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TRAVTALK

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Proud passport holders of the UAE

The UAE has overtaken previous contenders Singapore and Germany as the country with the most powerful passport in the world.

Shehara Rizly

In a landmark achievement, the United Arab Emirates celebrated a significant milestone as its passport took the lead with a record-breaking score in the Global Passport Power Ranking. According to Passport Index, those holding UAE passports can gain entry to 167 countries without obtaining a prior visa, 113 countries visa-free and another



Colonel Ali Ghanim Al Marri
Naturalization Affairs Consultant—
General Directorate of Residency
and Foreigners Affairs, Dubai

General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, Dubai said, "The power of the UAE passport enables the holder to travel to 167 countries without the need for a visa. Additionally, the healthy relationship with other countries also helped the UAE to rank as the most powerful passport," he said.

54 countries using visa on arrival. The government has been working towards goals to establish the UAE as a number one nation in the world with all its many records over the years.

Colonel Ali Ghanim Al Marri,
Naturalization Affairs Consultant—

The achievement is a clear sign that there will be an increase of travel from the Emirati population. Travelling visa free to many destinations gives freedom of travel, a good mindset thus encouraging the visitor to spend more time exploring new destinations.

Renewed vision for Dubai Airports

Dubai International (DXB), with its new brand, plans to elevate the airport customer experience by capturing unique values of home city Dubai.

TT Bureau



His Highness
Sheikh Ahmed bin
Saeed Al Maktoum
President, Dubai Civil
Aviation Authority & CEO and
Chairman, Emirates Group

"In Dubai, we continuously strive to be at the forefront of the industry globally and lead the way with unwavering ambition, innovation and timely investment. Aviation, tourism and travel have been fundamental in Dubai's growth story and we believe this investment will yield further dividends by encouraging repeat traffic and enticing connecting passengers to visit Dubai. We recently welcomed our billionth customer at DXB, which was a remarkable milestone. Today we are making a clear statement that will ensure DXB continues to be one of the world's most innovative airports for years to come."

"We are proud to launch the new DXB brand to reflect the fresh direction and truly transform DXB into the airport of the future, one that is led by a more customer-centric approach, that incorporates the hospitality, excitement, warmth and true spirit of Dubai. The new brand represents the ways in which we connect the world not only by physically facilitating access to over 220 destinations but also by transporting our customers through their experience of different cultures, food, music and art."



Paul Griffiths
Chief Executive Officer
Dubai Airports

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Take your mind

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ME makes a comeback

The exponential growth in terms of technology in the Middle East has enabled more online presence in the travel sector. After successful shows in 2014 and 2015, Web in Travel (WiT) is back at Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach on April 9, 2019. In conversation with its Founder & MD, **Siew Hoon YEOH...**

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What are reasons behind the resumption of WiT in Dubai?

Keeping a close eye on the Middle East travel market, we have noticed that the online travel landscape has matured and evolved considerably since our last event in 2015. We were also getting requests from industry players in the Middle East, who attend our conferences regularly across Asia, to return. This is largely due to their encouragement and support as well as a desire to make a difference in the market.

What role will WiT play to further enhance Dubai's technological growth in travel and hospitality?

WiT's role is to act as a catalyst to facilitate the development of the online travel market and upgrade professionalism in the sector. We do that by creating events that offer relevant content, sparking honest discussions and debate among key industry leaders and bringing the online travel community together around one common purpose – making travel better for customers.

What is the theme of this year?

WiT 2019 will be based on 'Through the Looking Glass'. For travellers, a trip is a connected journey – we grab a ride to the airport, fly, arrive, grab a ride to the hotel, hopefully have



Siew Hoon YEOH
Founder & Managing Director
Web in Travel

a lovely stay and if we have time, book a couple of activities, departing from the hotel to the airport, and the loop continues. The travel industry

however, works, thinks and acts in silos – airlines, hotels, travel agents, tour/ground operators, tour and activity providers, with each obsessed with their own set of issues and challenges. However, as technology has flattened the world and, with it, the travel industry, it is time for the leadership of travel companies to take a helicopter view, look beyond their own verticals and the industry to collaborate, to not only grow the \$7.6 trillion travel industry but also look after the end consumer. Our theme encourages travel industry players to do just that — take lessons from each other and other industries so that we can compete and thrive in the sea of changes.

How many attendees are expected to attend the event?

We are expecting about 120-150 delegates from across the Middle East and nearby regions. Close to 40 speakers from Asia, Middle East and Europe will be gathered to address key trends in the online travel space.

What are the applicable methodologies that will benefit the Asia market?

Both Southeast Asia and the Middle East have a young, social and mobile population of consumers who are tech-savvy and travel-hungry. Parallels are to be drawn between how online travel has developed in these regions. 



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EDITORIAL

Wings of change

We sure know what's taken over our lives! Technology has become an integral part around the globe irrespective of the industry. Dubai, in keeping with its reputation to be smart in every sense of the word, has taken a step further to be equipped with Artificial Intelligence. In hospitality, technology is put to good use in supporting the tedious task of the front desk and enabling more opportunities of upselling other services in the property.

Few years ago, travel agents were expected to become redundant with agencies having to shut down their businesses. Today we see a slight shift from closed agency doors to more agencies opening up to enable clients to have a better planned trip to their required destination. In Europe, there has been an increase in agencies as the demand has risen over the past few years. In the Middle East, the agent has become a catalyst and an advisory body that could better recommend the selected journey.

Redefining the travel experience, millennials now want to be exposed to destinations first-hand and feel more like a local than a tourist today. Although direct bookings may seem to cost less in the eyes of the traveller, little do they realise that they have paid more than what they are required to pay.

Dubai is on its way to becoming the smartest city in the world and employing more methodologies to becoming a 'smart tourism' destination. As the number of hotels for Expo 2020 seem to grow exponentially over the past few months, Arabian Hotel Investors Conference (AHIC) 2019 set to be held in Ras Al Khaimah from April 9-11, will discuss the strategies to be used in investing in business as expected ROIs seem to be the most important concern of today.

Reshaping the hospitality milieu

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman and Founder, Bench Events, expresses the need for investors, owners and operators alike to be aligned for Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) 2019 to be held in Ras Al Khaimah from April 9-11 on the theme 'Synchronised for Success'.

According to the latest data from ASTR, there are 740 hotels in the total pipeline for the Middle East — 431 under construction, 117 in final planning and 192 in planning. This equates to a total of 197,823 upcoming rooms in the region. In the second AHIC Hotel Investment Forecast conducted by MEED Projects, we revealed that close to US\$30 billion worth of hotel construction contracts will be awarded in the Middle East and North Africa between now and 2023. The UAE leads the way with almost US\$11 billion worth of planned and unawarded hotel projects. Egypt, which has a long-established tourism sector, is the second largest

that enrich our economies for the future and sustain our industry in the long-term. Three key areas to consider are sustainability, innovation and real estate development. These will be discussed in depth at AHIC but here is a sneak peek ahead of the event.

Synchronised for sustainability
Sustainable tourism is the topic we expect to be pivotal to conversations at AHIC with significant roles of all major stakeholders of the industry. Destinations, tourism authorities and master developers have a responsibility to not only protect and maintain their environments but also to encourage them to

AHIC — Amaala, a bespoke hospitality experience located within the Prince Mohammed bin Salman Natural Reserve and The Red Sea Project situated along the Western Coast. The Red Sea Project will be created around an archipelago of more than 90 islands surrounded by thriving coral reefs, dramatic desert canyons and dormant volcanoes, and heritage sites. Master developer The Red Sea Development Company has already undertaken more than 30 ecological studies throughout the design and development phase.

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

“Destinations, tourism authorities and master developers have a responsibility to protect and maintain their environments whilst encouraging them to prosper”

future market with just over US\$4 billion worth of hotel projects, followed closely by Saudi Arabia at US\$ 3.9 billion.

Absorbing this level of supply will require shared vision and coordination at a destination level, constant dialogue and transparency between all stakeholders, ingenuity beyond anything the industry has experienced before, and a firm focus on creating products

prosper. For investors and lenders, there's an obligation to finance projects and properties with a long-term sustainable vision and for owners, a mandate to maintain portfolios that are environmentally-aware. Operators must be committed to managing these assets sustainably. Saudi Arabia witnesses great progress in this field. We're excited to be showcasing two of the Kingdom's giga-projects at



Jonathan Worsley
Chairman and Founder
Bench Events

450+ boats at Dubai International Boat Show 2019

The Dubai International Boat Show (DIBS), organised by Dubai World Trade Centre, saw a flock of sea enthusiasts and families attend the opening day for a look at some of this year's biggest boat and yacht launches. The 27th edition of the show has brought to the coasts of Dubai for the first time ever a number of launches, including custom yacht-builder Oceanco's newest project, the 105-meter (345ft) diesel-electric driven Esquel, designed for extensive cruising to remote regions extending from the North Pole to the South Pole and everywhere in between.



Rotana charts ambitious roadmap

Hotel management company Rotana started off the year on a positive note with sustained performance across key markets in the Middle East. Acting CEO **Guy Hutchinson** shares insights at a recent round-table conference.

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How have the first two months fared in terms of ADR and RevPAR?

Most of our markets in the region posted firm growth in occupancy, average daily room rate (ADR) and Revenue per available room (RevPAR), and this is chiefly due to our relentless focus on improving product offering, expanding portfolio and enhancing commercial efforts. During January and February, Rotana hotels in Abu Dhabi delivered stronger growth as compared to properties in other emirates and recorded a 3.5 per cent growth in occupancy, 2.3 per cent increase in ADR and 5.9 per cent rise in RevPAR, while its properties in Beirut and Riyadh posted 17 per cent and 15 per cent rise in occupancy and 29 per cent

“Major upcoming events such as Expo 2020 Dubai and tourism initiatives including the \$500 billion Red Sea coastline project will further strengthen the region's reputation as an attractive destination for tourists”

and 48 per cent surge in RevPAR respectively, as compared to the same period in 2018. Similarly, ADR and RevPAR soared 24.8 per cent and 9.8 per cent in the company's resort in Sharm El Sheikh, while Manama saw a 5 per cent rise in occupancy rates.

Could you tell us about the key feeder markets?

Room nights coming from Saudi Arabia have increased by 15 per cent in the first two months of this

year. In 2018, the UAE, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Germany and India topped the list of leading feeder markets. Major upcoming events such as Expo 2020 Dubai and tourism initiatives including the \$500 billion Red Sea coastline project, NEOM mega-city project, Al Qiddiya Entertainment City, Farasan Islands and the 3,000 square kilometre Amaala luxury destination project in Saudi Arabia, will further strengthen the region's reputation as an attractive destination for tourists

and investors alike. In addition, international events in the region such as Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019 not only help drive occupancy but also promote the destinations worldwide. Similarly, the ongoing reforms aimed at easing visa regulations will make way for new source markets.

What are the challenges faced by the hospitality sector today?

The GCC region is expected to see an additional 58,000 keys in 2019, with Dubai, Makkah and Riyadh accounting for the highest increases in supply. These new stocks will intensify competition leaving further pressure on room rates. As a result, maintaining profit margins will be a key challenge for hoteliers this year.



Guy Hutchinson
Acting CEO
Rotana

Could you share details about new openings expected over the next two years?

By 2020, Rotana will open nine new properties to bring its strong inventory of operational keys to 21,135. Properties opening in Q2 2019 include Johari Rotana, Dar Es Salaam (256 keys), Bosmal Arjaan, Sarajevo (130 keys) and Dana Rayhaan, Dammam (285 keys).

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Embrace Thai's myriad shades

Friendly, cultured and historic, Thailand radiates a golden hue from its glittering temples and tropical beaches through to the ever-comforting Thai smile. With broods of all ages looking for new ways to spend time together, Thailand is the perfect destination for families.

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Today's parents and grandparents are active, healthy and looking to spend time with their loved ones. Milestone birthdays and anniversaries are a chance for bring-the-whole-gang celebrations with many families yearning to share a place that's special to them, such as a national park or a hidden corner of Thailand. More and more

and visit temples, where they bring offerings such as food. Visitors sprinkle clean or scented water over religious statues to represent purification and good fortune. Young people also pour water on the hands of elderly relatives and friends to show their respect and ask for blessings in the coming year.

Thailand is also the 12th safest country in Asia according to the Numbeo 2018 Crime Index. Safety is a huge priority for parents looking to travel with their children and Thailand's safety rating bodes well in terms of attracting families. The Land of Smiles also has partnerships with key police organisations. Dubai Police recently visited Thailand to mark its new Esaad partnership with Tourism Authority of Thailand, which highlights the readiness and strong future potential of Thailand as a privileged destination for all of the UAE government entities. Currently, Thailand is promoting its 'Open to the New Shades' campaign, which highlights all of the country's different offerings for every kind of traveller. The campaign looks at the diversity of Thailand and its many unique and undiscovered offerings. It comprises five pillars—shades of Thai gastronomy,




families are taking children abroad at an even younger age and parents want to include kids in the decision-making process too, including them in itinerary-planning meetings and brainstorming group activities together. Alongside the friendly culture that has caused the country to be known as the land of smiles, Thailand's affordability, weather and vast array of activities make it the perfect destination for a fun, family-friendly holiday.

Recent data revealed that festival tourism is increasing in popularity with travellers opening up to cultural experiences globally, and an increase in demand of approximately 20 per cent for experiences including Songkran in Thailand. Songkran is an incredibly popular annual Thai festival that marks Thai New Year.

From April 13 to 15, the entire country will celebrate the New Year. People prepare for it by cleaning houses, schools, offices and other public spaces. They are joined by family members who have moved away and returned for the holiday to spend time with loved ones. Many families wake up early during Songkran

Honouring family traditions is an important part of Songkran. Outside, Songkran is celebrated with street parties featuring loud music and a giant friendly water fight. Alongside festival tourism, medical tourism has also created a surge in families visiting Thailand. Medical tourism is an expanding, multi-billion-dollar industry, and in terms of market share, Thailand is currently dominating the market with the number of tourists visiting solely for medical purposes. This growth has subsequently positioned Thailand as the leading medical tourism destination in Asia with the rise for demand continuously pushing other nations down the list.

shades of nature, shades of arts and crafts, shades of culture and shades of way of life.

Thailand is a diverse country that is waiting to be explored by every family. Exquisite temples, vivacious floating markets and walking streets, traditional villages, and unique annual festivals are waiting for tourists to visit all year round. Many people just touch the surface, but there is so much to discover by way of unique cuisine, rich art and culture, exotic nature, incredible beaches and an open, authentic way of life that's uniquely Thai. 

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Plan your wellness holiday

Most locals and expats residing in the UAE are on the look-out for new destinations offering personalised experiences. **Josephine Sophia**, Executive Director, Sugarcane Elephants, shares an update.

 TT Bureau

Please share the work undertaken by the company.

Sugarcane Elephants is the first and only wellness travel company in the MEA region. We are soul alchemists, using the medium of travel to profoundly affect and change perceptions and world views. We function as a representation company for boutique wellness resorts and hotels; carrying their message to the right audience in the assigned geography and creating an ecosystem of travel explorers, wellness evangelists and experience seekers. We provide both – teachers and enquirers – with eclectic living spaces in idyllic destinations that become playgrounds for the spirit to soar.

How important is outbound wellness in the Middle East market?

There are supposed to be 200 million followers of yoga world-wide. And the Middle East is not immune to the charms of this ancient well-being practice either. There are over 100 yoga studios in UAE itself and many more freelance teachers. Yoga schools from Ashtanga to Sivananda, and everything in between, have established their presence in the Arabian Gulf.

Associated wellness modalities from Theta Healing to Raw Food lifestyle, are well represented too with a growing demand for their benefits in this fast-paced era. On an average, one new fitness studio opens just in Dubai alone every fortnight. And the patrons of these studios travel frequently on either teacher-led retreats or individually on well-being-themed holidays.



Josephine Sophia
Executive Director
Sugarcane Elephants

Given the high level of disposable income in this region, wellness is a very important segment of the outbound travel industry. In the end, we all crave to be healthier, happier and at peace. Going on a wellness

holiday helps us to do this and return to our centre.

What are the 'most visited' outbound wellness destinations around the world for the Middle East market?

The lion's share of wellness travel from the Middle East is bound towards the Asian subcontinent – India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand and Bali. Germany and a few spa destinations of Eastern Europe also gain some traffic.

Could you share what the clientele in this market seek in terms of wellness?

The Middle East Market is used to high standards of service so they look for destination resorts that have not only unique themes

and modalities but also a distinct service orientation. There are some clients who are particular about Ayurveda treatments or detox regimes but most clients want a proposition that combines wellness treatment with rejuvenation and relaxation offerings.

Is there a time period that the Middle East travellers prefer?

Most travellers like to spend at least five to seven days at the destination so that they can 'decompress' and experience the true benefits of the treatments. However, we have clients who are short of time and want to pack a wellness break into a long weekend and we cater to that segment as well. On the other spectrum, we have clients who seek a longer 15 to 30 days stay due to specific health issues. 

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Kigali leaves agents in awe

RwandAir organised a familiarisation trip for top agents of the UAE to provide first-hand experience onboard the A330 Rolls Royce engine aircraft and an opportunity to experience Rwanda as a destination of choice and seek opportunities with the many offerings for travellers from the Middle East.

 Shehara Rizly



Timothy Njihia
Country Manager - UAE, GCC
& Pakistan, RwandAir

“We organised the trip to provide an opportunity to the top travel agents to expand their repertoire of RwandAir and Rwanda as a country. They got to experience our product, Airbus A330 and the services onboard comprising full flat beds in Business Class, Premium Economy and Economy, and in-flight

entertainment across the entire cabin. In terms of the destination, the focus was on what Kigali has to offer both as RwandAir's hub and capital city of Rwanda. It was also an opportunity to showcase Rwanda as a Meetings & Events and leisure hub for Africa with RwandAir. Agents had an opportunity to engage with suppliers on a one-on-one basis. The criteria for selection of agents was based on both performance and potential.”



Peter Kairu
Travel Consultant
dnata Travel

“The Airbus A330-200 was amazingly smooth right from take-off till landing. Radisson Blu has a class of its own within the African region not only in terms of the variety of rooms but also a state-of-the-art conventional centre adjacent to it. Our excursion to Akagera National Park was a trip to remember. The park has a variety of animals including the big five which guarantee the country a worthwhile visit. Other attractions include Volcanoes National Park, camel riding, archery, zip lining and Genocide Memorial. Meeting with Rwanda Development Board (RDB) broadened our horizons in terms of understanding Rwanda as a potential country for MICE. Rwanda is peaceful, welcoming and ready to do business with the outside world.”



Fonz Capili
Travel Consultant
Salguru Travel

“I had a great experience flying RwandAir, a trip I won during RwandAir's Product Presentation & Best Practice Session. Rwanda is beautiful and clean. The hotel's facilities and amenities were top-notch. Akagera National Park was a great experience as we could see all those animals living in their natural habitat instead of a zoo. I think RDB is doing a great job with their packages. They offer three types of packages depending on the budget of the passenger (low, medium and high-end). I think they have everything which MICE requires including a hotel and convention centre that can offer multiple options depending on the number of people attending events.”

“RwandAir is an amazing product. Radisson Blu has an outstanding room service, breakfast, Business Class lunch, Fillini dinner especially Tilapia and the swimming pool. The conventional centre was well equipped with state-of-the-art auditorium and 18 meeting rooms. I also enjoyed the excursion to Fazenda



Tharik Anvar
Branch Supervisor
Deira Travel

Sengha. The experience in Nabugogo local market and bike taxis was enjoyable. Amongst my best experiences was the roof-top hotel dinner. We were extensively familiarised about Rwanda Tourism and received good support from RDB for our tourism packages. Perfect weather, unmatched cleanliness, greetings from people and the Friday jummah prayer at Biryugo Masjid made it a worthwhile experience.”

“We travelled in an Airbus A330. The seating in Business Class had full flat beds whilst offering Premium Economy and Economy cabins too. The rooms were excellent with a comfortable bed and a large bathroom with a spacious walk-in shower. The delicious variety of both local and international cuisine was my favourite during the stay. The convention centre was quite large with very good conferencing facilities in the main room and multiple board rooms. It was very well signposted all over with excellent amenities for international conferences of all sizes. We indulged in archery, zipline, horse riding and safari at Akagera National Park. I was completely blown away by its landscape and wide variety of animals.”



Dinesh Udayakumar
Business Travel Consultant
BCD Travel

“The roads were clean with lots of greenery. Everything was spick and span. Service at the hotel was excellent with fully trained staff. Our expedition to the Akagera National Park was amazing as we got to see some interesting natural wildlife in their habitat. The breakfast and all meals at the hotel were really great. I will definitely miss the tilapia dish which was served at the hotel more than once as per our request. They were all very hospitable towards our team and they made sure that we felt very welcome at the property. The Rwanda tourism board expressed their support and spoke to us about how we could promote the destination. RwandAir flight from Dubai to Kigali was excellent onboard and we thank Tim and his team for organising the trip.”



Sajjad Mahmood
Travel Consultant
dnata Travel



Ahmed Kasim
Manager—Online Operations
Akbar Travels

“Flying RwandAir, on board its A330-200 was amazing. Radisson Blu Kigali was a beautiful property with spacious rooms and excellent service. We had two excursions and a convention centre visit. The visit to Akagera National Park was enjoyable. RDB is a very transparent government unit promoting the overall development of Rwanda. The trip to Kigali was a great experience for the corporates. Kigali as a destination is a visual treat for nature lovers. Its weather and greenery is sure to attract GCC clients. As a destination, Rwanda needs to market itself aggressively, especially in the GCC, ISC and EU, where accessibility is easier. For me, Kigali is not only a tourist destination but one with immense business opportunities.”



Susan Wanjiru
Senior Sales Executive, Al Rais
Travel & Shipping Agencies

“The stress-free travel, easy check-in, timely take-off and landing all added to a great experience on RwandAir. The in-flight decor showcased their national heritage and offered passengers a way to experience the local culture onboard. The hotel, with its strategic location, is a luxurious new and beautiful property. The staff was friendly and helpful, rooms were spacious and cozy, and amenities were affordable. The Fillini restaurant became the apple of my eye. Rwanda has plenty of experiences to offer ranging from its thousands of green hills, amazing landscapes and spectacular sceneries. RDB has a passion for its property and thirst to make it one of the best MICE destinations.”



Emma Sison
Travel Consultant
Karoo Travel

“The hotel was excellent and the convention centre being next door will be ideal for MICE business. The entire property was spacious and absolutely apt for guests if they are at a conference next door. The excursions were unforgettable, especially the activities in Fazenda Sengha. Meeting with the RDB team also helps one know much more about Rwanda. The overall experience from a GCC point of view should be based on MICE business and leisure. Rwanda is tropical and green; so it will be a new destination that could be promoted for people in the GCC who seek lush greenery, wildlife, adventure and a new meeting destination.”

Building on exponential growth plans

As the year kicks off on a rapid pace, a host of new market drives is now setting the ball rolling to ensure lucrative results. Four key winners of Arabian Travel Awards share opinions on this trend.

► **Best Arabian Tourism Board —**
Sharjah Commerce & Tourism
Development Authority (SCTDA)

Innovative tourism products

Tourism is a key component of Sharjah's advancement, according to H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, SCTDA. "We have embarked on several initiatives to make Sharjah a favourite travel destination. We will be highlighting our ecotourism products, outdoor activities and more branded hotels in Sharjah this year," he expressed.



► **Gallery of Legends — Jamal Abdulnazar**
Expansion opportunities on the rise

Business in 2018 closed fairly well for Jamal Abdulnazar, CEO, Cozmo Travel. "The market started picking up with expansion of our China operations and a new market emerged - Vietnam which helped close the year vibrantly," he mentioned. Cozmo Travel also launched CCTM - Cozmo Corporate Travel Management in Delhi. He further informed, "Expansion of China and new markets like Egypt and Jordan is on the charts."



► **DDP Game Changer — Nasir Jamal Khan**

There's no looking back

For Nasir Jamal Khan, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel and Tourism, the year gone was challenging but targets were successfully achieved. He shared, "We expanded our reach to KSA, opened our first international office outside UAE and also completed our travel management system VIATI." Khan is optimistic about the growth of his company in 2019. "We will be opening a new branch in Sharjah and relocating Abu Dhabi branch very soon," he said.



► **Best Travel Technology Provider —**
Travelport

Progress across customer priorities

2018 was another strong year for Travelport, informs Kathryn Wallington, Country Manager—UAE, Travelport. "We ended the year with all of our full year key financial performance measures either in line with or better than management expectations and guidance. In particular, we were proud to become the first GDS to manage the live booking of flights using IATA NDC," she explained.



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Steer clear of legal troubles

Beenish Batool Haider, Head of Corporate & Commercial Division, The Legal Group, clarifies important queries relating to tourism and the hospitality industry to ensure the success of a travel experience.

TT Bureau

What is the importance of knowing the legal framework when it comes to travel, tourism and hospitality sectors?

Tourists or people coming to the UAE for work or business often end up facing hurdles merely due to lack of information on a minor aspect that may lead to severe consequences. It is vital to understand that the UAE has been very welcoming and tourism-centric with a dedicated industry developing the field on a recurrent basis. However, with immense growth in tourism and interest of diverse nationalities in exploring the region, the country has had to introduce several measures to take care of the security of the tourist traffic coming in order to retain and ensure that the spirit and culture of their history, religion and society remains intact. Therefore, all tourists coming into the UAE are strongly advised to review the legal frameworks of the country, be aware of the do's and don'ts when in the region and conduct thorough research to avoid any unpleasant occurrences during their stay.

What are the main areas that legally bind agents and visitors?

Visitors are required to ensure that all tour operators and travel agents providing any hospitality, travel, tourism, leisure activity are duly licensed companies. For this purpose, tourists are advised to ask for their requisite licenses issued for conducting the activities they are advertising and selling. The UAE has specific and targeted activities

Further, every tour guide is required pursuant to the law to wear a license badge on his chest while on duty for ease and confirmation of the tourists and visitors. From the perspective of tour guides, the Bylaw of 2000 regulates the tour guide profession in the emirate of Dubai, which essentially requires a tour guide to have a valid license issued by the requisite authority and to be of "good reputation, and not have been convicted of a

subsequent to which the license has to be renewed annually through taking refresher courses of the authority. Those who do not renew their license badge for two consecutive years will be subject to additional regulations.

Could you explain the challenges in case of ignorance of these laws?

In case of lack of information and knowledge by a visitor regarding the violation of a law or code of conduct in the UAE, serious penalties and consequences can be faced by the affected person. Thus, research and inquiry about relevant laws in the country prior to travel are recommended. For the travel and hospitality fraternity who seek to enter the market for starting their businesses, the UAE is a highly favourable foreign investment market with a Foreign Investment Law announced recently that allows certain businesses to be 100 per cent owned by foreign/non-Emirati nationalities in the UAE, subject to particular terms and conditions. Such entrepreneurs in the market are required to meet and discuss with the law offices and lawyers in the UAE to obtain information about the processes of the country for incorporation and managing their businesses. However, it does not stop at only the initial business set up. The laws of UAE also regulate how business is to be conducted and the hiring of employees and labour matters. Non-compliance to the laws attracts fines and penalties.

Are there any legal rules in the UAE pertaining to code of conduct from travel, tourism, hospitality and other associated companies?

The UAE is very progressive with regulations particularly for busi-



nesses and industries that cater to people. Any person can file a penalty against a tour operator that is not duly licensed or regulated. Further, all authorities and approvals for licensing events in Dubai have been regulated now by electronic systems whereby concerned government entities will be connected to the e-licensing system and subscribers to the e-ticketing systems. Any public or private entity organising an event or having a venue licensed to hold events must subscribe to the e-licensing and e-ticketing system.

On hospitality, it is important to note that visitors can stay in hotels or rent holiday homes. However, visitors staying in holiday homes are required to abide by the house rules with respect to noise and residential amenities. All holiday homes operating companies are required to be licensed and recognised by Authorities. The operators leasing out holiday homes are required to "act with integrity, professionalism, courtesy and consideration when dealing with guests, neighbours, owners and other community stakeholders."

Any person wishing to obtain a license for any of the tourist activities must submit certificates of good conduct for both, owner and managing director, of the establishments. 🇦🇪

“The UAE has specific and targeted activities which allow companies to undergo, practise, market and sell, subject to approvals. A company from which the visitor is utilising tour and travel facilities does not retain due licenses, must know that they are not authorised by the government to conduct such activities”

which allow companies to undergo, practice, market and sell, subject to approvals. Thus, at first if a company from which the visitor is utilising tour and travel facilities does not retain due licenses must know that they are not authorised by the government to conduct such activities.

felony or misdemeanor affecting honour, trustworthiness or public morality". Tour guides are further required to undergo trainings developed by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing to obtain the license which would only remain valid for a year

Do's and don'ts of the travel, tourism and hospitality industries

Do's for Visitors	Don'ts for Visitors
Auto Driving license-no need for conversion for twenty five (25) countries.	No public display of affection
Modest dress code	No bringing in of arms, tools, ammunition, weapons
Take care of custom laws	No bringing in of poppy seeds or any food containing poppy seeds
Abide by the traffic laws	Bouncing of post dated cheques is a criminal offence. Be careful on issuance of such cheques and receiving the same.
Drinking or possession of alcohol requires liquor permits	Smoking is banned within the premises of certain malls, buildings and public offices
Keep a clean car at all times	Swearing is a public offence in the UAE- even electronically
Hotels are allowed to take copies of passport or ID	Privacy invasion is a penal offence in the UAE
Seek professional advice for setting up business or buying properties or investing	Eating or drinking on public transport is prohibited
Alcohol consumption only allowed by non-Muslims in licensed entities	Using a VPN is banned
Respect the culture and traditions of the locals	Do not take any one's picture without permission



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Sharjah beckons German travel

The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA), during its participation at ITB Berlin 2019, reviewed the emirate's chief plans, strategies and tourism programmes whilst showcasing ecotourism and sustainable hospitality.



TT Bureau

Sharjah strongly emphasised on promoting local culture and distinct leisure activities that it has to offer at ITB Berlin 2019 as it seeks to highlight the cultural identity of the emirate and promote the potential of the tourism sector. Commenting on the participation, **H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, SCTDA, said, "During this year's event, we attracted thousands of German and European visitors to Sharjah's pavilion to witness key activities, programmes and events designed for visitors. These efforts effectively highlighted the tourist attractions in the emirate. Visitors' interest in our offerings will inspire us to create more innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing tourist experience and will make them want to return to the emirate. In line with Sharjah Tourism Vision

2021, we at SCTDA, are keen to participate in the exhibition every year to enhance the emirate's position on the world tourism map and increase tourism flow."

The delegation at ITB Berlin 2019, headed by SCTDA, included a number of government and private bodies in the emirate such as Sharjah International Airport, Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA), Sharjah Museums Authority, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA), Al Bait Hotel, Sharjah Collection, Ramada Hotel and Suites Sharjah, Coral Beach Resort, The Act Hotel, Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort & Spa, Orient Tours, Al Khalidiah Tourism and Cozmo Travel.

The participation of EPAA promoted Sharjah by offering a new product that supports ecotourism with 10 quality centres, while Shurooq promoted its most prestigious tourism, environmental and luxury hotel projects and signed a partnership agree-

ment which has become a global link connecting different countries of the world, as well as introducing its latest and most important services, innovations and facilities. Meanwhile, Sharjah Museums Authority highlighted the emirate's 16 museums

H E Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman, Shurooq, said, "The last few years have recorded a number of transformative progress for Shurooq, its destinations and Sharjah's global tourism ranking. We are currently playing a leading role in fully transforming the emirate's authentic and ecotourism vision into reality through destinations such as Mleiha Archaeological and Ecotourism Project, Heart of Sharjah, Al Noor Island and Al Bait Hotel. These destinations have allowed Shurooq to explore and achieve unique partnerships with top international brands and operators that both see the value behind what we are offering to the global travel and tourism market, and behind our study in ensuring that our partners deliver what we aspire to

“We attracted thousands of German and European visitors to Sharjah's pavilion to witness key activities, programmes and events to enhance the emirate's position on the world tourism map”

H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, SCTDA

ment with Shaza Group to manage three luxury hospitality projects within Sharjah Collection. The Sharjah International Airport focused its efforts on seeking new partnerships to promote the growth of passenger and cargo traffic through Sharjah Airport,

which celebrate the culture, history, architecture, archeological remains and arts of the UAE, the Arab world and the Islamic civilisation.

Speaking on the participation of Shurooq at ITB Berlin,





ellers through unique products



achieve behind experiencing Sharjah's rich culture, heritage and leisure features."

He explained, "Participating at ITB Berlin this year falls within our mission, vision and commitment in ensuring our continuous and historic involvement with leading travel and tourism trade fairs such as ITB Berlin, support SCTDA's Sharjah Vision 2021 and use the platform as an opportunity to make an iconic announcement such as Shaza's management of our three Shar-

jah Collection properties — Al Faya Lodge in Mleiha, Kingfisher Lodge in Kalba and Al Badayer Oasis at Al Badayer desert."

In the future, the authority plans to develop more unique leisure and tourism activities and an exclusive range of tourism services to attract more visitors.

It is adopting several measures to enhance tourism facilities in a sustainable manner and promote awareness of environmental responsibilities aimed at intensifying sustainability efforts in the tourism sector, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. In addition, SCTDA held a series of fruitful meetings and discussions, including H E Khalid Jasim Al Midfa's meeting with Zurab Pololikashvili, Secre-

tary General of World Tourism Organization. On the sidelines of the event, a special session was organised for international media to enhance media ties and introduce them to new initiatives and tourism programmes that Sharjah has to offer. A press conference was also held to announce the latest developments and current projects of the sector.



During the event, H E Ali Al Midfa, Chairman of Sharjah International Marine Club, announced the launch of the official Team of Sharjah who will be participating at UIM F1H2O World Championship, and will be touring the world in search of its first win while also promoting tourism in the emirate.

Future Tourism

- ❖ Authority plans to develop more leisure and tourism activities
- ❖ Exclusive range of tourism services to attract more visitors
- ❖ Authority will adopt several measures to enhance tourism facilities for sustainable tourism
- ❖ Promote awareness of environmental responsibilities aimed at intensifying sustainability efforts in the tourism sector



For a memorable 'bleisure' stay

Steps away from the famous Gold and Silver souk in Sharjah, and a few minutes drive to the heritage precinct, also covering the prominent business and leisure destinations of the emirate, Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah recently opened its doors with 225 rooms.

TT Bureau

Fancy a unique experience in the heart of Sharjah? Head to Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah to enjoy a comfortable hospitality experience. The hotel, catering well to both business and leisure travellers, is positioned in an ideal location to explore the city. "We are delighted to open the first Four Points by Sheraton in the emirate complementing Marriott International's footprint in Sharjah and diversifying the tourist experience in line with Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021," said Alex Kyriakidis, President and Managing Director—Middle East & Africa, Marriot International.

Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah features 225 contemporary and spacious rooms, including

inter-connecting and twin rooms designed to suit the needs of families or large groups staying for an extended duration. "Reflecting the brand's promise to provide today's independent travellers with balance, the hotel offers the brand's defining touches including complimentary bottled water in all rooms, Wi-Fi and breakfast. Every room has the Four Points by Sheraton comfort bed, fitted with a plush mattress and down duvet and pillows," Kyriakidis informed.

Catering to the needs of business travellers, Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah offers six meeting rooms equipped with the latest technology and a dedicated events team tasked to deliver seamless business

experiences. "The Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah team is excited to open its doors and serve our guests with warm hospitality and authentic service. With its comfortable room offerings, multiple dining experiences and facilities all within close proximity to Sharjah's most popular heritage sites, business hubs and modern retail destinations, the hotel is a great choice for all types of travellers," said Dany Dagher, Complex General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah and Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort & Spa.

Four Points by Sheraton Sharjah is directly connected to one of the most prestigious business towers in Sharjah and an upmarket shopping mall. Furthermore, the hotel stands



at the end of the famous Sharjah Buhairah Corniche with easy access to the famous Blue and Gold Souk, offering a variety of options for

dining and family entertainment. The hotel provides a complimentary shuttle bus service for guests to visit the picturesque beach side. 📍

Ushering in a new wave of luxury

The exclusive beachfront in Dubai Jumeirah recently received the luxurious Mandarin Oriental. The 256 spacious guestrooms and suites, with a view of the picturesque ocean and the dynamic city skyline, is surely set to become a game changer in the region.

TT Bureau

Mandarin Oriental Resort, one of the rare properties with its own private beach, was developed by wasl Asset Management Group, one of the largest real estate development and management companies in Dubai. Designed by acclaimed international designer Jeffrey Wilkes, the property features spacious guestrooms and suites, most with private balconies and terraces, offering ocean views or the dynamic city skyline. In terms of food and beverage, the property offers six unrivalled restaurants and bars, all of which are noteworthy additions to Dubai's dining scene. The two signature restaurants are Tasca by Portuguese celebrity chef José Avillez and Netsu, a Warayaki-style



(L-R): His Excellency Hesham Al Qassim, CEO of wasl Asset Management Group and James Riley, Group Chief Executive of Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Japanese steakhouse by Australian-born chef Ross Shonhan.

His Excellency Hesham Al Qassim, CEO, wasl Asset Management Group, commented, "Mandarin Oriental Jumeira Dubai will not only be an exceptional addition

to our robust portfolio but will also represent an exciting and premium addition to Dubai's hospitality scene that will support sustainable growth in tourism in one of the most sought-after locations in the emirate." As the closest beachfront resort to Dubai's financial and

business districts, the hotel has exceptional meeting and event facilities, providing a wonderful setting for weddings and social celebrations. A 700 square metre glass-walled ballroom featuring a beachfront terrace is complemented by four meeting spaces and an expansive private bridal room. The spa at Mandarin Oriental Jumeira Dubai takes wellness experiences to another level with its focus on locally inspired experiences.

All nine treatment rooms feature individual changing and bathroom facilities, and some have private ter-



aces overlooking the ocean. This welcoming oasis offers exceptional heat and water experiences, and an unrivalled range of holistic rejuvenation and relaxation treatments. There is also a state-of-the-art fitness centre and a Little Nomads kids' club with a range of exciting activities for younger Mandarin fans. 📍

It's First things First for British Airways

As part of the £6.5 billion investment, **BRITISH AIRWAYS** will include significant changes to its onboard products and services in its First Class cabin. The new look and feel, set to take to the skies from March 31, will include new bedding, amenities and menus akin to that of a five-star hotel.

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2019 is British Airways' centenary year. The airline is investing £6.5 billion to improve its customer experience over the next five years, including new aircraft, cabins, catering, lounges, Wi-Fi and new routes. **Carolina Martinoli**, Director—Brand and Customer Experience, British Airways said, "As part of our £6.5bn investment in customers, we're changing parts of the travel experience in our First Class cabin. Our teams of designers, chefs and customer service experts have carefully thought through the details we know matter most to our customers. In our centenary year, we've sought out some of the best British designers and manufacturers to work with to ensure travelling in First Class with British Airways is an unforgettable experience."

The airline's First Class customers will be offered super-soft, sophisticated new male and female loungewear designed exclusively by British fashion brand Temperley London, informed Martinoli. "The loungewear will be coupled with bespoke British Airways amenity bags, featuring Temperley's "Star" design. The bags will be filled with products from British skincare brand Elemis, including products from the sought-after Ultra Smart Pro-Collagen range. The amenity kit contains the essentials to cleanse, revive and hydrate," she shared.

Of all things gourmet

The airline's chefs have also designed new à la carte menus that focus on fresh seasonal ingredients of British provenance. The new

menus will be served on elegant bone china crockery, designed exclusively for the airline by British tableware designer William Edwards. The new tableware will be accompanied by contemporary cutlery from Studio William.

Martinoli further mentioned, "The airline will also be introducing a new signature afternoon tea service, showcasing the British tradition of high tea. The menu will include a selection of sandwiches, pastries and scones, as well as a wide range of tea infusions. As part of the changes, British Airways is also investing in new Dartington glassware. Travellers will now be able to enjoy the airline's fine wines and champagnes from sophisticated stemware, while soft drinks and

spirits will be served from elegant cut-glass tumblers."

Luxury on air

The airline's First Class customers will benefit from an improved turndown service for the perfect night's sleep with new luxurious 400 thread count bedding, accompanied by a foam fibre mattress topper. Customers will also receive a new day blanket and bolster cushion while those wishing to relax can enjoy the 1,000 hours of programmes available on the in-flight entertainment channels through headphones crafted by Meridian, the British pioneers of high-resolution audio. British Airways' First Class customers continue to have access to the airline's exclusive First Wing at Heathrow Terminal 5.



Prospects of marine tourism

Over 50 leading travel agents from Dubai participated at a special gathering organised by Ministry of Tourism and Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia at Conrad Dubai. The objective was to promote Indonesia as a marine tourism destination. **Nour Aridi**, Middle East Representative, Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia introduced important facts about the destination.



Plan your next meeting here

The 292-room Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre is the upcoming new MiCE destination in the African region. The multi-functional convention centre can house over 5,000 delegates with a variety of tailor-made options for any type of event.

 TT Bureau

The buck stops here! Located 10 minutes away from Kigali International Airport in the heart of the city, Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre, Kigali shapes itself up as the ultimate MiCE destination. As you enter the compound, you will find picturesque well-manicured lawns with beautiful flora, accompanied by the on and off soothing chirping of birds. Owned by Government of Rwanda, Radisson Blu Hotel and Convention Centre is a significant destination which provides an absolutely

Rooms with views

The hotel comprises 292 luxurious rooms in various categories which are modern, spacious and equipped with the latest amenities. The room options are many ranging from standard rooms, Business Class, five junior suites, five Presidential suites to an oversized Royal Suite. "The rooms are very personalised for every category; you need to tap in your key card and press the desired floor in order to enter the level; from there on, there is another entrance which will take you up to



Eat to your heart's content

According to Naidu, if you enter the lobby at any time of the day, there will be water and juice accompanied by the crispiest banana chips and cookies which melt in the mouth with every bite. If you are a guest in the Business Class rooms or in the suites, you have access to the special business lounge which serves tea, coffee, savouries, etc. "Restaurant-wise, there are three options to choose from; the outdoor terrace overlooking the swimming pool, 'The Larder' – an all-day dining restaurant combining classic local cuisine with a global fusion. If you are an Italian food lover, you are in for an absolute treat with 'Filini' restaurant located on the same side of the convention centre. From the regular Italian cuisine of pasta and pizza, one of the most popular dishes is the Tilapia fish. The ingredients are very fresh with a 'farm to the table' concept," he informed. Over the weekend, the restaurant has its own two-piece band which



plays some of the most loved soul music from yesteryears.

Exclusive spaces

The Auditorium Club caters to VIPs while the Business Class lounge and piazza bar provide special spaces for guests travelling in Business Class. The lounge can be used for various events and activities around the year, depending on their requirements. The multi-functional areas which can host varied types of events, conferences and private gatherings according to the specified requirements makes it a MiCE destination of its own. Naidu points

out that when events are held at the convention centre, Radisson Blu shares the business with properties in the vicinity. "Facility-wise, we can cater to 10 to 15 people in smaller rooms while the larger areas are reserved for large scale exhibitions, events and even private functions like destination weddings. Both indoor and outdoor can be utilised. In fact, every single inch of the premises has been really purpose-built," he shared. In addition, there is a private boardroom and a 24-hour business centre catering to the needs of those who will host a meeting or a quick round-table. 📍

Rwandese experience to its visitors. **Nagendran Naidu**, Director, Radisson Blu Hotel and Convention Centre, Kigali, furnished details of how the MiCE activities are conducted, saying, "When we have big conventions and conferences, we share space with the other properties in the vicinity. We work together complementing each other so that we drive more MiCE events to the destination. Our facilities can accommodate any corporate or even private event."

your rooms, giving it an utmost feel of luxury. There are two different room views; one which overlooks the pool and the other which overlooks the road side. So, you can decide which view you prefer," Naidu informed. The property is shaped in a way that every room overlooking the pool view has a balcony. Guests can opt for swimming or a work-out in the modern equipped gym or indulge in a rain mist shower, steam bath, sauna or a treatment at the Amani spa.



Donning multiple hats

Personality of the month



TT Bureau

Maria Lamarche, a seasoned hotelier who has worked in management roles for international hotel companies across Europe, the Middle East, Asia and North America for more than three decades, became the General Manager responsible for the recent opening of the Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai. She has worked for international hospitality brands including Starwood, InterContinental Hotels Group, Millennium and Copthorne, Hilton and Rotana. "Dubai is not new to me. I was here 15 years ago and worked with various hotel brands such as Le Meridien chain and Crowne Plaza. But before coming to Dubai this time, I was based in Jordan for three-years in charge of a beautiful Mövenpick resort property near the Red Sea. Prior to that, I worked in Iraq for one year which I consider as a notable experience." She narrates her experiences earlier on in her career, "My early career was a perfect blend of exposure on the Front Desk, and in the Sales and Marketing department. I have amassed a lot of learning from these experiences and it paved the way to opening challenging yet highly rewarding positions in various parts of the world such as the Middle East, Asia and Europe. I have

held various senior management positions over the years like Resident Manager, Hotel Manager and now a General Manager of a newly opened hotel."

Riding high on success

For Lamarche, hospitality is more than just business. "It's an industry that is not limited to offering a place to stay in but rather an industry that creates experiences through human interaction as well as builds connections and this I think, is what drew me to be a part of this industry," she mentions. She is a born leader with many accolades and achievements throughout her career. She also gained a spot and recognition as one of the 'Top 25 Women in Hospitality' in the Middle East and Africa. Lamarche is recognised for her commercial acumen, successful initiatives to heighten guest satisfaction, operational and management expertise, reducing costs as well as maximising profits. Lamarche speaks on what she describes as her own achievements in life. "Opening a hotel, embarking on a new role and leading a team of hospitality professionals all at once is probably my greatest professional accomplishment till date. It's like a roller coaster ride that's full of

No stranger to Dubai's hospitality, **Maria Lamarche**, General Manager, Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai, gives an account of opening the hotel, embarking on a new role and leading a team of hospitality professionals.

excitement, sleepless nights, courage and unexpected circumstances. It's a great feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction to be able to witness and be part of how a project started from scratch and materialised into such a great product," she shares.

The 'homotel' experience

Although the number of hotel rooms in Dubai has increased over the past few years, hotel apartments seem to have an edge as they endeavour to provide a comfortable space to accommodate families, which perfectly matches the needs of the Middle Eastern and GCC travellers. The property is distinctive with notable offerings, and Lamarche explains, "After careful research, conclusions presented a necessity for a deluxe category hotel apartment within the vicinity of the famous Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, hence the process was initiated. Our key audiences are travellers who wish to experience home comfort with hotel services conveniently available during their stay. A 'homotel' suits this need perfectly as travellers can experience to live and not just stay. It offers flexible environment with a kitchenette and a space which resembles

that of a home. Mövenpick Hotel Apartments Downtown Dubai has 244 deluxe apartments with studio, one bedroom, two-bedroom and one three-bedroom apartment offering ample space. We have an all-day dining menu with continental, Arabic and Indian along with options to tailor-make the food."

Opening the property

The demands of her audiences are sacrosanct for Lamarche. She shares, "We opened in high season, so we made sure that food and beverage and rooms come up first. We dedicated the fourth floor as a greenery oasis for relaxation with an outdoor swimming pool, gym and sauna. When we started, we made sure that guests will be able to experience 'homotel' and simultaneously feel the overall brand experience from the choice of colours and themes. We also broke away from the buffet concept to introduce an à la carte experience for guests to have the flexibility to personalise. The terrace overlooking Burj Khalifa with canal views and Downtown Business Bay are some of the must-visit areas a guest can have a glimpse of while staying with us."



Live, work & create at Business Bay

Conveniently located in the heart of Business Bay with easy access to both international airports and Downtown Dubai, this luxury serviced residence complex comprises studios, and one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments which are the largest in the area.

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As the countdown has begun for Expo 2020, hotels are adding up to their inventories so that they can enjoy a good footfall during the next few years. Millennium Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and Africa (MEA) and Deyaar Development recently opened Millennium Atria Business Bay. Saeed Al Qatami, CEO, Deyaar Development and Ali Hamad Lakhraim Alzaabi, President, Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA, attended the ceremony that marked the opening of Deyaar's first hotel and the 40th hotel operated by Millennium Hotels and Resorts in the Middle East, joined by VIPs, dignitaries and guests.

Al Qatami commented, "We are exceptionally proud of our work here and could not be more thrilled to have partnered with Millennium

close to two decades of experience in creating unique, culturally-appropriate residential and commercial properties, Deyaar has developed a deep understanding of what residents, visitors and investors look for in property. Deyaar's vision to expand into exceptional hospitality offerings align with the vision of the UAE's leadership, as detailed in the UAE National Agenda 2021 – and the time is right, with an estimated 20 million visitors expected to arrive in Dubai for Expo 2020."

The 30-storey Millennium Atria Business Bay features 347 well-designed studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom and duplex apartments. Facilities within the hotel include an all-day dining restaurant, grab and go, podium terrace with cinema projection, infinity pool on the 25th floor,



The 30-storey Millennium Atria Business Bay features 347 well-designed studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom and duplex apartments. Facilities within the hotel include an all-day dining restaurant, grab and go, podium terrace with cinema projection, infinity pool on the 25th floor, gymnasium and kids' club. Every unit in Millennium Atria Business Bay has a characteristic personality and flair with a key focus on urban elegance paired with the latest smart technology.

smart technology. The units offering different views which include the iconic Burj Khalifa, the Dubai Water Canal or the stables will cater to business and leisure travellers alike. The property is well positioned in Business Bay and offers easy access to Dubai's two airports as well as being close to business and leisure centres.

Kevork Deldelian, Chief Operating Officer, Millennium Hotels and Resorts Middle East and Africa, says, "The opening of the Millennium Atria Business Bay will help



Hotels and Resorts for making the Millennium Atria Business Bay into what we believe will become an icon among Dubai's Deluxe Serviced Apartments sector. With

gymnasium and kids' club. Every unit in Millennium Atria Business Bay has a characteristic personality and flair with a key focus on urban elegance paired with the latest




Dubai's tourism industry in its product diversity and strengthen Business Bay as a popular business destination. It also reflects our strong and long-term commitment to the UAE's hospitality sector, where we are expanding our footprint very fast. The opening of the Millennium Atria Business Bay will change the tourism landscape of Dubai and strengthen Business Bay as a major business destination where people live, work and do business. For business travellers, Millennium Atria Business Bay comes as a place to be and conclude business deals, while their

families could avail leisure trips to all the destinations in different parts of the city. Millennium Atria Business Bay complements Dubai's tourism industry and is well positioned to serve visitors to the Expo 2020 – that will attract 25 million visitors in just six months. As a hotel operator, we are getting ready to serve a growing number of tourists to Dubai and the UAE." Dubai has been named as the seventh most visited city in the world in 2018, ranked by Euromonitor International. According to Dubai Tourism, its tourism sector was worth Dh109 billion in 2017. 



Priorities for future mobility

Roads and transport services in Dubai is slowly paving the way for key government roles in the future by leveraging relationships with the private sector. Take a sneak peek into the latest findings of studies, innovations and technology in the field of transport and communications.

 TT Bureau

The Future of Mobility in the Fourth Industrial Revolution—this was the statement made by **HE Mattar Al Tayer**, Director General and Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors, Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), at a session during World Government Summit 2019. He stated that the UAE had committed all its resources to cope with the technological and industrial breakthrough. "The country had launched the UAE's Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy based on benefitting from nanotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), smart devices and digital transactions in all fields. In the mobility field, it seeks to provide autonomous air, land,

and marine transit modes fully managed by AI systems. Dubai has recently established the Emirates Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution to improve on the business plans and applications as well as enhance the governance of relevant technologies."

Shaping the future

Al Tayer reiterated that as part of its efforts to shape the future, RTA has developed systems for monitoring and analysing the local and global future trends to study various scenarios. "In 2016, Dubai launched a fully-fledged autonomous mobility strategy in the field of autonomous mobility aimed at transforming 25 per cent of the



HE Mattar Al Tayer
Director General and Chairman of the
Board of Executive Directors
Roads and Transport Authority

total transportation in Dubai to autonomous modes by 2030. In the field of AI, the Fourth Industrial Revolution seeks to

develop AI systems capable of taking autonomous smart decisions based on Big Data and high computing skills. RTA has launched a package of AI projects highlighted by Traffic Control System to be operational in the mid of 2020. As for shared transport, RTA has charted out the 'Shared Mobility Plan 2030' covering the introduction and deployment of transit means for the 'First and Last mile' and boosting integration with public transit means," he elaborated.

Government initiatives

Al Tayer recapped the future roles of government sectors in keeping pace with the accelerating developments in five

key areas — anticipating the future governance and legislation, improving relationship with the private sector, upgrading business systems to cope with future needs and encouraging research, trials and development. "RTA has launched several initiatives as part of the Dubai 10X such as the City Gate Airports to ease check-in formalities for riders from various districts of Dubai and the Smarter Vehicles Quicker Response using AI to reduce the response time for emergencies," mentioned Al Tayer. Optimistic about the future of the transport sector across the world, Al Tayer along with his team is gearing up to cope with its future developments. 



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NEW HOTELS

The end of the first quarter of 2019 has witnessed a number of new property announcements in the UAE. We take a sneak peek into the ones scheduled to open and the ones already opened so far.

★ Premier Inn Dubai Al Jaddaf Hotel

Rooms/Suites inventory: 389 rooms

Opening Date:
March 2019



Located in the city's cultural district of Al Jaddaf, the new hotel is just 10 minutes away from Dubai International Airport. Premier Inn Al Jaddaf offers a mixed inventory of spacious guest rooms from double occupancy to those which can accommodate a family of up to four. Remaining true to its heritage, the new hotel utilises contemporary design while embracing British charm and local culture. The new property provides dining options catering to all tastes.



★ Occidental IMPZ Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory:
239 rooms

Opening Date:
January 2019

The four-star deluxe hotel at International Media Production Zone (IMPZ) is spread across two towers with leading spaces for conferences and events to suit all business needs. Alongside two signature restaurants, are four varied meeting rooms as well as a ballroom with a 350-person capacity. The signature restaurants of the property, including Stage Sky Bar & Lounge, an expansive rooftop bar with 360-degree city vistas and Champs Sports Bar, a vibrant sports bar on the ground floor, have been launched alongside the hotel.

★ Al Jaddaf Rotana Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory:
338 rooms

Opening Date:
Q2 2019

Rotana is set to open its new property in the cultural district of Al Jaddaf. The new property will follow the same standards of Rotana Group with beautifully designed rooms, food and beverage offerings and wellness facilities like a gym, spa, a 24*7 business hub and most importantly, an efficient hotel staff that is entirely dedicated to ensuring a hassle-free and memorable experience for every guest that walks into the property.



★ Cayan Cantara Arjaan and Cayan Cantara Residences

Rooms/Suites inventory:
329 rooms

Opening Date:
Q2 2020

The project comprises two towers, the residential and hotel apartments tower with 700 units in the form of studios, one- to three-bedroom apartments and penthouses. It will also contain retail spaces such as restaurants, meeting rooms, gym, spa and lounge. Cayan Cantara is located two minutes away from each Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road and Al Khail Road, and six minutes away from Emirates Road; the Mall of the Emirates and Dubai Mall is only a five and 18-minute drive respectively.

Indulge in classic Finnish hospitality at Hotel Kämp

Dating as long back as 1887 when the property was first built, 179-key Hotel Kämp personifies its rich history through its architecture, furniture, art and craft.

TT Bureau

With a turnover of 23 million euros, this 179-key Hotel Kämp is operated by the Kämp Collection Hotels. The property was originally built in 1887 at the seaport. However, by 1960s it was renovated in keeping with its old-world charm to include what was relevant with time. Further by 1999, it claimed its prowess once again with the new management and forged ahead to become an iconic property in the new

“The 179 luxurious rooms include 15 suites which are exemplary with its own design concept going back in time”

era. **Tuomas Liewendahl**, General Manager, Hotel Kämp states, “The hotel has played a major role in the development of not only Helsinki but also the country. Over the years, the hotel has become a landmark which preserves its initial buildings with its rich craftsmanship, furnishings and works of art surrounding the beautifully carved walls from top to bottom.”

The 179 luxurious rooms include 15 suites which are exemplary with its own design concept going back in time. “We are a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and are one of the grand hotels dating back to the 1880s where you will notice the largest suites are on a lower floor. Hence, our presidential suite is on level four with a separate entrance to ensure absolute privacy. The ceilings in each room become higher as we tread on different floors. As we are part of an equity company with a keen interest in art, you will notice many great artworks throughout the property. We underwent a major refurbishment last year and now are fully operational,” explained Liewendahl.

Boasting of 11 state-of-the-art meeting rooms which can cater to different events for corporate and leisure visitors, Hotel Kämp plays a key role in securing the MICE business in the city due to its rich history and Finnish hospitality.

Tuomas Liewendahl
General Manager, Hotel Kämp

Intellectual disability awareness

Travelport launched a global awareness campaign to use the DPNA Special Service Request (SSR) code, which can be used by travel agents to alert airlines when a passenger has an intellectual or developmental disability and needs assistance.

TT Bureau

Travelport initiated the campaign for use of the DPNA (Disabled Passenger Needing Assistance) SSR code after it found evidence of exceptionally low use of the code on bookings made through its global distribution system (GDS). Despite registering more than 250 million flight bookings through its GDS globally in 2018 and an estimated 200 million people worldwide having an intellectual disability (2.6 per cent of the global population), the code was used just 4,309 times (approximately 0.0015 per cent of total flight bookings). A poll of 136 travel agents, conducted by Travelport, revealed that just 24 per cent know about the existence of the code.



Gordon Wilson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Travelport

Linda Ristagno, External Affairs Manager, IATA, said, "We introduced the DPNA SSR code to assist persons with intellectual and developmental

disabilities. We are delighted that Travelport has launched this awareness campaign that encourage all our member airlines and travel agents to use this code and all the other IATA disability codes to ensure that the appropriate support to our valued passengers is provided."

Travelport's six-month long campaign will reach more than 100,000 travel agents in over 30 countries. It features electronic direct mails (EDMs) as well as 'sign on alerts' and graphical 'prompts' delivered through the company's flagship Travelport Smartpoint tool, used by travel agents, among others, to search and book airline seats,

hotel rooms and more. The EDMs and 'sign on alerts' are being shown to its travel agent partners globally while the 'prompts' are activated when a consultant is at the booking stage of a flight to over 30 of the most popular destinations in the world such as London, New York, Sydney and Delhi.

Gordon Wilson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Travelport, said, "Travelport Smartpoint, with all its graphical and prompted capabilities offers the perfect channel to remind travel agents across the world of the existence of this facility, enabling them to work in better partnership with our airline customers in the service of these travellers.

We hope this campaign will not only make a difference in the travel industry but act as a catalyst for other organisations to investigate how their industry can better support people with intellectual disabilities."

The 'prompts' are also being shown when any flight is about to be booked to or from the United Arab Emirates, the country hosting the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2019. Travelport has created a campaign webpage (www.travelport.com/travelunified), which provides guidance for travel agents on talking to travellers about intellectual disabilities and associated assistance.

For a robust maritime sector

The Dubai Maritime City Authority (DMCA) sheds light on some of the major local insurance services designed to ensure safe navigation, and support maritime operational efficiency and security.

TT Bureau

The Dubai Maritime City Authority (DMCA) has been at the forefront of promoting excellence and quality across key maritime indicators, including maritime insurance, that form part of a robust, inclusive, attractive and sustainable maritime environment. The ongoing efforts of the Maritime Authority contribute to enhancing the contribution of the maritime sector to the GDP of the Emirate of Dubai.



Hamed Hassan
Director for Registration
and Licensing, DMCA

We are keen on adopting an integrated portfolio of insurance services that have been developed to meet the needs of the maritime sector, investors, owners and operators of international ships—ensuring their protection and coverage in case of an accident or an emergency situation."

As an example, several local insurance companies provide a range of comprehensive and high-valued services for private and commercial pleasure crafts. These services range from Marine Hull Yacht Insurance to Third Party Legal Liability Insurance, that also cover both crew and passengers.

Hamed Hassan, Director for Registration and Licensing, DMCA said, "A comprehensive insurance coverage is one of the major pillars of the growth and sustainability of a maritime sector."

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Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA

► Bahrain

Millennium Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and Africa has appointed **Samy Boukhaled** as Vice President of Operations for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia region. Boukhaled has more than 29 years of experience in the industry, having held several leadership roles with hotel companies such as Accor and Sofitel. He has worked in countries such as France, Bahrain, Morocco and KSA. Reporting to Kevork Deldelian, Chief Operating Officer of Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA, Boukhaled will oversee all operational aspects of the brand's strategic expansion in the KSA region.



Anantara Mauritius Resort

► Mauritius

Coetzer Deyssel is appointed General Manager of Anantara Mauritius Resort opening in Q4 2019. Deyssel joined Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas in February 2016 as Cluster General Manager in the Maldives for Anantara Dhigu, Anantara Veli and sister property Naladhu Private Island. Coetzer's career in hospitality started out leading safaris in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. With a focus on guest satisfaction and a knack for pleasing high end, discerning travellers, Deyssel's career has spanned over 20 years and taken him to more than seven countries.



Anantara Tozeur Resort

► Tunisia

Lotfi Masbahi has been appointed General Manager of Anantara Tozeur Resort, Tunisia, to lead the team during the pre-opening and opening of the resort, which is scheduled for September this year. An experienced hotelier, Masbahi brings with him a wealth of hospitality leadership in both resorts and luxury hotels spanning three decades Tunisia as well as in Qatar, Spain and Germany. This includes a decade with Méliá Hotels International, where he attained his first Managing Director (General Manager) role and several years heading up two Vincci Hotels properties.



Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort & Spa

► Ras Al Khaimah

Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort and Spa has designated **Sarah Mokere** as the Marketing Communications Manager. Mokere brings with her over 10 years' experience in marketing and brand development roles across luxury hotel brands and the travel industry. Mokere started her career as Communications Manager at Hotel de Paris – Rouen France after which she joined as Marketing & Communications Manager at GHM Hotels UAE in the pre-opening team. In her previous role at VisitBritain Dubai as Marketing & Communications Manager, she was responsible in maximising the value of outbound travel to Britain from the ME Markets.



MOVEMENTS

Aloft Me'aisam

► Dubai

Elaine Watson has been appointed as Cluster General Manager of Aloft Me'aisam, Element Me'aisam and Aloft Dubai South. In her role, Watson will oversee the management and operations of all three properties. A dynamic and goal-oriented professional with extensive experience in the international hospitality industry, Watson is a hands-on General Manager who has demonstrated a high level of operational skills, problem-solving abilities and the drive to achieve success under pressure. Her career with Marriott International spans four countries and has seen her hold senior positions at hotels in the UK, UAE and Egypt.



Address Dubai Marina

► Dubai

Emaar Hospitality Group has appointed **Eleni Tsolakou** as the General Manager of Address Dubai Marina. With over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Tsolakou will be responsible for driving and strengthening the distinctive positioning of the hotel. She will focus on delivering innovative initiatives to achieve higher levels of operational efficiency, guest experiences and unrivalled service standards. Tsolakou has demonstrated exceptional leadership and efficient management in all aspects of hotel operations in her previous roles.



Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh Kingdom Centre

► Riyadh

Guenther Gebhard has been appointed as the General Manager of Four Seasons Hotel Riyadh at Kingdom Centre. He will oversee a substantial renovation project at the stylish property in Riyadh's iconic Kingdom Centre besides driving the hotel's ongoing Saudisation efforts in addition to exploring avenues for further expansion throughout the EMEA region. Prior to joining Four Seasons, Gebhard excelled in a variety of senior leadership positions across the globe.



Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel

► Dubai

Park Regis Kris Kin Hotel has recently appointed **Marie Bernadette Ortiguerra** as Marketing & Communications Manager. Ortiguerra will oversee the department ensuring that all actions are in line with StayWell standards. She started her journey with Rotana brand in 2007 in Sharjah Rotana as a Sales Secretary. Prior to joining this, Ortiguerra worked with AccorHotels' Swissôtel Al Ghurair as Assistant Director of Marketing & Communications where she headed the successful rebranding of the first Swissôtel in UAE.





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BurJuman Arjaan by Rotana Dubai offers an impressive experience with its 148 spacious suites. All suites include a wealth of attractive and contemporary accessories with modern day amenities, like separate sofa lounge, kitchenette or full kitchen and dining area, allowing guests to take in the panoramic views of old and new Dubai as well as the bustling Dubai Creek.

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