

# 1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP UAE'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE MONTHLY

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# Summer means business

Come summer and the Middle Eastern traveller explores various ways to unwind, be it in the form of staycations or travelling for retail tourism. Other destinations stand to gain a lot through these visits. Industry spokespersons share this season's inbound and outbound trends.

“The GCC market is Germany's third-largest non-European source market, behind China and the US. GCC travellers stay an average of 11 nights and spend on average \$5,300 per person per trip, significantly more than other international travellers. In 2009, overnight stays in Germany by GCC nationals amounted to 770,000. By 2018, the number of overnight stays surged to 1.8 million, which demonstrates that the annual number of overnight stays went up by 130 per cent over the past decade. GCC travellers get immersed in nature's best, along with outdoor activities with interactive and digital experiences in Hamburg. According to the latest forecast from the GNTB, GCC nationals visiting Germany are expected to increase to 3.6 million overnight stays by 2030, compared with 1.8 million guest nights from Gulf nationals recorded in 2018, with key markets being UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.”



**Sigrid de Mazieres**  
Director, German National Tourist Office – Gulf Countries

“We continue to expand and accelerate the passenger numbers. Oman Air has started operations to Alexandria and Athens this year. The codeshare with Gulf Air was extended recently to include Tbilisi in Georgia, Baku in Azerbaijan, Gassim in Saudi Arabia and Beirut in Lebanon from Bahrain flights to and from Muscat, connection to Salalah and Khasab in Oman, Nairobi in Kenya, Zanzibar in Tanzania, Goa and Lucknow in India, Kathmandu in Nepal and Jakarta in Indonesia. Also, the codeshare arrangements with Kenyan Airways has also been expanded. We also work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and other stakeholders in promoting Oman from our network throughout the year. Oman's growing reputation as a sought-after MICE destination is a crucial factor to bolster our sales and marketing strategies.”



**Shahzad Naqvi**  
Country Manager  
Dubai and Northern Emirates – Oman Air

“Our main objective for this year is to become efficient to host global visitors. We aim to restructure Monaco by recognising the types of tourists flocking to the country and create experiences that are memorable. As a destination, we are an all-year round vacation hub. During the last 10 years, the Middle Eastern traveller numbers have been soaring; Saudi Arabia and UAE have been important markets for us. One family from the UAE or Saudi Arabia represents about 20 to 30 people from Germany, Italy or any other destination. Summer is the busiest time, with many Middle Eastern visitors making their way to enjoy the mild summer in Monaco. We are a small country of 2.25 square kilometers and 2500 rooms. Our hotels propose infrastructure that can accommodate the families through interconnecting rooms, or a big apartment or connecting three or four rooms.”



**Christophe Brico**  
Press Manager  
Monaco Tourism Authority

Contd. on page 2 ▶

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## 47% MENA tourists flock to Thailand in 'green season'

Almost half (47 per cent) of MENA nationals who visited Thailand during 2018 chose to travel during the green season. This season, also described as the 'rainy season', runs from June to October. It is one of the most vibrant times of the year in Thailand, bringing with it picturesque tones of blues and greens. During the rainy season, the temperature ranges from 89° F (32° C) to 78° F (25° C). Travelling to Thailand during the green season also has the bonus of being much cheaper than during high season, with flight fares costing less and many hotels and retreats offering discounts. Alongside cultural and ecological excursions, visitors to Thailand can also spend time at hundreds of wellness retreats, which focus on physical and mental well-being.

# Experiential creating a buzz

► Contd. from page 1



**Elif Derya Bakkal**  
Cluster Director of Commercial Strategy  
Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum

five new luxury villas and suites and enhanced our cabanas at our famous Blue Beach, to attract visitors. The Middle East continues to be a big market for us with increasing interest from the region – especially with more flights now, including direct flights from Qatar and Kuwait. Our numbers are also on the rise in India. ”

“ At the Mandarin Oriental, Bodrum, we're all set for a very exciting summer! The recently unveiled Kai Beach at the property ensures a unique beach experience for the guests. We host an exciting line-up of surprise performances and projects, along with a spread of exotic and healthy savouries. We have added



**Bruno Wiley**  
Vice President Sales  
Experience Hub

conducted every year. We have an extensive golf course and one of the largest malls in Abu Dhabi, Yas Mall; more are to come up over the next 18 months. We are investing in rooms and new parks to provide memorable experiences to the visitors. Some B2B partners are already working with us. ”

“ Experience Hub has brought to the table the best brands to collaborate and bring in more numbers to the island. We partner with hotels out of the island as well. Today, we have 2200 rooms, three big theme parks - Yas Water World, Ferrari World and Warner Brothers. At our Yas Marina Circuit, the Formula One Grand Prix is



**Nisreen Boustani**  
PR & Corporate Communications Manager  
Mercato

“ Mercato has in its offering an array of amazing activities, events and deals to ensure a memorable experience during the six-week summer festival for the GCC nationals. Mall visitors can enjoy a host of a great variety of international circus shows, roaming performances in addition to kid's circus workshops, where they will learn fun tricks and more. For every AED 200 spent at Mercato or Town Centre Jumeirah, during DSS, shoppers will get the chance to win incredible prizes. We look forward to a spectacular Dubai Summer Surprises in 2019, with fun-packed programmes planned for family members. ”

Inputs by Shehara Rizly



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# Get set for Arabian Travel Awards 2019

This year, Arabian Travel Awards will be held on October 22, at the Westin Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina, with leading travel commerce company Travelport as its technology partner.

 TT Bureau

As the countdown begins for the third edition of the coveted Arabian Travel Awards, nominations are still open for those who would like to be part of an evening of appreciation for those who have contributed towards not just the travel and tourism industry, but the economy of the destination as well.

Arabian Travel Awards follow a fair, unbiased, and systematic method of internet-based voting. The awards will be divided into four categories — Personal Awards, Business Awards, Trending Awards and Partner Awards. They will include awards for

the Best Business Hotel, Best Family Friendly Hotel, Best City Hotel, Best Green Hotel, Best Leisure Hotel, Best Destination Management Company, Best Hotel Apartments, Best B2B Travel Portal and Best Luxury Hotel, to name a few.

"We are getting everything ready for the third edition of Arabian Travel Awards which will be held in the new Dubai area adjacent to the Tecom area. Our hospitality partner this year is Westin Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina, and at the same time we are very happy



**Tolga Lacin**  
General Manager, Westin Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina

to announce our partnership for the third consecutive year with Travelport. Having one of the world's biggest GDS platforms as a partner is not a mean feat to achieve and we are happy that our association has only grown over the years.

This is also a great opportunity for our



**Kathryn Wallington**  
Country Manager for the UAE  
Travelport

award winners who will be recognised on a global scale thanks to the platform that Travelport provides to them. We hope that this association will scale new heights," states **Nikhil Jeet**, Director, Arabian Travel Awards.

**Kathryn Wallington**, Country Manager for



**Nikhil Jeet**  
Director  
Arabian Travel Awards

the UAE, Travelport, comments, "We are delighted to partner with Arabian Travel Awards 2019 for the third consecutive year. In the past year, Travelport has worked closely with customers and partners to launch a series of innovative solutions in travel distribution and emerging technologies,

such as mobile, AR/VR, blockchain, etc. We will continue to innovate and build technologies that power the regional and global travel industry."

**Tolga Lacin**, General Manager, Westin Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina, states, "Arabian Travel Awards are extremely important as they appreciate and showcase those behind the success of the hospitality industry and reward their continued hard work. We are very excited with our new partnership with them and believe this is not going to be a short-term partnership; it is just a start and we will go a long way to create an impact for the industry." 



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# TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

### Emerging trends and markets

The UAE region is witnessing a boom in the number of arrivals flocking to the region. The plethora of amenities and world-class infrastructure makes the region viable for many segments. Among them, medical tourism is gaining quick popularity. The hotel industry, too, is witnessing a positive growth.

According to the latest data by Expedia Group, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) saw an exponential increase of tourists from UAE, USA and UK over 2018, which secured a continued growth in the hotel sector. Another report by Colliers reveals that international arrivals to Saudi Arabia are expected to increase 5.6 per cent every year from 17.7 million in 2018 to 23.3 million in 2023.

The reports reveal that with travel bookings in the Kingdom, considered the largest in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the growth in international travellers to Saudi Arabia is expected to remain strong. UAE saw a whopping year-on-year growth of above 140 per cent than last year, with almost 20 per cent share of total room nights.

The data also revealed strong growth in package demand of above 200 per cent year-on-year increase from travellers in India. According to the Savills report, the recent tourism growth in Saudi Arabia has been driven by three key demand pools – leisure, pilgrimage and corporate visitors.

KSA witnessed an exponential growth in religious tourism, with the demand for lodging for Makkah and Madinah, increasing by almost 30 per cent and 40 per cent respectively in 2018 versus 2017.

Religious tourism is expected to remain the bedrock of the sector over the next decade, with a goal of attracting 30 million pilgrims to the Kingdom by 2030, an increase of 11 million from the 19 million Hajj and Umrah pilgrims that visited the country in 2017.

# Navigating online travel

The world is more connected and accessible than ever before. When we market a destination our audience can be anywhere in the world. Here's why we need to get online to reach out to a wider audience...

There are approximately two million destinations around the world that people are actively looking to visit. There are also roughly ten or more ways that a traveller can describe their accommodation — from a motel and hotel, to bed and breakfast, apartment, tent or even treehouse. If we put these numbers together, we're already looking at 20 million search combinations. This is the scale of the travel ecosystem that we are operating in today. So, when it comes to navigating a more connected, more technologically advanced, and therefore more complex ecosystem, is it overwhelming? Absolutely. But the opportunity for the tourism industry in UAE is limitless.

One of the keys to put the industry in hyper drive

is by leveraging data and technology.

This is a great industry, one that last year contributed 20.9 billion US Dollars to the UAE's economy and promises to be a long-

**“In the not-too-distant future, we will develop the capabilities for lodging partners to discuss revenue management advice and opportunities with a video bot”**

term economic pillar, if we stayed ahead of the game. So how exactly do we do this? Let's look at the opportunity provided by data and technology. Machine learning, which is a powerful and positive disruptor, can help solve industry challenges and put the power of global platforms, such as Expedia Group, into the hands of

lodging players of all sizes. Machine learning enables lodging players to become better and smarter about how they interact with travellers and optimise their business. It allows for the predicting of trends in the

market and more precise personalisation.

Looking forward, it's clear we need a piece of AI to take machine learning one step further and recommend which of the available tools and actionable insights are going to most efficiently optimise business for our lodging partners. Over

the past few months we've developed algorithms to do just this. This is continually evolving. In fact, in the not-too-distant future, we will develop the capabilities for lodging partners to discuss revenue management advice and opportunities with a video bot.

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

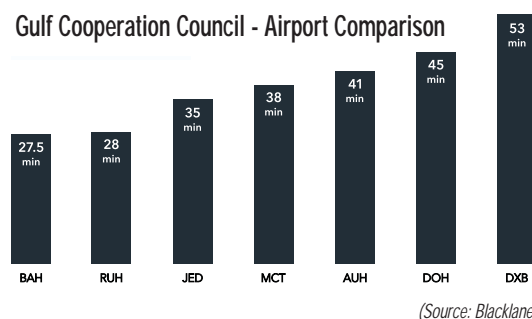


**Paula De Keijzer**  
Senior Director - Market Management  
Africa, Indian Ocean, Middle East  
and Turkey, Expedia Group

# Bahrain, swiftest in arrivals

❖ A report by Blacklane reveals an outlook of the fastest airport arriving international travellers in the GCC region. According to the study, Manama, Bahrain (BAH), is the fastest airport for arriving international travellers, with a median time of 27.5 minutes. It also adds that Riyadh (RUH) has a median time under 35 minutes. The Istanbul Ataturk Airport (ISL) showcased average performance.

## Gulf Cooperation Council - Airport Comparison



## ME Airports to Exit, Fastest to Slowest: International Arrivals

Rank	Airport Code	City	Country	Median Time (minutes)
1	BAH	Manama	Bahrain	27.5
2	RUH	Riyadh	Saudi Arabia	28
3 (t)	JED	Jeddah	Saudi Arabia	35
3 (t)	SAW	Istanbul	Turkey	35
5	MCT	Muscat	Oman	38
6	IST	Istanbul	Turkey	40
7	AUH	Abu Dhabi	UAE	41
8	TLV	Tel Aviv	Israel	44.5
9 (t)	BEY	Beirut	Lebanon	45
9 (t)	DOH	Doha	Qatar	45
11	DXB	Dubai	UAE	53



# India to tap ME for medical tourism

For the upcoming CII Tamil Nadu Travel Mart (TTM), the Middle East is a crucial market. Its parallel event, CII Tamil Nadu Medical Travel Mart, in association with the Health Department, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, aims to be an eye opener for the ME buyers.



TT Bureau

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in association with Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society will organise the CII Tamil Nadu Medical Travel Mart. The event will have a knowledge sharing programme, which would see in attendance eminent speakers from health and related agencies, government bodies, central and state governments,

ministries, officials from the Department of Health, policy makers and professionals in the field of healthcare and eminent experts from healthcare and related industry. **S Sundar**, Honorary Secretary, Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society, says that the Middle East is an important market for the state of Tamil Nadu. "While we don't know the exact number of buyers coming from the Middle East



**S Sundar**  
Honorary Secretary  
Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society

for the Tamil Nadu Travel Mart, the market is very important for the state. There is increased connectivity from the Middle East to Tamil Nadu."

Sundar says that the state is not only a temple

destination, but there are many other avenues of leisure as well as wellness, which attracts the Middle Eastern travellers.

"There are lovely wellness properties in Tanjore and other places in Tamil Nadu. Apart from that people can come here for cultural experiences, as well as shopping, which is very affordable in Tamil Nadu," he said. Tamil Nadu has been one of the preferred destinations in MVT. According to a recent study by Grant Thornton, more than 45 per cent of patients who choose India as their healthcare destination, have chosen Tamil Nadu as their state of choice because

of its state-of-the-art medical care at an affordable price. "Tamil Nadu has state-of-the-art medical facilities and equipments, which are not even present internationally as well as in major metro cities in India," Sundar added. The exhibition will focus on hospitals, healthcare centres, AYUSH hospitals, educational institutions (medical colleges, nursing colleges, pharma colleges & AYUSH colleges), medical tourism facilitators and TPAs.

The event will reiterate the importance of Tamil Nadu in the medical value travel sector. The three-day conference and exhibition would also have

B2B meetings. India has the finest and one of the largest pool of doctors and paramedics in South Asia, with many of them of global repute. India's expertise in highly specialised areas of organ transplants, orthopaedics, cardiology, oncology, neurology etc., has made the country an emerging hotspot for Medical Value Travel (MVT).

## QuickFacts

- The event will showcase the liberalisation of the Visa policy for smoother medical interventions
- There will be reverse buyer-seller meeting with hosted delegates from 60 identified countries

“While we don't know the exact number of buyers coming from the Middle East for the Tamil Nadu Travel Mart, the market is very important for the state”

## Thank you

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## Personality of the Month

## Nurturing new-age trends

With over three decades of experience across Europe & Middle East, Belgium national **Eric Seso** was entrusted with the reins of Mövenpick Downtown Dubai as its General Manager.

 Shehara Rizly

The selection of the industry to work in was really a choice made from the heart by Seso. His endearing passion was to become a hotelier with the right foundation. He shares, "I have always been a hotelier at heart, and I couldn't really imagine myself veered away from the industry. I have graduated with a degree in Tourism & Leisure from Hautes Ecoles Charlemanges in Leige, Belgium. The degree was a personal choice as my passion has always been towards the hospitality and tourism industry."

## Career in a nutshell

Seso has spent almost three decades in the hospitality industry, spearheading operations for Ibis and Novotel across Europe and the Middle East. Seso shares his views on the industry and his experience, "Hospitality and tourism are a varied and buoyant industry to be in. There is always something new to experience, learn, meet, and encounter everyday. It is an industry that is always evolving, yet the focus is always ensuring that travellers and guests alike receive a welcoming, genuine and a warm experience; this I believe is what lures me to this industry."

## Hospitality in UAE

Hospitality has been a key contributor towards the economy in the UAE, Seso says, "We all acknowledge that Dubai is one of the busiest airport hubs in the world. Travellers flock to the UAE for a quick stop or genuinely travel to experi-



**Hospitality and tourism are a varied and buoyant industry to be in. There is always something new to experience, learn, meet, and encounter everyday**

ence UAE as a destination. As a country, UAE offers varied experiences for travellers from different walks of life and we highly appreciate the efforts from the Department of Tourism in promoting Dubai as a destination to different source markets. These promotional activities in the hospitality industry are beneficial. The growing number of hotels opening up also create jobs for both the expatriates and the locals."

## Challenges overcome by resources

Taking over during summer is a challenge to a certain extent, but the advantage for Seso is that he has the necessary team and resources to back him in ensuring a very good balance. He shares his plans, "Our focus during summer is to generate commercial awareness to key source

markets, mainly, in the UAE and other GCC countries. The property is located in Downtown Dubai with proximity to The Dubai Mall and Burj Khalifa, which makes it an ideal stay for leisure and family travellers alike. The property also has great meeting and events facilities, a key area where we want to drive more awareness locally."

## Market strategies

Hotel apartments is a fast-growing trend, especially in the GCC and Dubai in particular. Seso shared some of the market strategies that will come in handy. "Our property perfectly matches the needs of the GCC travellers, most specifically families looking for a place to stay that offers more space for them and their kids." He shares his views on attracting new clientele to the property, "We are now considering penetrating our marketing efforts into other potential markets such as CIS and China."

The property is a perfect fit for Chinese travellers, who wish to shop as we are a few minutes away from the world's largest mall, The Dubai Mall, among others."

## Trending today

Travel, tourism and hospitality has evolved over the years. Seso shares, "Travellers are more receptive to real experiences and majority base their travel plans on what they deem would be social media-worthy."

They like to maximise experiences and at the same time, be in line with their travel budget. The shift in travel needs is what urges changes in the hospitality and tourism industry. There is a blatant growth in mid-scale and budget hotels in the industry to meet the changes in travel behaviour."

## QuickFacts

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**Eric Seso**  
General Manager  
Mövenpick Downtown Dubai



# Connect, learn and network

Global DMC Network, owned by JTB Group, with their representative in Dubai Venture Planet organised a special roadshow for B2B agents in the UAE recently. Industry experts share with us the trends they foresee in the Middle Eastern market and how they can leverage it to their advantage.



**Abrar Uppal**  
Senior Manager – Global Marketing  
Global DMC Network by JTB Group

“Global DMC Network is owned by JTB Group with many companies around the world trained to do B2B business. Our main business on B2B constitutes leisure, FIT and MICE. The Middle East is a rapidly growing market, predicted to grow to 12 million USD, hence, we decided to penetrate this market with value-added and specialised services.

Our products, services and expansive network are assets that could further benefit the travellers from this region.”



**Rebecca Whitter**  
Global Destination Management  
Global Marketing – Global DMC Network  
by JTB Group

“Global DMC Network provides inbound travel services for a number of destinations that are relevant to the Middle Eastern travellers. Our unique network will cater to the Middle East market, which is always on the lookout for tailor-made options. The agents were divided into groups with four different break-out sessions where they learnt an in-depth study about the destinations and the offerings for the specific market.”



**Elena Bounimovitch**  
Global Destination Management  
Global Marketing – Global DMC Network  
by JTB Group

Dubai as we know has a great potential for B2B agents, FITs and meeting agents.”

“We see a new trend from this market, which is a demand for long-haul destinations to experience specific FITs, so we feel as a global DMC we can make it happen. The event witnessed face-to-face meetings with some of the biggest agents who discussed the scope of business in the market.

“Venture Planet represents JTB in Dubai, hence, we organised the first-ever roadshow so that all agents could receive comprehensive information first-hand by the agents themselves. The agents who participated were from some of the top destinations, most favoured by this region, such as Europe and Asia. We were targeting fixed departures, MICE, etc. We received a positive feedback and now look forward to strengthen the market.”



**Manju Manchanda**  
Director  
Venture Planet

“We highlighted an important aspect necessary for this market. What is most important for the Arab speaking guests is that they require tour guides and drivers who can connect, understand and serve their needs, as most of them are not so well versed in English. Hence, for the first time we were able to provide specialised Arabic speaking tour guides and drivers in order to make the travellers from the region comfortable.”



**Murad Farrah**  
Sales Representative, Middle East  
Europamundo

“We have received nearly 3,000 pax last year from the Middle East and we hope to enhance the numbers this year. Hence, the locals will be informed about our offerings. Some of the countries desired are Iceland, Scandinavian countries and Western European destinations. With Kuoni joining our company last year, we have provision of additional services, which can be beneficial to the travel agents in the UAE region.”



**Didier Nicoux**  
Regional Sales Director – Europe and  
Middle East – Tumlane



**George Joseph**  
General Manager  
Trinity Travel and Tourism

“The sessions were informative and had good partners from around the world with their professional setups and tie-ups, which could benefit our clients. We learnt a lot from the mature markets. As travel agents, the sessions certainly helped us to learn more about the network in the region and how best we

can work together to deliver best services to the trade and grow our business optimally.”



**Pramod Thomas**  
Head of Leisure  
SNITA

suitable business from our local clients. With this, we aim to provide a more comprehensive service.”

“Networking is a major part of our business and we need to constantly engage in having the right sources to provide to our clients. We need to update ourselves and enhance what we can offer to our clientele. In the past four sessions, we were provided additional information that can be useful for us for procuring



**Abdul Jabbar Ali**  
Operation Manager  
Al Barrak Travel and Tourism

By attending the sessions I gained knowledge on how to help my clients enjoy their holiday better.”

“We deal mainly with FITs, especially serving the locals. The sessions were important in imparting how we can work together to provide our customers with better service. Most of my clients prefer destinations like Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, as they are mainly travelling to check the car factories in Japan on business or for leisure.

“The event was one of the most interesting ones that I attended. The presentation was in Arabic which is my native language. The event was important for me as 90 per cent of my clientele are locals. I am grateful to global DMC and Venture Planet for taking the initiative. Locals look out for tour guides and drivers who speak Arabic. I shall share the inputs with my clients for helping them generate profitable businesses.”



**Suzan Alali Humaid Al Falasi**  
Holidays Consultant  
Orient Travel

“We are specialised in inbound, MICE and events, with a mix of 40 per cent local and 60 per cent expat clientele. The four sessions conducted were very informative. The one-on-one meetings with the representatives provided comprehensive information on the needs of the region in terms of business. The trends that are relevant to the region were showcased and discussed in the presentations and sessions.”



**Uma Ravindran**  
Manager – Corporate and Leisure  
B6 Travel and Tourism

“We are an inbound and outbound tour operator in Dubai for the past three-and-a-half years, catering to FIT, MICE, leisure etc. There were some crucial takeaways in the four sessions. We also gained knowledge on the extensive network, which we can leverage to our advantage as we can reach out to different markets through one organisation. Besides, there were specialised Arabic speaking tour guides and drivers for the European destinations.”



**Dona Niluka Dangalla**  
Head of Sales and Operations  
Traveled



# An arena to meet and socialise

The inaugural Global DMC Network Roadshow by JTB was conducted at Conrad Dubai. The roadshow was organised in conjunction with Venture Planet. The event witnessed networking and signing of deals among potential agents.





# A safe travel oppor'tune'

Travellers who travel back home during holidays carry invaluable gift items. There have been instances of their luggage being damaged during transit. **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel, shares the role of Tune Protect's assurance policy that ensures such valuables are taken care of.

## Electronic items are of high-value. How does one protect them during travel?

People love to carry heavy electronic items back home as gifts for their loved ones. Since these items must be checked-in, there have been instances of such items being damaged, lost or destroyed in transit. This is where the Electronic Protection Policy by Tune Protect comes into place. It is a specific protection plan to cover electronic items that are prone to damages, or even loss during transit. The policy provides coverage during the actual time of travel, however, travellers

should note that the cover is not applicable prior or after flight travelling time.

## Does the Baggage Assurance Policy cover electronic items as well?

No, the Baggage Assurance Policy does not provide protection for electronic items. It covers baggage losses or damages. However, the Electronic Protection Policy can be added on to the Baggage Assurance Policy to specifically cover electronic items. Taken together, these two policies ensure that travellers will enjoy peace of mind and not work themselves over potential eventualities.

## Kindly explain the course of action taken by an airline when it comes to damage of electronic items during travel.

All airlines have their own processes and procedures when electronic items are damaged or lost, but the turnaround time for redressal is indefinite. On the other hand, the Electronic Travel Assurance

from Tune Protect has an efficient claim policy that can help the traveller recover his losses quickly. Claims can be made online through a simplified process.

## Can a traveller get a cover for everything in a single policy?

A single policy cover for travellers may be a utopian thought. Moreover,

every travel-related loss cannot be parked under one Policy, as every traveller has different needs and these needs vary during different travels. For example, if we were to craft out a Policy that covers all the needs of travellers whilst they may not necessarily require all, it will be a waste as the insurance premium paid will be more excessive than when the coverage is customised. Being a leader in travel protection, Tune Protect has identified the various needs of a traveller and introduced the right types of Policy for almost every



**Nasir Jamal Khan**  
CEO  
Al Naboodah Travel

need. You can bundle Baggage Assurance with Electronic Travel Assurance Policies. Together, they make a great combination for travellers.

“Tune Protect's Electronic Travel Assurance has an effective claim policy that can help a traveller recover his losses quickly. Claims can be made online through simplified processes”

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# Decoding travel in digital age

Even as millennials prefer working online and booking their packages through phones or laptops, travel agents are also innovating. Agents are now more aggressively looking at sectors like corporate travel, luxury travel and cruises, shares **Arshad Munir**, General Manager, Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA).

TT Bureau

## Tell us in brief about the agency

Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA) is a leader in the travel and tourism sector offering value for money and excellent customer service through its 14 branches in the UAE. It is also the passenger sales agent for Flynas, a privately-owned airline based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. SATA is in five Emirates in the UAE; our market share ranges from 8 per cent to 12 per cent.

## What is the USP of the agency?

SATA has a very focused and active Outbound and Inbound Department. SATA's strength has been a full-service travel agency that handles air tickets, hotel reservations, transportation, visas (with a dedicated global visa department), cruises, tours, incentive and education groups.

## What are the significant changes/challenges faced by travel agents today?

The biggest challenge



**Arshad Munir**  
General Manager  
Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA)

and change faced by travel agents is the Internet – offering wider options- more choice, price transparency, creating

less dependence, thereby, less customer loyalty. It is opening avenues of greater traveller independence.

## Do you think that the role of the traditional travel agent has changed?

Definitely. During the earlier days, one would head down to a local travel agent to ask questions about an exotic land far away. We get information from elsewhere now. Travel service companies need to adapt and offer something more

insightful than the generic information which can be found over the internet.

## What is your opinion about digital arena?

Change is inevitable. The real importance of digital to business is not in the emergence of new technology, but the importance is the shift in customer behaviour.

## In your opinion what is the future of the travel agent?

The reality is that the typical travel agency which focused on point-to-point

trips, is largely dead. But as online bookings have grown, new breeds of agents have emerged that target luxury, business and niche travellers who value personal relationships and expertise over savings.

## QuickFacts

**14** branches in UAE and serving as the passenger sales agent for Flynas

Owned by Sharjah Airport Authority, Government of Sharjah

**8-12%** market share; located in 5 Emirates in UAE

# Dubai's business bonanza

The 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of Dubai Summer Surprises, a six-week event from June 21 to August 3, 2019, organised by Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), offers tourists and residents exclusive retail experiences and attractions. Some spokespersons share highlights of the event and its USP.



**Ahmed Al Khaja**  
CEO  
DFRE

region and we are committed to creating compelling offerings to highlight Dubai as a summer destination. ”

“Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) is one of the most eagerly-awaited events in the retail calendar. This year, we initiated a programme of activities, city-wide events and promotions, attracting visitors from around the world, along with our retail partners on board. Dubai offers unbeatable value for families travelling to the



**Sheikh Majid Al Mualla**  
Divisional Senior Vice President  
Commercial Operations Centre  
Emirates Airline

continues in supporting Dubai's solid positioning as a world-class tourism and business destination. ”

“DSS transforms the Dubai summer months into an exciting period for residents and tourists. The city is increasingly becoming an exciting getaway for summer, with its remarkable shopping destinations, landmarks and venues, and endless entertainment options. Emirates has been a key sponsor of DSS since its inception in 1998 and our commitment



**Colm McLoughlin**  
Executive Vice Chairman and CEO  
Dubai Duty Free

aim is to sustain the momentum by selling to passengers, who stop to shop at the two airports ”

“We are proud to continue as a strategic partner of this annual summer event, which is usually accompanied with a lot of local expatriate travel through Dubai International and Al Maktoum International Airport. We will see a great increase in passengers specially as the season picks up a notch and our

“The DSS is an exceptional event that further positions Dubai as a year-round tourist destination. Summer sees a rise in travel activity, and through such family-oriented initiatives, Dubai is not only luring tourists, but also delighting residents with retail promotions. As a strategic partner of DFRE, we will continue to support its goal to establish Dubai as the must-visit summer leisure destination. ”



**Patrick Bousquet-Chavanne**  
CEO  
Emaar Malls

## Retail Tourism

■ Dubai Summer Surprises held from June to August

**6** full weeks of shopping with various items discounted up to **75%**

■ Over 300 brands participating in more than **3500** outlets across Dubai

■ Events and activities featuring major retail-based festivals, new season launches, mega sales and exclusive retail experiences and attractions aimed at further enhancing the retail sector, a main contributor towards Dubai's economy

“Dubai Summer Surprises is an opportunity for families to spend time together, get involved in their favourite activities and find unbeatable offers on international brands. Every year, the Majid Al Futtaim Shopping Mall aims to bring the unexpected to visitors with special offers and exclusive entertainment. Our packed agenda of activities will create memorable experiences this summer. ”



**Fuad Mansoor Sharaf**  
Managing Director for Majid Al Futtaim  
Properties, Shopping Malls  
(UAE, Bahrain & Oman)

Inputs by TT Bureau



# ITB China 2019: 17,000 attendees

The third ITB China, held recently in Shanghai, was a resounding success. Around 17,000 attendees had gathered, an increase of 2,000 compared to last year. Buyers, trade visitors and exhibitors gained positive business results. The ITB China Conference also maintained strong attendance figures.



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## NEW HOTELS

As we approach Expo 2020, room inventory is on the rise. Some properties have already opened their doors while others will be opening very soon in the UAE.

★ Hyatt Place Dubai /Wasi district

Rooms/Suites inventory:  
202 rooms and 105 apartments  
Status: Opened in Q2 2019



The third property in the portfolio of Hyatt properties in the Old Dubai area opened recently as Hyatt Place Dubai/Wasi district. The hotel offers 202 guestrooms, including 10 suites, with separate spaces to sleep, work and play, as well as a Cozy Corner sofa-sleeper, 105 well-appointed apartments, comprising of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments that feature kitchenette, modern utility services and more. Meeting spaces amassing over 300 square metres have been designed for clients for hosting stylish and flexible small-scale business meetings, conferences or celebrating special occasions.



★ Citymax Hotel Al Barsha

Rooms/Suites inventory: 120 rooms  
Status: Opened in June 2019

In keeping with the mid-market sector, UAE's homegrown brand Citymax launched its second hotel in the Al Barsha area and the fifth across the UAE. This Citymax property is positioned to cater to business travellers looking for the comforts of a well-known brand. The hotel boasts 120 spacious rooms, including 24 twin rooms and 96 queen rooms. Each floor of the hotel has only 10 rooms, providing a sense of privacy in the heart of bustling 'New Dubai'. One of the most unique features in this property is the special floor dedicated to women travellers. On this exclusive floor, guests will be attended to by an all-female service team.

★ Millennium Al Barsha

Rooms/Suites inventory:  
299 Rooms and 109 apartments  
Status: Opening in Summer 2019



Conveniently located in the bustling Al Barsha at a walking distance from Mall of the Emirates, Millennium Al Barsha is a four-star property. The hotel includes 299 well-appointed rooms and suites and 109 serviced apartments featuring all modern amenities and the latest technology. The hotel's facilities include House of Colours, an all-day dining restaurant serving international cuisine showcasing playfulness with its open kitchen concept, The Moroccan Kitchen serves an authentic Moroccan cuisine in a relaxed atmosphere. Pool Deck is the rooftop lounge that serves light snacks and beverages, while the Lobby lounge epitomises relaxed ambience with a selection of coffee, tea and fresh juices.



★ Novotel Bur Dubai Hotel

Rooms/Suites inventory: 220 rooms  
Status: Opening in August 2019

The new property with 220 rooms to open in August is the four-star, Accor-operated hotel Novotel Bur Dubai. Ideally located in the Healthcare City, close to the Dubai Creek, it offers guests the perfect destination to stay for business or leisure. The closest metro station is Dubai Healthcare City, which can be reached within a 5 minutes walking distance, in order to have quick access to all major tourist attractions and the business districts.

## Dubai sets stage for medical tourists

Linda Abdullah Ali Ruhi, Consultant, Health Tourism Department, Dubai Health Authority, highlights the progress in the medical tourism sector.



What was the value of medical expenditures in 2018?

Medical expenditures from visiting international health tourists surpassed AED 1.163 billion in 2018 due to visiting numbers exceeding 337,011.

From which destinations are tourists visiting Dubai?

From Arab and GCC countries, 33 per cent of patients were from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman. Thirty per cent who visited were from Asia, mainly from India, Iran and Pakistan; whilst the 16 per cent of European tourists consisted mostly of UK, French and Italian citizens.

Elaborate on the recent growth in healthcare facilities

In addition to the significant growth in the number of tourists, there has been a 9



Linda Abdullah Ali Ruhi  
Consultant, Health Tourism Department  
Dubai Health Authority

tourism, [dxh.ae](http://dxh.ae), now lists more than 600 packages from 72 healthcare establishments – including 18 hospitals and 54 specialties centres.

What are the facilities provided for medical tourism visitors?

Through the establishment of visa facilities, Dubai Health Experience has elevated the emirate's profile as a competitive hub for global and regional medical tourism services and business expansion

“The emirate offers a medical tourism visa of 90 days, in line with the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, which is renewable for an extra 30 days”

per cent increase in health facilities that have been verified and added to the health tourism DXH Group member programme. Our electronic portal for health

initiatives alike. The emirate offers a medical tourism visa of 90 days, in line with the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, which is renewable for an extra 30 days depending on the procedure and case of the individual patient. Furthermore, medical tourism visas and related travel insurance is also issued within 48 hours of registration at any visa facility.

## QuickFacts

AED 1.163 bn  
was utilised in medical  
expenditure last year

33% patients came from  
from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia  
and Oman



## Making Dubai 'accessible' by 2020



In tandem with its vision of being accessible to People with Determination by 2020, Dubai has engaged in adoption of smart solutions for enabling optimal services to the segment. A whopping 50 million people with special needs in the Middle East visit cities and tourist destinations. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, Dubai will host the first Accessible Tourism International Summit, from November 5-6, at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC). Supported by the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing as Destination Partner, the summit is themed: 'Making all cities friendly for tourists with determination'.

## PPPs to accelerate smart cities in MEA region

Investments in technologies enabling smart cities in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region is expected to hit the USD 2.30-billion mark by 2021, as per the estimates of International Data Corporation. Given that large funding is needed to build smart cities, public-private partnerships (PPPs) are the key force that will help accelerate such undertakings in the region.



Dawood Al Shezawi, President, Strategic Marketing and Exhibitions, and organiser of the Future Cities Show, stated that the private sector can help boost government funding for smart city projects by injecting their own capitals with return on investment (ROI) expectations. In the UAE, the Smart Dubai Office has partnered with government and private sector entities alike for the implementation of its more than 130 initiatives, which include the Dubai Data Initiative, the Dubai Blockchain Strategy, the Happiness Agenda, the Dubai AI Roadmap, and the Dubai Paperless Strategy.

## Dubai sailing towards smart station



Working towards the goal of becoming a smart city, Dubai has mapped out numerous strategies. One of them is unveiling of the marine transport station that aims to connect Dubai Festival City (DFC) to Al Jadaf Station. The service will be running every 10 minutes from both ends daily from 07:00 am up to 12:00 am (midnight) at a fare of 2 dirhams.

HE Mattar Al Tayer, Director General and Chairman—Board of Executive Directors, Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) unveiled the first floating station in the UAE. This smart station, which can accommodate over 25 passengers, contributes to the integration of marine transit modes by linking Jadaf-Dubai Festival City line with public buses and Creek Metro Station. Al Tayer toured Dubai Festival City Station, which has witnessed a considerable rise in the number of visitors from 42,863 riders in 2016 to 187,000 riders in 2017. The numbers continued the upward trend in 2018, recording a 24 per cent increase to hit 245,000 riders.

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# MOVEMENTS

## Travelport

### ► Langley, UK

Travelport's board of directors has announced the appointment of **Greg Webb** as Chief Executive Officer. He will join effective from August 1, 2019. Webb succeeds Gordon Wilson, who will step down as the President and CEO of Travelport. Webb will also join Travelport's Board of Directors. Webb brings deep industry knowledge and a track record of commercial and operational execution. Most recently, he served as SVP and General Manager of Oracle Hospitality, where he was responsible for strategy, enablement, development, sales, service and support. Prior to Oracle, he was Vice Chairman at Sabre. He has also served as Chief Information Officer of BellSouth.



## Hilton

### ► Ras Al Khaimah

Hilton has appointed **Nader Halim** as Cluster General Manager for four of its properties in Ras Al Khaimah – DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island, DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah, as well as DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Corniche Hotel & Residences and Hampton By Hilton Al Marjan Island, both of which are scheduled to open shortly. Halim most recently served as General Manager of DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island. He will be overlooking the commercial aspect and operations of all four properties, ensuring that all remain focused on offering unique services and experiences to different target markets.



## Rotana

### ► Abu Dhabi

Rotana Hotel Management announced the appointment of **Karim Nahas** to the newly created role of Complex General Manager for its three properties based within the prestigious Capital Centre development in Abu Dhabi. Having served as General Manager at Pearl Rotana Capital Centre since it opened in March 2018, Nahas will now also oversee operations at Centro Capital Centre and Capital Centre Arjaan by Rotana, with a combined total of 988 rooms and seven outlets within the complex. A passionate hotelier with almost three decades of experience in the region's hospitality sector, Nahas will leverage his expertise and deep industry knowledge to drive further growth at all three of Rotana's Capital Centre properties.



## Radisson Hotel

### ► Dubai

Radisson Hotel Group announced the promotion of **Katharina van Beugen-Mayr** to Regional PR & Communications Manager Middle East. She joined the Group in 2016 as PR & Marketing Communications Manager at Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City and progressed to her last role as Cluster Director of PR & Communications for Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Waterfront and Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Canal View as part of the pre-opening team, in charge of the full communications mix, from Marketing to PR and Communications. She brings her skills gained from numerous international positions in similar roles.



## RAKTDA

### ► Ras Al Khaimah

**Raki Phillips**, a hospitality veteran, has been appointed as CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA). Phillips brings to the table wide-ranging industry experience, which will aid Ras Al Khaimah's goal of becoming one of the fastest growing destinations in the world. He will be responsible for implementing the authority's recently announced Destination Strategy 2019-2021, which aims to attract 1.5 million visitors to the Emirate by 2021 and 3 million by 2025. In his new role, Phillips will also be supervising key projects, with notable development projects on Jebel Jais including multiple zip lines, adventure park hiking trails, among more.



## JRG

### ► Dubai

JRG Dubai, the emirate's leading homegrown hospitality management company, has appointed industry stalwart **Spencer Ayers** as its new Managing Director. Ayers assumes the role after amassing three decades of senior-level food and beverage sector experience at the UAE's Bateel International LLC, Le Pain Quotidien and AlShaya Group International, as well as various positions in the United Kingdom. Having been impressed by JRG Dubai's recent successes in overhauling operations, future-proofing and consolidation, Ayers is eager to enhance the company's fiscal success and brand evolution.



## Millennium

### ► Al Barsha

Millennium Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and Africa (MEA), announced the appointment of **Christian Palacin** as General Manager of Millennium Al Barsha, which will be opening in the summer of 2019. A seasoned hospitality professional, Palacin will be responsible for all aspects of the operation at Millennium Al Barsha. During the span of his career, he has been instrumental in large renovation projects, rebranding and hotel openings. Conveniently located in the bustling Al Barsha at a walking distance from Mall of the Emirates, Millennium Al Barsha is a 4-star property.



## Radisson Blu Hotel

### ► Dubai Media City

Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City has appointed **Elliot McKenzie** as its new Front of House Manager. With over 7 years' experience in 5 star hotels & resorts, McKenzie will be overseeing Front Office, Concierge, Spa & Pool's working with the relevant departments to drive new projects, incremental revenue & overall guest satisfaction. Before moving to Dubai and Radisson Blu, McKenzie spent two years at InterContinental London – The O2, with recently holding the position of Front of House Manager having previously spent five years at the Celtic Manor Resort in a variety of roles from Chef de Rang to Assistant Reception Manager.



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