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All roads lead to Germany

ITB Berlin 2019, to be held from March 6-10 at Messe Berlin, attracts six emirates from the UAE with Expo 2020 Dubai and Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority as new additions from the Middle East.



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

“We are participating at ITB Berlin for the 22nd consecutive year and this represents a fresh opportunity for us to showcase the finest aspects of Sharjah's heritage, adventures, architecture and other offerings. This year, during our participation, we will focus on Sharjah's ecotourism, outdoor activities and branded hotels with the aim of attracting more tourists and investors from Germany, a major source market, and other participating nations. The event will help boost our efforts to meet our target of attracting 10 million visitors by 2021. Our contingent this year will comprise Ramada Hotel, Sharjah Airport Travel Agency, Coral Beach Hotel, Sharjah Museums Department, Sharjah International Airport, Cozmo Travel, The Act Hotel, Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Sheraton Hotels, Al Bait Hotel, Sharjah Collection, Centro Sharjah by Rotana and Orient Tours.”

SHEHARA RIZLY



Haitham Mattar
Chief Executive Officer
Ras Al Khaimah Tourism
Development Authority

“Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority has exceeded its target of attracting one million visitors by 2018 by reporting 1,072,066 visitors from domestic and key international markets. Germany continues to be our leading international source market with 83,605 visitors to Ras Al Khaimah in 2018, followed by Russia and the UK. At ITB Berlin, we will be showcasing a virtual reality experience of Jebel Jais Flight - the world's longest zipline, which has welcomed over 25,000 flyers since its opening about a year ago. We will be updating visitors on the culture and heritage projects including the pearl farm and restoration of old pearl farming village of the 17th century.”



Sigrid de Mazieres
Director—Gulf Countries,
German National Tourism
Board

“Like every year, the German tourism board will have a large stand at ITB Berlin to meet with our valued partners from all over the world. We look forward to strengthening relations with the travel trade and tourism partners to update the tourism community about the latest industry trends and marketing activities to promote 'Destination Germany'. Our Dubai-based office will be attending ITB to connect with German partners like hotels, regional tourism boards or any other travel-related service providers and woo them to take part in our GCC-wide marketing activities. To promote 'Destination Germany' and for the travel trade industry to explore our country, we organise Germany Travel Mart every year whilst offering a range of pre-scheduled educational tours.”

Contd. on page 3 ►

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Riyadh preps for travel fair

Sheikh Imran Hafeez, Director of Sales & Marketing, ASAS Exhibitions and Conference Organizing Company, shares details of Riyadh Travel Fair that is being held from March 28-30.

TT Bureau

As one of the biggest travel and tourism events in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh Travel Fair provides a great networking platform for all those in the business of tourism and hospitality. Over the past years, the trade fair has been growing exponentially. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the most lucrative markets due to its habitual outbound vacations along with its great spending power.

The event this year has been preponed from April to March. **Sheikh Imran Hafeez**, Director of Sales & Marketing, ASAS Exhibitions



Sheikh Imran Hafeez
Director of Sales & Marketing
ASAS Exhibitions & Conference
Organizing Company

& Conference Organizing Company, says, "The reason to advance the dates to March is because the holy month of Ramadan will begin earlier over the next two years, as it advances by 10 days every Islamic year."

Riyadh Travel Fair expects over 50 countries with a total of 300 exhibitors from across the world and over 25,000 visitors.

In terms of new exhibitors, a considerable amount of new destinations have been added on to its list and some of them are Azerbaijan Tourism, Malaysia Tourism, Maldives, South Africa, etc. "The number of visitors keep increasing to the destination with participation at the Riyadh Travel Fair increasing by 30 per cent every year. We have always witnessed a positive increase every year," concludes Hafeez.

Luring the Europe market

Contd. from page 1



Mohamed Awadalla
Chief Executive Officer
TIME Hotels

"The event provides us with an excellent opportunity to network with our trade partners and our peers as well as the local, regional and international press. This year, we will be highlighting our pipeline of property launches. In particular, we will be promoting our debut property under the TIME Express Hotels brand - TIME Express Hotel Al Khan, a three-star property in Sharjah featuring 55 keys and scheduled to open in April 2019. Expansion will remain key for us throughout 2019 with a range of new openings planned across the UAE as well as other properties throughout the wider MENA region."

"Crucial for hotels in the UAE, the German market is focused on leisure as it offers volume throughout the year, including the summer season. Mövenpick Hotel Ibn Battuta Gate Dubai continues to work closely with this market. ITB Berlin is a great networking platform for us. We aim to strengthen our existing partnerships with Germany to increase business volumes whilst taking this opportunity to source new ones. Additionally, promoting and selling in-destination services together with our room rate is another area we look forward to enhancing during this show."



Fadi Sallit
Director - Sales Leisure
Mövenpick Hotel Ibn
Battuta Gate Dubai



Freddy Farid
Managing Director,
Two Seasons Hotel &
Apartments Dubai

"The German market and Central Europe as a whole represent a 21 per cent share of arrivals to Dubai, and the German market in particular represents UAE's largest trading partner that has consistently generated an influx of inbound visitors. As a home-grown management company, we are focusing on the German market since a long time for its stability and economic growth. We are showcasing our new brand as Two Seasons Hotels from the viewpoint of Dubai enjoying two seasons - winter and summer. We are expecting to increase our brand awareness."

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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

New wave of tourism

Germany has always been at the forefront of the travel trade and travellers alike. As the world gathers in Berlin to interact with international buyers and sellers to display and network to promote destinations, ITB Berlin makes sure to provide an opportunity to facilitate discussions on the pressing issues concerning travel and tourism like overtourism, global warming and sustainability. In addition to these, customer experience, luxury travel and future mobility are other topics that will have a focus at the event.

The Middle East is a key contributor which offers myriad customer experiences for travellers of today. Dubai together with the United Arab Emirates has been a leader in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors with its authentic experiences to the European markets.

Expo 2020 in Dubai will nonetheless be an extraordinary event that is set to be a game changer in the geography of the region. The new area being developed especially for the event will add on to the rich books in history. The recently-concluded Global Investment in Aviation Summit proved that Dubai will be the aviation hub of the world. The new aviation district developed over the past few years is now booming due to its convenient locations for the sector to execute the requirements to either refuel, MRO services or even serve as a VIP destination.

The new branding of Dubai International Airport by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, will elevate the customer experience in its drive towards becoming the busiest and best airport in the world. Dubai is striving to become a smart city and a gateway to innovation and technological transformation.

The future of travel tech

While no one has a crystal ball that can envision the future, accurate forecasting or the 'making of predictions' is an important aspect of business planning. **Volkan Çağsal**, CEO, Adphorus, enlists three of his predictions.

We will stop fearing that the robots will eat our jobs and embrace Artificial Intelligence

Fear of the all-knowing and all-seeing AI-powered dark overload will fade. Consumers will find that auto-correction and grammar-checking tools have morphed into auto-sentence completion tools and they will find them useful at improving typing on a phone. They will like this new consumer-friendly face of AI as it makes all simple things, that are actually complex, on a computer simpler. Artificial Intelligence has probably passed through the 'trough of disillusionment' in the Gartner hype cycle and it's now finding a variety of ways it can be useful in, like data-mining past aircraft maintenance logs to improve a mechanic's ability to diagnose and fix airplanes instead of replacing them.

A perfect storm of new technology, consumer adoption and low-cost creation tools put programmatic video advertising on the media plan in a big way

AT&T acquired the largest independent advertising exchange AppNexus last year and they have big plans for programmatic television this year. With free video editing software in the cloud and an assortment of low-cost video advertising platforms available to business of

“YouTube is already the de facto juggernaut in the space and Facebook is now one of the top platforms for video ads that is sustaining unprecedented engagement rates”

all sizes, 2019 will be the year when programmatic video breaks out. YouTube is already the de facto juggernaut in the space and Facebook is now one of the top platforms for video ads that is sustaining unprecedented engagement rates. Netflix is now testing simple static promotions, of what one could call house ads, for its own programming on its platform. I don't expect them to open that up to advertisers next year, but given their rising level of debt (more than \$20 billion), monetising that inventory will be a priority for Netflix at some point, soon.

Chatbots and instant messengers will make an impact as marketing distribution tools

This has already happened outside in some regions, particularly in China. We're now only starting to see this trend take hold with average consumers. This will push more con-

sumers to the instant messenger-style interfaces as a way to conduct commerce, including booking travel. Apple has already provided the apps on your iPhone a gateway to connect via its text messaging application. Android and Facebook have also made similar types of tools available. For a new mobile-first generation, conducting commerce with a chatbot from their favourite brand, airline or hotel makes sense. It takes time for brands to catch up, but expect their early experiments with chatbots to start to gain traction with consumers in 2019.

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



Volkan Çağsal
CEO, Adphorus

Fujairah Rotana Resort & Spa spreads love

Fujairah Rotana Resort & Spa visited Dibba Hospital's Paediatric Ward as part of the Rotana Corporate Social Responsibility initiative with the aim of spreading love to the children. The team interacted with the kids through activities such as face painting, indoor games and distribution of gifts courtesy of Fujairah Rotana Resort. The hotel regularly engages in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives under its corporate sustainability platform, Rotana Earth.



Air India Express expands Gulf services

The low-cost carrier has been growing its wings exponentially over the Gulf region. **K Shyam Sundar**, CEO, Air India Express, shares plans for the new year with new routes for the region.

TT Bureau

Air India Express launched its first international operations recently from Sharjah to Surat with a twice-weekly service. **K Shyam Sundar** informed that the service will be the 47th direct connection of Air India Express between India and the Gulf region. "Flight IX - 172 will depart from Sharjah at 7:35 pm and arrive in Surat at 11:45 pm on Mondays and Saturdays. Flight IX - 171 from Surat to Sharjah will depart from Surat at 12:30 am

with arrival into Sharjah at 02:15 am on Tuesdays and Sundays. The service will be upgraded to four flights a week in the summer schedule. The Sharjah-Surat service will be on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and in the return directions, the service will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays," Sundar said.

Air India Express is set to further expand its operations in its



“Flight IX-172 will depart from Sharjah at 7:35 pm and arrive in Surat at 11:45 pm on Mondays & Saturdays. The Surat to Sharjah flight will depart at 12:30 am with arrival into Sharjah at 2:15 am on Tuesdays & Sundays”

K Shyam Sundar
CEO, Air India Express

summer schedule from March 31, 2019. Operating with a fleet of 25 Boeing 737-800 NG aircraft, the airline will have 653 weekly departures in the new schedule as against 621 departures per week currently. Sundar further informed, "Summer 2019 will witness additional capacity being deployed to strengthen the network between the Gulf and Kerala. The airline will operate five flights on the

Kozhikode-Riyadh sector in the summer schedule of 2019 instead of the present four services per week. The additional flight will operate on Fridays at the existing timings."

Sundar reiterated that Kannur-Sharjah will become a daily service from Sharjah and would also offer two flights from Abu Dhabi, making it a five-day service. The

year 2018 witnessed addition of two more aircraft, bringing the total fleet strength of the airline to 25 Boeing 737-800 NG aircraft. The airline has plans to further expand its fleet with necessary approvals. UAE continues to be the most important market for Air India Express with services to/ from UAE accounting for about 65 per cent of the airlines' capacity and revenue. 



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In-destination services @ITB

ITB Berlin, from March 6-10, 2019, will lay emphasis on promoting and selling in-destination services, as a result of which tours, technology and activities will remain a key focus, shares **Dr Martin Buck**, Senior Vice President—Travel & Logistics, Messe Berlin.

 Shehara Rizly

What new can visitors expect at ITB Berlin 2019?

The Technology, Tours & Activities (TTA) segment is new at ITB Berlin 2019 with an emphasis on promoting and selling in-destination services. Both major players and small start-ups will be able to present their products at the new meeting area in Adventure Travel Hall. The TTA marketplace will be the place to head for providers of tours, tour guides, technology and apps, re-sellers, intermediaries and destinations. Exhibitors and trade visitors can also establish new contacts and exchange experiences at networking events. This year, ITB Berlin Convention will take place at CityCube, the new multi-purpose congress and trade fair venue.

The eTravel World continues to expand with the travel technology segment gaining more space. Visitors interested in new technologies, digital marketing and social media have a short distance to reach the exclusive displays. Besides in-destination services, another focus at TTA Forum is the topic of payment solutions. Related events will include sessions with Amazon Pay, Paypal and Wirecard. Last but not least, we will launch an ITB Virtual Reality Lab where top-speakers will give exciting insights into the importance of augmented and virtual reality for the travel industry.



Dr Martin Buck
Senior Vice President—Travel & Logistics
Messe Berlin

“The ITB Berlin Convention will address topics on overtourism, global warming, sustainability, new customer expectations in the luxury travel market and future mobility”

What are the key areas of focus this year?

Malaysia, as the official partner country, is organising a big spectacle during the event. The ITB Berlin convention will address key topics on overtourism, global warming, sustainability, new customer expectations in the luxury travel market and future mobility along with a

special emphasis on adventure travel and sustainable tourism. We are seeing a trend towards seclusion and exclusiveness in the luxury travel segment. Customers want to experience something that is out of the ordinary that can range from an underwater hotel to an exclusive treehouse.

Who will be exhibiting from the Middle East this year?

Demand from the Middle East has been especially high this year. Dubai itself has increased its participation at ITB Berlin. Oman, the partner country of ITB Berlin 2020, will be represented in larger numbers, as will Fujairah, the last country to join the Emirates. Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and Qatar will also present their tourism highlights at the exhibition. The United Arab Emirates can also be found in the hotel hall, alongside Lebanon and Iraq. New exhibitors include the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority and Expo 2020 Dubai.

What role does the Middle East play at ITB Berlin?

Countries from the Middle Eastern region are fast-growing tourism destinations and the demand for exhibition space at ITB Berlin is particularly high this year. In the Middle East markets, there is a thriving middle class with a growing buying power and new consumer behaviour. 



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DMCA's workshop for yacht companies



In line with its strategy to enhance the quality of various services in Dubai's maritime sector and ensure customers' happiness through collaboration with the private sector, the Dubai Maritime City Authority (DMCA) organised an extensive workshop for private companies in the yacht industry. The workshop is the first of a series following the recent launch of 'Sea Dubai' initiative aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of Dubai as a world-class destination in this major sector. The workshop was recently held on the Queen Elizabeth 2 at Mina Rashid, which witnessed wide participation by private companies providing related services.



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Exploring new strategies in aviation

The maiden Global Investment in Aviation Summit 2019 (GIAS), recently held at InterContinental Dubai Festival City, is considered as a qualitative leap in the aviation industry that requires an estimated global investment reaching \$1.8 trillion by 2030.

TT Bureau

With the demand for air transport projected to increase by an annual average of 4.3 per cent, the aviation industry has become one of the most important economic sectors globally. This growth can be attributed to successive developments in the market as well as increasing air travel demand around the world, especially in India, China and the Middle East.

H E Eng Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, UAE Minister of Economy and Chairman, General Civil Aviation Authority, in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman, Dubai Airports; President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority; Chairman and CEO of Emirates Group and **H E Saif**

Mohammed Al Suwaidi, Director General, General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), inaugurated the Global Investment in Aviation Summit. The two-day summit saw many business transactions and signing of MoUs. With a core objective to explore and present investment opportunities within the aviation sector, the summit witnessed an attendance of more than 750 investors, leaders, government officials, financiers and key aviation stakeholders from around the world.

The UAE has been ranked number one in Quality of Air Transport Infrastructure Index by International Institute for Management Development, informed Al Mansouri in his welcome address. He said, "We have world-class airports and airlines



H E Eng Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri



H E Saif Mohammed Al Suwaidi



Dr Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu

for future delivery." He expects the aviation sector to account for 20 per cent of the UAE's GDP over the next few years.

Dr Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu, Council President, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), believes that aviation is a global industry as it connects people, cultures and business across continents. "Our sector is responsible today for providing meaningful employment and sustainable careers to over 65 million men and women worldwide, while contributing more than \$2.7 trillion to global GDP," he claimed.

– both scheduled carriers and award-winning corporate airlines; a rapidly developing aviation support infrastructure and a long-term commitment to the industry which is evidenced by its inclu-

sion in our national development plans. Today, some 882 aircraft are registered in the UAE of which more than half are registered under UAE national carriers and a further 630 aircraft are on order

Suwaidi called for stakeholders from around the world to join the second edition of the summit in Abu Dhabi next year whilst creating further optimal investments in the sector.

Network in an investors' ecosystem

The maiden Global Investment in Aviation Summit hosted more than 500 delegates, 200 global investors, 200 aviation senior-level attendees, 80 speakers from the region's airlines and aviation organisations.



Relax, revive and rejuvenate

Given its rich history of Ayurveda treatments, Sri Lanka demonstrates holistic therapies to living a healthy lifestyle. Here's a sneak peek into the insights from a few wellness experts...

 Shehara Rizly



Dr Rajitha Senarathne
Minister of Health, Nutrition and
Indigenous Medicine

“Six of Sri Lanka's leading wellness resorts participated at Arab Health for the first time. I believe that it is a very good start at expanding our tourism offerings to the world at large. This is one of the largest exhibitions in the world with over 4000 exhibitors from 160 countries and 250 local and international speakers specialising in health and wellness sectors.”



H E Charitha Yattogoda
Consul General of Sri Lanka
in Dubai

“With a rich history in wellness tourism, Sri Lanka showcased its wellness resorts available especially for the Middle Eastern clientele. Our participation in the event is a gateway to this region to learn about the many tourism offerings the country has to attract different types of tourists to the nation and its emergence as a wellness tourism destination.”



Asoka Hettigoda
Managing Director, Hettigoda
Industries, Siddhelepa Group

“Arab Health was a good platform to network and share our treatment plans. Currently, a lot of people are looking at holistic health programmes including natural foods, natural medicine and natural practices for the physical, mental and spiritual health. The programmes we offer are not only based on Ayurvedic treatments but also on health food, yoga and meditation.”

“Our resort is built with nature itself and it is a wonderful experience to guests who prefer a wellness holiday amidst a very natural environment. We have a very personalised service which can be tailor-made to the requirements of guests. We'd like to invite the Middle East travellers to come and indulge in an unforgettable experience in a cool climate.”



Shelly Thenuwara
Managing Director
Tree of Life Nature Resort
Kandy

“At Heritance Ayurveda Maha Gedara, we have different programmes for different people depending on their necessities—to relieve stress, shed weight, rejuvenate or detox. With adequate time of staying in the hotel, these treatments can be performed well to help guests as people are now looking at changing their lifestyles to make them more healthier.”



Janaka Buddhakorala
General Manager, Heritance
Ayurveda Maha Gedara
Beruwela

“Located 20 minutes away from the international airport in Uswetakeiyawa between Colombo city and the airport, our wellness resort offers natural treatment solutions such as magnesium floating tanks, salt caves, hyperbaric and hyperthermia machines, detoxing machines, etc. We also have the kaya cuisine to indulge in healthy eating options.”



Upul Gamage
General Manager
Kaya Health and Wellness
Resort, Uswetakeiyawa

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Culture of hospitality: Tatarstan

Bordering seven regions lying at the centre of the European part of Russia is the Republic of Tatarstan. It is an active region with a growing economy, leading in many international and national rankings, and in factual data in many industries. Tatarstan owns an oil deposit and three petrochemical plants.

 Shehara Rizly

Most of who may have been interested in FIFA 2018, may be familiar with Kazan, the sports capital of Russia which not only hosted football but also FINA 2015, Summer Universiade 2013, etc. In terms of business, one may remember the annual international economic summit, KazanSummit and Halal Expo Russia which are the only world-scale Islamic forums in Russia organised by Kazan annually in April or May. This year, they have one more onboard in August — World Skills 2019.



Taliya Minullina
Member of the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan, Chief Executive Officer of Tatarstan Investment Development Agency

Feel at home in Tatarstan

Middle Eastern travellers are always on the look-out for new destinations. Tatarstan with its rich heritage and culture and 30 per cent of its population following Islam has everything these travellers require. Tatarstan is halal-friendly. Restaurants, cafes and hotels are certified to international standards. Tatar cuisine is rich in Turk tribes' traditions and diverse in tastes of meat and baked dishes. Its national

culture pleases the eyes in clothes, interiors and decoration. Shops offer a wide range of halal products and fashionable modest clothing. Namaz can be done in one of around 1500 mosques or special rooms.

Immerse yourself in history and culture

Northern Mecca – the ancient city Bolgar – annually attracts thousands of pilgrims striving to see the Muslim shrines – Khan's

Palace, Jameh Mosque and the biggest printed Quran in the world. The legendary mosque Kul Sharif draws to Tatarstan's capital – Kazan. There are three UNESCO World Heritage sites in Tatarstan – Kazan Kremlin, Bulgarian Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve and Assumption Cathedral and Monastery of the town-island of Sviyazhsk.

Easy connections

Direct flights connect Kazan with Dubai and Sharjah, UAE, Istanbul and Antalya, Turkey, Teheran, Iran. GCC is linked with Kazan through Moscow, too. The Moscow-Kazan flight takes an hour only.

Hotels galore

Some of the international hotel chains in the country include DoubleTree by Hilton, Marriott,

“ Warmheartedly, I welcome inhabitants of the UAE and other Middle East countries to Tatarstan! We enjoy a very close connection with the emirates: governmental, economic and cultural cooperation is flourishing! Each year, Tatarstan builds one of the biggest stands at AIM (Annual Investment Summit) in Dubai to greet all our friends and make new ones. If you haven't heard about Tatarstan or Kazan yet, it is now the right time to use the sign and check-in the next flight to get to hospitable Tatarstan for business or leisure! And if you wish to know more, connect with the representative office of Tatarstan in Dubai. I invite you to try Tatarstan, visit Tatarstan and invest in Tatarstan! ”

Park Inn by Radisson, Tasigo and ibis. Apart from this, multiple countries invest in Tatarstan with Turkey leading the list. The freshest example is the five-star Kazan Palace Hotel by Tasigo. Arabic network, Alliance Business Center, offers a premium class business centre. Largest in GCC construction companies like Emaar and Al Habtoor show active interest.

Ideal for bleisure

Once in Tatarstan, any entrepreneur would start a business here! Men of affairs are attracted by Kazan, machine building capital Naberezhnye Chelny, oil extraction capital Almet'yevsk and petrochemical capital Nizhnekamsk. In terms of leisure, the many shopping and entertainment areas along with sightseeing could be added on the list. 🕌

FactCheck

Languages spoken
- Russian and Tatar

Best time to travel
- April to September

Connectivity
- From Dubai and Sharjah

Total Area
- 68,000 sq km

Religions
- Islam, Russian orthodox, other orthodox, Christians



Live life the German way

Each year, the German National Tourist Board plans out its global campaign and a more focused one for the Gulf Corporation Council countries in both B2B and B2C segments. **Sigrid de Mazieres**, Director—Gulf countries, German National Tourist Office, shares an insight to the board's plans.

 Shehara Rizly

Could you tell us about the latest campaign for UAE?

'The German National Tourist Board (GNTB) entered the year 2019 with its worldwide campaign on the centenary of the foundation of the legendary Bauhaus movement in Weimar. In addition to the worldwide '100 years of Bauhaus' campaign, the German National Tourist Office for the Gulf countries is also launching a wide range of market-specific B2B and B2C campaigns to promote 'Destination Germany' and we look forward to working closely with our trade partners throughout the GCC.

What attracts the UAE tourist to Germany?

Germany's greatest USP is its

diversity. The country is replete with myriad offerings in terms of recreation and nature, sightseeing and entertainment in our many exciting cities like Berlin, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf or Hamburg, or shopping in our beautiful pedestrian highstreets or state-of-the-art designer outlets.

Last year, how many visitors from the UAE travelled to Germany?

Our statistics sum up all GCC countries and evaluate only GCC nationals, not expats. In 2018, we had over 1.69 million overnight stays from the region and are positive about attracting more GCC travellers to Germany in 2019. The GCC is one of the



Sigrid de Mazieres
Director—Gulf countries
German National Tourist Office

top 15 source markets for Germany and the third largest non-European source market after China and USA.

What itinerary do you suggest to UAE travellers?

Our aim is to highlight the great variety Germany has to offer all year round and to inspire travellers to explore other places like the North with its unspoiled coastline, historic castles in Lower Saxony or Berlin and its surrounding areas. GCC tourists generally love driving from one city or region to the other, as we offer great infrastructure and many themed scenic routes like the German Alpine route, Sabian Spa route and also the German Fairytale route.

What type of travellers do you receive from GCC?

Majority of tourists from the GCC are leisure travellers, and to a

lesser extent, travel is conducted for business. Medical tourism is also an important segment.

What are the latest plans for marketing to the UAE?

We have joined forces with the tourist boards of Switzerland and Austria and are inviting travel trade to our 'Heart of Europe Travel Summit' just a few days ahead of ATM, and just after the Marhaba France Workshop with which we are also closely cooperating. Our travel trade workshop will bring together over 70 leading product providers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and will be the perfect platform for buyers from the region to do business in an attractive environment at the beautiful Sofitel Dubai The Palm. 

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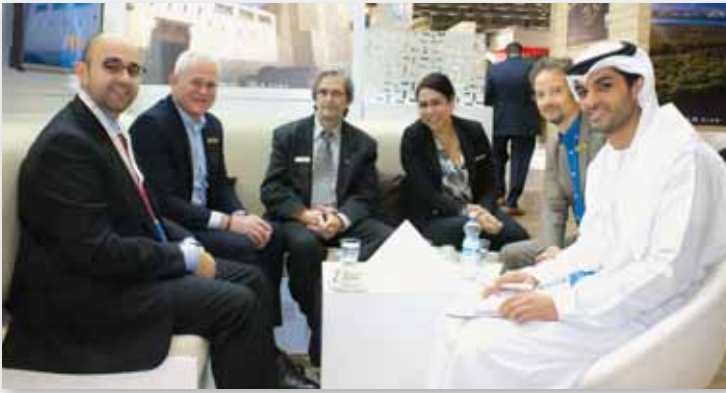
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1000+ tour operators at MATKA '19

Nordic Travel Fair (MATKA), held in Messukeskus, Helsinki in Finland this year, marked 30 years as one of the biggest travel industry events in Northern Europe with 940 exhibitors and 86 destinations on the theme 'Hidden Treasures'. Buyers and suppliers, especially from Finland and Nordic countries, focused on workshops and networking.



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Wyndham Garden Ajman attracts Germans

Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche has been riding on high growth ever since its opening in the summer of 2018. The number of visitors from Germany to the property remains robust.

TT Bureau

Breaking all barriers, Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche is a shining example of team work, relationships and yielding profits. The property bagged a number of awards for its exceptional service excellence whilst enjoying the highest occupancy in the Ajman area within just six months of operation. This is attributed to the vision and strategic planning of **Iftikhar Hamdani**, Cluster General Manager, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman, Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche.



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

He says, "We have been able to not only succeed in our endeavours from a business perspective but also from a reputation point of view as we have got an excellent number of online reviews. They speak about the experience of guests and this, for us, is an authentic feedback."

The success of the team is primarily attributed to careful planning and dedication. Aggressive marketing campaigns, good long-term relationships with corporates, agents and operators provide a lucid flow in business.

Curbing overtourism with WTACH

While tourism contributes immensely to a country's GDP, it is important that regulations be put in place to curb overtourism, failing which the ethos and sanctity of heritage and culture of a place may be damaged.

TT Bureau

The World Tourism Association for Culture and Heritage (WTACH) has been launched to protect local cultures, heritage and historical sites that are in peril from overtourism. The new association will promote ethical practices and better management relating to culture and heritage destinations that are now buckling due to unrestricted visitor growth. WTACH will also encourage the implementation of sustainable practices at locations that are still in the honeymoon phase of tourism development. The creation of WTACH comes at a time when the UNWTO reports that international tourism arrivals hit 1.4 billion in 2018, two years ahead of its previous forecast of 2020.



Chris Flynn
Founder and CEO
WTACH

The global economy grew 3.7 per cent in 2018, says UNWTO, propelling international tourism arrivals growth to six per cent for the year. To advance its agenda, WTACH has been



Carolyn Childs
CEO
MyTravelResearch.com

launched with 15 specialist advisors from diverse backgrounds, who will work with destinations that need help now or want to put plans in place before running into trouble.



WTACH is the brainchild of its founder and CEO, **Chris Flynn**, a former director for the Pacific region at the Pacific Asia Travel Association, a role he held for 15 years. He says, "WTACH works with destinations to provide development strategies and policy framework recommendations to avoid the kind of tourism meltdown we are seeing at Angkor Wat, Phi Phi Island and Mount Everest. It's time for the tourism industry to take a step back and look at the long-term impact of its decision making."

Social media and mobile devices aren't helping. **Carolyn Childs**, CEO of MyTravelResearch.com, and a member of the WTACH advisory specialising in analysing data and trends, says it is no coincidence that WTACH is being born at a time when 'selfie' culture and the promotion of 'Instagramable' travel is sweeping the world. On the supply side, WTACH believes that destinations should no longer make arrival numbers their holy grail. 📱

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Sharjah casts a spell on with its pool of attractions & activities

The emirate of Sharjah, cultural capital of the UAE, has something to offer to every kind of traveller. In addition to historical monuments and museums that embody the emirate's culture and traditions, Sharjah has a wide array of leisure and recreation options that can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Scenic beaches, wildlife and public parks, and attractions such as Kalba, Al Majaz Waterfront, Eye of the Emirates and Al Noor Mosque are only some of Sharjah's major attractions. We compile a list of locations you can enjoy in the emirate along with your family or solo along with a slew of activities they are famous for. Be assured - you will never run out of things to do in Sharjah!

Soak up in Emirati culture

Sharjah is home to a number of award-winning museums, which is a testament to its reputation as the cultural capital of the Arab world. Visitors wanting to gain an authentic insight into how the prosperous rulers of Sharjah once lived should visit Bait Sheikh Saeed Bin Hamad Al

Qasimi in Kalba, located near Al Kalba fort, directly on the east coast of the Arabian Gulf. One of the most beautiful heritage houses in the UAE, first opened its doors as a museum on December 5, 1999. Built between 1898 and 1901, this museum was formerly the residence of Sheikh Saeed and his family. More centrally, Sharjah Heritage Museum, which opened in 2005 in the Heritage Area and later reopened in 2012 after renovation in the Heart of Sharjah, is dedicated to highlighting Sharjah's authentic heritage and the rich culture of Emirati people. The artefacts preserved here embody the value of deep-rooted Arabic customs and traditions, giving visitors a glimpse of ancestral legacy.

The new Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization was opened in June 2008 after moving the extensive collections of the first Islamic Museum to the impressive traditional Souq Al Majarrah building, to be reinterpreted and redisplayed. Home to thousands of rare and important Islamic artefacts, the museum offers a true reflection of the Islamic civilisation's timeless achievements and its universality, presenting an ideal opportunity to learn about aspects of Islamic faith, science, discoveries and culture.

Amidst the greens & beings

Those looking to learn more about the flora and fauna of the region must visit the Sharjah Desert Park, a specialised nature reserve that also

houses a number of attractions for children, including a wildlife centre, botanical gardens, a children's farm and more. A visit to Arabia's Wildlife Centre will be an opportunity to see rare native wildlife species up close, before unravelling the region's geological and botanical secrets at the Sharjah Natural History and the Islamic Botanical Garden. Those looking to enjoy the outdoors, the Sharjah National Park covers an area of nearly 630 thousand square feet and features play

areas with jungle gyms, slides and rope ladders, where children can have lots of fun. What's more, this is the ideal location for an unforgettable family picnic and barbecue.

Feel the thrill

Al Montazah Parks recently opened its gates to visitors with a grand celebration after undergoing a complete overhaul and rebranding process to feature two unique offerings in one destina-



visitors

tion. Witness the spectacular rides and facilities at Island of Legends, an amusement park that takes you on a trip around nine different countries. Pearls Kingdom offers splashing entertainment to seekers of wonder in water. Al Montazah Parks is centrally located close to Flag Island on Khalid lagoon across the Central Souq. Since its opening, Pearls Kingdom has been receiving a great turnout of visitors to experience its 35 new slides, which take the little ones to a magical wonderland. Island of Legends has 26 new attractions inspired

by countries like Spain, Italy, France, London, China and the Netherlands. Here, visitors travel through time to explore Hercules' adventures celebrated in Greek mythology or partake in a Spanish carnival. One can test their courage by facing the Scottish Loch Ness monster in addition to enjoying many other thrilling activities.

Better at the beach

Thanks to its location on the Arabian Gulf, the city of Sharjah has many public and private beaches for visitors. Besides, the region is

also known for its beautiful lagoons and creeks, in addition to scenic, beautifully-landscaped parks such as Al Hamriya Beach which features a 1,300-metre jogging track, a service building and an interlock walking track that is three metres wide and a wide range of facilities available at its service building. The Al Khan Beach, the first public beach in Sharjah with various amenities designed for sports enthusiasts, is an ideal place to enjoy kayaking, kite surfing, parasailing, banana boat rides, fly board ride and much more.

Indulge in tailor-made stays

A myriad of premium hotels and properties offering best-in-class hospitality is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Sharjah's tourism sector. For instance, the Al Bait hotel, opened in early 2018, is a five-star luxurious retreat that blends tradition with modernity to offer authentic Emirati hospitality. A thoughtful vision to revive the region's heritage through the preservation of the historic fabric within the city and the emirate at large is reflected here. Furthermore, DoubleTree by Hilton Sharjah, a desert park resort in the Mahthab area along with the Tulip management hotel and Ramada feature 134, 210 and 493 rooms, respectively, all bear testimony to Sharjah's reputation as a holiday and business destination beyond compare.





Luxury has a new address

BurJuman Arjaan by Rotana is set amidst the historical district of Bur Dubai and surrounded by rich culture and heritage. The apartment hotel is part of a multifunctional complex that includes a shopping mall and an upscale office tower. **Ulrich Hoffmeister**, General Manager, BurJuman Arjaan by Rotana – Dubai, shares more details.

 Shehara Rizly

Standing tall and growing in demand every day, BurJuman Arjaan by Rotana – Dubai is housed in a multi-purpose complex offering a residential and business tower with a comprehensive shopping mall that stores all leading international brands. The hotel is a concept of all suites and apartments fully equipped with kitchen, cooking essentials, washing machine, dryer and refrigerators.

The property is located minutes away from the consular district, corporate street or more rightly bank street which has the key international banks, schools, the historical or heritage sites of Dubai such as the gold souk and creek. Hoffmeister adds, "We have a number of corporate

“We have a number of corporate long-stay guests who prefer this property as it has all the conveniences within a five to 10-minute radius”

long-stay guests who prefer this property as it has all the conveniences within a five to 10-minute radius. For those who prefer to race against the traffic to get to the business or leisure destinations, the entrance leading to the metro is a quick way to discover the beautiful metropolis.”

Home away from home

The property boasts of 148 suites equipped with modern ameni-

ties that will have everything one could find at home, informs Hoffmeister. "It ushers in a sense of personalisation for both leisure and corporate travellers. Creating a stay that can be considered a perfect 'home away from home' is quite a challenge especially as Dubai enjoys a very diverse offering of beautiful rooms, suites and apartments for any tourist. What stands out at BurJuman Arjaan by Rotana is the fact that it has perfect spaces that can really provide the concept to all guests not merely by offering the space but also the exceptional service," he shares.

Demand for key markets

Dubai used to be a seasonal touristic destination with a large influx of tourists especially during the



winters. Today, due to the many efforts by Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing and the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, it has become an all-year destination for tourists. "India remains the number one market for Dubai over the past many years and the property does receive quite a good footfall from this source market due to its close proximity to the popular Meena Bazaar. It's a location convenient for both business and leisure," Hoffmeister states.

"The key market for these apartments are GCC families,

especially Saudi Arabia who tend to spend their summers for a few days or even weeks. The European market is also increasing," he adds. With the structure of the hotel as a deluxe apartment, majority of the bookings received are from the corporate segment and those who are staying long-term to make a home away from home concept where guests can cook their own food.

Behind the scenes

In today's context, traditional travel agents and tour operators to the more recent online travel agents comprise a considerable part of obtaining business for the properties. As Dubai has a considerable amount of hotel rooms which has gone way above 100,000 rooms to be filled on a daily basis, these agents are the core to providing the business required by any property or destination. Hoffmeister reiterates, "No hotel or tourism operator can work without agents. We see them as partners and these are relationships that have been nurtured for quite a while for over 25 years as there is a lot of mutual support." 



RAK showcases diversity at Fitur

In a continuous effort to strengthen Ras Al Khaimah's popularity in European markets, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) increased its participation in key European travel trade exhibitions in the first month of 2019.

TT Bureau

They started off the year by participating in Fitur, Spain, for the very first time, alongside co-exhibitors Rixos, Ritz Carlton, Waldorf Astoria, Department of Museums and Antiquities and Toro Verde UAE, where the team was honoured to showcase Ras Al Khaimah and its key attractions to the king and queen of Spain, who visited the RAKTDA stand on the opening day. European visitors are a key focus for Ras Al Khaimah's tourism promotion strategy in a bid to attract 1.5 million visitors by 2021.

Following in from the success of its inaugural participation in the Vakantiebeurs trade show in the Netherlands at the beginning of January, RAKTDA also recently

concluded its second appearance at the MATKA Nordic Travel Fair held at Helsinki in January this year.

The RAKTDA stand was graced by HE Noora Mohammed Juma, the UAE Ambassador to Finland and HE Abdulla Al Neyadi, the Head of Economic, Political & Media Affairs Section, Embassy of the UAE, Helsinki, who interacted with key trade representatives to discuss Ras Al Khaimah's future and contribution to the global tourism industry. Furthermore, Emirates Airline was among the key co-exhibitors at the RAKTDA stand.



RAKTDA also exhibited at the FESPO exhibition in Zurich, Switzerland, a leading consumer travel trade exhibition attracting more than 60,000 visitors.

Haitham Mattar, CEO, RAKTDA, said, "We believe our unique combination of authentic Arabian hospitality, pristine beaches, and outdoor adventure pursuits have great appeal to holidaymakers

from all over Europe. Furthermore, in addition to offering an insight into our unique adventure offering on Jebel Jais, we are also using these international travel fairs to promote the successful summer campaign 'kids go free,' which saw visitors to Ras Al Khaimah increase by 15 per cent in the summer of 2018 versus the same period in 2017."

Travel trade and public visitors were introduced to Ras Al Khaimah's diverse and spectacular beach, desert, mountain, and adventure offerings, including a unique Virtual Reality experience which gave them a taste of the breathtaking experience of Jebel Jais Flight - world's longest zipline at Jebel Jais, the UAE and Ras Al Khaimah's highest mountain peak.



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Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche is operated by R Hotels under a franchise agreement from Wyndham Hotel Group.

Benefits of a strategic location

As part of Gulf Hotels Group Bahrain's global expansion plans, the location of 270-roomed four-star Gulf Court Hotel Business Bay amidst the business and leisure precinct in Dubai is sure to lure many visitors, claims **Volker Mandlowsky**, General Manager of the property.



 Shehara Rizly



Volker Mandlowsky
General Manager
Gulf Court Hotel Business Bay

Bahrain's leading home-grown hospitality provider, Gulf Hotels Group (GHG) presented the latest addition to its portfolio with Gulf Court Hotel Business Bay in Dubai. The new hotel is the first part of GHG's regional expansion plan which will include Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. The 270-roomed four-star deluxe hotel ideally situated within one of Dubai's most impressive projects, the Dubai Water Canal, just 15 minutes away from the Dubai International Airport, will be a much looked forward to property in the area. The hotel will cater to business and leisure travellers, and provide easy access to Dubai Mall.

Tasteful spaces

The property offers a wide range of room categories and suites with a canal view, aesthetically decorated to provide every guest a personal space of luxury and comfort. Mandlowsky says, "The 270 elegantly stylish inventory consists of 48 standard rooms, 39 superior rooms, 92 deluxe rooms, 60 grand deluxe rooms, 25 executive suites, four luxury suites and two penthouse suites. The property also boasts of six different F&B outlets such as Café Delices, Al Waha Restaurant, Naisa Oriental Restaurant, Sports On 4, The Canal Lounge and The Other Office Karaoke. For business travellers, the five meeting room areas are an excellent space for quick review meetings or trainings. For those

checking out a venue for a leisure or even a business event, the banquet hall will arrange all your requests to host various functions — from a birthday party to a brand launch event. Not forgetting the many health and recreational facilities including a swimming pool, kid's pool and fitness centre, spa, nightclub, and karaoke rooms."

Ideal for bleisure

In today's hospitality sector, locations play a pivotal role as Dubai has witnessed a considerable amount of bleisure visitors. "As the World Trade Centre is within a short drive or a metro ride away, more visitors who attend exhibitions here also check out the Dubai Mall. Our property is ideally located just a few minutes away from Dubai Mall, La Mer, World Trade Centre and Financial Centre," Mandlowsky says. He believes that it is the perfect location for bleisure travellers who could make their stay profitable in business and leisure, especially as the hotel provides a free shuttle service to Dubai Mall, Emaar

square, Dubai Financial Centre, and La Mer.

He further comments, "When you work in a competitive city such as Dubai, you have to pay attention to what is changing around you. In today's world, the greatest challenge is to keep up with new trends and adapt to them. We have listed out each feature of our product or service and the benefit it could provide to our target market/partners. We have also determined what features are appealing that would fit into our targets' lifestyle."

Valuable partnerships

Agents and partners are very important to any property around the world — traditional or online — both equally contribute towards filling up occupancy in every property. Mandlowsky reiterates, "Understanding and adapting to market trends today is most critical. Our sales strategy is based on these factors and evolves as the business evolves — evaluating which market we

“In today's hospitality sector, locations play a pivotal role as Dubai has witnessed a considerable amount of bleisure visitors”

expand into, where we spend our money, and if they are capable of proactively building a sales process for our business. With the plethora of choices nowadays available for guests, we have to keep up with the changes and mark our presence in all sales channels.”





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Ras Al Khaimah

for thrill seekers & adrenaline junkies



With magnificent landscapes and over 7,000 years of fascinating history and culture, Ras Al Khaimah – the northern-most emirate of the United Arab Emirates – is a relaxing, engaging and reinvigorating getaway.

Visitors can soak up near year-round sunshine against spectacular backdrops — from breathtaking coastlines, lush mangrove forests, rich terracotta desert and fertile green oases to the awe-inspiring vistas of the stark Hajar mountains, including the country's highest peak – Jebel Jais – where temperatures are around 10 degrees lower than the UAE norm.

The myriad of landscapes offers up a host of activities for all interests and all ages with water sports, family and luxury beach re-

sorts and waterfront golf along the emirate's 64 kilometres of white, sandy beaches. There's kayaking through the mangrove forests with hidden bird and marine life. The adventure of a desert safari tackling huge dunes, camel and horse-back riding tours take in the emirate's ancient and intriguing heritage and culture, including its passion for local cuisine and adrenalin-packed hiking, trekking, cycling and ziplining across the ravines of Jebel Jais, which rises to just short of 2,000 metres above sea level.

Visitors also have a wide choice of accommodation – from ultra-luxurious beach resorts managed by some of the most notable names in hospitality to family-friendly city and beach resorts, city centre properties and resorts for the more laidback adventure seekers.

You'll also be able to taste local food throughout the emirate – from the luxury of hotel restaurants to the abundance of local cafes and food stalls. For a more 'traditional' dining experience, head to Al-Fanar Restaurant & Cafe, where the ambience resembles that of an Emirati family home in the 1930s with a pure UAE menu. Round off the meal with a stop at Ras Al Khaimah's oldest ice-cream shop Ashuk, renowned for its signature creamy dessert packed with fruits. Don't miss the chance to sip local tea 'karak' from one of the tea and coffee stalls.

Seafood restaurants are also available in abundance – with the catch having been fished just hours before from Ras Al Khaimah shores – though meat dishes, predominantly goat and mutton, also make appearances in the traditional family restaurants.

You can also live the ultimate desert experience in Ras Al Khaimah. Enjoy a wide range of traditional Arabic activities with dune bashing, belly dancers, Arabic Tanoura, camel riding as well as Arabic barbecue. Desert camps also provide facilities to experience an overnight stay for those who wish to camp under the stars.

If you enjoy mountains and cycling, spend a day mountain biking on the UAE's highest mountain, Jebel Jais, and take part in a guided hikes with three adrenaline-filled ziplines with the Via Ferrata experience. Jebel Jais

is also home to the world's longest zipline, Jebel Jais Flight – an exhilarating experience to definitely tick off your bucket list. You will soar with unparalleled speed over the UAE's highest mountain peak and land on a transparent platform that will be suspended completely in air. The Jebel Jais Viewing Deck Park is perfect for those looking for a more laidback experience. With several viewing platforms, visitors can enjoy panoramic views of the majestic Hajar Mountains.

Much of Ras Al Khaimah's popularity also comes from the ease with which it can be reached. By road, Ras Al Khaimah is a mere 45 minutes from Dubai International Airport. Visitors from Dubai can also reach Ras Al Khaimah within 25 minutes via the Seawings sea plane service. Meanwhile, an increasing number of charter operators are now flying into the easy-to-navigate RAK airport.



More agents on-board NDC

Following the successful implementation of its NDC roadmap during 2018, Travelport has completed the onboarding of the first group of travel agencies to receive access to NDC content.

 TT Bureau

UK-based travel agency Meon Valley completed the first live booking using NDC content through Travelport's Smartpoint desktop in October 2018. The next phase of Travelport's NDC roadmap involved onboarding a larger group of travel agencies. To ensure NDC works for all parts of the travel ecosystem, Travelport has implemented its booking solution with a wide variety of agencies of different sizes, including American Express Global Business Travel, dnata, Gray Dawes Group, Global Travel Management, Meon Valley Travel, Premier Holidays, TAG, Travel Counsellors and Travel & Transport Statesman.

Commenting on this milestone of Travelport's NDC delivery,



Nick Dagg
Senior Vice President—Agency
Commerce, Travelport

Nick Dagg, Senior Vice President—Agency Commerce, Travelport, said, "We've taken great care in managing the roll-out of our NDC booking capability through Smartpoint to our agency customers. This

"We've taken great care in managing the roll-out of our NDC booking capability through Smartpoint; this has allowed us to learn as we go and refine our NDC solution"

has allowed us to learn as we go, listen to the feedback from our customers and refine our NDC solution to ensure it provides an integrated choice."

Working with key parties is integral to delivering access to all content with a focus on improving traveller experience, controlling cost, maintaining full end-to-end servicing, as well as transparent fares, pricing and comparison shopping, feels **John Bukowski**, Director, Content and Distribution, American Express Global

Business Travel. "NDC is an important step in advancing airline offers and fare options, which we believe should remain focused on delivering value to corporate clients and not as a means to limit access to content, add cost or force new and costly airline connectivity. We look forward to continuing to engage with Travelport, airline partners, and others," he said.

According to **David Bishop**, Commercial Director, Gray Dawes, NDC is a major shift

in air content distribution. He elaborated, "We've provided feedback to Travelport as we work together to refine the NDC work-flow so that it best serves the agents who will use it."

Travelport recently shared insights from the first phase of implementation of its NDC booking solution, as part of its commitment to ensure NDC works for all parts of the travel industry. These learnings highlighted the importance of agent familiarity, workflow integration, a considered roadmap, the demand for NDC content and the need for broad industry collaboration. Travelport will follow up with Smartpoint enhancements along with an API NDC connection channel through Travelport's Trip Service API. 


More ways to chat at Four Seasons



With chatting apps trending and conversational commerce on the rise, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has once again expanded its multi-channel chat service with the recent addition of WhatsApp, the world's most popular messaging platform.

Since its launch, Four Seasons Chat has exchanged over 3.5 million messages, allowing guests to connect with real people on property in real time. "Integrating new technology as part of our celebrated chat service adds further value at each

touchpoint in the travel journey and paves the path to our continued innovation in the mobile space," said **Christian Clerc**, President—Worldwide Hotel Operations, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Four Seasons launched its

multi-channel messaging platform in 2017 without the use of chatbots. The service is 100 per cent powered by humans and translates over 100 languages in real time, allowing for response times averaging 90 seconds or less. 

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900 investment experts at AHIC

The Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) 2019 has unveiled its programme for the 15th edition of the forum, which will bring more than 900 hotel investors, owners and operators together at the AHIC Village in Ras Al Khaimah.

TT Bureau

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of Bench Events and Founder of AHIC, said, "This year's programme has been painstakingly developed in consultation with hotel owners, investors, operators and consultants from across the region. Time and again, they have told us that amid challenges of new supply, more needs to be done to educate the market and synchronise the efforts of all stakeholders. The agenda is designed around our theme 'Synchronised for Success', with content streams targeted specifically for hotel developers, owners, and investors."

Programme highlights include the Official Opening by Conference Host and Patron His Highness

Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, a keynote AHIC Talk by Sébastien Bazin, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, AccorHotels, who will address the topic 'What is Your Compass in Times of Disruption, Innovation and Global Turmoil?'; and Jay Rosen, Head of Investment & Finance at The Red Sea Development Company, who will be speaking on 'Sustainable Investment Tourism Development for the Future'. Mega Projects in Saudi Arabia such as the Red Sea destination, expected to add \$5.86 billion to the Kingdom's GDP, will form a focus at AHIC 2019, following on from the success of the Saudi Hotel Investment Forum (SHIC) held

last month. A dedicated plenary session entitled 'Uncovering The Kingdom' will take a deep dive into the KSA market, discussing opportunities for international investors, government support for the industry and how the market is dealing with the increase in supply.

Ahead of the event,

Dr Badr Al Badr, CEO, Dur Hospitality, commented, "In Saudi Arabia, all key stakeholders in the hotel investment industry are benefitting from Vision 2030, with the wheels for socio-economic transformation already in motion.



Dr Badr Al Badr



Jonathan Worsley



Jay Rosen



Haitham Mattar

This blueprint for economic diversification earmarks tourism as a growth sector crucial to the Kingdom's long-term success, and savvy hospitality companies are aligning their development strategies to this vision".

Haitham Mattar, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, said, "We are delighted to be hosting AHIC 2019, bringing together world-class speakers and key players from the hospitality sector to share their insights." 📸

Hyatt House debuts in Saudi Arabia

The opening of Hyatt House Jeddah Sari Street in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a significant step towards increasing Hyatt's footprint in the extended-stay segment and growing its brand presence in the Middle East with innovative hospitality offerings in key locations and gateway cities.

TT Bureau

The Hyatt House brand is rooted in extensive customer insights which indicate that guests seek casual and authentic hospitality with purposeful service and seamless experiences that accommodate their lifestyles and familiar routines. This, coupled with a smartly designed, tech-forward and contemporary environment, allows guests to feel at home at Hyatt House properties.

"We are thrilled to announce the opening of Hyatt House Jeddah Sari Street, marking the Hyatt House brand's arrival to the region," said **Zulkifli Bhatti**, General Manager, Hyatt House Jeddah Sari Street. "Our aim is to offer guests and families a comfortable stay in the heart of Jeddah

“Our aim is to offer guests and families a comfortable stay in the heart of Jeddah and provide high-quality service standards for which the Hyatt House brand is known”

and provide high-quality service standards for which the Hyatt House brand is known."

Hyatt House Jeddah Sari Street is conveniently located in the Al Salamah District, in close proximity to Madinah and Thaliaya Streets, which connects to the Corniche, Jeddah's coastal resort area. The 102 residentially inspired upscale guest rooms, studio and one-bedroom kitchen suites, along with restaurant,

fitness centre and prayer rooms, provide an ideal home-away-from-home setting.

The guest rooms range from spacious studios to one-bedroom Kitchen Suites with fully equipped kitchens, gathering rooms with more than 500 square feet (50 square metres) of flexible meeting spaces and free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel. H Lounge is a cosy space featuring a delicious selection of home comfort food and

Omelet Bar where breakfast is served daily for guests from chef-inspired options that rotate daily with where guests can make their own custom creations. The H Market meets the everyday needs of guests, from snacks and sundries to freshly-prepared salads and sandwiches, with a 24-hour work-out room equipped with TechnoGym cardio and strength training equipment, including treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes and free weights, an outdoor, temperature-controlled rooftop swimming pool with stunning views of Jeddah. A 24-hour business centre is equipped with computer work stations as well as printers, a game room available for all guests with different activities



Zulkifli Bhatti
General Manager
Hyatt House Jeddah Sari Street

such as foosball, pool table and video games. The property also has three floors of shaded parking space dedicated to hotel guests, with prayer rooms. 📸



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NEW HOTELS

It is overwhelming to see more properties opening in the UAE in the first quarter of 2019 so that by the end of next year, they will be ready for the world event of Expo 2020. We take a peek at the ones scheduled to be opened and the ones already open.

★ Mandarin Oriental Jumeira, Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory:
178 rooms & 78 suites

Opening Date:
February 2019



Located in the heart of Dubai with views of the beach, urban architecture and chic design, the property is set to bring a new wave of luxury to Dubai. The rooms were conceived as individual retreats on the Arabian Gulf. Mandarin Oriental Jumeira, Dubai is also home to six unrivalled restaurants and bars, all of which are noteworthy additions to Dubai's dining scene.



★ JA Lake View Hotel Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory:
348 rooms & suites

Opening Date:
September 2019

The hotel is the third unique property in the 128-acre experience-packed JA The Resort in Jebel Ali. Promising to add exciting restaurant concepts driven by chefs with Michelin-star acclaim, three additional outdoor swimming pools and a contemporary rooftop bar with views over the golf course and Arabian sea, JA Lake View Hotel will add unforgettable experiences for modern travellers.

★ Leva Hotel Apartments, Dubai

Rooms/Suites inventory:
178 rooms

Opening Date:
February 2019



The four-star hotel property is tucked between Al Wasl Road and Sheikh Zayed Road. Located in Mazaya centre, Leva stands in the midst of celebrated tourist attractions. Open in space and spirit, Leva offers a living environment where design and technology blend together seamlessly. The artistically designed rooms span across three different categories - studios, 1BHK and 2BHK.



★ Andaz Dubai La Mer

Rooms/Suites inventory:
156 rooms & suites

Opening Date:
2020

The property will become the first Andaz-branded hotel in Dubai and the second Andaz hotel in the United Arab Emirates, joining Andaz Capital Gate Abu Dhabi. Delivering thoughtful service to guests in search of local experiences, Andaz Dubai La Mer will offer distinct experiences that immerse them in the sights, sounds and tastes of Dubai. The hotel will also offer easy access to globally recognised landmarks

New outlook for 2019

Enjoying a healthy footfall of tourists, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira is now looking to maximise its online presence whilst curating innovative experiences for guests.



Ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira has been enjoying a good occupancy rate over the past three years since its opening. Maintaining 92 per cent is no easy task in the emirate as competition is quite high in the mid-market segment. One of the benefits the property enjoys is its location, as it is located between the business and leisure areas in Dubai. Some of the stronger markets for the hotel over the past year have a good nationality mix. UAE still holds on to the



Muhammad Mujtaba Haider
General Manager, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira

“We ended another remarkable year; we were able to achieve highest occupancy of 89 per cent among our direct competitors (mostly four-star hotels) and four per cent higher than last year”

number one position, followed by India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Great Britain, Germany, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Egypt. Muhammad Mujtaba Haider, General Manager, ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira, says, “We ended another remarkable year; we were able to achieve highest occupancy of 89 per cent among our direct competitors (mostly four-star hotels) and four per cent higher than last year.”

The hotel is preparing new strategies to further develop its revenue. Haider says, “Product-wise, we will not have anything new to offer but the hotel is changing drastically in terms of business. In other words, we have spotted new markets and are working on further seeking new markets to ensure more growth in revenue.”

For 2019, the hotel will look to enhance its ranking on OTAs and social media platforms by using new digital marketing techniques. “We are encouraging our associates to gather innovative ideas, implement the selected ones and convert these into unique guest experiences. We're teaching values to all our associates to be thankful and happy, as 2019 has been marked as the year of tolerance,” concludes Haider.

Over 4500 exhibitors at Arab Health'19

Over the past few years, there has been a rapid increase in visitors, exhibitors and countries participating at Arab Health. This year, the event witnessed over 4500 exhibitors from 160 countries, as well as 250 local and international speakers specialising in the health and wellness sectors.



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MEDIA PARTNERS



Sabre

► Singapore

Sabre Corporation has appointed **Abdul-Razzaq Iyer** as Vice President to lead Sabre Travel Network's Middle East business. The new appointment will help drive business growth for both Sabre and its customers in the regions. In his new role, Iyer will be responsible for increasing Sabre's footprint in the Middle East, including high-growth markets such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Most recently, he has worked as a senior director in the Strategic Business Development team in Sabre's Singapore office. Leading a substantial sales organisation, he helped achieve significant growth for Sabre in APAC.



Campbell Gray Hotels

► London

Alan O'Dea has been appointed as Managing Director of Campbell Gray Hotels. With 20 years of experience in the hospitality sector, O'Dea has held a number of senior positions within globally-recognised hospitality groups including, most recently, spending 12 years with Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts. He will oversee the day-to-day running of the company and ensure the continued high-performance of its six hotels and its Campbell Gray Living arm. He joins the team at a particularly exciting time as a number of new properties have recently joined the Campbell Gray Hotels portfolio.



Citymax Hotels

► Ras Al Khaimah

Citymax Hotels designated **Ahmad Taher** as Hotel Manager at the newly-opened Citymax Ras Al Khaimah. Taher has joined the home-grown hotel group's senior management team and is heading up the first new-look property for the brand. His core responsibility will revolve around the operations of the hotel as well as growing the guest occupancy at the Ras Al Khaimah property. With a significant hospitality experience – from being part of pre-opening management teams, F&B management, to becoming a Hotel Manager – Taher has played a key role in the properties he has previously worked in.



Fairmont Ajman & Fairmont Fujairah Beach Resort

► Ajman & Fujairah

Galia Baker has been appointed as Cluster Public Relations Manager for Fairmont Ajman & Fairmont Fujairah Beach Resort. She will be responsible for working closely with the Cluster Director of Marketing and Communications in reaching the targeted goals of the hotels as defined in the marketing and communications plan while managing the Public Relations function of the two hotels.



MOVEMENTS

Travelport

► Dubai

Travelport appointed **Kerry Koutsikos** as Managing Director of the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region. Koutsikos joins Travelport from Qlik, a leader in visual analytics, where he spent more than six years in leadership roles including, most recently, as Vice President—Middle East, Africa, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and the Baltics. In 2018, he led his regional team to achieve double-digit growth and secure a record number of 'market defining' new business wins. At Travelport, Koutsikos will be responsible for leading the company's operations across MEA. He replaces Matthew Powell, who has been appointed to a newly formed global role.



Hilton Capital Grand Abu Dhabi

► Abu Dhabi

Hans Schiller takes control of Hilton Capital Grand Abu Dhabi as General Manager. Schiller has more than 26 years of hospitality experience, traversing the pan Arab region, including UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Nigeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After his repeated success as Cluster General Manager of Hilton Abu Dhabi and Hilton Al Ain, Schiller will continue to focus on guest engagement, hotel standards and overall guest experience at Hilton Capital Grand. He joined the Hilton family in 2008 as Director of Operations for Hilton Alexandria Green Plaza in Egypt.



Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria

► Dubai

Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria has appointed **Nikhil Satwani** as Director of Sales & Marketing. In his new position, Satwani will oversee and strategise sales, marketing, revenue and events initiatives to support the hotel's business goals. He began his career as an Events Executive with Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad, in India. In 2010, he moved to The Oberoi Group as Assistant Sales Manager—National Sales. In 2012, he joined Grand Hyatt Dubai as a Convention Sales Manager. Later, Satwani held various leadership roles including Associate Director of Event Sales and Director of Event Sales at Hyatt Regency Dubai & Galleria.



Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa

► Dubai

Ziad Sleiman has been appointed as Executive Assistant Manager—Operations at Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa. In his role, Sleiman will manage all aspects of the resort's operations, its food and beverage service and culinary departments. Furthermore, he will be overseeing the hotel's in-room dining, banquet food and beverage operations in addition to eight restaurants and lounges. The Lebanese national started his professional career in 1999 and is bringing to this award-winning luxury desert resort more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality sector in Lebanon and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



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