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# TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

**SPECIAL**  
OCTOBER 17-19  
Singapore  
**2018**

ITB Asia  
The Trade Show for the Asian Travel Market

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## Arabian Travel Awards 2018

# Clean sweep for Maya in ME

The second edition of the Arabian Travel Awards was held at JW Marriott Hotel Dubai, as over 300 guests cheered the winners at a glittering ceremony.

Shehara Rizly

Arabian Travel Awards is a platform for the Middle East market to appreciate the efforts of travel specialists who have contributed to the booming tourism industry.

H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority presided over the occasion as the chief guest whilst dignitaries from consulates, travel,

tourism and hospitality professionals marked their presence to be recognised for their untiring efforts to place the United Arab Emirates as the fourth most visited destination in the world.

Jamal Abdunazar, CEO, Cozmo Travel received the Gallery of Legends award, while **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel was honoured with the DDP Game Changer title.



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

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\*Effective November 2, 2018 until January 27, 2019



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# Reimagine travel at ITB Asia

ITB Asia, to be held in Singapore from October 17-19 at Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Marina Bay Sands, will focus on MiCE, technology and millennials. **Katrina Leung**, Managing Director, Messe Berlin (Singapore), in an interview with **TRAVTALK**, talks about all that is on offer at the show.

 TT Bureau

## What is the theme for this year's event?

ITB Asia, 'Asia's Leading Travel Trade Show' is excited to host its 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference on the theme 'Travel Reimagined'. Key leaders from travel and technology industry will share insights on the major trends provoking disruption across the travel industry while analysing how companies are innovating to stay ahead. Hosted at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Marina Bay Sands, the conference will take place from October 17-19, 2018. This year, we are proud to welcome Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airlines and Marina Bay Sands, to name a few.

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

We are expecting 25-30 exhibitors from the UAE, GCC and Middle East, including leading industry players like Tourism Abu Dhabi, Etihad Airways, JTB, Turkish Tourism and many more. This year, we have six conference theatres— Knowledge Theatre, Presentation Hub, MiCE & Corporate Hub, Travel & Tech Hub, Muslim Travel Pavilion and the Ignite Rooms@Begonia at Level 3. The six areas will each focus on a different subject matter.

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

This year, we will be looking at the \$180 billion Muslim travel market



**Katrina Leung**  
Managing Director  
Messe Berlin (Singapore)

and partner with key experts, for the third edition of the Halal in Travel Asia summit. The conference

**“We are expecting 25-30 exhibitors from the UAE, GCC and Middle East, including leading industry players like Tourism Abu Dhabi, Etihad Airways, JTB, Turkish Tourism and many more”**

will kick off with the official release of the Mastercard-Halal Trip Digital Muslim Travel Report (DMTR) 2018, revealing the latest insights into the Muslim travel market and behaviours. While our newly-dedicated Muslim Travel Hub will offer panels, showcases and important discussions on Halal travel, key topics covered include how to attract Muslim travellers to destinations throughout the year, how to further develop the growing Muslim travel market and developing Muslim-friendly travel packages.

## What are the important seminars for B2B partners?

Key highlights include an opening session with global leaders from Google, Microsoft and Trip.com who will provide insights on the major trends driving change in the travel industry. On the second day, ITB Asia 2018 will host a keynote panel session on the future of travel distribution with insights from leading OTAs and intermediaries. The third day will see a dedicated session on the Chinese market. 





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## TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

## Striking the right balance

Innovation, in all its myriad forms, is undoubtedly a game changer in today's travel, tourism and hospitality industries. Millennial ideas, ventures and thought processes seem to be the way forward in our fast-paced society in the Middle East. Having leapfrogged from a traditional era to an age of technological advancements, the Middle East seems to be surging well ahead in comparison to other regions. Having revolutionised the travel industry with their innovative practices over technology, millennials seem to be the dominant segment for modern hotels, their design and concept. In spite of different forums discussing features that will be futuristic in this part of the world, human element remains a significant factor in the industry as technology will only be an enabler in ensuring that the human work is eased for clarity, productivity and sustainable profit.

In terms of hospitality, Dubai is still an emerging market in the world map, yet standing tall with other giants such as New York, Paris, London, etc as far as price, facilities and innovation are concerned. According to STR reports, Dubai secures a strong \$180 rate in terms of accommodation prices whereas the highest is \$220 recorded by New York. With Expo 2020 being just two years away, Dubai is venturing into new source markets and working on a stable growth pattern to be a leader in travel, tourism and hospitality with a cutting-edge hub for MICE events. Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah are also following suit with each emirate taking several initiatives to ensure that they grab a good pie of MICE events. The United Arab Emirates has a very steady game plan; thanks to the late visionary leader Sheikh Zayed and current leaders His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

## Seamless travel experience

An airport analytics solution could make a significant difference in the overall customer experience, explains **Firas Jadalla**, Regional Director—Middle East, Turkey and Africa (META), Genetec.

The summer period is a peak season for the travel industry in the GCC. On one hand, Dubai Airport alone welcomes 1 billion travellers this year, while on the other, the current total economic contribution of tourism and travel in Saudi Arabia is approximately 258.1 billion compared to 240.9 billion in 2017. With a huge number of travellers, airports find it challenging to offer a smooth passenger experience. This is when an airport analytics solution could make a huge difference in the overall customer experience.

## The Tech Game

With Middle East's busy airports, it is vital to implement advanced and connected technologies to ensure a smooth passenger experience. Until now, airports have traditionally relied on stand-alone, unconnected systems to manage passenger flow and security. However, airport security, operations managers, business analysts and airport executives should be able to analyse and correlate data provided by multiple sensors such as video surveillance cameras, access control hardware, and IoT connected devices.

Like any business, the success of an airport relies on the customer's experience. This is why having a deeper understanding of what's

happening in an airport facility helps airport staff make timely and informed decisions to improve passenger experience. Such insights would also help increase revenue for duty-free, retail, and food services in the airport terminal. For exam-

“ Airport security and airport executives should be able to correlate data provided by multiple sensors such as video surveillance cameras, access control hardware, etc ”

ple, essential elements for a safe, easy-to-navigate, and profitable airport include understanding how people flow from the parking areas, check-in, duty-free and retail shops, in-airport cafes and dining areas. Combining and processing correlative data will help airport managers to understand this traffic and design a seamless traveller experience resulting in increased brand attachment, venue and airline loyalty, and positive business growth.

## Analytics Awareness

By relying on powerful analytics such as queue detection and

delays, heat mapping, directional analysis and people counting, Genetec Airport Sense pinpoints hindrances to the flow of passengers in ticketing, screening and passport control and can identify where wait lines build in areas such as duty free, dining, entertainment, and pre-boarding. Through intuitive web-based dashboards and dynamic maps, security personnel, operations and business analysts and retailers stay informed of real-time activity and compare it against key performance indicators (KPI) or historical trends.

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



**Firas Jadalla**  
Regional Director—Middle East, Turkey and Africa (META), Genetec

## Air Canada offers seasonal four times weekly service

Air Canada is expanding its offering to Dubai with the addition of a fourth, weekly non-stop flight from Toronto to its regular three-times weekly, year-round service from November 2, 2018 to January 2019. With its best cabin offers, Boeing 777-300 will operate for this special winter season. From Toronto, customers can connect to the US destinations with the ability to pre-clear the US customs at Pearson Airport. Departing from Toronto, eligible Signature Class customers can enjoy the Air Canada Signature Suite.





# Is Dubai a 'China-ready' market?

Bolstered by an attendance of 900 local dignitaries, stakeholders and Chinese partners, the two-day Dubai China Conference by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) aimed to further reinforce the emirate's deep and continued commitment to China.

TT Bureau

The two-day Dubai China Conference brought together industry players to share insights from the China market, while outlining Dubai Tourism's ongoing collaborations to reconfirm its continued focus on one of the most important global source markets. The close relationship between China and Dubai is evident in the willingness of the emirate to become fully 'China-ready'. Large-scale initiatives, in collaboration with strategic partners like Alipay and WeChat Pay are already in place, ensuring Dubai is prepared to increase visitors from China. The forum is a clear indication of China's rising prominence as one of Dubai's fastest-growing source markets, after closing the first six months



HE Helal Saeed Almarri  
Director General  
Dubai Tourism

“Our strategic agreements have increased market penetration with native language content and complimented our marketing across our four in-market offices”

of 2018 with a record 453,000 visitors – a growth of 9 per cent over the same period in 2017. Key contributing factors to this significant increase in visitors include the introduction of visa-on-arrival for Chinese citizens and recent partnership agreements with Huawei, Fliggy and Tencent.

HE Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, said, “China remains one of our fastest growing source markets and we expect this to continue over

the coming years. Our strategic agreements have not only increased market penetration with native language content and complimented our marketing across our four in-market offices, but have also advanced the China-ready commitment of Dubai Tourism for visitors. Private and public sector collaboration on activities such as citywide Chinese New Year celebrations are just some of the undertakings by the department over the past three years.”

Dubai Tourism was joined by key partners including Fliggy, Huawei, Mafwengo, Tencent, Ctrip and Dianping. The conference is expected to promote Dubai Tourism's China market efforts while highlighting key opportunities to stakeholders within the industry. Panel members tackled 360 marketing plans, digital platform presence and digital content enhancements, air capacity collaboration with key aviation partners and a Dubai Way China module for the industry. Additionally, the conference introduced key market stakeholders in China, from the travel sector and beyond, apart from presenting opportunities on how to work with partners to make Dubai more China-ready. 🇦🇪

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# ADNEC's record of excellence

In 2017, Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC) hosted a total of 442 regional and international events. **Humaid Matar Al Dhaheri**, Group CEO, ADNEC, shares how the company takes pride in organising events that cater to the development of key economic sectors in the country.

TT Bureau

## How do you manage to attract key MiCE events to the capital?

Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC), as part of its mission to position Abu Dhabi as a thriving tourism destination of choice and a global hub for the MiCE industry, has entered into collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau and the Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT), to promote the capital as a preferred destination.

ADNEC recently joined the delegation from Abu Dhabi, headed by the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau, to IMEX Frankfurt, Europe's biggest trade exhibition in the MiCE industry, with the aim of consolidating the company's

global position in this crucial sector. We are also targeting international associations in line with our efforts to become a preferred destination for important international events and congresses on a global rotation process.

## What are your strategies to promote ADNEC?

ADNEC enjoys memberships in the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC), as well as the Association of Event Venues (AEV). This has not only enhanced the image of ADNEC globally but also widened the company's portfolio of industry

“Our flagship exhibition, the International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX), is a prominent gathering of industry leaders and decision makers, showcasing cutting-edge technologies and defence systems”

defining international events, congresses and exhibitions.

ADNEC has also signed an MoU with the Emirates Medical Association (EMA) and the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau, part of the DCT, in an initiative that is set to position Abu Dhabi as an international medical meetings hub. This move will increase the number of international medical confer-

ences hosted in Abu Dhabi and provide unique educational opportunities for medical practitioners throughout the region. By hosting a growing number of events in Abu Dhabi, ADNEC has managed to highlight the city's unique geographical positioning. The emirate's record of excellence across parameters like safety and security, economic growth, technology adoption as well as quality of life, have all received significant global attention and helped increase business tourism.

Acquiring key global venues like ExCel London has helped bolster ADNEC's reputation inter-



Humaid Matar Al Dhaheri, Group CEO, ADNEC

nationally. Currently, the company also owns the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, as well as the Al Ain Convention Centre.

## What are some of ADNEC's key MiCE events which attract visitors from across the world?

Our flagship exhibition, the International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX), is a prominent gathering of industry leaders and decision makers, showcasing cutting-edge technologies and defence systems. The Naval Defence Exhibition (NAVDEX) also runs in conjunction with IDEX every other year.

The 2017 edition of IDEX and NAVDEX attracted more than 105,000 visitors and over 1,200 exhibitors, and secured deals worth AED19.17 billion.

The company hosted other leading events, including the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2018, featuring 1,350 exhibitors from 63 countries across an exhibition space spanning of 35,000 square metres at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. The Joint International Conferences on Medical Education - the

18<sup>th</sup> Ottawa and the 5<sup>th</sup> ICME – witnessed over 1,000 medical education experts from 56 countries convened for five days.

## What are your plans for 2018 and what markets are you looking to tap to promote events?

ADNEC is focusing on vital economic sectors that fall in line with the 12 non-oil sectors identified in the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030, such as education, health, technology, finance and more. To cater to Abu Dhabi's leisure marine sector, ADNEC is organising the inaugural edition of the Abu Dhabi International Boat Show (ADIBS) 2018 to be held from October 17-20. The event is anticipated to be the largest ever gathering of leisure marine and luxury yachting in Abu Dhabi.

## Figures don't lie

❖ The 2017 edition of IDEX and NAVDEX attracted more than 105,000 visitors and over 1,200 exhibitors, and secured deals worth AED19.17 billion

❖ Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2018 featured 1,350 exhibitors from 63 countries across a space spanning 35,000 sqm

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# Business travel on the rise

Highlighting the diversification of offerings to appeal to different markets and the growth of MiCE travel in the MENA region, **Paula De Keijzer**, Senior Director—Market Management, Middle East, Africa, Greece & Turkey, Expedia Group, explains the emergence and development of varied markets.

TT Bureau

**Given the extensive experience in hospitality, how do you find the MENA market?**

According to recent reports in the industry, I think what we're seeing in the Middle East and Africa (MENA) in general is a rise in occupancy rates, which in turn, has helped boost revenue and profit for hotels in the region. Of late, our company data from the past quarter suggests that international demand into the UAE is on the rise. Travellers from Asia topped the list of those coming to visit the country. Overall, I think that the significant diversity of hotel markets across MENA means that there will always be a mix of top- and bottom-line performance.



**Paula De Keijzer**  
Senior Director—Market Management,  
Middle East, Africa, Greece & Turkey  
Expedia Group

**“Hoteliers entering the market need to be aware of the emerging trends and think about catering to the demand from the growing middle classes and shorter-stay passengers into the region”**

**How is Dubai different from other markets?**

What sets Dubai apart from other markets is that it really caters to the international market. For example, as seen from our data report from the last quarter, the number of Chinese travellers has significantly increased as a result of the efforts to accommodate Chinese travellers, which include facilities like visa on arrival.

**What are the hospitality trends in the Middle East?**

There is a push for personalisation and diversification of offerings to appeal to different markets. Recently, we have seen the industry being open to a wide audience that does not focus solely on luxury travel in this region. We're also seeing competition on the global scene for the business of new emerging markets as four and three-star hotels are now competing with the luxury hotel segment. Countries including Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain and Kuwait are all gaining momentum

as they develop their MiCE sectors. Hoteliers entering the market need to be aware of these trends and think about catering to the demand from the growing middle classes and shorter-stay passengers into the region to attract new travellers from Africa and Asia.

**How has technology supported the efficiency levels in hospitality?**

Technology plays an increasingly important role in helping drive demand and revenue to hoteliers. At Expedia Group, we have listened to our hotel partners' needs and have developed a toolkit of strategic technology, marketing and data offerings, known as Expedia Powered Technology, to help them grow their business.

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# Meet Magento techs off in Dubai

For the first time, Meet Magento was held at The Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi Beach Resort & Marina with over 700 corporate companies and over 47 different nationalities. The two-day conference offered a platform to leading businessmen, merchants, developers and technology providers to network and gather knowledge from around the globe.



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## Attracting GCC investors

■ CitySuites 2 is already attracting significant interest across the GCC region and follows the success of the first CitySuites project that was sold in 2015, in which over 70 per cent of properties were sold to investors in the GCC. The first CitySuites property opened its doors in 2017 and has since established itself as Manchester's finest serviced apartments. Now home to an array of high-profile VIP residents, CitySuites has the highest guest ratings on some of the UK's largest travel websites. Like the first CitySuites, CitySuites 2 will be fully managed by Select Property Group's expert in-house team and guarantees investors a minimum 7 per cent NET for two years.

from investors here wanting a slice of the action in the UK's top regional city for property investment," commented **Adam Price**, Managing Director, Select Property Group.

Both CitySuites properties occupy a prime city centre location at Embankment West, an exciting neighbourhood



"Our Manchester property portfolio continues to experience strong demand from GCC investors, with the realisation that investment returns in the city are much stronger and properties offer more value for money than in London. There is a particularly strong affiliation between Manchester and the UAE, with its ties to Manchester City Football Club and Etihad Airways. It's great to see demand

at the heart of the city. CitySuites 2 comprises 148 studios, one and two-bedroom properties, combining luxury serviced apartments and premium residential suites. Offering a staggering 65 per cent higher returns on investment than traditional UK property hotspot London, Manchester has mass appeal among investors seeking strong capital appreciation and high rental returns.



# Abu Dhabi in all its authenticity

Abu Dhabi's recently-launched global marketing campaign features a series of extraordinary stories from the emirate. The purpose is to build upon a destination identity that has already attracted record numbers of guests to the emirate for two successive years.

 TT Bureau

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has launched a new international promotional campaign with an aim to continue raising awareness and interest in the emirate, and to grow its reputation as a unique leisure, business and cultural destination.

At the heart of this evolved campaign will be a collection of new films showcasing people living in the emirate who, through their own unique lifestyle, embody its personality and depth of offer. These individuals are intentionally honest and authentic, to reflect faithfully on Abu Dhabi, and to represent surprising but fascinating aspects of the destination. The characters are selected to make a connec-



**HE Saif Saeed Ghobash**  
Undersecretary, DCT Abu Dhabi

tion with certain visitor profiles and encourage travellers to come to Abu Dhabi to create stories of their own. To make the point on a variety of experience and underline a sense of the real world, the

first two of these films will feature Fatema Al Hameli, a self-styled 'Camel Whisperer' and the first Emirati female to enter her animals into the country's camel auctions and beauty pageants, and Theo Kekati, a cart-racing teenage 'Rocket Boy' well-versed in places to find fun and thrills. Two further films will follow later in 2018, featuring different individuals.


Commenting on the announcement, **HE Saif Saeed Ghobash**, Undersecretary, DCT Abu Dhabi, said, "The introduction of new video content will undoubtedly enhance and add scale to an already successful campaign and reinforce its potency on a global scale. Our aim is to evolve our messaging to give greater depth




to the offer and resonate more emotionally and effectively with our target audiences."

**Steve Copestake**, Acting Executive Director—Marketing and Communications, DCT Abu Dhabi, added, "We are proud to be able to tell the world what an inspiring place Abu Dhabi is. There is so

much to discover and experience in the emirate, but we know that visitors more than ever before are wary of hyperbole and want to shape their own interaction with a destination. Through these characters and voices, our aim is to build a real and more immersive connection to inspire stories that will be shared." 



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# IUPS to boost economic sectors



The second edition of the India-UAE Partnership Summit (IUPS) is set to take place from October 30-31, 2018 at Atlantis the Palm, Dubai with ministerial sessions between the two nations. The objective is to facilitate the private sector partnership in diverse areas.

 Shehara Rizly

The second edition of India-UAE Partnership Summit is scheduled to be held at Atlantis the Palm, Dubai from October 30-31, 2018. The objective of the summit is to facilitate the private sector partnership in diverse areas. Speaking at a press conference, **HE Navdeep Suri**, High Commissioner of India to the UAE stated, "The second edition of India-UAE Partnership Summit in Dubai is an important sequel to the last year. We are applying the lessons learnt from last year and are focusing on specific sectors like SMEs and education. What is encouraging is the response we have received from five state governments confirming their participation with at least one state coming with its chief minister."

When inquired about the newly-announced tourism projects between the two nations, Suri reiterated, "Attracting investments into tourism-related infrastructure is a real priority for the government of India and it is also a designated priority to many of the state governments that are keen to get foreign investments in these sectors. We are beginning to see that Business Leaders Forum (BLF) has taken the first

step forward by attracting tourism infrastructure on an island in Andhra Pradesh. We have also seen Yusuff Ali of the Lulu Group establish India's biggest convention center and hotels. It is now planning to establish additional convention centers in Visakhapatnam and Lucknow. In the UAE, there is a strong interest in different sectors of Indian tourism, particularly the mountains and the resorts and spas."

**HE Juma Mohammed Al Kait**, Assistant Undersecretary—Foreign Trade Affairs, Ministry of Economy, UAE, said, "The UAE considers India the first trading partner with more than AED 195 billion trade exchange and this will influence private sector to explore new areas of cooperation, along with several other sectors. The purpose of the conference is to facilitate and introduce speakers from the government and private sectors to talk about laws, regulations, challenges the private sector faced and the ways to overcome those. The two governments aim to take their relation to a new high and thus have signed a number of agreements in sectors such as education, finance, economic cooperation."

**India-UAE Partnership Summit is segmented into a number of brainstorming business sessions and panel discussions on current topics, while ministers of the five Indian states — Assam, Delhi, Puducherry, Punjab and West Bengal — will present investment opportunities in key projects within the states**

**HE Vipul**, Consul General of India—Dubai, commented that he is happy with the second edition of the event. Expressing joy, he said, "Last year, it was successful with ministers participating from different states of India and this year, five states have confirmed participation. BLF did a good job in not treating India-UAE Partnership Summit as a stand-alone meeting but following up on the discussions at the first IUPS in the past 12 months."

**Sudesh Aggarwal**, Chairman of India-UAE Partnership Summit organising committee and Board Member of BLF, said, "The second edition of the India-UAE Partnership Summit will focus on sectors like education, SMEs and skill development and placement of manpower. We are also inviting the Indian states

to aptly present their policies and investment projects as five Indian states — Assam, Delhi, Puducherry, Punjab and West Bengal — have confirmed their participation for the event. About 150 contingents are expected to arrive from the education sector."

He further added, "BLF is actively engaged in promoting tourism-related projects which involve large-scale investment for developing a 500-acre island on the new capital in Amaravati, that is, a 18-hole pds standard golf course, a convention centre in a five-star hotel, luxury villas and apartments. This is an ecosystem island on the Krishna river and we are ready to facilitate any investment in the tourism sector."

The India-UAE Partnership Summit is segmented into a number

of brainstorming business sessions and panel discussions on current topics, while ministers of the five Indian states — Assam, Delhi, Puducherry, Punjab and West Bengal — will present investment opportunities in key projects within the states and seek investment from potential partners in the UAE. The emirates of Abu Dhabi and Sharjah will be joining the event as focused emirates of the UAE to showcase their projects to Indian investors. This is the only business conference of its kind to be proactively supported by the Government of India through the Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi and Consulate General of India—Dubai as well as the UAE Ministry of Economy. It is also the only bilateral summit where ministers of the Government of India as well as UAE will actively participate.

## Focus Areas

- ❖ The 2<sup>nd</sup> IUPS will focus on sectors like education, SMEs and skill development and placement of manpower
- ❖ Speakers are expected to talk about laws, regulations and challenges the private sector faced



# GNTO unveils culinary adventures

German National Tourist Office (GNTO) in Dubai, together with its partners Emirates, Munich Tourism and Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay, sprinkled a dash of flavour of German cuisine in Dubai in a bid to inspire guests to visit Germany.



TT Bureau

Welcoming the invitees at Steigenberger Brothaus Bakery – Bistro in Dubai, **Sigrid de Mazieres**, Director—Marketing and Sales, Gulf Countries, German National Tourist Office, stressed on the importance of the GCC as being the third-largest non-European feeder market for Germany. She reiterated that from 2009, the GCC traveller number has been increasing year-on-year (YOY) that witnessed 4.5 per cent increase in 2017, and nearly 4.4 per cent this year up to June from the region. Some of the most-visited areas by GCC are Bavaria, Berlin, Munich, South West and NRW with 66 per cent overnight stays. The amount of spending per person per trip is 5000 euros, which is considerably higher than any other international tourist. The theme to attract international

tourists this year is about the culinary journey. This is particularly interesting for visitors from the region as food and shopping are two main areas they focus on while travelling to Germany. Mazieres added, "Halal food, prayer rooms, family-oriented spaces such as zoos, parks, etc, coupled with great shopping destinations make Germany an ideal destination for the UAE visitors. With over 200 Michelin star restaurants, 800 natural mineral springs and many other attractions, the country has become one of the most-visited destinations for GCC travellers.

**Shaz Peshimam**, Senior Manager—Dubai and Northern Emirates, Emirates, stated that the new visa free facility to all the UAE nationals has made a great impact for their flights as earlier

**According to a recent survey conducted by German National Tourist Office (GNTO), 7 per cent of foreign holidaymakers choose to visit Germany because of the wide variety and high quality of dining, food and beverages on offer. In fact, visiting restaurants and cafés were listed as the second most-popular holiday activity after sightseeing**

it was seasonal with UAE nationals selecting only as a summer getaway. However, they now take a quick break even during a long weekend. Emirates has been serving Germany for the past 31 years and tourists fly to four main areas — Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Munich and Hamburg with 70 weekly flights. Three of the four destinations — Frankfurt, Düsseldorf and Munich operate with the new A380 aircraft and he added that by October, Hamburg will

also enjoy the same operation. "We hope that this event is an eye-opening experience to the wonderful culinary adventures on offer not only in Germany but also during the journey on Emirates."

**Udo Johann Leick**, Regional Catering Manager, Emirates, stated, "In keeping with the culinary journey, Emirates has a new menu onboard for travellers from the GCC to experience the 'food tourism' initiative launched by GNTO to ensure the experience is both onboard and on ground at the destination."

**Robert Leckel**, Marketing and Media Relations—Russia, Middle East and Eastern Europe, Munich Tourist Board emphasised on the role of Munich tourism in the journey as it has nearly 12 Michelin star restaurants with special halal food for Arabic visitors. Three most important places visited by GCC travellers to enjoy a culinary journey are the Olympic Tower, BMW World and Werksviertel. He then recommended that a five-day journey to Munich will be a

good period to engage in various activities in the city. Southern Germany and particularly Munich have traditionally been the hot-spot for most GCC travellers. To gain insight into Bavaria's special food traditions, participants in the event were invited to take part in decorating gingerbread hearts and learn to prepare the Bavarian cheese delicacy, obatzda as well as pretzels.

According to a recent survey conducted by GNTO, 7 per cent of foreign holidaymakers choose to visit Germany because of the wide variety and high quality of dining, food and beverages on offer. In fact, visiting restaurants and cafés were listed as the second most-popular holiday activity after sightseeing. The latest inbound tourism figures from the Gulf region reflect that Germany is increasingly becoming a popular holiday destination for Gulf nationals. From January to June 2018, overnight stays from the region increased by 4.4 per cent compared to the same period in 2017.

## Taste of Germany

❖ Food and drink are often the highlight, if not the main reason for holidays and short breaks to promote Germany as a year-round travel destination

❖ Travellers can head to vibrant cities to dine at a fine Michelin-starred restaurant or plan to visit seasonal food events





# Centara debuts in the UAE

Centara Hotels & Resorts, along with Nakheel, recently cemented a joint venture with a construction contract worth 2.63 billion to build a 601-room beachfront resort at Dubai's Deira Islands. Centara Deira Islands Beach Resort Dubai, Centara's first in the UAE, is scheduled to open in 2020.

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The joint venture between Centara Hotels & Resorts and Nakheel is expected to significantly boost the emirate's four-star accommodation – the fastest-growing segment in 2017 with a 10 per cent growth rate last year – in line with the increasing popularity of Dubai as a tourism hotspot.



Located at a prime beachfront spot at Nakheel's Deira Islands waterfront city, Centara Deira Islands Beach Resort Dubai will be managed by Centara, whose growing portfolio already includes over 12,000 keys across 60 hotels and resorts in Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East.

Thirayuth Chirathivat, CEO, Centara Hotels and Resorts, said, "This is Centara's first hotel in Dubai and the UAE, which signifies our presence in a major gateway city in the Middle East. This signing ceremony marks a profound milestone of expansion for Centara as we continue to extend our upscale resort portfolio

internationally. With the expertise from a regional leader in development like Nakheel and Centara's record of delivering and inspiring extraordinary guest experiences, Centara Deira Islands Beach Resort Dubai will represent a one-of-a-kind resort that will give our guests fond moments for years to

come. We look forward to opening Centara Deira Islands Beach Resort Dubai in 2020."

Led by Ali Rashid Lootah, Chairman, Nakheel, the contract was signed in Dubai. Talking about the company's contribution to Dubai tourism, Lootah said, "Nakheel

continues to play a pivotal role in shaping and diversifying Dubai's tourism offering with a AED 27 billion hospitality and retail expansion that supports our government's vision. The joint venture with Centara underlines our commitment to working with trusted international brands."

The family-centric resort will feature a waterpark, multiple restaurants including indoor, alfresco and rooftop options, kids' clubs, spa and diverse family entertainment options. The 601 sea-view and city-facing rooms will cover a range of categories from standard and deluxe rooms to expansive duplexes and suites. 

## Over 750 firms at Hotel Show Dubai

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, and CEO and Chairman, Emirates Group, recently inaugurated the 2018 edition of Hotel Show Dubai and Leisure Show at Dubai World Trade Centre. The event witnessed participation from various technology and sports equipment companies.





# Assurance with limitless coverage

Many credit cards have travel insurance embedded in their plans. **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager, Tune Protect, Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEIA) and **Gururaj SA**, General Manager, Sur Travels, shed light on the importance of a correct travel insurance plan.



**Arijit Munshi**  
General Manager  
Tune Protect EMEIA

## Does a traveller credit card offer full protection before, during and after travel?

A credit card travel protection plans can provide insurance coverage for some key events, provided the traveller has used his/her personal credit card to pay for the travel. Further, coverage benefits and limitations vary widely depending upon the card issuer and the insurance partner. Credit card with travel protection plans usually come free of cost and therefore, benefits are limited. So, instead of replacing the travel protection plan, the traveller can use these complimentary benefits. Besides, travellers must not expect credit card travel protection plans to cover all the standard contingencies of the trip.

## What if the traveller cancels travel mid-way?

Experiencing hiccups during travel is rare and unfortunate. Tune Protect travel assurance before, during and after is one such plan that caters to such emergencies. The travel protection plans includes benefits for trip delays, trip interruptions and trip cancellations or even a terrorist incident at the destination. However, such events should not stop travellers from travelling. The travel assurance plans, in partnership with local insurance partners, will cover trip cancellation because of a terrorist incident at the destination. Furthermore, the traveller will be covered for medical and hospital expenses.

## What is your key advice for travellers when it comes to travel protection programmes?

Travel insurance is a must for any traveller — be it for business or leisure. The travel protection plans must have enough protection for travellers against various uncertainties that may ruin a pleasant enjoyable trip. Before investing in a travel cover, a traveller should always remember the terminology, identify the coverage types, know the exclusions, review the coverage and understand the claim-filing process. The most important factor is to purchase a travel assurance cover immediately after finalising and purchasing travel products before commencement of the journey.

## If the traveller has not consulted a doctor before cancelling the trip due to illness, will that create a hindrance with the travel cover?

Pre-existing medical condition, under most policies, will not be covered unless declared. However, most insurance providers have a list of pre-existing medical conditions that are covered too. It is important to be transparent with one's insurance provider and inform them about any ailments that the traveller may have prior to travelling. And traveling without declaring is not advisable.



**Gururaj S A**  
General Manager  
Sur Travels



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# Poised to be dnata's game changer

## Personality of the month



 Shehara Rizly

Currently a Divisional Senior Vice President, **Iain Andrew** is responsible for overlooking all aspects of dnata's travel business. There are 20 brands that operate in 77 markets within dnata's travel portfolio. This is with an employee count of around 5,500 and the business types are a mix of tour operators, OTAs, destination management companies, travel management companies, support services, bed banks and contact centres. Equating his role to that of a group CEO, Andrew says, "dnata is a complex group of businesses and I would empower the experienced executive team to strive for sustainable growth."

Before joining dnata, Andrew was employed by Unipart, Thomas Cook, American Express, Air 2000 in a number of IT, finance and management roles. He also served as Chief Information Officer for TUI Airline Management. More recently, he was employed as the IT and Change Director for Britannia Airways as well as CIO for the Dixons Stores Group. He is a qualified Chartered Man-

agement Accountant (ACMA) and holds a degree in Business Studies from the University of Westminster and a Master of Science in Information Technology and Management from Sheffield Hallam University.

### Worthy achievements

Thinking about various sectors in the industry, Andrew finds travel the most dynamic, exciting and aspirational one. He says, "My education background did not start out as specific to the travel trade, but I can happily say that travel is still fulfilling as an industry for me." Regarding the evolution of dnata, Andrew says, "When I had joined, dnata was mainly a corporate travel company which only dealt in this region. It then expanded into the B2C landscape and later on an international scale. The company is now made up of an array of different types of travel and tourism business with international presence."

### Changing scenario

Sharing his views on keeping pace with the changing world, Andrew says that travel companies have become technology companies to find solutions to the complexities faced by customers. He explains, "This region particularly has witnessed an outpouring of competitors – local start-ups, international expansions and changes of business model to fill new spaces opened up by the changing role of technology. We are able to stay ahead of the curve of technological change by learning and observing from the experiences of our business across the globe, and also by leveraging the host of skills and expertise that reside within the Emirates Group. With our decisions backed by data, we deliver work at speed, and put the customer at the centre of everything we do."

### Tackling overtourism

Expressing concern over the burning issue of overtourism, Andrew comments,

**Iain Andrew**, Divisional Senior Vice President—Travel Services, dnata joined the Emirates Group in December 2005 and was promoted to the current position in 2007. Since then, he has been instrumental in strategising a new game plan for dnata which serves over 20 brands in 77 markets with more than 5,500 employees.

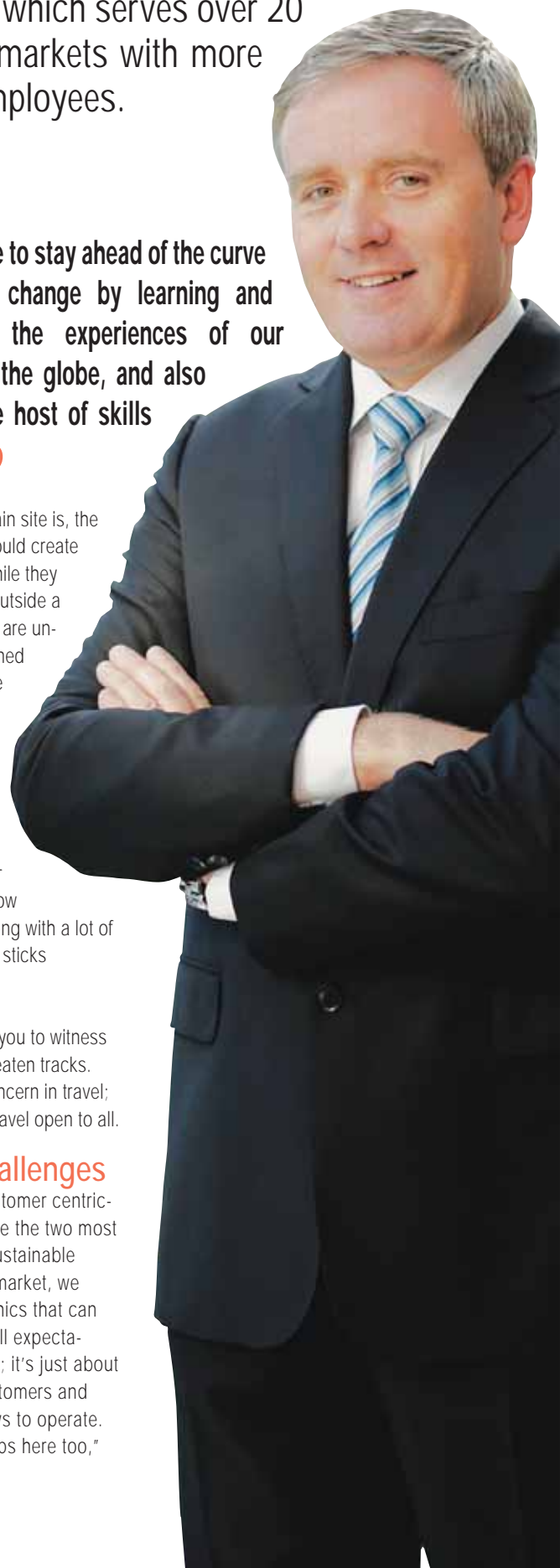
**“We are able to stay ahead of the curve of technological change by learning and observing from the experiences of our business across the globe, and also by leveraging the host of skills and expertise”**

"The more popular a certain site is, the more disappointment it could create to a traveller especially while they experience long queues outside a popular attraction. Places are under the threat of being ruined and certain locations have already been required to take measures such as Boracay temporarily closing down to tourists, Machu Picchu putting visitor quotas, Rio's Christ the Redeemer having to manage the inflow and outflow of people, along with a lot of sites starting to ban selfie sticks and drones.

We want to find and offer you to witness the unusual and off the beaten tracks. Visa is another area of concern in travel; it would be nice to have travel open to all.

### Coping with challenges

Andrew believes that customer centricity and level of service are the two most important factors for a sustainable travel business. "In this market, we have a mix of demographics that can be challenging to meet all expectations as they vary greatly; it's just about getting to know your customers and deciphering the best ways to operate. Technology and data helps here too," he said. 





# HOTELS

## Growth strategies of ibis

Enjoying an occupancy rate of 89% this year, **Muhammad Mujtaba Haider**, General Manager, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira, shares how the hotel has witnessed a steady growth strategy ever since its inception.

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Although ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira is a three-star property, it is on par with the four-star properties in the vicinity. Compared to other three stars, the property is distinct in many ways — large lobby, spacious rooms, the only dry property in the ibis chain in the UAE, family-oriented with separate prayer rooms and spa areas for males and females and a service that comes with a broad smile.

**Muhammad Mujtaba Haider**, General Manager, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira, said, “We have identified some of our strongest markets in which we have top 50 nationalities completing 39,669 rooms nights, starting from January 1 till date. Emirati nationals from Abu Dhabi secure the first position with other emirates following on, with India and Saudi Arabia securing the second and third places, respectively. Our good nationality mix, repeated guests, corporate guests, long-term relationship with agents from different markets and strong support from brand website are some of our growth drivers to the property. On an average, we have also witnessed a good flow of walk-in guests — about eight to nine on week days and 15 to 17 over weekends.”

### New markets

Haider also stated that in order to have repeat guests, they take an interest in each guests’ feedback. The hotel ensures that every guest is important and this practice has placed them well in the market. They are also participating in upcoming roadshows with agents specialised in the Vietnamese market and their



Muhammad Mujtaba Haider  
General Manager, ibis Styles Jumeira

“Our repeat guests and long-term relationship with agents from different markets are some of our growth drivers to the property”

new Columbia familiarisation trip. Haider says that as the Vietnamese were more interested in the four-star brands, they were not sure how the reaction would be. However, when they invited the agent to personally inspect the hotel, the agent had been very positive mentioning it is good and sellable and will attract their partners. Apart from the agent,

business international trade exhibitions like EMITT (East Mediterranean International Tourism and Travel fair in Turkey, KITF (Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair), Azerbaijan International Travel and Tourism Fair (AITF) in Azerbaijan, roadshows in Spain, Portugal and Italy provide an excellent platform for business and networking opportunities.

### Exemplary service

From day one, the hotel has been striving to ensure that it delivers high service standards. Operating with less than 90 associates and serving 191 rooms, an all-day dining, gym, indoor swimming pool, spa, two specialty restaurants, the continued high occupancy rate of the hotel is testament to its achievements which also brings in a higher number of repeat guests. The employer and employee relationship enjoyed between the management and associates has ensured a happy set of service providers in the hotel. 



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# Upping the ante on luxury

Over 100 participants attended the second edition of Luxury Outbound Travel Market held at the Sheraton Abu Dhabi Hotel & Resort. Organised by Luxury Connections under the leadership of Mario Anthony, the event was co-sponsored by Gallerie Hamdan with Rwanda Consulate as the main sponsor. Raviz Center Point Hotel was the official hospitality partner of the event.





# Pay for hand baggage only

Etihad Airways has launched a new hand baggage-only 'Deal Fare' across selected destinations, allowing travellers to purchase lower fares in Economy Class if no checked baggage is required.


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The 'Deal Fare' includes a complimentary carry-on baggage allowance of 7 kg and is available on flights between Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Azerbaijan.

Guests looking to add additional checked baggage after purchasing a 'Deal Fare' can simply buy extra allowance at check-in or enjoy a 20 per cent

discount when buying in advance online. Etihad Guest members who purchase the 'Deal Fare' can continue to enjoy free checked baggage allowance (Etihad Guest Silver – 10 kg, Etihad Guest Gold – 15 kg and Etihad Guest Platinum – 20 kg). Etihad Airways has successfully implemented several new ancillary products to provide guests additional choice, including extra legroom seats, neighbour-free seats and preferred seating.

**Robin Kamark**, Chief Commercial Officer, Etihad Airways, said, "After a successful trial of the 'Deal Fare' late last year, purchasing behaviour demonstrated guests appreciate having more choice and like to be able to select the travel option that best meets their needs.

We are enhancing our product offering to align with customer feedback. Guests travelling for business, weekend getaways or day trips who like to travel light can now avail cheaper fares." 



## Connected while airborne

■ Covering 190 global destinations, etisalat's Global Business Roaming pack will now allow its subscribers to use in-flight roaming at no extra charge. Partnering with AeroMobile and SITAOnAir, it will provide an expanded coverage across all airlines with on-boarding connectivity.

etisalat, the UAE's largest telecommunications provider, has

announced that all its roaming packages shall remain the same for subscribers with the ability to use in-flight roaming at no extra charge. Currently, etisalat's roaming network covers 190 global destinations. **Salvador Anglada**, Chief Business Officer, etisalat, said, "This exclusive proposition is in line with etisalat's commitment to offer innovative and convenient communication

services to our roaming business users. We recognise that business travellers need to remain connected on-the-go, including roaming while on-board a flight."

He further added, "With AeroMobile and SITA-OnAir as our partners, we are now able to provide expanded coverage across all airlines with on-boarding connectivity during flights."







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## Travel Forward announces latest upgrade to its speaker line-up

The inaugural Travel Forward – comprising a conference and exhibition – will take place from 5 – 7 November 2018 at ExCeL London, UK.

The conference sessions take place on the first two days. Mike Croucher, chief architect for **Travelport**, will open the event on Monday 5 November with a keynote presentation, drawing on his vast experience of travel technology to deliver what promises to be a compelling perspective on the trends and innovations to watch.

Other speakers from the technology sector include Francesca Benati, who is vice president of online for Western Europe, MEA for **Amadeus**. She is also managing director for Amadeus' entire Italian business and will be on a panel talking about distribution on Tuesday 6th.

Travel Forward aims to position travel as part of the overall technology landscape, and has confirmed that **Dr Sue Black**, a technology evangelist with a PhD in software engineering, will deliver a keynote speech on the Monday. Dr Sue Black, a government adviser and has played a prominent role in championing the role of women in the technology industry.

Elsewhere, some mainstream travel brands are also on the agenda. **Club Med** has been around since 1950 and has successfully managed its digital transformation by focussing on direct bookings to drive customer loyalty. This will be the topic discussed by its MD for the UK and Northern Europe, Estelle Giraudeau on the Monday afternoon.

**Secret Escapes** is well established in the UK and is growing across Europe. It uses TV advertising to build up awareness of its members-only luxury deals business and counts the investment



arm of search giant Google as one of its backers. Co-founder and chief operating officer Tom Valentine will be part of panel on Monday 5, looking at how technology is changing the traveller experience.

He will be joined by Gunjan Verma, chief technology officer for **The Travel Corporation**, a US-based holding company which handles nearly two million travellers a year across its global portfolio of 29 brands, and Didier Pinson, chief information officer for **Rail Europe**, which distributes tickets from European rail operators to North Americans visiting Europe.

The rail industry is also represented by Roberto Abbondio, managing director of new business for **Eurostar International**. On the Monday afternoon, he will talk about how dynamic packaging technology has helped it to become a successful tour operator.

The hospitality sector has arguably faced the most disruption from technology and will be prominent across Travel Forward. Distribution is the most obvious example of how hotels have had to adapt.

Nayan Peshkar, senior vice-president of revenue management and distribution for **Millennium Hotels and Resorts** will be on a panel sharing his thoughts on distribution

and brand ownership, alongside Nils Korsvoll, senior vice president for **eBerry**, a standalone business within Nordic Choice Hotels which is dedicated to technology and distribution. Their session takes place on Tuesday morning.

The airline industry, which invented travel technology in the 1960s with its computer reservation systems, is also exposed to changing tech trends. Mobile as a search, booking and customer service channel is firmly established but constantly evolving.

Vincent Fillon is the director of mobile strategy and development for **Air France** and will be sharing his insights into what travellers want and expect from their mobile interaction with suppliers. This takes place on Tuesday 6.

Finally, the online travel agencies who brought online booking into the consumer mainstream, will also be featured. **Expedia Group** is now a global travel platform business, best known for [expedia.com](http://expedia.com) but with interests in corporate travel, meta-search distribution, B2B rail technology and much more. One of the fastest growing parts of the business is Media Solutions, its in-house digital marketing agency which sells access to Expedia's audience to advertisers from travel and other sectors. The unit's global senior vice president, Hari Nair, is on stage on the opening day, giving his data-backed insights into what the traveller of tomorrow will demand.

Richard Gayle, Event Manager, Travel Forward, said: "Looking through the list of confirmed speakers shows that tech is now an integral part of every travel company across all sectors and geographies. Attendees at Travel Forward will be spoilt for choice when it comes to deciding which sessions to attend and the strength of the conference programme for our inaugural event confirms that we have identified and addressed a need in the market for a dedicated deep dive into travel technology."





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## NEW HOTELS

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★ **Grand Millennium Business Bay**  
Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 251  
Expected Opening:  
November 2018



Grand Millennium Business Bay, a Millennium Hotels and Resorts property has opened on the banks of the Dubai Water Canal. Scheduled for an official opening at the end of 2018, the hotel will cater to a mix of leisure and business travellers with plans for seven F&B venues, 11 fully equipped meeting rooms, a 455 sq m ballroom to accommodate more than 600 guests, spa, health club and swimming pool. Currently in its soft opening phase, the hotel is the new five-star destination along the Dubai Canal waterfront.



★ **Hampton by Hilton Dubai Airport**  
Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 420  
Opening Date:  
August 2018

The contemporary hotel is the world's largest Hampton by Hilton to date and located just a few kilometres away from the Dubai International Airport and Dubai Airport Freezone Authority (DAFZA). The property brings Hampton by Hilton's signature value-added services and amenities for the first time to the region. Tailored to meet the expectations of the regional market, the property also boasts a large infinity pool and a state-of-the-art rooftop gym with panoramic views of the Dubai skyline.

★ **Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah**  
Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 225  
Expected Opening:  
November 2018

The property is ideally located in the centre of the town close to shopping, entertainment as well as cultural and business hubs. Whether you're in town for work or fun, you're in for a great stay in each of our 225 modern, comfortable and spacious guest rooms. Start each day with a good breakfast at Yasmina, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant. Relax at Library Café for a snack in between. If you're in the mood for the exotic, try Asian Fusion Restaurant for a dinner treat.



★ **Courtyard Al Barsha, Dubai**  
Rooms/Suites  
inventory : 216  
Expected Opening:  
November 2018

The new state-of-the-art lobby at the hotel provides greater flexibility and choices for guests. At the center of it all is The Bistro, your destination for a great breakfast or drinks and dinner during the evening. You will also enjoy inviting, flexible spaces where you can work or relax, free Wi-Fi throughout and easy access to the latest news, weather and airport conditions via the hotel's GoBoard technology. Plus, the well-equipped fitness centre, indoor pool and whirlpool will help you stay refreshed and energised.

## Fraser Suites in Muscat now

Fraser Suites, a 120-key spacious property with modern furnishing, opens in Muscat, Oman. The property offers business and leisure travellers unprecedented amenities.



**TT Bureau**

Under the ownership of **Amer Al Suleimani** and co-owners **Ammar Al Suleimani** and **Ahmed Al Suleimani**, Fraser Suites Muscat is set to redefine the concept of hospitality. Located in the landmark mixed-use complex, the serviced residence offers guests a range of one to three-bedroom apartments. The launch of the property is in line with the growth strategy of Frasers Hospitality, which aims at expanding its global presence with new properties in the Middle East and Africa.

Fraser's Hospitality Group initially entered the Middle East market when it launched Fraser Suites Seef, Bahrain in 2009. Since then, the group has been identified as Middle East's leading serviced apartments brand and best serviced apartment company in the Middle East. Additionally, the properties have also been individually awarded as leading serviced apartments in the region. The already existing and operational properties in the region, including Fraser Suites Diplomatic Area, Bahrain; Fraser Suites Seef, Bahrain and Fraser Suites Dubai, comprise an average occupancy rate of over 85 per cent.

Vincent Le Gorrec, General Manager, Fraser Suites Muscat said, "Countries in the Middle East have several cultural tourism prospects, including Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE. As part of Oman's diversification efforts, there has been growth in tourism, manufacturing, transport and logistics. This will subsequently result in the increase of demand for high-quality accommodation for travellers. Along with the wide range of facilities and plethora of lifestyle options in and around the capital, Fraser Suites Muscat is an ideal choice for corporate travellers, holiday-seekers and even families."



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# MOVEMENTS

## Travelport

### ► Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa

**Mark Meehan** has been appointed as Managing Director, Travelport of its newly-formed Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa (APACMEA) region. In his new role, Meehan will focus on bringing greater alignment across Travelport's operations in Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa. Meehan has been successful in a range of high-profile global and regional roles over his 19-year tenure with the company. Most recently, he was the Managing Director of Travelport's Asia Pacific operations. Prior to this, Meehan was Managing Director for Travelport Africa, a role that saw him grow the company's share across the continent.



## Emaar Expo 2020

### ► Dubai

Emaar Hospitality Group and Expo 2020 Dubai have announced the appointment of **Alma Au Yeung** as its Corporate Director—Strategic Projects and Partnerships. She is now responsible for driving the group's strategic partnership with Expo 2020 Dubai. In addition to leading the Emaar Hospitality Group, Yeung is involved in planning, managing and executing numerous private clubs, F&B outlets and catering sites within the Expo 2020 Dubai site. Having 20 years of industry expertise, Yeung was previously Group Director of Lifestyle Events, Sponsorship & Partnership at Emaar Hospitality Group.



## Minor Hotels

### ► Europe, Middle East & Africa

Minor Hotels has announced the appointment of **Ramine Behnam** as Vice President—Development for Europe, Middle East & Africa. His career in hospitality development, operations, consulting and asset management includes senior roles with JLL Middle East & Africa in Dubai and the MA Kharafi Group in development, acquisitions and asset management, based out of Cairo. Prior to joining Minor Hotels, Behnam held the position of Director of Development with Starwood Hotels. He will be responsible for continuing to drive strategic growth for Minor Hotels in key destinations across EMEA.



## Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara

### ► Salalah Oman

Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara has announced the appointment of its new Resident Manager **Adil Al Lawati** who joined the resort following 18 years of experience. Lawati has previously worked locally with brands such as Al Sawadi Beach Resort, Millennium Resort Mussanah and Six Senses Ziggy Bay Resort and Spa, Oman. Most recently Director of Human Resources at the Six Senses Ziggy Bay Resort and Spa in Oman, Lawati will be bringing his extensive experience, personality and passion to the hospitality industry in his new role.



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(a member of R Holding) under a franchise agreement with Accor Hotel

## Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria

### ► Dubai

**Osman Selim** has been appointed the Hotel Manager for Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria. In his new role, he will administer divisional department activities, develop reviews, and implement business strategic planning, including sales, financial performance and services. He will be responsible for maintaining positive relationships with team members for efficient running of hotel operations. Prior to this, Selim was Executive Assistant Manager and Director of Rooms at Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria.



## Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria

### ► Dubai

Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria has designated **Jocelyn Ong** as Director of Finance. She is responsible for overseeing all finance-related activities at the property, including budgeting, forecasting, account reconciliation, auditing as well as profit and loss reporting. Before this, Ong was the Resident Director of Finance at the Regency. In 2002, she had joined Hyatt Hotels as Guest Services Officer at Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria.



## Rixos Premium

### ► Dubai

Rixos Premium Dubai has designated **Cenk Unverdi** as its General Manager. Already associated with Rixos The Palm Dubai, he now oversees day-to-day operations of the two five-star properties. With proven success city environments (Kazakhstan) and resort environments (Dubai), along with 10 years' experience, Unverdi is no stranger to Rixos Hotels. Starting in finance, business administration and F&B at Rixos President Astana, he later took part in management trainee programme that allowed him to progress into various operational roles.



## Travel Connections Arabia

### ► Dubai

Travel Connections Arabia (TCA) has appointed **Shady Ghoneem** as its Director of Sales for the region. Ghoneem has spent the last two decades in the hospitality industry, and has worked with the likes of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Raffles, Jumeirah, Hyatt, InterContinental Hotel Group, Roda Hotels & Resorts and Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts. With a strong appreciation of both - hotel operations and corporate group management, Ghoneem will now oversee a portfolio that covers Europe, the CIS and the Indian Ocean, and takes over the leadership role at TCA for The Langham, London.







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