TT BUREAU

It was a night of celebration and grandeur as over 250 key industry leaders attended a black-tie dinner to officially receive their awards at the Arabian Travel Awards 2018. H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) graced the occasion as the chief guest while dignitaries from consulates, travel, tourism and hospitality professionals attended to be recognised for their untiring efforts to place United Arab Emirates as the fourth most visited destination in the world. Two special Gold awards were given away.



(L-R): H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, SanJeet and Sumeera Bahl

Jamal Abdunazar, Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel entered the Gallery of Legends whilst another industry stalwart, Nasir Jamal Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Al Naboodah Travel, was awarded as the DDP Game Changer.

For more pictures, turn to page 12 ▶



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# UAE sets eyes on new potential

The UK is one of the most important markets for the UAE and the Middle East. This year, properties from all over the UAE and the Middle East are surging ahead with a brand-new mandate to ensure they receive their own pound. Exhibitors from the UAE share why WTM is an important forum for them.

 TT Bureau



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

“We will highlight our latest property, Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche, alongside our two Ramada hotels in Ajman. The new hotel has enjoyed high occupancy since it opened in April. WTM is an excellent venue to meet and network with different tour operators, as we set sights on broadening our nationality mix by tapping potential partners.”



**Muhammad Mujtaba Haider**  
General Manager,  
ibis Styles Jumeira

“The UK is an important market for us although it was slightly a challenge to extract more business because of less visibility which resulted in contributing 3.2 per cent from total business mix. Hopefully, this will increase for the next season. We are excited to interact with new partners as we look forward to collaborate with strong active wholesalers in the UK market.”



**Ashraf Helmy**  
General Manager  
& Area Business  
Development  
Manager, Miramar Al  
Aqah Beach Resort,  
Fujairah

“The UK market is one of the important inbound markets to the UAE and to Fujairah. The British tourists occupy the third in a number of room nights at our hotel. We will attend WTM not to showcase our properties but meet our loyal partners and look for potential ones. We expect that our efforts in marketing the UAE and Fujairah would blossom.”



**Christophe Mousset**  
General Manager,  
The Oberoi Beach  
Resort, Al Zorah,  
Ajman

“The UK market has the potential to contribute 30 per cent of our market share considering the large volume other emirates has. Our focus at WTM is to reach out to new partners and update our existing partners of the development of the resort. We expect to meet top travel professionals who are looking to partner with The Oberoi, Dubai.”



**Suresh Dissanayake**  
Assistant VP—Sales  
and Marketing,  
Adaaran and  
Heritage Aarah  
Resorts Maldives

“At WTM, we meet some of our key partners from the UK and Europe here, as well as form new relationships to support our business. While we will highlight all our Adaaran properties, we will also be launching Heritage Aarah, the premium all-villa all-inclusive resort in the Maldives. Key expectation is to meet new trade partners from UK.”



**Samir Arora**  
General Manager,  
The Retreat Palm  
Dubai M Gallery by  
Sofitel

“Our participation at this year's WTM is to support the opening of The Retreat Palm Dubai MGallery by Sofitel, the Middle East's first 360-degree wellbeing resort in our top feeder markets. Aiming to build strong business relations with loyal partners, we intend to educate the UK market about the region's first holistic wellbeing resort, for international trade.”



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## TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

## Global trade meet

It is again time to strengthen global ties on one stage in London among professionals from travel, tourism and hospitality as they convene to discuss the biggest business deals for the year. As the focus renders itself more on to digital platforms slowly but surely seeping into the trade, the latest 'Travel Forward' event introduced at WTM will provide a comprehensive overview to the many trade partners of the future of the industry. The Middle East always takes centre stage at WTM, essentially due to its beautifully-adorned stands that spill out Arabian culture to mesmerise visitors. People visiting the UAE or even the Middle East would always take good experiences home that would last a lifetime. In every exhibition, a notable element is the depiction of the rich Arab history and culture within the limited space.

The United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia take a leap in technology as they have already ventured into the digital world with careful and ongoing research. This year's GITEX witnessed some important breakthroughs in terms of technology. Holograms which were once just a talk among tech specialists, have now come into effect, as both Dubai and Saudi are far ahead and researching the best way forward. As Dubai prepares itself for becoming the world's first smart city, 40 leading government entities recently participated in the campaign 'A week without service centres' including Dubai Airport, leading banks, government departments, etc.

Several weeks ago, Dubai lit up the Burj Khalifa in a bid to celebrate the 720-day countdown towards Expo 2020. Properties are already coming up gradually in this area with other major developments in infrastructure. Various new business opportunities would soon find its way towards the new area in progression.

# Opportunities galore in MENA

The Middle East and North Africa, as a transient market, has a high demand for education and learning products, according to Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director—Middle East, IBTM Arabia.

## Evolving opportunities

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa have traditionally relied on oil for a large portion of their income, but with prices in that sector on a long-term low, several are now re-focusing their economies on busi-

ness with increasing tourism as their significant target. Strategies such as Dubai's Tourism Vision 2020, Egypt's Refreshed Tourism Strategy 2013-20, Morocco's Vision 2020, Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 and Saudi Vision 2030 are examples of national strategies aimed at developing the country's economy across a wide range of industries, including technology, healthcare, tourism, education and finance. Jordan and Oman are pursuing similar goals — business tourism is on the rise across the Middle East. The MICE industry is rapidly becoming a priority for governments in the entire MENA region.

**“Abu Dhabi Airport is the world's fastest growing hub, registering growth in connectivity of 1,479% between 2007-17 according to Airport Industry Connectivity Report 2017”**

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## Building connections

Abu Dhabi airport is the world's fastest growing hub, registering growth in connectivity of 1,479 per cent between 2007 and 2017, according to

Airport Industry Connectivity Report 2017, published by Airports Councils International (ACI). A new fourth terminal of the airport is currently under construction and due to open in late 2019. While the existing Abu Dhabi International Airport handles around

## New regions for MiCE business

Across the Middle East, we see evidence that the region is gearing up for events business. Saudi Arabia is experiencing sweeping change across all aspects of life from entertainment to the economy and a major part of the country's strategy is to become a powerhouse in meetings and events.

The country is investing in road, rail and air infrastructure and will open over 50 new four- and five-star hotels in the next four years, creating 11,000 bedrooms. State-of-the-art event facilities are also on the way.

Saudi is not alone. Growth in business tourism in Morocco has also been supported by the development of several economic clusters, including Casa Nearshore for ICT, Midpark for aeronautics and Casablanca Finance City for capital markets.

## Technology to watch

Houston-based Zenus Biometrics's facial recognition technology and guest management software concierge are quite popular, among others. It indeed makes sense for MENA to embrace the latest technologies and events trends.

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



**Danielle Curtis**  
Exhibition Director Middle East  
IBTM Arabia

## Sarawak targets 5 million arrivals for 2019

Malaysia's Sarawak Tourism Board has unveiled the Visit Sarawak Year logo in two key markets - West Malaysia and Singapore as a precursor to the launch of Visit Sarawak in 2019. **Datuk Haji Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah**, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports, Sarawak, unveiled the logo designed to connote fun, and friendliness, while representing the warm hospitality of the state. The multicolored fonts spell out 'Sarawak' with the tagline 'More to Discover' and includes the hornbill, representing Sarawak's moniker.





# Gear up for business & networking

This year, WTM will focus on some of the most important technology aspects with its new 'Travel Forward' sessions which will provide a comprehensive outlook of nextgen technology for travel and hospitality. **Simon Press**, Senior Director, WTM London, shares some of the key highlights.

 TT Bureau

## What will be different at WTM this year?

WTM London will focus on the geographic regions of the exhibition floor with Inspiration Zone added to each region. These zones will host dedicated regional content and events. The inaugural International Travel & Tourism Awards will also take place on the evening of November 6, 2018 at Tobacco Dock.

The awards will honour the excellence and best practices in 13 categories. A new technology event will also be co-located with WTM London at ExCeL. 'Travel Forward' will inspire the travel and hospitality industry with the next generation of technology.

## How many exhibitors are expected from the UAE, GCC and Middle East?

We have more than 300 exhibitors from the Middle East region, including Dubai Corporation for Tourism & Commerce Marketing, Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, Ajman Tourism Development Department, Oman Ministry of Tourism and Jordan Tourism Board. Other exhibitors include Saudia Airline, QE2 Shipping and Al-Muhaidb Group of Hotel Apartments & Grand Plaza Hotels.

## Do share the business transacted last year and expectations for this year.




**Simon Press**  
Senior Director  
WTM London

WTM London 2017 attracted around 50,000 delegates. The number of pre-qualified buyers

“We have more than 300 exhibitors from the Middle East, including DTCM, Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism and Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, among others”

from the WTM Buyers' Club stood at 10,484 – up 8 per cent on 2016. The number of senior industry executives invited by exhibitors to do business at WTM London rose 14 per cent year-on-year to 16,049 – including an 8 per cent rise. This year, it is anticipated that the 50,000 delegates from 182 countries and regions will attend and conduct even more business than last year's record £3.1 billion.

## Is there a special focus on millennials this year?

There will be a couple of sessions focusing on social media and millennials. The inaugural day will have a look at Instagram's impact on travel. The photo-sharing app reached its billion-user threshold in June and as its influence continues to grow, the session will ask how travel marketers can get involved. This will be followed by a talk entitled 'How to Get Billions of Video Views,' which will explain how a handful of video creators are responsible for billions of Facebook views. 



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# An inspiration for Emirati women

## Personality of the month



 Shehara Rizly

Having moved from the field of Aero & Astro Sciences and Aviation Management to pursue her education and career in the hotel and hospitality industry, Al Mashary finally found her calling. "It was simply an explosion! That's when I changed my major and walked into hospitality management without knowing it – and then, fell dangerously in love with the industry. It has always been my mother's dream that at least one

of her children will have a Swiss Hotel education and become a hotelier as she enjoys luxury hotels," she happily reveals.

### Passion drives achievements

For over a decade, Al Mashary worked no less than 15-18 hours in hotel operations and she always chose to be in operations because that's where the connection lies. She informs, "My father always said, what-

Taking over the reins as the first female General Manager at Manzil Downtown, **Sharihan Al Mashary** is a pioneer in the field of hotel operations and management. As an Emirati woman serving different properties for the past 12 years, she is the female trendsetter for other women today.



ever you choose to become in life, start from the bottom, build a solid foundation, and that will help you stand, firm and rise. I've been blessed with incredible parents and few industry legends who guided me along this long rough road. I think I did alright, stood out with merit from the start, from being a simple intern, to strong industry contender, to winning competitions in the field, to operation departments, then divisions, and bringing in incremental changes within team dynamics and hotel operation efficiency. Someone believed in me and someone gave me a chance — and with that in my mind, I have always looked for ways to give back to the industry and the community. Training and guiding the UAE National Team and Emirati youth to be part of the hospitality industry and compete nationally and internationally in the field makes me happy."

**“Training and guiding the UAE National Team and Emirati youth to be part of the hospitality industry and compete nationally and internationally in the field makes me happy”**

### Strengthening foundations

A Graduate in BSc (Hons) in international hospitality management and currently completing her MBA in the same subject from EAHM-UAE and EHL-Switzerland, Al Mashary grew into leadership and managerial roles across core hotel functionalities, hotel operations and executed special projects in all her roles with Jumeirah Group: Burj Al Arab, Madinat Jumeirah Resort and Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Incentive, DIFC—Signature Clubs International, Palazzo Versace Hotel (pre-opening) and Emaar Hospitality Group: Address Boulevard (pre-opening). Dedication and intense respect for the industry made her accelerate to her current role as the youngest and first female Emirati General Manager.

### Vast experience

Prior to being the first Emirati and female observer judge at Hotelympia London and expert judge at WorldSkills International for Hospitality & Service Category, Al Mashary had been recognised by industry founders and awarded by Michelin-star chefs. Her rooted passion and commitment for the hospitality industry and the community goes beyond hotel operations and management. She continues to support the industry by contributing to hospitality education, youth education and vocational training in the service industry, and changing the local and regional mindset towards hotels and hospitality as a career, employment and education path. She is a member of Institute of Hospitality, HFTP and WorldSkills UAE (EmiratesSkills as UAE Team Expert for Hospitality & Service Industry Category). 



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# Airports embrace technology

The growth of global air travel, increasing infrastructure constraints and higher traveller expectations have created a new challenge for airports on ways to maximise existing facilities.

 TT Bureau

This summer, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) warned that an increasing number of airports do not have the capacity to handle all the flights airlines want to deliver. With global passenger numbers set to double within the next 20 years, the pressure lies on airports to adapt to a new environment. It is against this backdrop that Amadeus commissioned Arthur

are likely to focus on:

- Core enabling technologies such as big data and cloud technology
- Process automation and integration such as the Internet of Things, mobile technologies and smart energy systems
- Fringe technologies like virtual modelling and blockchain

**“As the expectations of passengers, airlines and shareholders grow, airports must maximise their existing infrastructure, improve efficiency and ensure that their proposition delivers value to all stakeholders”**



John Jarrell  
Head of Airport IT, Amadeus



D Little to assess the potential of digital technologies within the airport environment. The study highlights how new technologies will help airports achieve greater efficiency and reduce cost. Embracing the concept of digital transformation will allow them to meet the increasing expectations from passengers, airlines and stakeholders. The report also identifies a number of barriers in digital investment, including a lack of strategic clarity on digital transformation, lack of collaboration between airports and airlines and issues with non-digital mindsets within airport environments.

The report defined three clusters of technologies, which airports

John Jarrell, Head of Airport IT, Amadeus, said, “As the expectations of passengers, airlines and shareholders grow, airports must maximise their existing infrastructure, improve efficiency and ensure that their proposition delivers value to all stakeholders.

This report demonstrates that digital technology is enabling them to achieve these objectives. The path toward airport digital transformation is not an easy one, but all of the airports interviewed for this research have already begun their journey of digital evolution – with different maturity levels – and recognise that digital transformation efforts can yield true step-change potential.”

Russell Pell, Managing Partner, Arthur D Little, said, “This report highlights the truly transformative potential of digital technology for airports, with tangible benefits that go far beyond cost reduction. While many airports have begun the journey of using digital to aid passenger processing, airports of all sizes must confront and overcome a number of cultural and organisational barriers to change, with a sustained commitment to digital transformation.”

Arthur D Little interviewed senior executives at more than 15 major airports worldwide to support the study and incorporated views from a variety of industry experts. 



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# Discerning experience of privacy

The tasteful experience of a luxury tent set amidst the thriving outdoors of an enclave closer to the city defines Kingfisher Lodge by Mantis. This ecotourism boutique property with 20 luxurious tents sets a new era of tourism in the emirate of Sharjah.

 TT Bureau

Kingfisher Lodge by Mantis features the ultimate luxury with its 20 well-appointed tents having its own private pool in seclusion. Its views overlook the Indian Ocean, whilst the neighbouring mangroves are home to a turtle-breeding area and many rare species of birds. Embracing its Arabian heritage and culture, you can expect world-class hospitality. Each room has been designed with your every need in mind. Chic and comfortable, the rooms feature all modern amenities, with a calming colour palette designed to allow full relaxation. Different to any other hotel in the UAE, you feel like you are on safari ready for your next


big adventure. Each room also features awe-inspiring views, whilst also retaining privacy. Heading down to the main tent, this bespoke dining venue is the heart of Kingfisher Lodge. A space to indulge in sumptuous food, or simply relax by one of the fire pits.

For those seeking a little bit of adventure, the mangroves are home to a whole host of activities. Kayak or paddle board through the water, looking from the sky to the sea to experience the spirit of Kalba's vast animal life. Be on the lookout for the many species, which call it home, in particular, the sea turtles and rare species of birds



that include the White Collared Kingfisher and Sykes's Warbler. You can also search for the beautiful creatures on a guided nature walk or bird-watching expedition. Pick up the pace by heading to the surrounding mountains, where you can hike down to

the marshes, or even try your hand at archery at the Kalba Absolute Adventure Camp. Take things to new heights with the most comprehensive high ropes course in the UAE or test your stamina on mountain bike skill track. If that's not enough, the beach calls

for fat bike riding and water sport activities, from fishing to diving and even a spot of paragliding. For those looking to simply relax, the onsite spa will massage away any stresses with its fully qualified therapists and locally-sourced ingredients. 



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# A night to remember for trade

It was a celebratory night for 60 award winners for their efforts and contribution to the travel and tourism industry as they were recognised by the conveners of Arabian Travel Awards at a gala event held recently attended by over 250 professionals from the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors.







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# SHARJAH

## Confluence of the past & present



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa  
Chairman  
SCTDA



With its rich tapestry of culture, heritage and history, Sharjah is one of the most dynamic and vibrant regions in the country. It is home to souks, wildlife sanctuaries, diving spots, museums, parks and Arabian wildlife, along with a host of world-class facilities for visitors.



### The Central Souk

The city's most photographed building is known for its elaborate architecture and close attention to detail with wind towers and beautiful blue tiles. Central Souk comprises six buildings that hold over 600 shops selling everything from handicrafts and clothes, to shoes, souvenirs and anything else you can think of. This is the place to visit for everything authentic — Arabian-rich carpets, lanterns, jewellery and exquisite gift items. One can stroll down picturesque indoor alleys and experience an exciting mix of local sights, sounds and colours, that are guaranteed to pique your interest.

### Al Majaz Waterfront

Looking for a perfect spot to spend the day with family? Head to the Al Majaz Waterfront, which promises fun and excitement for everyone. There are dedicated play areas, parks and activities to please children of all ages from toddlers to teens, including a mini golf course to practice their skills and several restaurants offering cuisines to please every palate. Fitness

enthusiasts can jog around the perimeter on the recycled tyre jogging track, with spectacular views of the lagoon and surroundings.

### Arabian Wildlife Centre

Sharjah has a unique and extensive range of wildlife, much of which can be spotted at the Arabian Wildlife Centre. The area is divided into three parts, dedicated to three different types of wildlife: mammals, reptiles and insects. However, this is more than just a zoo. It was created to help repopulate certain endangered species by means of a special breeding programme and educate visitors about the dangers of extinction and the importance of bio-diversity. The zoo has been designed in such a way that visitors can enjoy viewing the animals in their natural habitat without disturbing them.

### Kalba

Kalba is home to the restored 'hisn' (fort), a former royal residence and a seaside promenade. On the southern outskirts of the town, the tidal Khor Kalba boasts of the oldest mangrove forest in Arabia, inhabited by two of the world's rarest birds. Kalba







has an extensive range of attractions to tempt visitors: the beautiful museum at Bait Sheikh Saeed bin Hamad Al Qassimi, watching royal falcons in flight at the Kalba Bird of Prey Centre or kayaking in the mangroves.

### Heart of Sharjah

Heart of Sharjah was a project conceived in order to discover and preserve the local history and culture of the emirate. The project, which is ongoing, is scheduled to be completed in 2025, but is already a tourist hotspot for its coral brick walls, carved wooden doors and heritage museums, which evoke a sense of history and culture. This unique attraction is also home to the region's oldest souk.

### Dibba Al Hisn

This place is a must-visit, not only for its swaying palm trees and serene mosques, but also for its bountiful market produce that imparts a unique local colour and character to the place.

Visitors can stroll around the harbour and see fishermen bringing in the day's catch. Or they can hire a dhow and go for an unforgettable cruise round the coast. If they're lucky, they can spot a dolphin or two and head to the mysterious deserted coves and secret snorkelling spots that will make it an adventure to remember.

### Mleiha

Mleiha is home to several historical sites, including Bronze Age tombs and pre-Islamic forts. It is popular for its artefacts, from camel skeletons to pottery and iron tools, many of which are on display in the Mleiha Archaeological Centre. Opened in 2016, Mleiha offers an exciting range of guided tours and activities. Visitors to Mleiha can also opt for activities such as trekking to Camel Rock, desert cycling, 4WD tours, dune buggy rides and even paragliding as well as exploring stone age caves in the Valley of Caves.

### KhorFakkan

If diving is your thing, then the port town of Khor Fakkan, the second largest on Sharjah's East coast, will provide the perfect venue. Shark Island is one such destination, frequented by divers for its coral outcrops and scenic diving spots. The Rifaisa Dam, tucked away in the mountains, is another attraction, especially since it was built over a village and the tops of the houses become visible when there is no rain.

### Al Noor Mosque

For anyone interested in delving a little deep into the UAE's heritage and acquainting themselves with Islamic beliefs, the Al Noor Mosque is a must-visit, as it is the only Mosque in Sharjah that is open to non-Muslims. A guided tour takes place every Monday at 10 am and includes a focused discussion on Islamic history and emirati customs and traditions. The mosque is modelled on the classical Ottoman style, but with a modern twist.



A visit to this seat of culture and tradition is uplifting, educative and enriching.





# What it takes to ace the game

Success comes with commitment and dedication. Rarely would one find such traits in three different properties managed by a single person. **TRAVTALK** interviews **Iftikhar Hamdani**, Cluster General Manager, Ramada Ajman, Ramada Beach and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche to find out his techniques that would mentor the wider hospitality industry.



**TT Bureau**

In a country where there are over 100,000 hotel rooms to be filled every day, one has to be smart enough to understand how to achieve their own goals while securing their piece of pie in the big picture.

## Clever operations

It is a strategy that would never fail in the field of hospitality. Yet, hardly a few realise its value. In fact, it is the core of success. No matter how beautiful the ambience may be, if the operation is unsuccessful, then it hits hard on the revenue factor. One must employ a strong operation to stay ahead in the game. Hamdani shares, "Clients have the power today to make a property successful or fail. If the operation is not good, it will affect your business. So, whatever we deliver today, we will be harvesting tomorrow. For Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche, the months of June, July and August witnessed high occupancy. Even though it is a new property with many challenges, we were able to achieve 97 per cent recommendations from Holiday Check – known as the bible for the German-speaking clientele. German-speaking tourists depend highly on what others recommend about the

property, and Wyndham Garden being a new property managed to achieve 250 plus reviews within a short span of three months." This is a clear definition of the strength and dedication of a committed operation team led by Hamdani.

## Personalisation and loyalty

Ramada Beach is a property which overlooks the beach and has its own private beach on the opposite side, so that guests have ample room to enjoy. It can accommodate up to 1200 visitors at a time secluded especially for the two properties — Ramada Beach and Wyndham Garden. Ramada Beach, the four-star property that has been operating



**Iftikhar Hamdani**  
Cluster General Manager  
Ramada Ajman, Ramada Beach and  
Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche

every person by their names and give their best to fulfill all of their requirements. He explains, "Our team at Ramada Beach is really

**“For Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche, June, July and August witnessed high occupancy. Even though it is a new property, we were able to achieve 97% recommendations from Holiday Check”**

for a long time has witnessed remarkable reviews from guests around the world. The primary reason for repeated guests is the staff and operations allowing the guests more privacy. The staff tends to know each and

well-versed with their operations and the service they render is with a good heart and attitude. As I always say, if the team is happy, then guests are happy too and the revenues escalate without any hitch on the way.”

## UAE National Tourism Programme

United Arab Emirates (UAE) personifies the real unification to its fullest with its new programme to promote all emirates under one flag. The Ministry of Economy UAE provided the opportunity for those engaged in travel, tourism and hospitality to be part of their Scandinavian roadshow. **Iftikhar Hamdani** and his team participated and were successful as they secured some good business not only for winters, but for next summers as well. Hamdani reiterates, "We participated as a country at the Scandinavian roadshow conducted by the Ministry of Economy and visited Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen — three cities of utmost importance and signed some good contracts for winter and summer next year."

## New business areas

Hamdani and his team tirelessly work together to ensure not just a smooth business acumen to get in more business to the properties, but also to ensure that the operation runs as smoothly as possible ensuring good returns. This year, Hamdani and the team participated at the second edition of Pakistan Travel Mart in Karachi where he was selected to moder-

ate a few panel discussions and was successful in obtaining new business, especially for promoting sports tourism.

Ramada Ajman or black Ramada as known by all is a property that hosted world-class cricketers throughout the years and this year too, the likes of Chris Gayle, Colin Munro, Ravi Bopara, Thisara Perera, Shahid Afridi, Ben Laughlin, Andre Russell, Ben Cutting, etc stayed at the property for their APL. "Apart from this, we also organised and hosted blind cricket and wheelchair cricket, which was another good initiative that drove in many clientele to the property. We are now focusing on football teams to make them stay at the property with few national teams from Central Asia, GCS countries and West Europe at Ramada Ajman," he concluded.

## Cricket Stars

❖ Ramada Ajman or black Ramada as known by all is a property that hosted world-class cricketers throughout the years and this year too, the likes of Chris Gayle, Colin Munro, Ravi Bopara, Thisara Perera, etc stayed at the property



# Innovation in luxury yachts

Reinforcing opportunities for the marine sector in Abu Dhabi, the four-day Abu Dhabi International Boat Show attracted over 21,000 local, regional and international visitors. As many as 270 exhibitors from 25 countries, as well as leading local manufacturers of luxury yachts were a part of the event.

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The Abu Dhabi International Boat Show (ADIBS) 2018 hosted and organised by Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC) was an ideal platform to showcase the latest innovations in the luxury yachts and boats industry while emphasising on easy access to the location and attracting a recognised number of local, regional and international visitors.

Humaid Matar Al Dhaheri, Group CEO, ADNEC, said, "The inaugural edition of ADIBS exceeded our expectations. Several deals were signed during the show, reflecting the high interest in the UAE's leading marine industry. The first-of-its-kind event has taken its place as one of the



leading platforms in the Middle East for the world's prominent leisure marine companies and water sports enthusiasts to come together and witness the best that the UAE Capital has to offer."

## New launches, new deals

ADIBS witnessed the launch of state-of-the-art leisure marine

equipment. Emirates Riviera unveiled the yacht (RCAT50) in the 'Fly Bridge' version, the boat (Rcat38) and the Riviera enclosed Abra, in addition to showcasing its luxurious yacht, Integrity 55. Gulf Craft — the UAE's leading yacht and boat builder, showcased its latest recreational boating (Oryx 37) design and three different

models of the Majesty, including Majesty 100, Majesty 135 and Majesty 62, in addition to the display of three boats from Oryx and Silver Craft, a line popular amongst the fishing community. Delma Marine launched the Boston Whaler 210 Montauk boat, the first of its kind

in the Middle East.

Two yachts were announced for the first time in the region, the luxury yacht Monte Carlo (MC6-2019) from 'SF Yachts' and the UK-origin 'Princess 55' yacht from Princess Yachts. The event also witnessed launches from Emirates Boats, world's first finest boats and powerboat

range, which included the 'carbon epoxy' infused centre-console 48 feet fishing boat built in the UAE, a House Boat by Al Kous; The Sea Star Racing boat, the Sea Star RS boat, the Tullio Abbate Kid and the Elite 27 manufactured by Sulaco Arabia, as well as the latest models of the drone-operated Hull cleaner by Keel Crab.

## Water activities

Visitors were able to take part in yacht and sailing trips, fishing competitions, and had the opportunity to witness stunt performances, such as Jet Ski and Flyboard shows. Motorised and non-motorised watersports, such as the 'Open 60' yacht sailing experience and Keel Boats sailing experience with Abu Dhabi Sailing Academy. 

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# RWANDA: Burst of nature

Located in East Africa, Kigali is the capital of Rwanda — a must-visit destination which recently relaxed visa norms for all nationalities around the world. The daily flights on RwandAir ensure connectivity from the UAE.

TT BUREAU

## Unique destination for exclusive visitors

Remarkable Rwanda is known as “The Land of Thousand Hills” the third greenest country in the world with a green landscape of hills, gardens and tea, coffee plantations. It offers tourists a one-of-a kind journeys, a home to one-third of the world’s remaining mountain gorillas and one-third of Africa’s birds’ species, volcanoes, game reserve, resorts and islands on the expansive Lake Kivu, cultural dances and traditional arts.

## Seasons

Rwanda’s long rainy season lasts from about March to May, when the rain is heavy and persistent. Then, from June to mid-September is the long dry season, generally the best time to visit. If you have the choice, October

to November is a shorter rainy season and it’s followed by a short dry season from December to February.

## Fast facts about Rwanda for locals in GCC

- Rwanda is the second safest country in Africa and ninth, globally
- Visa on Arrival for all the citizens of the world
- UAE Embassy recently opened in Rwanda
- Direct flights from Dubai to Rwanda by RwandAir
- Family-friendly visa process
- Visa is upon arrival to all the citizens of the world after submitting some documents — valid passport, invitation letter for business or hotel reservation for tourism, vaccination of Yellow Fever

## Hot spots to be enjoyed

- Volcanoes National Park
- Nyungwe Forest
- Lake Kivu
- Akagera National Park
- Kings Museum



Rwanda has three national parks that cover about 10 per cent of the country’s area, one of which is the Volcanoes National Park (VNP). The Akagera National Park offers a range of wildlife, such as elephants, hippos, giraffes, zebra, etc. The Nyungwe Forest National Park has a large tract of mountain forest and is rich in biodiversity. Guided

walks and chimpanzee trekking are also offered.

Lake Kivu has recreational facilities as well, but there is still significant potential that could be developed. King’s Palace Museum gives a glimpse into the Rwandan traditional seat of the monarchy and introduces the traditional materials. 🇷🇼

## Presence of International hotel chains

- ❖ Radisson Blu Hotel
- ❖ Marriott Hotel
- ❖ One & Only resort

## Quick tips about the destination

- ❖ The best time to travel is from June to September and November to February.
- ❖ Casual Clothes
- ❖ Yellow Fever Vaccination

## Food wise

- ❖ Lebanese restaurant called Kebab House in Kigali
- ❖ Zafraan Restaurant Arabic, Indian & Asian food in Kigali
- ❖ Shawarma House in Kigali





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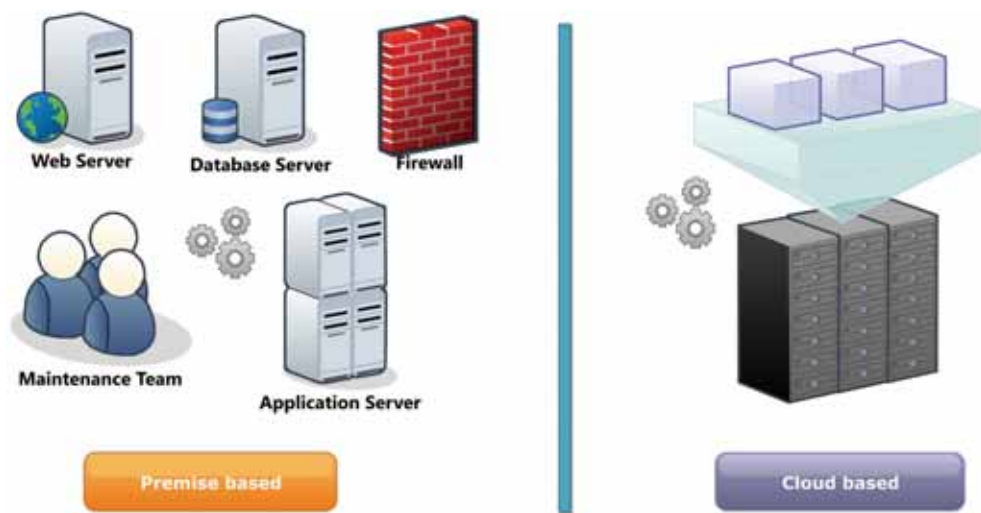


# OneView to connect customers

Business in the travel and tourism industry needs extensive customer interaction and delivering services on time is the key. Better tools are required to cater to requirements of customers and a contact centre solution seems more appropriate to meet and exceed the client's overall experience.

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Call centres have proved that it was possible to improve customer experience and reduce costs by centralising inbound customer calls into a modern call centre. A contact centre can be thought of the next generation call centre which can handle not only traditional telephone calls, but also other means. Contact centresolutions must allow customer engagement teams to multitask any incoming contact, ensuring optimal customer service and first contact resolution.



personal dashboard for agents to displays their own metrics, such as contacts handled, as well as overall queue statistics such as contacts in queue and longest wait can help an agent to analyse his productivity and improvise work flow.

A supervisor module which can monitor the overall activities of a group and also drill-down statistics of each agent will help supervisors to manage agents. Another possibility is CRM profiling which allows supervisors to make informed decisions about

Customers say they always prefer travel solutions that offer multiple channels. Thanks to the power of computer-telephone integration that makes it easier to integrate the services used for running your business. This includes phone, VoIP telephone services, live chat, emails, help-desk, SMS, instant message, CRM tools, script builders, feed-back templates or even social networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. Every service is run, developed and maintained by specialists, leaving your business to benefit by their expertise.

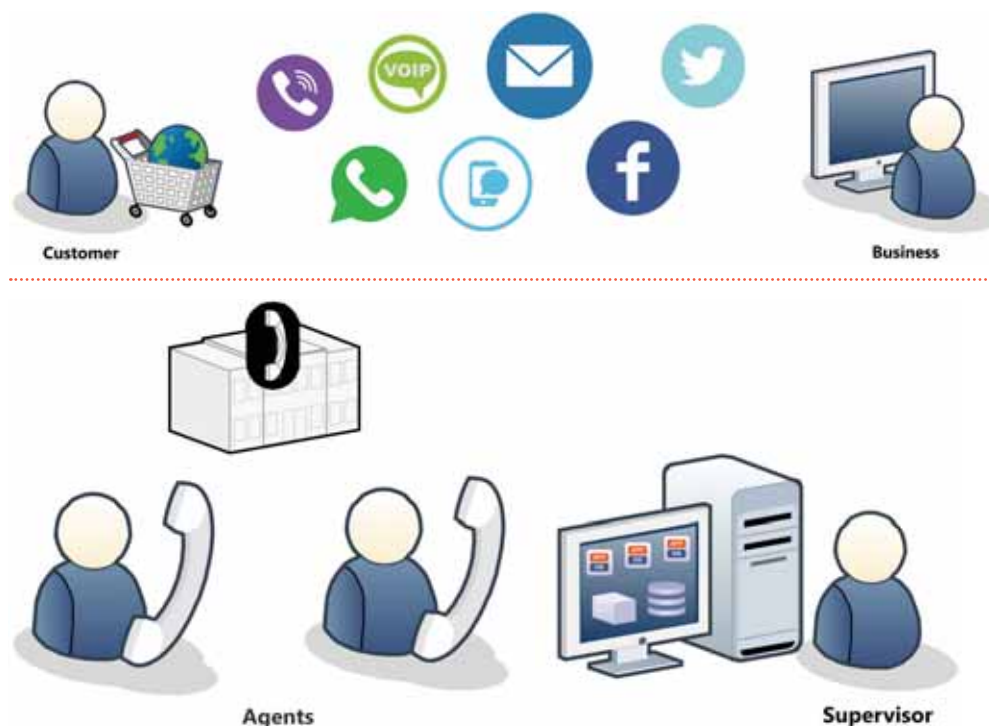
Customers expect the information they share with an organisation to be available in another place. All important information including contacts, client histories, performance data, etc. are shared across teams and platforms. This encourages a team to work as a cohesive unit and stay on the same page. Moreover, displaying common goals and key indicators further federates the team. Teams take advantage of collaborative call centre features to help each other during calls. Managers can listen, jump in, or advise their team member without the person on the other line realising it. This

is how managers can give their team a hand and support to agents in need, so as to serve the customer better.

For many businesses, these are handled in silos or separate groups, if at all. A state-of-the-art, multi-modal contact centre brings this all together to provide a consistent, seamless customer experience across all communication channels. Contact centre solutions are usually of two types — premise-based and cloud-based. These can be chosen as per the organisation's needs. Premise-based contact centres

## Application areas:

- ❖ Travel consulting services
- ❖ Emergency Customer support
- ❖ Multilingual Customer support
- ❖ B2C travel industry to engage every visitor to a website or portal
- ❖ B2B travel industry support services
- ❖ Cost-effective travel agency customer service
- ❖ 24/7 inbound customer service for tour operators
- ❖ Answering customer queries professionally
- ❖ Consolidated customer service: phone, email, website inquiries and web chat
- ❖ Call back feature
- ❖ Issue resolution through social media and improving customer rating



operate right in your offices, hardware, software, and infrastructure. Your team takes care of the installation, configuration and maintenance of the entire solution. Maintenance can be outsourced, if required.

Cloud-based contact centres work on the software hosted in the cloud by a service provider. Users can employ a computer or smartphone with an internet connection to access the service. Cloud-based virtual contact centres differ from premise-based ones because the upkeep is the responsibility of the service provider. Hence, users can easily focus on running their own businesses.

Specific modules for different roles can increase visibility and boost productivity. For example, a

prioritisation. Supervisors can have full visibility and control of their agents with configurable thresholds to alert them of potential problems.

Apart from it, both live web chat and call back can help businesses not to miss out any potential leads visiting their website or portal. This is especially useful for B2C travel industry. The solution may also support multiple concurrent webchat sessions, providing agents quick links to canned responses, attachments and links to improve customer response times. As an alternative to inbound contact queues, contact centres may also support 'call me back' queues, where the customer's details are queued to an agent, who then initiates the callback with a single click.



# Boost for medical tourism industry

With the capital's vision to become the most trusted medical tourism destination by 2030, DCT Abu Dhabi recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Medical Tourism Association (MTA), to host MTA's annual World Medical Tourism & Global Healthcare Congress in Abu Dhabi.

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The World Medical Tourism & Global Healthcare Congress brings together experts and organisations from more than 100 countries worldwide and regularly attracts more than 10,000 visitors, approximately 200 exhibitors and sponsors and up to 100 hosted VIP buyers.

The MoU agreement, signed by **HE Saif Saeed Ghobash**, Undersecretary of DCT Abu Dhabi and **Jonathan Edelheit**, CEO, Medical Tourism Association, opens a pathway for the two entities to strategically cooperate to further build a medical tourism proposition for consumer markets in several key areas, including Russia, China, India and across the GCC. The agreement

also includes the opening of a new MTA office in Abu Dhabi as well as the production of a new Abu Dhabi destination guide. The MoU will see DCT Abu Dhabi and MTA co-ordinate their efforts in a variety of ways, including compiling an assessment of Abu Dhabi's current medical tourism strategy as it looks to develop targeted markets, coordinating digital marketing initiatives, launching dedicated promotional roadshows across China, Russia and the GCC, as well as organising Familiarisation tours to Abu Dhabi's state-of-the-art medical facilities for specific hosted buyers.

Ghobash said, "This agreement between our organisations



is in line with our mandate to promote Abu Dhabi on the world stage and to support Abu Dhabi's Economic Vision 2030, designed to guide our emirate's growth and development. The experience and knowledge shared under this MoU will greatly enhance the emirate's ability to appeal to our intended markets as we

look to increase the contribution of medical tourism to the UAE's economy.

Edelheit mentioned, "The partnership between the MTA and DCT Abu Dhabi will boost the medical travel industry. This MoU establishes a 10 year partnership demonstrating Abu Dhabi's long-term

commitment to emerging as one of the most advanced and sustainable medical tourism destinations in the world. Strategically moving our global event to Abu Dhabi will align our mutual goals and provide accessibility for buyers of medical travel, insurers, hospitals and investors to a more central location." 📌

## AFRICA'S LEADING BUSINESS TRAVEL AGENCY 2018

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# SIA honours top agents

Singapore Airlines recognised top trade agents and cargo agents for their unstinted support throughout the year. The awards ceremony was held at Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai with award winners from leading travel and cargo agencies in the UAE.





# Are you ready for the NDC era?

Travelport recently became the first GDS operator to manage the live booking of flights using the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) New Distribution Capability (NDC) technical standard. But what really is NDC and what are the challenges and opportunities it poses for TMCs?

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NDC is a technology standard, based on XML, which transforms the data exchange to and from Global Distribution Systems (GDSs) and other third parties, through Application Programming Interface (API) and enables data, such as passenger booking information, to be transferred in a common way between all parts of the travel provider ecosystem, over the internet.

NDC was introduced by IATA providing airlines more choices in the ways they distribute their products, improving product differentiation, time-to-market and access to full and rich air content for all travellers.

## What are the benefits?

NDC will deliver flexible new ways of unbundling services, selling fares and ancillaries through menu style pricing and tailoring offers to specific customers. In doing so, it will provide new opportunities for TMCs to build more direct relationships with agencies, travellers, and corporate customers.

## Opportunities for airlines

With ancillary airline revenue



**David Gomes**  
Senior Commercial Director, Air,  
Travel Partners, Travelport

reaching \$82.2bn in 2017, the ability for airlines to sell ancillary products like lounge access, pre-checked bags, onboard food and drinks and more, is increasingly more important and NDC enables airlines to compete more effectively in this space. NDC technology enables each airline to clearly highlight differences in their overall respective offerings.

## Opportunities for TMCs

For corporate travel managers and buyers, NDC offers the potential to negotiate deals that deliver significant added value. This will help deliver a more

personalised journey experience and the ability to pre-apply the parameters of a defined corporate travel policy. By enabling the distribution of highly personalised content, corporate travel managers and buyers should be better equipped to prevent out-of-policy travel bookings. As business travellers start to see their trips becoming personalised to their own preferences, complying with policy becomes the default.

## Challenges faced

### For airlines:

- NDC does not equate to 'free distribution'. There is still a cost, whether that might be in customer acquisition, back office and customer support or technology investment.
- The future commercial relationships between airlines and travel sellers will evolve to better recognise the value provided by each party. Currently, airlines distribute fares; in the future, they will create and distribute offers, packaged to meet the exact needs of a traveller.
- Airlines are at very different stages of NDC implementation. IATA's industry goal

is for a subset of airlines to distribute 20 per cent of their global sales via NDC technology by 2020.

### For TMCs:

- NDC does not reduce the complexity of the travel distribution landscape.
- Back office workflow management including automation, agency robotics, change management, integrated itineraries, duty of care, invoicing and business analytics will also remain complex.
- Agents and intermediaries need access to multiple carriers and their content as well as a range of other suppliers so that they can aggregate itineraries for their customers.
- The speed and consistency of NDC booking needs to top the existing systems of corporate travel managers. As some parts of the NDC itinerary will be managed in airline systems, this could have an impact on speed and performance.

## Tackling challenges

Travelport's evolution started more than five years ago and

has been rapid since then. Travelport was the first GDS operator to achieve NDC Level 3 certification as an aggregator late last year and it recently became the first GDS operator to manage the live booking of flights using IATA's NDC technical standard.

The first transaction was recently made by British agency Meon Valley Travel for a short-haul low-cost flight from London to Milan issued by a major European carrier. It was managed on the latest Travelport Smartpoint agency point of sale. It is the first of a series of products Travelport is developing to accommodate changing airline distribution methods.

Over the next few months, the first version of the NDC capability launched in October 2018 will be used by a steadily increasing number of agencies and airlines as part of Travelport's NDC rollout. It will also be followed by a series of product enhancements, including a version for online agents in 2019. Given the complexity of the technology, Travelport has pledged to continue to develop these products. 🚀

Travelport

## New Distribution Conversation

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For more information visit  
[travelport.com/ndc](http://travelport.com/ndc)





# Appetite for Chinese visitors

The maiden Dubai China Conference concluded successfully with over 900 delegates at Atlantis The Palm, Dubai. The two-day event featured workshops and informative guest speakers offering valuable insights from Chinese as well as local industry experts.

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At the two-day conference, guests dived into Dubai's China-readiness strategy, while many industry partners engaged the august audience through their presentations. There were workshops hosted by Mafwengo, Fliggy and Alipay enabling attendees to meet the teams to discuss collaborations, while Meituan and DaZhongDianPing delved into the digital cooperation trends in Dubai. The comprehensive programme demonstrated the clear appetite for attracting Chinese visitors and engaging with market



Key business leaders and officials were among over 900 delegates who attended Dubai China Conference



Helal Saeed Almarri  
Director General  
Dubai Tourism

“His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, commented, “As Dubai continues to gain traction as a preferred destination of choice for Chinese travellers, we are actively working with our public and private sector partners and stakeholders to facilitate a city-wide conversation to continue to tap the true potential of this market. The purpose of this conference has been to create a platform for industry leaders and partners to come together to not only share the best practices and technical industry insights, but also encourage all stakeholders to find synergies that fuel our local endeavours in making Dubai more China-ready.”

leaders in the travel and technology space.

With exponential growth in overnight visitors from China, the event offered a clear indication of the market's rising prominence as one of Dubai's fastest-growing source markets, after closing the first eight months of 2018 with a record 578,000 visitors – a growth of 9 per cent over the same period in 2017. While demand from Chinese travellers is increasing at a quicker rate than capacity,

visitation growth is supported by a 9.5 per cent increase in air capacity over the last five years. Furthermore, the percentage of those on China-Dubai flights who stay in Dubai has increased by 29.2 per cent highlighting the increase in demand for elongated stopovers for Chinese tourists. Examining consumer spend of Chinese tourists in Dubai during 2017 compared to the same period in 2016, there was a 6 per cent increase in share of spend on hotels and local transport with

a 5 per cent increase in spend on leisure and entertainment.

The ongoing relationship between China and Dubai is underpinned by the emirate's China-readiness strategy. Incorporating a series of large-scale initiatives in collaboration with key partners like Alipay and WeChat Pay to further enhance the visitor experience of Chinese tourists, the ongoing support and investment through private and public sector collaboration further reinforces the commitment from both markets.



Roger Qui  
General Manager, EMEA,  
Ctrip Destination Marketing

“The China conference held by Dubai Tourism provided a great opportunity for communication as we better understood the destination, whilst getting local partners to learn more about Ctrip. We are looking forward to strengthening our cooperation both with Dubai Tourism and all partners in Dubai, so that we can provide Chinese tourists with higher-quality and more professional stories.”



Timothy Kelly  
General Manager and  
Senior Vice President —  
Operations  
Atlantis, The Palm

“China continues to be a leading source market for us with a record-breaking 18 per cent increase of Chinese guests during this year's Chinese New Year period. We look forward to welcoming more Chinese guests as they choose Dubai as a must-visit tourism destination over the coming years.”



Badr Abbas  
Senior Vice President —  
Commercial Operations Far  
East, Emirates

“With China being the largest trading partner of the UAE, we are pleased to contribute to the growth of trade between the two nations. Emirates was the first airline to establish non-stop connectivity between the Middle East and China. China is an important business and leisure destination for Emirates and we are committed to offering Chinese tourists and business travellers a product that is at the forefront of innovation.”



Olivier Harnisch  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Emaar Hospitality Group

“The Dubai China Conference served as a strategic initiative to strengthen Chinese tourist arrivals to the city. Emaar Hospitality Group has a strong track record of hosting Chinese visitors, offering them exceptional hotels in iconic locations that meet their aspirations. With plans to expand our brand to the country, we look forward to fostering our market leadership in welcoming Chinese guests.”



Sue Wheatley  
Director — Sales and  
Marketing  
Fairmont, The Palm

“It is indeed a matter of delight for us to be a part of the Dubai China Conference. The event enabled us to better understand Chinese tourism and connect and network with a number of significant partners and other stakeholders.”



Freddy Farid  
Area General Manager  
Gloria Hotels & Resorts

“I think it is a very informative platform, in the sense that some of the information we were unaware of, especially the scale and size of the China market and how much emphasis Dubai Tourism is putting into it. We think it is a great initiative, the C-Trip presentation was really amazing, and the figures shared were quite compelling.”



# UAE celebrates Polo in style

**Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor**, Founding Chairman, Al Habtoor Group, welcomed **Her Highness Sheikha Maitha bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum** and over 400 guests at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Polo opening held at Al Habtoor Polo Resort. The annual event celebrates the tradition of polo, fashion and UAE hospitality.

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The second polo season opened in style with a friendly polo match with the UAE Polo team playing a great game against Habtoor Polo. **HH Sheikha Maitha bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Patron, UAE Polo team, was joined by several players, including **Mohammed Al Habtoor**, Vice Chairman & CEO, Al Habtoor Group, and **Habtoor Mohammed Al Habtoor**, Director, Al Habtoor Polo Resort & Club and Polo professional **Alejandro Gowland**. Guests arrived at the Andalusian-style resort best competing for prizes in the best-dressed competition. The evening programme included live entertainment and bespoke

hospitality catered from across the six culinary venues at the Al Habtoor Polo Resort.

In his welcome speech, **Khalaf Al Habtoor**, Founding Chairman, Al Habtoor Group said, "We have a unique luxury lifestyle offering at the Al Habtoor Polo Resort & Club. The sprawling six million square hospitality, residential and equine development is a luxurious private haven offering world-class facilities and impeccable service."

The centrepiece of the resort features the Al Habtoor Polo Resort, an equestrian-inspired luxury hotel offering personalised services across 136 rooms and suites, 25




bespoke villas and six culinary venues.

The upcoming polo season includes three 18-goal handicap competitions as part of the Dubai Polo Gold Cup series kicking off in





October with the next Polo season opening until April 2019. 🏇





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# Luxury now has a new Address

Located at the famous Dubai Mall premises, Address Dubai Mall comprising 244 rooms and suites, recently opened doors with a refurbished look to attract guests from around the world.

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Emaar Hospitality Group welcomed guests to Address Dubai Mall, an exclusive city shopping retreat in The Dubai Mall. With a new look and sparkle, the all-new Address Dubai Mall redefines premium luxury with its ultra-modern hotel rooms and suites, exceptional dining concepts and avant-garde wellness facilities. The renovation of the hotel was undertaken over the past few months with the new design spanning the welcome entrance, lobby, hotel rooms and suites, the restaurants, fitness centre, and the children's club, among others. Alongside, there have been new additions to delight visitors.

Olivier Harnisch, CEO, Emaar Hospitality Group, said, "The


all-new Address Dubai Mall once again underlines our strategy of creating exceptional lifestyle environments under our Address Hotels + Resorts. This is 'where life happens' and it is important that we revisit the hotel's offerings – from its look and décor to the amenities – to deliver innovative and authentic experiences for our guests."

Mohamed Samir El Sayed, General Manager, Address Dubai Mall, added, "As a city shopping retreat, Address Dubai Mall has set industry benchmarks for its service excellence, lifestyle choices and central location. We are raising the standards with the all-new design and added amenities that will make the hotel the first choice for every occa-



sion." With the entrance to spot a new design, the lobby is more contemporary, reflecting sophisticated elegance, and complementing the hotel's appeal to the fashion-lovers who revel in retail therapy at The

Dubai Mall. Vitrines featuring high-end brands add to the fashion quotient and offer another opportunity for retailers in The Dubai Mall to build their brand engagement with the visitors.

The rooms take on an inspiring new look and feel with lavish furnishings adorning them. Best-in-class amenities assure a superior lifestyle befitting the individuality of the guests. 

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# Here's a fully automated laundry

Moving ahead towards 2020, supplying a facility that can accommodate nearly 150,000 kg of linen a day, AA Al Moosa Enterprises in partnership with Newmatic thrives on a new venture to ensure that the hospitality industry benefits further with this initiative.

 TT Bureau

Golden Sands has unveiled its new state-of-the-art industrial laundry facility at Dubai Investments Park (DIP). **Abdallah Ahmed Al Moosa**, Chairman, AA Al Moosa Enterprises, inaugurated the ceremony, alongside **Abdulaziz Al Serkal**, General Manager, Dubai Investments; **Omar Al Mesmar**, General Manager, DIP and **Mohammad Saeed Al Raqabani**, General Manager-Commercial, DIP.

AA Al Moosa Enterprises has partnered with Newmatic to complete and equip Golden Sands' laundry facility. The company had furnished all the laundry and mechanical room equipment



including installation, start-up and training services for the staff. The laundry facility in DIP spans across an impressive 14,700sq meter facility. The new plant will have a capacity of washing 150 tonnes per day and with its 24-hour year-round operation, it is expected to handle around 200 pick-up and delivery trips on a daily basis.


**Majd Abulaban**, Managing Partner, Newmatic commented, "This project was planned four years ago by Golden Sands as they have appointed us as the designer and supplier for this project. We wanted the laundry to be fully automated and have considered environment safety issues. It has been supplied and will be considered as one of a kind in the Middle

East in capacity, automation and environment friendliness and one of its kind in Europe."

**Ali Melhem**, General Manager, Golden Sands Laundry, said, "The new facility is the technologically-advanced commercial laundry

facility in the region. We have partnered with Newmatic to design this facility using the latest equipment and technology with complete automation for washing, drying and ironing. With the support of AA



Al Moosa Group, we are introducing the latest high-tech processing systems, while at the same time actively pursuing an environment-friendly initiative. 



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## 200+ attendees at 2<sup>nd</sup> Travel Tech

The second edition of Travel Tech Conference held recently at The H Dubai brought together an interesting mix of partners from travel, tourism and hospitality industry professionals. Over 20 reputed international speakers shared their views and over 200 attendees from the sectors participated at the event.





# Next-gen cruise ships from 2023

Four luxury cruise ships are set to be constructed and be ready by Spring 2023 according to a memorandum signed recently by MSC Cruises and Fincantieri with a total value of over EUR 2 billion.

 TT Bureau

The ships, the first of which will be delivered in Spring 2023, will have a gross tonnage of approximately 64,000 GT and will feature 500 cabins. The remaining three ships will come into service one per year over the following three years. The ships will feature, amongst others, the best and latest environmental technology and other cutting-edge maritime solutions at sea. They will also showcase a highly-innovative design as well as introduce ground-breaking options for guest comfort and relaxation.

**Pierfrancesco Vago**, Executive Chairman, MSC Cruises said, "It is off the back of the great success of our ship-within-a-ship luxury concept that our guests asked us to enter into the ultra-

luxury segment, as a natural evolution of the MSC Yacht Club. These ships will be able to offer unique itineraries, thanks to their size, and the guest services will be taken to another level, including our personalised MSC Yacht Club butler service, available 24\*7."

Vago continued, "I am especially pleased to be able to further extend our partnership with Fincantieri through this new order. The award-winning Seaside and Seaside-Evo class have already been recognised as ground-breaking and innovative designs. We are now introducing another new class, which will establish a new standard of ultra-luxury at sea with ships that will showcase the quality and



**Pierfrancesco Vago**  
Executive Chairman  
MSC Cruises

highest standards that are associated with Made in Italy."

**Giuseppe Bono**, CEO, Fincantieri, stated, "It is with pride that two great brands – an Italian one and one with a strong Italian DNA, well-

**“The luxury cruise ships will offer unique itineraries, thanks to their size and the exceptional guest services, including our personalised MSC Yacht Club butler service, available 24\*7”**

known all over the world, today announce an important construction programme. We are extremely satisfied that, to launch a new class of ships in the luxury segment, MSC Cruises has recognised that our design will help them create a new generation of ships that will be cutting-edge both in terms of safety and technological content, and with particular attention paid to passenger comfort. With this project, Fincantieri can count on 53 cruise ships in its order book, confirming its position as absolute market leader".

**Angelo Capurro**, Executive Director—GCC and Sri Lanka, MSC Cruises said, "Entering into the ultra-luxury segment is yet another exciting development in our offering.

In addition to our MSC Yacht Club experience, our guests will enjoy from 2023 onwards an even wider choice of five-star cruise experiences in the highest segment of the market. Our future ultra-luxury ships will come as close as it comes to a private yacht experience." 

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## NEW HOTELS

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

★ **Rixos Saadiyat Island**

Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 378

Opened:  
October 2018



Rixos Hotels opened its doors in Saadiyat Island Abu Dhabi as the first-ever all-inclusive resort in the island. Rixos Saadiyat Island invites guests to experience pure luxury in an opulent setting inspired by the palaces of the Ottoman Empire, with dazzling interiors reflecting gem stone shades of green, blue and turquoise throughout. With panoramic views overlooking a sprawling private beach, the 378-key resort comprises 366 rooms and suites, plus 12 three- and four-bedroom villas.



★ **Aloft Dubai South**

Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 145

Expected Opened:  
October 2018

Aloft Dubai South marks the first hotel to open in the Dubai South District near the Al Maktoum International Airport and the Expo 2020 site. The property boasts 145 loft-inspired leisurely guestrooms, including six savvy corner rooms, featuring modern décor with custom guestroom artwork. All rooms feature the brand's signature offerings, such as an ultra-comfortable plush bed, walk-in shower, custom amenities by Bliss Spa, fast and free Wi-Fi, 49-inch LCD TVs, custom USB, universal sockets throughout the room and Google chromecast that allows guests to stream their own content during their stay.

★ **Al Faya Lodge**

Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 5

Expected Opening:  
Q4 2018



Ushering in a new era of hospitality, Al Faya Lodge is set to change the way we perceive luxury travel. The latest property from the highly-acclaimed Sharjah Collection by Mantis, is set to captivate visitors and offer them an experience like never before. Nestled within the Mleiha Archeological and Eco-Tourism Project, the five-bedroom luxury lodge is unique to the region.



★ **ibis Styles Sharjah Hotel**

Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 168

Expected Opened:  
October 2018

The property is located close to the Expo Centre in Sharjah and is a 20-minute drive to Dubai. The new ibis Styles guarantees a special stay within the city in their stylish interiors. With one meeting room which can accommodate 40 persons in different styles, the property is both a business and leisure hub for travellers.

## 2019 date for Sentosa properties

Far East Hospitality has announced that the Village Hotel at Sentosa and the Outpost Hotel will open in Q1 2019. The Barracks Hotel is also slated to open in Q3 2019.


**TT Bureau**

Tailor-made experiences await families, business travellers, groups and couples at the new gateway and getaway in Sentosa. Far East Hospitality has announced that the Village Hotel at Sentosa and the Outpost Hotel will open in Q1 2019. Besides, The Barracks Hotel is slated to open in Q3 2019. Adding 839 keys across three distinct hotel experiences – all at a strategic location at Artillery Avenue in the Palawan area of Sentosa, this new gateway and getaway is poised to shift the visitors' centre of gravity into Singapore's State of Fun.



Arthur Kiong, Chief Executive Officer, Far East Hospitality, said, "While there are travellers who prefer distance from the hustle and bustle during their getaway, others look for convenient and connected accommodation options. Located in a prime area in Sentosa, our new hotels offer guests the best of both — connectivity as well as the serenity of an island getaway. It's as near, or as far as you want it to be."

Just two minutes away from Imbiah monorail station, 10 minutes from Singapore's Cable Car Sky Network and a walk away from Universal Studios Singapore, guests will be able to enjoy excellent connectivity to major attractions in Sentosa.

The hotels also place guests close to the Sentosa causeway and adjacent to a bus stop serving buses going into the main city area. Here, they are no more than 15-minutes away from the Central Business District, major shopping areas and attractions, including Gardens by the Bay and Trick Eye Museum. 



# 'The House' away from home

Etihad Airways has named Sydney and Melbourne as the next airports in the global rollout of its new lounge brand 'The House'. Eligible customers of Etihad Airways, and those of its partner airline, Virgin Australia, travelling through Sydney can now experience 'The House'.

TT Bureau

The House is the result of a unique collaboration between Etihad Airways and lounge provider, No1 Lounges, with the two brands working together to create a stylish and contemporary airport lounge experience in keeping with Etihad's design and guest experience philosophy.

Linda Celestino, Vice President—Guest Experience and Delivery, Etihad Airways said, "In developing the new brand, we worked with a specific objective of taking everything that makes our lounges great - the ambience, the design, the food and beverage offering, and make it even better. Together with No1 Lounges, we are evolving the lounge experience for our guests

at more key locations around the world, ensuring they feel at home in the new setting of The House."

The introduction of The House to Sydney and Melbourne airports underscores the importance of the Australian market to the national airline of the UAE.

Phil Cameron, Chief Executive Officer, No1 Lounges, said, "The House maintains Etihad's core brand presence at these locations, enhances the overall guest experience and broadens its appeal to a wider market." To be known as 'The House, home of Etihad Airways', the new brand represents Etihad and the needs of its premium customers through three-core pillars - simplicity with



sophistication, privacy with attentiveness and tranquillity with engagement. The kitchens and bars will offer greater choice, with emphasis on well-being

and local produce. All dishes will be freshly prepared and guests will be able to enjoy self-service and a la carte menus in the upgraded dining

areas. The bars will have a new cocktail and mocktail list, and a selection of great Australian wines. Over the next year, both lounges will be refurbished. 🇦🇪

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# MOVEMENTS

## Ayla Bawadi

### ► Al Ain - Abu Dhabi

Ayla Hotels & Resorts has appointed **George Titus** as Hotel Manager, Ayla Bawadi Hotel. He was previously Cluster Director of Sales of the hotel group. Having more than 20 years of experience in the hotel industry, Titus possesses years of senior management and hotel pre-opening experience for renowned international brands such as Intercontinental. First joining the Ayla Hotels in 2010, Titus restructured and strategically consolidated the Sales and Marketing channel, along with streamlining a new strategy across the three hotels.



## Rotana

### ► Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Tanzania and Democratic Republic of Congo

**Tom Stevens** has been appointed as Area General Manager, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Tanzania, and Democratic Republic of Congo, where he will be responsible for overseeing the company's strategic agenda. Stevens joins Rotana with an extensive background in the commercial side, brand performance, hotel operations, development and management. Having spent more than 20 years with Hilton Hotels & Resorts, his new role will see him drive Rotana commercial and operational strategies across a portfolio of 15 hotels.



## Park Inn by Radisson Dubai Motor City

### ► Dubai

Park Inn by Radisson Dubai Motor City has designated **Paul Franz** as the hotel's new General Manager as of September 10, 2018. Prior to his current appointment, Franz had been serving as Hotel Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel in Doha, after working as a General Manager in various hotels in Austria and Switzerland. Franz joined the Radisson Hotel Group in 2008. With over 20 years of experience, Franz is a graduate from Hotel Management School Modul in Vienna, Austria.



## Habtoor Palace, LXR Hotels and Resorts

### ► Dubai

The recently rebranded Habtoor Palace, LXR Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Wael Maatouk** as its General Manager. In his new role, Maatouk will solidify the property's reputation as one of Dubai's leading luxury hotels, along with overseeing all day-to-day operations, profitability and overall guest satisfaction. With over 20 years of experience in the restaurant and luxury hotel industry, Maatouk has worked for high-profile hotel groups.



## Studio M Arabian Plaza

### ► Dubai

Studio M Arabian Plaza has named **Ursula Chidiac** as the hotel's General Manager. With over 15 years of experience working for international hotel groups like Le Meridien Hotels and InterContinental Hotels Group, Chidiac will oversee the entire operations of the first Studio M hotel in the UAE. She will apply her expertise in hotel management, rooms and food and beverage operations, sales and revenue, profit and loss management and guest services operations to position Studio M Arabian Plaza as an affordable and quality accommodation.



## Mercure Hotel Barsha Heights

### ► Dubai

Mercure Dubai Barsha Heights Hotel Suites & Apartments has designated **Naseer Thodi** as its new General Manager. With more than 20 years of experience in various management roles within the hospitality industry, Thodi has extensive knowledge of what it takes to run a successful property. In his more recent roles, he has provided leadership and strategic planning and counsel to all departments within leading international five-star hospitality chains. Thodi has worked in the Saudi Arabian market at a senior level in four properties and has also completed roles in Bahrain and India.



## OneView

### ► Abu Dhabi

**Felix Rovin Vincent** has been appointed as Technical Project Manager, OneView. Vincent is an Information Technology management professional with more than a decade of experience in analysing, designing, consulting, deploying and managing software development applications for the IT sector. He holds experience in technical training, IT systems training, employee development team leader and multiple solution project achievements. His expertise also lies in analysing projects that require strategic thinking and that affect company's objectives.



## Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara

### ► Abu Dhabi

Anantara Qasr Al Sarab proudly welcomes **Hussam Khraisat** as the property's Executive Assistant Manager. He will overlook the resort's 206 rooms, suites and villas nestled within the dunes of The Empty Quarter – a 90-minute drive from Abu Dhabi. A Jordan national, Khraisat has a firm hospitality background in personnel and operations management, crucial for his new position. Khraisat's career started nearly two decades ago in unique destinations such as the Maldives, Tanzania, and the GCC.



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