

1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP

UAE'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE MONTHLY

Scan & Share



TRAVTALK



TravTalkMiddleEast.com

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Getting tourism back on track in the UAE 04 | ■ Green Spain & Spanish islands explored 12 |
| ■ Virtual roadshow by Thailand 06 | ■ Singapore Tourism connects partners 13 |
| ■ Discover the diversity of Germany from home 08 | ■ New league of hotels 16 |

PASS IT ON

NAME _____

SEEN ☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

Nominate Now

ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS 2020

sonia.butalia@arabiantravelawards.ae +91-9650311774
nikhil.jee@ddppl.com +91-9910031313

Media Partners

www.arabiantravelawards.ae

Media Partner



DIGITAL CONCLAVE a huge success

In order to keep the industry professionals well informed of all the initiatives taken for recovery post COVID, **TRAVTALK** conducted two digital conclaves with some of the eminent personalities in the industry. It also entailed the commendable leadership steps taken to open the country for international visitors.



HE Khalid Jassim Al Midfa
Chairman – Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

“The new normal in my opinion will be a temporary situation for travel and tourism, not for other industries, based on the reports by international organisations like UNWTO it will soon come back to normal. The physical presence of a human being in a destination will not be replaced by any digital technology and I think travel will still be placed as it used to maybe like 50 years ago, especially with the airlines coming up. Before that people used to visit the nearby places as tourists so tourism has always existed in human life. We will need a place to go to relax and get away from a busy life, so tourism will come back to normal. What we have to do now and what we are working on in the UAE is that we have come up with a lot of precautionary measures and guidelines that are being monitored very strictly by our team of inspectors. They are working hand-in-hand with the private sector. We have always been very close to our partners in the private sector and are working hand-in-hand with them as they are our strategic partners, and at this period of time our relationship has further strengthened.”



Suman Billa
Director
Technical Cooperation & Silk Road, UNWTO

“The MENA region has world class infrastructure and a very strong aviation sector. In 2003 we had the SARS crisis which dropped tourism by 0.4% then in 2009 the global economic crisis which resulted the tourism industry to drop by 4% but today we are looking at a drop from 58% to 78% now this is unprecedented and there is no experience for us to cope with this. To

my mind there is no business contingency plan or a government support programme that can handover to tourism sector to come out of it without any pain. At the same time we must understand that tourism all over the world are in difficult position and in order to sustain that we do not have the luxury to wait for a vaccine to come.”

“We have gone through unprecedented times and the tourism industry has been the worst hit industry globally not just in the UAE. I'm very optimistic about tourism especially in United Arab Emirates. If you think about it in the UAE Currently 12 per cent of the country's GDP comes from tourism and hospitality. Coming from an oil rich nation that is a significant part of its

contribution; 750,000 employees in the United Arab Emirates rely on hospitality and tourism. I was so proud to see that the United Arab Emirates was one of the first countries to open globally and be able to welcome international tourists to the destination. For us being a developing destination we were able to fare very well during the pandemic.”



Raki Phillips
Chief Executive Officer –
Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority

Inputs by Shehara Rizvi

5 times a week E-newsletter
(Sun, Mon, Tues, Wed, Thur) sent to around
100,000 travel trade database

Tourism BreakingNews

It contains everything that has to do with
travel and tourism
in and outside the Middle East.

www.tourismbreakingnews.ae





Covid SMART

AN ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMME DESIGNED BY
INDIVIDUALS TRAINED BY WHO TO HELP THE TOURISM
INDUSTRY REBOUND SAFELY FROM **COVID-19**.

700
INDIVIDUALS TRAINED



550
COMPANIES CERTIFIED

27
SOURCES OF INFORMATION
AND TRAINING



100
POINT CHECKLIST TO BE
COVIDSMART

WWW.COVIDELEARNS.COM

Mitigate risk to ensure safe travel

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis on a global scale. Having to navigate through unpredictability has created an element of fear and anxiety in the travel and tourism industry, which has been hard hit by the pandemic. Today, there is a knee jerk reaction to reach out towards the red telephone in times of crisis, says **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager of Tune Protect EMEA.

 TT Bureau

As the world kick-starts the supply chains of travel and tourism, there will be new health and safety protocols implemented, which means that businesses shall operate at restricted capacity. It will also require some time before demands recover as consumers and travellers are more cautious in making travel plans given that the fight against the pandemic is still ongoing. Consumers' trust and confidence will need to be re-built as it will influence their travel behaviour

and decisions. Travelling in general will gradually recover when all the risk management measures are put in place by the relevant stakeholders in the travel and tourism sector to ensure safe travel.

What's the next step for the travel industry to manage risk?

From a business risk perspective, there are numerous commercial solutions that can help cushion the impact in the event of any unfore-

seen circumstances that could happen whilst running businesses. Under typical situations, most organisations would have already thought and incorporated some of these solutions as part of their risk management measures to protect their businesses.

Travellers protection or the red telephone?

To further mitigate risk, the next collective step would be to ensure that we have the travellers protected



Arijit Munshi
General Manager
Tune Protect EMEA


when they are travelling. By facilitating a comprehensive travel protection product into their travel plans, travellers will enjoy peace of mind against unforeseen incidents during their travel, as we have witnessed in the last six

months. It will also help in spreading the pressure points and not just limiting it to the service providers within the travel industry. As travellers get to enjoy peace of mind before, during and after their travels, the travel industry professionals indirectly extend protection on the services they provide. We all definitely need to step up to ensure we educate the travellers so that they understand the importance of travel protection.

The immediate future – avoiding the red telephone

As we restart our respective travel businesses, we should ask ourselves, do

we scale back to where it was before, or do we rebuild it to be better in the new norm? Wherever the road leads us, we need to move forward with hope and courage, and lean back on our time-tested values in making the right decisions to cope in these uncertain times.

Most importantly, we must start restructuring and rebuilding for a new norm in the travel and tourism sector to grow from here and not just survive. We need to extend travel protection as an industry norm so that there is no need to reach out to the red telephone again. 

“We need to extend travel protection as an industry norm so that there is no need to reach out to the red telephone again”



IBIZA • TENERIFE

Top quality à la carte restaurants. Swimming pools that are a real spectacle for the senses. Personal attention worthy of a rock star, unique spa services, amazing live shows and entertainment for all ages.

OPEN JULY 2020

TENERIFE AV. ADEJE 300, 5/N, 38678, PLAYA PARAÍSO, COSTA ADEJE • HRHTENERIFE.COM

IBIZA CTRA. PLAYA D'EN BOSSA • 07800 • SANT JORDI DE SES SALINES • HRHIBIZA.COM

Getting tourism back on track in the Middle East



With all the efforts by the leadership of the United Arab Emirates, last month the country opened for international travellers amidst strict protocols to ensure the safety and security of every individual. In the first session of the second Travtalk ME conclave, three eminent personalities spoke about the tourism industry and its future.



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

Ready for next phase

HE Khalid Jassim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, said, "After going through the different stages and experiments I believe that life can come back to normal much before we expect. In other countries people with symptoms had to visit a doctor for check-up but here the approach was different, the government

tested over 50 per cent of the population so that the citizens, people and the visitors are safe. We are seeing the airlines opening up slowly, and we are slowly building confidence and trust due to these efforts over the past few months. In Phase 2 of this scenario which will start early September we will start seeing more people coming into the UAE and having a higher level of comfort and trust in what the UAE

has to offer. I believe that the future will be bright and from what we are seeing from all emirates, with the guidelines of the leadership we are prepared for the next stage."

Sharjah hits 7.3 million visitors in 2019

As the set goal of 10 million visitors by 2021 approaches, the pandemic has but a short-term impact on the visitor arrivals and the UAE was one of the leading countries in the world to open to tourism once again. **HE Midfa** shared, "In 2019, we received 7.3 million guests both hotel and MICE guests to Sharjah, the aim was to attract 10 million by 2021, it will be extended to 2022 and

“In 2019, we received 7.3 million guests both hotel and MICE guests to Sharjah, the aim was to attract 10 million by 2021, it will be extended to 2022 and we should achieve it”



we should achieve it. You can see the numbers flowing into the UAE due to our strong infrastructure and road networks, which have a competitive advantage. In terms of receiving business and tourists to the UAE across the seven different emirates, the road networks

and public transport infrastructure is here for the new normal base. I'm very optimistic the near future will be very bright. We will see things slowly coming back."

Confidence building

"I think we should make sure that we convey the right message, sometimes I have seen some companies going back to the traditional marketing focusing on mixed messages. I think today it is very important looking at the present situation and the demand of the visitors and the people, we should convey the

message that gives confidence to the visitors, always keep that as your main message. You have done a lot of hard work and effort in that regard, so why not convey that message to your visitors, we as government entities as well as private companies or establishments need to always focus on this area to make sure it is given in the proper way to give enough information for the visitors to the UAE. For the time being, for the coming six months this would be the winning area when it comes to marketing," added **HE Midfa**.

Updates

“In other countries people with symptoms had to visit a doctor for check-up but here the approach was different, the government tested over 50 per cent of the population so that the citizens, people and the visitors are safe”

— **HE Khalid Jassim Al Midfa**



Suman Billa
Director
Technical Cooperation & Silk Road, UNWTO

MENA, a robust destination

"One of the most important factors in this region is that most oil economies are looking at tourism to see as to how they can diversify from their overhead reliance on oil. And they have got some extremely strong products such as culture, shopping and MICE." He opined that the best way forward as we are still to find a vaccine or even a cure for

the pandemic is that it is better to look at localised bubbles to be promoted where you could look at targeted market segments to work with first and then go on.

Reassuring safety of the travellers

"They also have a very strong aviation sector and world-class infrastructure. The biggest plus they have is the ability of destinations to work with the airlines. In order

to get the tourists in you need an airline and in the Middle East region this is an advantage. They have a very cohesive relationship which will come in stronger, strategically located between Europe and Asia with access, but the most important thing is health and safety protocols at this point of time, and they need to make sure they are in place. If you look at the global experiences the countries that had

the first wave of infections, such as Spain and Italy, have now restarted tourism. It is possible to restart your tourism with health and hygiene protocols in place. Another key advantage the Middle East has is that they have a lot of global players which are rated very highly, which goes a long way in reassuring travellers, because it is not enough to kill the virus but also to kill the panic or anxiety of the

Updates

“We are looking at a reduction of 1 billion tourists this year in terms of international tourist arrivals and in terms of revenues we are looking at a drop of 1 trillion. Also, there will be a change in the traveller profile until a vaccine comes, you will see a lot of the younger population travelling as the virus doesn't affect them, and as their ability to cope is stronger”

— Suman Billa

travellers. So quality reassurance is fairly strong in the Middle East, the way forward in the short-term is to develop these bubbles to see how we can get people from key markets in and then to see a very aggressive, very

focused and localised targeted marketing programme to connect the markets that are opened up as we go,” stated Billa.

Reprioritise your product portfolio

Billa pointed out, “The

Developing travel bubbles

► The way forward in the short-term is to develop these bubbles to see how we can get people from key markets in and then to see a localised targeted marketing programme to connect the markets that are opened up as we go.

— Suman Billa

immediate bubble is going to be within the region but as you go forward as some of the European countries are opening it will be easier for the Middle East to plug into that and if you look at India they are looking at UAE.” He further explained what the “bubble does”, when somebody comes from a destination there are certain quarantine ele-

ments; they need to be sure that they conform to the safety and hygiene standards as the destination wants to protect their citizens from being exposed to

risk or getting infected. So, safety comes first. Second is what the hotels will do in all industry touch points. In terms of markets they will be staggered as they open up.

You don't have the luxury of pitching your products to the entire world; it has to be very localised, very specific. If Germany is opening up, you need to see what are

Session 1

the products that would be of interest to the German market. Reprioritise your product portfolio and match it with the market you are going to focus on and run a very hyper focus campaign.

“MENA region has been very robust, their global share is 6 per cent and by 2030 we expect it would move up to 8 per cent. There is nothing to suggest that the robustness of growth and development in this region is going to slow down”



Raki Phillips
CEO
Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority

RAK, first city to be certified as a 'safe' destination

Raki Phillips, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority,

coming back and that excites us. Just last week our hotel occupancy was 60 per cent in the emirate and some of the properties were sold out. The levels of testing are phenomenal in

but also safe and secure. I also have to commend the global organisations like the UNWTO and WTTC that have worked very closely with us in coming up with global initiatives that help us drive some of our friends and colleagues around the world. I look forward to a good recovery.”

“It is important for us to know what the consumer sentiment is, the top priority we had in Ras Al Khaimah was safety and security of our colleagues as well as our guests so we put some guidelines together to ensure that we are prepared for the destination during the recovery and as we opened up. One of the things we did was we

the world to receive both the prestigious safeguard label from Bureau Veritas and World Travel and Tourism Council Safe Travels stamp. Our international exhibition and conference centre is also the first MICE facility in the Middle East to be Bureau Veritas certified so that means that we have got all measures and initiatives in place to ensure safe tourism options. When it comes to MICE, Ras Al Khaimah is very active in the MICE community; it is one of our key pillars and Indian weddings is a big attraction.”

Travellers look for memorable experiences

“Ras Al Khaimah is a sun and sand, tree and culture and adventure side of the business with a mountain experience. I think consumers will continue to look for experiences that engage them and give them long-lasting memories. Destinations that have a myriad of offerings such as culture, adventure etc. will have a better chance of attracting travellers as they value not only the experience but also the safety aspect. We have made sure that our hotels and attractions are all safe by sanitising eve-



rywhere from our zipline, Al Suwaidi Pearl farm, hotels and every area is sanitised and kept safe,” stated Phillips. In terms of MICE, he said that they have created programmes to attract the MICE bookers where you can get credit against your booking, then there is the new shortcation campaign and the webinar seminars with zoom coffee hours.

Tourism is a resilient industry

Phillips reiterated that the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority has taken all necessary actions not only to provide safety measures

and protocols but has also waived off some of the charges and fees for the industry. It is important that the industry bounces back; the stimulus packages by the federal government provide many incentives to the investors. He further pointed out that the United Arab Emirates is just four hours away from most countries in the world and has some of the best in terms of tourism products on offer, which will bring back the tourists very soon. He concluded that Ras Al Khaimah has been able to maintain the highest RevPAR.

“RAKTDA has also waived off some of the charges and fees for the tourism industry. It is important that the industry bounces back; the stimulus packages by the federal government provide many incentives to the investors”

said, “Ras Al Khaimah is known for its natural beauty, sprawling hotels, mountains. For us, it was very good to focus on safety and security to welcome guests back primarily from the domestic markets but now we are starting to see the international travellers

the UAE and we are leading in the world. The safety and security measures put in place have made us a welcoming destination and I think it all comes from the leadership to drive us in order to have a wonderful offering that is not only exciting to tourists

funded COVID testing for every single employee who works in the hospitality sector especially at our hotels and we put some guidelines together for safety and security but then apart from that what we did is, Ras Al Khaimah was confirmed as the first city and emirate in

Updates

“Ras Al Khaimah was confirmed as the first city and emirate in the world to receive both the prestigious safeguard label from Bureau Veritas and World Travel and Tourism Council Safe Travels stamp”

— Raki Phillips



Virtual roadshow by Thailand

Thailand Tourism will host its first virtual event on September 9, 2020 from 10 am to 6 pm (UAE). This event will be the annual B2B event that the tourism board will promote before ATM but due to COVID-19, it will be held virtually so that it is more convenient for the participants. **Pichaya Saisaengchan**, Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & The ME Office shares with **TRAVTALK**.



What is the concept and aim of the event?

We aim to promote Thailand for leisure in the GCC market since more than 75 per cent of total Middle East visitors come from this region. We will link our 60 Thai sellers to meet with 180 GCC buyers (one-on-one meet-

ing via VDO conference) and expect that there will be more than 2,880 appointments during the entire day.

How will one register for the event?

180 Buyers can register at www.halathailandvirtualmart.com or via travel trade partner TravTalk Middle East.

Who are the target audience?

All travel trade partners in GCC & Thailand

Could you share the benefits for the audience?

Thai sellers & GCC buyers will get to know each other during a 10-minute session of each meeting slot (total 48 slots x 8

hours meeting), in order to create special holiday packages with the "new normal" to Thailand for GCC travellers.

What are you presenting about Thailand? Is it one destination or a few areas and islands?

We will highlight our new products & services in all major cities in Thailand in-



Pichaya Saisaengchan
Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & The Middle East Office

“ We aim to promote Thailand for leisure in the GCC market since more than 75 per cent of total Middle East visitors come from this region ”





cluding nearby cities such as Bangkok & Beyond, Phuket & Beyond, Chiang Mai & Beyond, Pattaya & Beyond, etc., as well as, highlight our SHA Certificate that has been given to all qualified Thai private sectors (<https://www.tatnews.org/2020/07/amazing-thailand-sha-certification-steps-up-information-sharing-and-outreach/>).

Amazing Thailand Safety & Health Administration (SHA) is a collaboration between the TAT, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Public Health, Board of Trade of Thailand, and Thai tourism operators.

The project is TAT's efforts to continuously place Thailand's ranking as a preferred destination, to prepare tourism establishments to be ready for the



return of tourism post COVID-19, as well as, offer tourists new tourism experiences with regards to "the new normal" as a result of the pandemic.

Could you give us more details about the virtual roadshow?

60 Thai sellers with GCC buyers will do one-on-one meetings via VDO call. The first session will com-

prise GCC Buyers Group A, while the second session will have participants from GCC Buyers Group B. For both groups, 10 minutes will be allotted per appointment. 🇹🇭

THE SHOW MUST GO ONLINE

SAVE THE DATE 09.09.2020 (10.00 GMT+4)



60 THAI SELLERS
48 MEETING SLOTS
2,880 APPOINTMENTS
AWAIT YOU!

REGISTER NOW

WWW.HALATHAILANDVIRTUALMART.COM

TEL: +971554704200, +971505074618



AMAZING THAILAND VIRTUAL ROADSHOW 2020
UAE.OMAN.KUWAIT.QATAR.BAHRAIN

Discover the diversity of Germany from home



© Black Forest Highlands

Germany is one of the most important destinations for travellers from the GCC due to its diverse offerings that cater to the many needs of the travellers from this region. **Yamina Sofo, Director, Sales & Marketing, German National Tourist Office, Gulf countries** shares about their webinar to discover the destination in the comfort of your home, [#DiscoverGermanyFromHome](#).



What is the reason to host a webinar?

We would like to highlight the importance of the destination of Germany as one of the preferred travel destinations for GCC nationals due to its diversity. The webinar is a perfect platform

to reach out to the travel professionals in the region. Germany ticks all the boxes, whether for wellness and recreation, nature and sight-seeing or simply for entertainment and shopping – offering high quality services, great value for money, luxury accommodation and facilities as well as en-

vironment-friendly transportation links throughout the entire country.

When will it be held and what time will it take place?

The webinar will be held on September 21, 2020 at 11.00 am (UAE standard time).

How many speakers will attend the session?

There will be a total of four speakers including myself; I would represent the German National Tourist Office, Gulf countries, sharing details about the importance of the ME market and the current numbers among many other general topics about the destination.

Joining me from the State Tourist Board Southwest Germany will be Janina Wittmann, Marketing & Sales Manager; she will speak about Southwest Germany as a special vacation destination offering something for every age from nature to culture and culinary experience in the sunniest state of Germany.

The next speaker will be from Hochschwarzwald



Yamina Sofo
Director, Sales & Marketing, German National Tourist Office, Gulf countries

“ We would like to highlight the importance of the destination of Germany as one of the preferred travel destinations for GCC nationals due to its diversity ”

Tourism (Hochschwarzwald Tourismus GmbH) – Christian Gross, Head of Incoming/MICE. Some of the topics that he will cover include; Where are the Black Forest Highlands located and how to get there? How does it look like in the region? For which target group is the region inter-

esting? Which activities are offered in the Black Forest Highlands? And, what are suitable hotels or accommodations?

He will be followed by Angela Rieger, Sales & Tourism Manager, Outlets City Metzingen; Europe's largest outlet which brings outlet



Lake Constance (Bodensee), Southwest Germany © DZT/Guenter Standl

shopping to a new level. You can discover what Metzingen can offer as a touristic destination and why it should be your choice for a unique shopping trip.

Who are your target audience?

Travel and tourism professionals, that is, OTAs, travel agencies, tour operators, MICE representatives and media in the GCC region.

What are the areas that will be covered in this special webinar?

The webinar provides an overview of the destination of Germany as a travel and tourism destination that perfectly fits GCC traveller requirements.

The webinar will focus on two aspects of the destination – nature diversity and shopping.

- ❖ 'Nature diversity' will be highlighted by the

GNTO WEBINAR

German local destination the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg with the Hochschwarzwald region

- ❖ 'Shopping' will be highlighted by the German shopping destination Outletcity Metzingen

What are the benefits for the agents that will attend the sessions?



© Outletcity Metzingen



© Outletcity Metzingen

Agents can explore the diversity of the destination and its highlights through an informative and educational webinar with an opportunity for instant and live interaction;

hold discussions on the current and future travel conditions to Germany and the precautions taken in the destination, and participate in a quiz with raffle prizes. 🎁

Germany
The travel destination

#Discover Germany FromHome

Join the SouthWest Germany webinar
21st September @ 11:00am (UAE standard time)
***Exciting raffle prizes**



Reopening for Tourism 2.0



The first digital conclave themed “reselling tourism” concluded with a record number of viewers from the Middle East and Asia. There were two sessions; the first session included three personalities in the travel trade – **Nasir Jamal Khan, Jamal Abdalnazar and Tarique Khatri.**

 Shehara Rizly

The three panellists mentioned the importance of the industry to stay positive during these challenging times as there will be light at the end of the tunnel. One of the key factors mentioned throughout was keeping the customers informed as to what is currently happening will help in building their confidence.

GCC ready to travel

In his opening statement, **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel, mentioned, “If you look into the demographics of GCC, you will see that most of the people are

ready to travel, most of the people need to travel; they will travel outbound to meet their family and friends, there will be people travelling inbound to the UAE to meet their family and friends therefore outbound will start in August and beyond. We hope that by October, November or December we will have a good number of inbound visitors to the UAE.”

Jamal Abdalnazar, Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel, shared, “Human beings are very resilient in nature and travel is in the blood of most of the people in the Middle East. They

have the heritage of travelling therefore the doubt of travel not coming in is not at all there, business will pick up but at a slow pace.”

Tarique Khatri, Executive Vice President Center of Excellence, Seera Group, shared, “Last month we carried out a survey in KSA with 3,000 plus customers, almost 70% of the people who participated in the survey expressed that they were confident to travel. Secondly they were willing to travel to places that has health and safety measures in place.”

Rise in staycations or domestic tourism

Over the past few months the government of UAE has been working very hard to ensure safety of all those who live there by sanitising all the areas. Most hotels remained open even during the lockdown to cater to some of the people that could not head back to their respective destinations due to closure of their home

bound destination airports and borders. All hotels in the UAE were given instructions for opening with proper hygiene and safety protocols that are necessary. Every year, summer is the time of staycations or domestic tourism, as most people take their vacation along with that of their children and enjoy great deals through the summer. Surprises for summer announced by every emirate

ensure that the retail sector is active. This year too a good amount of residents are seen partaking in the many hotel offerings. Khan noted, “Staycations or domestic tourism has now become popular especially during the summer. Residents will make use of the good deals on offer.” Abdalnazar reiterated, “As hotels, attractions and malls announced their deals we can see how residents are enjoying the staycations.” Khatri mentioned the difference during this year in terms of staycations or domestic tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. “People in KSA know that the places are safe to travel so when they are confident they want to travel first to destinations within where they reside, hence when domestic flights started we saw a rise in the segment of domestic tourism and saw that they wanted to visit lesser known places and cities, which we have now incorporated in our information guide.”

Ensuring ‘customer confidence’

Ensuring the confidence of the client or the traveller is



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO, Al Naboodah Travel

“Outbound will start in August and beyond. We hope that by October, November or December we will have a good number of inbound visitors to the UAE”

most important at this point of time. However, the travel agents did play a vital role when all the airports went on lockdown mode and people had to cancel and request refunds. This was a turning point for the industry, those who had made online bookings had to face many challenges for obtaining their refunds especially as there were cancellations.

In the GCC, travel agents play a key role for travellers hence they ensured that the refunds, policies, information about the bookings were clearly communicated to their customers. Khan stated, “The role of the travel agent I believe will remain the same or become more important. Over the last couple of months when people wanted their

bookings cancelled and refunded, they faced many issues. Booking tickets online was hard over the months as getting refunds and information too was difficult. When you go through a travel agent you know that he will provide you the refund and help the customer as much as possible. Travel agents do play a major role; corporates need a travel agent so that all their requirements are met with and most importantly they are offered a 30, 60 or 90-day credit period.”

Abdalnazar added, “Currently customer confidence is a big question mark but as a travel agent we help customers to maintain the confidence by engaging with them and sharing information about the health and safety measures. Also, we made sure that the customers received their refunds without having to wait, this helps build the relationship with them as we cater to their most important needs.

It will take some time to overcome the fear caused by the pandemic. Airlines

Updates

“Travellers may opt for direct destinations than connecting flights during summer, however, travel will pick up soon. People will prefer to rent a car as a full package with other travel requisites.”

— **Nasir Jamal Khan**

“The government is looking at the ultraviolet emissions from the AC vent that can kill any virus, including the COVID, which will build confidence in customers to travel.”

— **Jamal Abdalnazar**

“One of the top destinations Saudis like to travel to is UAE, I see a big jump, it is all a matter of opening the borders and starting flights, then Saudis will come to their favourite city.”

— **Tarique Khatri**



have now found that there is an ultraviolet system that can destroy any virus, and this will help to regain trust among the travellers. Our role is important as a service provider, it is vital at this point of time, especially at the time of can-

However, people realised the importance of having a travel agent to depend on."

Khatri shared, "In our survey, one of the most important points was that the customer wanted to know more details about refunds

that those travel agents who were well equipped with technology managed to serve their customers more efficiently. "Going online we cannot deny the fact that technology will take over, however over a time period of five to 10 years. After the pandemic people will need one-to-one interactions; currently we are helping them by providing information on health and safety measures, opening of countries, their policies on entering etc.," Abdulnazar stated. "Customers will prefer technology-driven areas. We need to come up with new and efficient technology to improve transactions."

Khatri mentioned that having efficient technology can support the travel agent. "What is most important is that we all want to go for-

ward, we do not want to go back to doing archaic things and one of the ways in which we can deal with our customers, vendors, partners, etc. is to look at them from a technology point of view; how can we make it faster, error free and more efficient, more seamless in every possible way because customers will demand a higher level of transparency for services while engaging with them. Travel agents have to invest in technology that will enable them to serve customers in the best possible way. At the end of the day it is the customer behaviour that drives and influences the market trends, not the other way around. Technology will evolve and there will be new methods to support the industry. Today technology is much cheaper than before, so investing in technology will make the travel agent more efficient. There are many new tools that will make the agents serve their customers more efficiently. In my opinion, we need to adapt to the new technologies and ensure that the customer benefits at the end."

Outbound travel to resume

As UAE has already opened for outbound travel to the residents, most of them are taking shorter trips, especially to see their families. This has been a

trend in summer every year. Khan shared, "Outbound will start by August to short-haul destinations and travellers will look for health and safety when flights start operating and airports and borders open. Travellers may opt for direct destinations than connecting flights during summer, however, travel will pick up soon. Travel insurance will now come into place, people will prefer to rent a car as a full package with other travel requisites. As travel agents we will have to upgrade our technology. People will also prefer to reach out to a travel agent to book the package so that they are assured of their refunds and information sharing; there will be a demand for the travel agent, just the role will be different."

Session 1

be mandatory with a clause of COVID test in place. The government is looking at the ultraviolet emissions from the AC vent that can kill any virus, including the COVID, which will build confidence in customers to travel." Khatri went back to the survey and shared that most people would prefer to start off with short-haul destinations, especially UAE has always been the most favourite among Saudis and it will once again be so, once restrictions are lifted, borders open and people can travel. The relationship enjoyed between the two countries is another important factor as



Jamal Abdulnazar
Chief Executive Officer, Cozmo Travel

“People in the Middle East have the heritage of travelling therefore the doubt of travel not coming in is not at all there, business will pick up but at a slow pace”

cancellations and refunds for customers. We should be providing them information on the safety measures and places, hotels that are safe so that they may become more confident. Travel agents' role will be more vital, although everyone thought that with the internet coming in travel agents will go out of their business.

and cancellation policies, so as a travel agent we provided all this information to them to ensure that they are clear about the policies and conditions."

Upgrade technology to support agents

Some of the lessons learnt through the pandemic were

Corporate travel

► *GCC is a huge corporate market; they need somebody to look after their business. They come to the agent for credit as online they have to pay cash. Currently we are working with corporates in terms of repatriation flights.*

— Nasir Jamal Khan

► *Middle East cruise business will resume soon.*

— Jamal Abdulnazar

Efficient technology

► *We have to bring in new information systems and financial disciplines with efficient technology to control the business, retain customers and enjoy profitability.*

— Jamal Abdulnazar

► *Most important is changing the way we deal with our partners and vendors and customers. Travel agent services and technology will go hand-in-hand.*

— Tarique Khatri



Tarique Khatri
Executive Vice President Center of Excellence, Seera Group

“We carried out a survey in KSA with 3,000 plus customers, almost 70% of the participants expressed that they were confident to travel. Secondly, they were willing to travel to places that have health and safety measures in place”

Abdulnazar was confident that outbound will pick up at a slower pace with leisure and corporate travel taking more time to revive. "Currently customers are interested in places where health and safety takes first place. Travel insurance will

they prioritise on health and safety measures. "One of the top destinations Saudis like to travel to is UAE, I see a big jump, it is all a matter of opening the borders and starting flights, then Saudis will come to their favourite city."

Green Spain & Spanish islands explored



The final session in a tri-series webinar to promote the rich, beautiful and historical Spain was held last month. In this session, **Daniel Rosado Bayon**, Director of the Spanish Tourism Office in Abu Dhabi walked the viewers through the very interesting lush greenery areas in the Spain.

 Shehara Rizly

As Spain is now an open destination to foreign visitors, behind the scene, the authorities continue to implement all the necessary measures to ensure safety and hygiene for its travellers. First and foremost, Rosado updated attendees about the current situation in Spain, regarding tourists, measures taken, what they need to know to travel to the destination etc.

"Although these are unprecedented and challenging times, we are getting used to it and we are together in this and while we wait for travel and tourism to start to get back, from the Spanish Tourism Board we would like to



Daniel Rosado Bayon
Director
Spanish Tourism Office in Abu Dhabi

and the north of Spain. But before that let me provide some basic information about the destination. First of all, Spain is located in the south western part of Europe, surrounded by France in the northeast and Portugal in the west, Mediterranean sea in the east and Atlantic ocean

– its landscape; its climate; its good weather and more than 5,000 km of coastline. We have more than 300 heritage sites, with lively street ambience, world-class cities and historical towns. Shopping is amazing with a choice of international brands and Spanish designers, VAT refund from the first Euro and long opening hours. Also, in the current situation we have flights from UAE to Barcelona and Madrid from Emirates and Etihad as well as from Qatar Airways. And, we expect connectivity to increase progressively.

An unforgettable experience

Another video explained the Spanish travel experience and what makes this country one of the most visited destinations in the world. Spain welcomed more than 83 million travellers in 2019, and in recent years Spain has doubled its arrivals from the GCC region from 119,000 travellers in 2014 to 240,000 in 2018; there's still great potential for growth from this region. So what makes Spain a key destination from the GCC? In Spain we welcome travellers who enjoy our diversity, love our warm hospitality and share our zest for life. We have an excellent climate throughout the year, for a warm summer in December and January you could go to the Canary Islands where it's

an average of 18 - 24 degrees Celsius; if you want to stay cool in the summer months, visit the evergreen north of Spain from snow-

here. The most Mediterranean way to enjoy it is to sail from island to island, or visit the more private coves by yacht. All the islands

perfect place to go. The regions of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country, in northern Spain, are home to some of the



capped mountains to rain forests or beaches to deserts, a metropolis to the rural countryside.

Thereafter Rosado took the viewers through an interesting journey of the greener areas in northern Spain and the many islands.

Journey through greener areas

The Balearic Islands are a Mediterranean paradise. A wonderful place to relax, with every modern comfort; luxurious resorts, exclusive marinas, natural settings that are easy to explore, beautiful coves and a clear turquoise sea. It's easy to see why this is a favourite destination for international jet setters, with actors and athletes from all over the world choosing to holiday



have exclusive marinas with large shopping areas and renowned restaurants.

The Canary Islands, to the south of the Iberian Peninsula and of volcanic origin, is a place to enjoy a perfect climate with warm winters and mild summers – perfect for a fabulous holiday any time of the year. They offer paradise beaches with green sceneries, great nature, amazing gastronomy and history.

For countryside lovers "Green Spain" will be the

most valuable and best-conserved ecological areas in Europe. These are landscapes full of contrasts, with salt-water rivers, unspoiled beaches, charming villages and extraordinary nature reserves with endless green... Gastronomy is fabulous and there are regional capital cities with a very special charm.

"Spain is reopening to tourism and soon visitors from the GCC countries will be able to come back and enjoy a fantastic and safe Spain," concluded Rosado. 

“Spain is reopening to tourism and soon visitors from the GCC countries will be able to come back and enjoy a fantastic and safe Spain”

use this time so that we can educate you about Spain and help you to discover all it has to offer," stated Rosado. He showed a video that sent a message that Spain will wait for the visitors. He said that it was the third video that was made, which gave a more positive outlook as Spain is opening up.

Popular in summer

Rosado shared, "Today we are focusing on the islands

in the south. Many different climates throughout the country, throughout the year make it an ideal all year-round travel destination. Summer is very popular as the weather is very mild, Canary Island has good beach weather all year long. The language spoken is Spanish, but English is understood everywhere, and it is easy to move around. So, there are many reasons to visit Spain

Singapore Tourism connects partners

The maiden virtual roadshow will be organised by Singapore Tourism Board on August 31, 2020. **Beverly Au Yong**, Area Director, Singapore Tourism Board, Middle East shares with **TRAVTALK** the importance of connecting the regional stakeholders with Singapore service providers for business and networking opportunities.

TT Bureau

What are the main objectives of organising this virtual trade roadshow?

We aim to connect local and Singapore based travel stakeholders with Singapore service providers for business and networking opportunities. Another objective is to maintain market presence and continue to strengthen our relationship with travel trade partners. We will be organising two sessions of the virtual roadshows, one on August 31, 2020, and another in January 2021.

Who will be your target audience?

The first roadshow will focus

on outbound travel agents/tour operators from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain while the second roadshow will be focused on MICE intermediaries.

What is the theme and concept for the roadshow?

The roadshow is part of Singapore Tourism Board's regional B2B engagement effort, under the theme #UnitedWeStand with focus on the GCC countries. It aims to provide one-to-one

networking and foster business opportunities for the local travel trade stakeholders with Singapore service providers. This platform will also allow the Singapore service providers to share the key initiatives taken by their organisations, under the government's directive, once the borders are open for international visitors.

How will one register for the event?

The registration will be open for travel trade stake-



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director
Singapore Tourism Board, Middle East

holders managing outbound travel services from the GCC countries on a first come first service basis. Interested outbound agents will be able to register their interest to meet a selected set of Singapore service providers on the registration link www.stbvirtual-

roadshow2020.com published and promoted on TravTalk Middle East B2B platforms. Each agency is allowed a maximum of two attendees. The local agents who are able to secure the highest number of virtual meetings will also get a chance to win exciting gifts.

How many buyers and sellers will be present?

We are expecting over 120 quality buyers from the GCC countries to virtually network with 10-15 Singapore service providers in the respective virtual roadshows.

What are the expectations from this event?

We aim for a seamless and productive networking

event which will be beneficial not only for our stakeholders in Singapore but will also help strengthen our relationship with the regional travel trade partners.

Are there any safety measures in place?

Launched in February 2020, the SG Clean campaign seeks to rally stakeholders and members of the public to adopt good hygiene standards and transform cleanliness level of public spaces in Singapore. An important component of the campaign is for an establishment to receive the SG Clean quality mark which requires organisations to commit to sector-specific sanitation and hygiene checklists to safeguard public health. 🇸🇬

Visa application from the safety of your home or office

With our optional **Visa At Your Doorstep** service, you can complete your entire visa application process from submission to delivery of your passport from the comfort and safety of your home or office.

For our well-trained team of professionals visiting your location, your safety is the top priority and they follow the highest health and safety standards based on guidelines from WHO and local health authorities.

Visa At Your Door Step benefits

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Available on all working days |  Personalized attention at every step |  Thorough sanitization of kit before every use |
|  Applicable for individuals & groups |  Courier return of passport and documents |  Complete adherence to WHO and local health & safety guidelines |



For more information, **EMAIL: UK:** ukvisaondemandgulf@vfshelpline.com

Schengen: schengenmbs@vfsglobal.com | **Non Schengen:** vayds@vfsglobal.com | **VISIT:** vfsglobal.com | **SCAN**



Disclaimer: Please note that the availability and the service charges for the above mentioned services may vary depending upon the country/location where it is procured. Available on visa applications to select countries. The grant or refusal of the visa is at the sole discretion of the Embassy and availing any of the above value-added service/s will not affect the processing time or decision of your visa as VFS Global is neither involved in the process nor is liable or responsible in any manner whatsoever for the grant or rejection of the visa application of any customer by the Embassy. For further information on the same, kindly refer to the VFS Global website. The above mentioned services are optional and will be charged in addition to the visa application fee. The customer hereby accepts and confirms that they, prior to availing the above mentioned services, have read, understood and agreed to be bound by, without limitation or qualification, all of the terms and conditions associated with the services. | Statistics as on 30th June 2020.

Technology to reshape the industry



Technology started playing a pivotal role over the past few years across the globe and the processes in the travel and tourism sector changed rapidly. Today, during the time of the pandemic, it has been put to test like never before by all industries. **Mamoun Hmedan**, Managing Director, MENA and India, Wego shared his views with **TRAVELTALK**.

Shehara Rizly

Could you share how technology can reshape post COVID the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors?

In the times of COVID-19, technology is playing a significant role in reshaping the travel and tourism industry. Tourism boards and countries are relying on technology to promote their destinations in the midst of coronavirus to inspire travellers and keep their interest in the destination alive until travel resumes. From virtual experiences to interactive maps, quizzes, and tours, travellers can

dream now of the destinations and travel tomorrow.

At Wego, we're bringing content to our users in the comfort of their homes until it is safe to travel again. We are providing inspirational and informative content on our blogs and social media channels as well as providing travellers with the latest information on travel restrictions to keep them updated.

Researches show that around 70 per cent of people expect to see an increase in the use of mobile devices and apps to assist the passenger journey. We will see more investment from airlines, airports, and hotels in technologies such as touchless biometrics, self-service, automation, mobile devices and apps.



Mamoun Hmedan
Managing Director
MENA and India, Wego

Will there be robots who will serve clients?

A lot of countries are discussing the possibility of having robots to test travellers at the airports and ensure social distancing at public places. Despite the number of trials being announced, studies show that only 27.4 per cent of people

“Researches show that around 70 per cent of people expect to see an increase in the use of mobile devices and apps to assist the passenger journey. We will see more investment from airlines, airports, and hotels in technologies”

anticipate the use of robots for customer service tasks.

Will there be a different way for travellers booking their vacations now?

Travellers will book their vacation slightly differently now. They will look to more contactless hotel stays using smart technology and ensuring the highest safety and health measures are adopted by the operator. The destination they book will also depend on the quarantine rules and COVID-19 cases in the desired attraction.

Where do you see technology in the next two years?

In the latest Arabian Travel Market event, it was revealed that messaging platforms will be a key tool for travel and hospitality brands to interact with consumers. Tourism, travel companies, and hotels are using AI to accurately and continuously sort through data. AI helps companies draw conclusions about business performance as well as trends associated with customer satisfaction, and even intelligently manage inventories.

Stronger together with TBO Holidays

The travel industry is currently facing the worst of times, yet industry specialists are taking steps to ensure that the rebound will incorporate a better outlook. As Dubai opened to international visitors, hope sets in; **Gaurav Bhatnagar**, Founder, TBO Holidays share his views with **TRAVELTALK**.

Shehara Rizly

What were the main issues you faced during the lockdown?

The first and foremost challenge was ensuring safety of our employees and enabling them to work from home. The other major issue was handling tens of thousands of refund requests that we got from our travel agent partners. We set up a separate team dedicated to COVID refunds which worked 24/7 to ensure we get maximum refunds done in time.

How did you keep the clients engaged?

We launched our “Stronger Together with TBO” cam-

paign. This was an agent outreach programme where we launched a series of courses, webinars, and panel discussions on TBO Academy. The idea was to ensure that our travel agent partners were constructively engaged during the lockdown.

Currently what are the main areas you focus on?

We have built a very extensive domestic product for our key source markets globally. We are also preparing two new products for launch. PAXES is our corporate self-booking tool which will allow corporates and

TMCs to completely automate their travel management process. And, our religious travel product will be unveiled as soon as Umrah opens again.

What is your opinion about Dubai opening for international visitors?

WTTC has recognised Dubai as a safe destination, giving the city a Safe Travels stamp that validates the stringent hygiene and safety protocols that the city has put in place. The WTTC endorsement further enhances the worldwide efforts of Dubai Tourism to encourage travellers to make



Gaurav Bhatnagar
Founder
TBO Holidays

Dubai their destination of choice. It is too early to expect tourists in large numbers, however Dubai's Summer Surprises has been a key event in the city's annual calendar and is likely to focus on local and regional visitors in the short-term.

At TBO Holidays, we have witnessed a gradual pick up from the local market in the past few weeks and are hopeful that regional and international travel will resume as Dubai takes cautious measures to open up its borders for travel. Recovery will be in stages; however, we are expecting some form of recovery to start from October 2020 onwards in time for Dubai's peak season.

Could you share some of the strategies employed by TBO Holidays as Dubai opened for visitors?

We have introduced a country specific COVID-19 information section to help travel agents review and educate their customers on safety measures and guidelines implemented in the UAE.

“Recovery will be in stages; however, we are expecting some form of recovery to start from October 2020 onwards in time for Dubai's peak season”

Reviving tourism amid crisis



Session
2

In current times, some countries are slowly opening out for international tourists with health and safety standards in place. The tourism boards are now working on plans to ensure that the right message is sent out to the travellers which will help them regain their trust and confidence. Key speakers representing Germany, Spain and Thailand discussed the new rebranding and repositioning policies in the second session of TRAVTALK Digital Conclave II.

At a time when the industry is trying its best to bounce back, one of the key elements necessary is to communicate to the travellers the efforts and hard work that have been put in by the relevant authorities to ensure a safe destination. Every tourism board has been implementing their own standards as regulated by the government authorities.

Communicating with the industry and customers

Yamina Sofo

Director – Sales & Marketing, German National Tourist Office, Gulf countries

"It is important to communicate with each other, to share opinions and share ideas and to see how we altogether pull on one string to get us all out of this crisis. It affected the tourism industry as one of the first and hardest hit, every destination has felt the impact of the crisis. Germany has done a tremendous job in handling the crisis, based on our research, feedback and surveys we are on a high ranking of our standards. Over the last few weeks our partners in the industry have implemented the necessary hygiene, distance rules, they have updated and upgraded their products according to the new standards so the destination itself is very well prepared now to welcome back tourists from all over the world."

Pichaya Saisaengchan
Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai & The Middle East Office

"The COVID situation disrupted the tourism industry but what we are doing now along with our partners is to ensure that we can bounce back with necessary precautionary measures. The tourism industry is adjusting to a set of new norms as travel restrictions start to ease. Health control requirements will become just as necessary as long-standing security protocols, with hygiene becoming a major factor."

Daniel Rosado Bayon
Director of the Spanish Tourism Office in Abu Dhabi

"What we can see today is that the industry is experiencing constant changes, as the situation and circumstances are evolving constantly and that allows us to be more flexible and change the approach to the reality we are living. As the customer priority shifts we must change with them. We must adapt to the demands like trust and confidence at this point of time. These are the ingredients for recovery. We must make our destination secure and safe and we must communicate it to our customers. When the customers see that the destination is safe again, they will regain trust and confidence and we will start to see recovery. So, what Spain has done in these last few weeks is

that we are open to some countries since July 1, some European countries but GCC will not be able to travel, however we will see

for the latest updates." She went on to state the many safety measures that they will be communicating with their B2B partners.

veloping with their industry partners. On a regular basis they inform the many standards of safety not just of the hotels and destina-

the moment, travel entry into Thailand is restricted to 11 traveller types such as business travellers, government diplomats, and travel-



Yamina Sofo
Director – Sales & Marketing,
German National Tourist Office,
Gulf countries



Pichaya Saisaengchan
Director of Tourism Authority of
Thailand (TAT) Dubai & The Middle
East Office



Daniel Rosado Bayon
Director of the Spanish Tourism
Office in Abu Dhabi

“Germany has done a tremendous job in handling the crisis, based on our research, feedback and surveys we are on a high ranking of our standards”

them soon. We keep communicating that we are a safe destination to travel."

Keeping the industry updated

Sofo recommended that they have the regular updates and the B2B partners need to check them as often as possible and in terms of the tourist office in the Gulf, they too will be sharing the necessary information. "We have updates every two weeks and want the industry professionals to keep checking

“Health control requirements will become just as necessary as security protocols, with hygiene becoming one of the top factors”

Currently the main concern is to ensure that the whole traveller journey is safe and the standards are maintained so as a tourism office, this is the work that is carried out by sending out the message, communicating safety measures that they have taken.

Saisaengchan stated that the GCC expat market is very important for them and constitutes between 25-30 per cent of travellers from the GCC, which they are continuously de-

“As the customer priority shifts we must change with them. We must adapt to the demands like trust and confidence at this point of time”

tions but also of the attractions. Rosado said, "People want to travel to have fun, relax and have a good time, now all that is possible. Now when we go on a holiday we have to wear masks and follow the rules implemented by the destination that you will visit. Spain has implemented 21 guidelines for tourists which will ensure their safety and security. We have to adapt to them."

Visa regulations

Saisaengchan shared, "At

lers who require medical treatment in Thailand. Visa requirements remain the same, however visitors who fall under the approved traveller category require a health certificate clarifying no risk of COVID-19 and issued no more than 72 hours before travelling, as well as a health insurance policy with COVID-19 coverage. Travel updates can be found on tatnews.org. In terms of the Schengen visa the regulations will be conveyed by the EU stated Sofo and Rosado.

New league of hotels



The second session of the virtual conclave had three speakers from the hospitality industry – **Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer**, Chief Operating Officer, Shurooq; **Alexander Suski**, Associate Vice President Sales & Marketing, Millennium Hotels & Resorts Middle East, Africa and Turkey; and **Philip Wooller**, Area Director – Middle East & Africa, STR.

 Shehara Rizly

The government of the UAE issued various precautions, safety regulations and measures to provide a good experience for their clientele. After almost two to three months of lockdown, customers will be looking for something new, they will look out for a different experience, opined the three speakers.

New protocols in the industry

Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer, Chief Operating Officer, Shurooq, shared, "Tourism plays a key role in GDP and some countries are totally dependent on tourism and what has come, has come to us without any notice and there are lot of lessons that we have learnt."

Alexander Suski, Associate Vice President Sales & Marketing, Millennium Hotels & Resorts Middle East, Africa and Turkey, said, "if you look at hospitality industry, two major things are already there; the health and safety protocols everywhere and secondly how travel industry; travel agents, airlines and hotels will look at the fixed costs. These are the two things right now. If you look at health and safety protocols, we work with only the best in this region. As we look at the guest journey it is going to change and the routine will change too. If you look at F&B, it will change for the better. In the hotel industry procurement is also changing. There will be changes in hotels, airlines and travel agents as well."

Philip Wooller, Area Director – Middle East & Africa, STR, stated, "We are in a way in a fortunate position to report about the hotel industry worldwide, as we collect hotel performance data across the globe for over 80,000 hotels. For the past three to four months, we have been supporting the hotel industry as much as we can and giving them as much information as possible about what is happening. We know that the virus started in Asia, interestingly we've seen some sort of developments and occupancies beginning to build and we see demand coming back to some of the cities. We are certainly not out of the woods, but the important thing is we can talk in detail about what is happening, and I can share a little bit about this region and beyond."

New trends

On the new trends, Al Qaseer commented, "Tourism sector is definitely the sector that has been affected the most in this COVID situation, people are banned from travelling, MICE and other industries have been affected. A lot of things will change but I'm a positive person and feel that things will slowly go back to normal. Interestingly there is a shift right now, we had a partial and full lockdown in UAE and what we learnt from that is, people are still not sure, some are okay with going out and some are still scared to venture out until a vaccine is developed."

But we have noticed during the lockdown that we have a unique hotel structure. We have something called the Sharjah Collection that consists of three hotels; one of them is located in the East coast among the mangroves in Kalba with 22 separate villas with their own pools; another hotel is located in the middle of the desert in the beautiful Al Badayer Oasis that consists



Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer
Chief Operating Officer, Shurooq

“During the lockdown we were pleasantly surprised as we received an average occupancy rate of 60% with a very high ADR which was strange at that time”

of 15 rooms; and the third hotel is linked to the archaeological site with five rooms. All are unique experiences and during the lockdown we were pleasantly surprised as we received an average occupancy rate of 60% with a very high ADR which was strange

at that time. But, during the lockdown people had the chance to go out, they wanted to go where they felt comfortable. And, in our hotels we have separate rooms, separate villas; we managed to get a lot of people to come to the hotel because they felt safe.



However, a lot of things change. It is the way you receive people. We had to restructure because today you need to have less interaction with guests. The way you deal with guests is different as you need to adhere to the protocols and government policies like checking the temperature, social distancing etc. You just show people how safe it is with social distancing and the health and safety protocols in place.

Guests will look at different experiences and the focus will be on boutique hotels. Looking at different experiences is what we are focusing on. We will continue with our developments. You

Updates

“It is all about reassuring people and we have a lot of bookings coming to our hotels until next year. Presently, we have both indoor and outdoor experiences.”

— **Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer**

“Development in the pipeline is in different areas in Dubai, Saudi, Africa and Turkey where we see the growth potential. There is a big chunk of hotel apartments and during the lockdown these functioned well.”

— **Alexander Suski**

“Development will continue once things start getting in place probably in about one or two years. However, hotels will still remain as a good investment in the region.”

— **Philip Wooller**

Session 2



Alexander Suski
Associate Vice President Sales & Marketing, Millennium Hotels & Resorts
Middle East, Africa and Turkey

“If you look at hospitality industry, two major things are already there; the health and safety protocols everywhere and secondly how travel industry; travel agents, airlines and hotels will look at the fixed costs”

need to make sure that you have less interaction with other guests. As humans we like to travel and I'm sure we will bounce back soon. It is all about reassuring people and we have a lot of bookings coming to our hotels until next year. We are not sure about which

countries will be open, so you need to diversify. Presently, we have both indoor and outdoor experiences.”

Continuous development

Wooler shared that the last 10 to 15 years have been busy but now things



Philip Wooler
Area Director – Middle East & Africa, STR

“We know that the virus started in Asia, interestingly we've seen some sort of developments and occupancies beginning to build and we see demand coming back to some of the cities”

will move at a slow pace. However, if you are on the road to open a hotel, you will open it but change the functionality. We need to get the airlines moving and there will be challenges temporarily, however things will improve.

Al Qaseer said, “As an investor will you put the money in hotels. We will still go ahead but look at boutique hotels' outdoor experiences in Sharjah, and adventure and eco-tourism. You can book your own activities with your family; the activities are safe and you can do them comfortably. Travelers are looking for new experiences and currently we are catering to the domestic market.”

Suski commented, “Development in the pipeline is in different areas in Dubai, Saudi, Africa and Turkey where we see the growth potential. There is a big chunk of hotel apartments and during the lockdown these functioned well. We kept our prices as there was a demand. In Dubai prices will not go up for the next one to two years. As Expo

Wooler added, “When we were at our worst point, in China it dropped to 6 or 8% for occupancy in 250,000 rooms. Now China has 49% occupancy, that is, a huge domestic market. They are averaging 35% occupancy. Europe and Africa had it tough. Development will continue once things start

getting in place probably in about one or two years. However, hotels will still remain as a good investment in the region.”



The new normal

► I think the protocols will change from country to country and hotel to hotel as well as in terms of implementation of protocols from government entities. For example, at Millennium we are an international brand and we are reaching out to make sure that we have the right partners in place and the right set up. Every hotel is a personal experience, at Millennium we have touch points, technology will not go to robotics stage but it will play a vital role; there will be QR codes for F&B menus, and hotels will have key cards.

— Alexander Suski

► Since Sharjah Collection has more boutique properties that ensure social distancing and more outdoor spaces, this helped us gain the trust of the visitors. Access to rooms through technology will be the new normal.

— Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer

UK, a lucrative source market

► UK is an important source market for the UAE and likewise UK travellers enjoy the summer in the UAE and this year too once restrictions are lifted they will see an increase in the number of these travellers. Another key point was, for Dubai and Middle East from April to August are the months of summer so this year might see a better occupancy than last year in summer as now people are slowly moving out to explore and enjoy their movements.

— Philip Wooler



Come as a guest and live as a family

Stay with us for as low as AED 99/ per night

The rate includes:

- 20% discount on laundry services
- Indoor pool & Gym
- Free Wi-Fi

Plus, get the following extra benefits:

- Breakfast, lunch and dinner boxes available at special prices
- Spa Services at additional charges
- Upgrade to suite room only for AED 75/ per night

Call +971 4 501 4451/453 or

Email at HA089-SL1@accor.com or HA089-SL4@accor.com

T&C: *Offer valid until 30th September, 2020. Minimum 30 nights booking required. The above mentioned applicable rate for Standard per room per night, inclusive of 7% municipality fee, 10% service charges, 5% VAT; and it is subject to Tourism Dirham Fee of AED 10.

**ibis
by
us**

3rd December street, Al Murooj Road, Jumeirah 1, P.O. Box 12232 Dubai, UAE
T: +971 4327 7031 - Fax: +971 4 327 0338

Tourism Breaking News

- Dubai announces new economic stimulus package worth AED1.5 billion
- UAE, Saudi Arabia, & Egypt showing consistent growth in global bookings: Sojern
- Movenpick Grand Plaza Media City partners with Culligan for health and safety role
- Seven Tides appoints Minor Hotels to manage Ibn Battuta Gate property
- DTCM appoints Claviger to drive growth from GCC and Egypt
- Two Seasons Hotel and Apartments Dubai obtains 'Green Globe Gold Status'
- Gulf Reps to represent international luxury Hotel Group 'Aman' throughout GCC
- Etihad to resume special passenger flights from Abu Dhabi to six destinations in India
- 756,640 domestic passengers passed through KSA airports: GACA
- Emirates to connect 50 cities by August

Cozmo back at work

As a Sharjah release announced that 50% of government employees in the UAE can resume work, Cozmo Travel started serving their customers with proper protocols of social distancing, wearing a mask while in the office and sanitising at intervals to maintain health, safety and hygiene.



Dubai welcomes international tourists

In the wee hours of July 7, Dubai gave a warm welcome to the first international visitors to arrive in the city after a lull in inbound travel. Passengers were greeted on arrival by Dubai International Airport staff, who gave them welcome kits containing mementoes provided by Dubai Tourism.



Safety protocols by Millennium Hotels

Under the large umbrella of the initiative, 'We Care. We Clean. We Welcome.', Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA has kept its guests well informed with regular updates on the current situation, we share some of the ways in which guests are able to stay safe.



Safety at Ramada by Wyndham Hotel Ajman

In keeping with the continued protocols implemented by the government of the United Arab Emirates and the hotel's prerogative to ensure customer satisfaction, safety and confidence, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman shares their methods of safety.



EVENT TALK

AUGUST 2020

Thailand Tourism Webinar
10 (Mon) 11 am-12 pm (UAE)
<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/154/2z71qc6p>

Singapore Tourism Virtual Roadshow
31 (Mon) 10 am-3 pm (UAE)
www.stbvirtuallroadshow2020.com

SEPTEMBER 2020

Amazing Thailand Virtual Roadshow
9 (Wed) 10 am-6 pm (UAE)
www.halathailandvirtualmart.com

German Tourism Board Webinar
21 (Mon) 11 am-12 pm (UAE)
<https://event.webinarjam.com/register/150/5v7qwi22>



Director
Sumera Bahl
Assistant Editor
Shehara Rizly
At the Desk
Smriti Kulshreshtha
Tripti Mehta
Neha Rawat

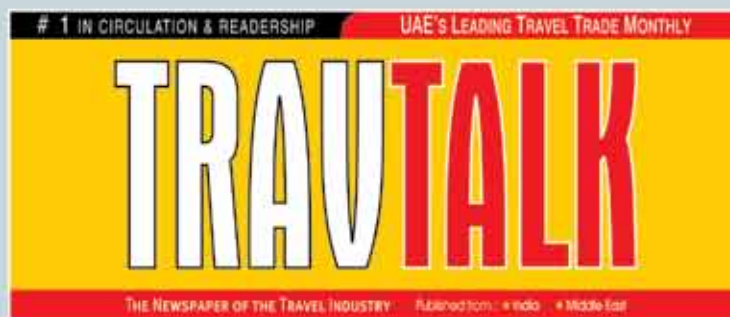
Business Development Manager
Crisna De Guzman
Sales & Admin Assistant
Angelito Villeza
Manager - Advertising
Gaganpreet Kaur
Design
Nityanand Misra

is printed on behalf of
Durga Das Publications (Middle East) FZE
at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd.,
C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110020
UAE : Z1-02, P.O. Box 9348, Saif Zone, Sharjah, UAE
Ph.: +971 6 5528954, Fax: +971 6 5528956
E-mail: uae@ddppl.com

is a publication of Durga Das Publications (Middle East) FZE. All information in is derived from sources, which we consider reliable and a sincere effort is made to report accurate information. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. The publisher regret that he cannot accept liability for errors and omissions contained in this publication, however caused. Similarly, opinions/ views expressed by third parties in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared by. However, we wish to advise our readers that one or more recognised authorities may hold different views than those reported. Material used in this publication is intended for information purpose only. Readers are advised to seek specific advice before acting on

information contained in this publication which is provided for general use, and may not be appropriate for the readers' particular circumstances. Contents of this publication are copyright. No part of or any part of the contents thereof may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publication in writing. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. An exemption is hereby granted for the extracts used for the purpose of fair review, provided two copies of the same publication are sent to us for our records. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action.

The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning any material solicited or unsolicited nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged. This publication is not meant to be an endorsement of any specific product or services offered. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw, amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the UAE and International Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by delayed publication, error or failure of an advertisement to appear.



DIGITAL OFFERINGS



For business development, contact:
Crisna Deguzman: +971 55 470 4200,
crisna.deguzman@ddppl.com, talk@ddppl.com

www.travtalkmiddleeast.com
www.travelvmiddleeast.news
www.tourismbreakingnews.ae



WEEKEND SUMMER ESCAPE

Indulge into a generous brunch at Marco's New York Italian followed by a relaxing stay at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr including breakfast at CuiScene and lunch at Poolside restaurant on the next day.

Boasting a prime location at the mainland gateway to the cosmopolitan city Abu Dhabi, Fairmont Bab Al Bahr offers easy access to Yas Island, downtown and Louvre Abu Dhabi. Discerning guests enjoy the quality of dining and leisure facilities, including private sandy beaches with spectacular views of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque.

For reservations or more information, please call us on +971 2 654 3333, email babalbahr@fairmont.com or visit fairmont.com/babalbahr

Fairmont
BAB AL BAHR