

Scan &amp; Share



# TRAVTALK



TravTalkMiddleEast.com

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

- |  |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|
| ■ Promoting 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' ..... | 06 | ■ Ireland focus on GCC market .....         | 11 |
| ■ Maldives kickstarts ME Campaign .....  | 09 | ■ Travel impact in the ME & Africa .....    | 12 |
| ■ Dubai's retail tourism bonanza .....   | 10 | ■ Healthy appetite for leisure travel ..... | 15 |

Media Partner



## Tourism Breaking News

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


[www.tourismbreakingnews.ae](http://www.tourismbreakingnews.ae)


# a resounding success

It was two days of non-stop meetings, extensive networking and understanding industry trends at the first-ever virtual Gulf Travel Show 2020. The event concluded with 6,000 one-on-one business meetings and 2,000 buyers from across the globe. Exhibitors, buyers and industry leaders share their views.



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa  
Chairman, SCTDA

“The Gulf Travel Show has been a crucial and inspiring event indicative of the tourism industry's ability to adapt, recover and move forward in these challenging times. It was a valuable platform to participate in, allowing us to reconnect with many of our stakeholders and to exchange information about the most up-to-date technologies driving the digital transformation and innovative solutions that are re-energising the industry while showcasing Sharjah's ever-evolving portfolio and new projects that are cementing the emirate's position as a global destination with a solid reputation for safety and security.”

“Congratulations on the recent Gulf Travel Show. It was a pleasure to have participated. I would also like to compliment the Gulf Travel Show team on the virtual platform you have used. It was by far the best I have seen of all the webinars I have linked in to over the last ten months. Well done! The Gulf Travel Show provided a platform for the travel trade fraternity to virtually connect with each other especially at this point of time when borders are yet to be opened.”



Gerald Lawless  
Former CEO Jumeirah Group  
and WTTC Ambassador

“Travel is all about building connections and being exposed to new things, and the Gulf Travel Show did a fantastic job of helping our industry do just that. I was honoured to host a discussion on how we can rebuild confidence; and it was truly heartening to see a great deal of that same confidence in the energy, engagement and eagerness to find new ways to bounce back which was on display throughout the entire event.”



Kathryn Wallington  
Head of Middle East and  
Africa, Travelport

“It is a great pleasure to be a part of region's first-ever virtual Gulf Travel Show as TravTalk Middle East brings together world-class speakers, attendees, and experts from the industry all under one virtual roof, connecting and building business relationships. The smart thinking and planning by the TravTalk team resulted in this extremely well organised event.”



Nasir Jamal Khan  
CEO  
Al Naboodah Travel



Ashu Gupta  
CTO & Co-Founder  
Technogram Solutions

“Technogram Solutions was pleased to be a part of the Gulf Travel Show. Technology has helped us overcome a lot of barriers, as seen through this virtual exhibition. Therefore, I cannot emphasise enough on the need of having a good technology partner for travel companies to take their business online. The overall theme of “Re-think, Re-engage, & Re-ignite Travel” had been executed sophisticatedly throughout the event. As India's leading Travel Technology solutions provider, we connected to a wide variety of audience who were looking to get their hands on robust technology.”



Imroz Uddin  
Group Director of  
Sales & Marketing,  
Lily Hotels, Maldives

“Overall, the event was organised in a very structured manner in terms of interface, technology, assistance on pre-scheduled appointments. We are very satisfied with the experience. Majority of buyers we interacted with were from the Middle East, Europe and UK. The buyers were looking for hotel contracting and it was a key opportunity and requirement from buyers. The event gave an opportunity to virtually connect with partners from the Middle East and other destinations over two days.”



Yamina Sofo  
Director - Sales & Marketing,  
German National Tourist Office

“It was a great pleasure for the German National Tourist Office Gulf Countries to take part at the first-ever Gulf Travel Show. This was a much needed digital platform where we were able to connect with our partners during the two days of the show and had many fruitful discussions and connections. Apart from that our participation in the special panel discussions gave us the opportunity to share with our partners the current status of destination Germany and the many protocols that are in place to welcome once the borders open for the travellers.”

# WORLD FIRST BEAR GRYLLS EXPLORERS CAMP NOW OPEN IN JEBEL JAIS, RAS AL KHAIMAH

As travellers across the globe navigate through the 'new normal', the opening of Bear Grylls Explorers Camp aligns seamlessly with travel experiences set in expansive, open and natural environments and that are curated for smaller groups with safety protocols and social distancing measures fully in place.

The survival courses, run by UK experts trained at the Bear Grylls Survival Academy, includes half-day (3 to 4 hours), 8 and 24 hour options designed for adults and families and team building activities for corporate companies. Participants will be exposed to practical and extreme survival techniques necessary to survive some of the toughest terrain in the wilderness.

[www.beargryllscamp.ae](http://www.beargryllscamp.ae)



@VisitRasAlKhaimah



[www.visitrasalkhaimah.com](http://www.visitrasalkhaimah.com)



  
**Ras Al Khaimah**  
Tourism Development Authority

# Malaysia shines at the GTS

One of the most proactive tourism boards in the region, Malaysia Tourism once again showed their prowess by presenting their most valuable offerings at the first-ever virtual event in the region, Gulf Travel Show. The partners share their experience.



Shahrin Mokhtar  
Director  
Tourism Malaysia, Dubai

“GTS 2020 proved to be a success in connecting buyers with industry players during this critical time. Tourism Malaysia is impressed with such a well-organised digital event and the smooth process of meetings with visitors. Having an assigned project manager for each exhibitor was a unique service that helped us a lot. It's a pleasure to be part of GTS 2020 and we are happy that our Malaysia hotels and tour operators took part at this professional business platform. Malaysia is looking forward to welcome tourists again soon and we are keen

to showcase our latest tourism products' updates for trade & media partners, where 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' is always a destination to keep in mind.”

“The Gulf Travel Show was better than we expected. We met quality buyers who showed immense interest in our destination. It was great to learn about their expectations and trends of the GCC market in the current scenario. It has been a great learning experience, which has given us an opportunity to plan ahead and welcome GCC guests.”



Olivia Ooi  
General Manager - Sales  
Desaru Coast



Fatmawati Mohamed Nor  
Managing Director  
JF Holidays Sdn Bhd, Malaysia

“The Gulf Travel Show was an awesome experience, although at first we were quite nervous and not knowing how it will work. Apart from the scheduled appointments there were many that came in as impromptu buyers, so we were quite busy. The buyers were interested to know what we could offer as current trends. Requirements are still the same, but we offer different trends of tours to them.”

“Overall, Gulf Travel Show is a good platform to revive and jumpstart the long hiatus of tourism industry players interaction, it does connect to some familiar business partners and new potential business contacts, approximately about 20-30 per day on schedule or walk-ins, most are by chatting on the message screen instead of video. Due to COVID-19, the need to communicate via online or virtual media is preferred and required for safety reasons.”



Faizal Iskandar Ghazali  
Director of Sales - Wholesale - Sales Department,  
Sunway Resorts Hotel and Spa

## Apply for a visa from a location of your choice

Submit your visa application from the comfort and safety of your home, office or any other preferred location in UAE with our 'Visa At Your Doorstep' service.

### Why choose the 'Visa At Your Doorstep' service?

- ✓ Experience the ultimate in safety and personalised convenience with the end-to-end visa application submission process completed at your preferred location
- ✓ Appointments available on all working days
- ✓ Service available in all cities across UAE
- ✓ Attractive packages for families and groups available
- ✓ Health & safety standards in compliance with World Health Organisation standards and local health guidelines - including sanitisation of all equipment and use of personal protective equipment by the team

### A simple, safe and convenient process:

- 1 Call or email us to book your appointment and complete payment of relevant fees
- 2 VFS Global team visits your preferred location at the scheduled time and date
- 3 VFS Global assists you with the full application submission process, including form checking, biometric enrolment, and scanning assistance
- 4 Processed passport delivered to your doorstep

Now also available at DIFC, Dubai!



VFS.GLOBAL

Visa At Your Doorstep

To book your appointment, Call: 056 5398601 or Email: [vayds@vfsglobal.com](mailto:vayds@vfsglobal.com) | For more information, Visit: [vfsglobal.com](https://vfsglobal.com)

Disclaimer: Please note that the service is currently offered for select countries. Availability and the service charges for the above mentioned service may vary depending upon the country/location where it is procured. The choice of location for availing the service may vary depending on the concerned Embassy. The grant or refusal of the visa is at the sole discretion of the Embassy and availing above value-added service 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 service is 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 service, have read, understood and agreed to be bound by, without limitation or qualification, all of the terms and conditions associated with the service. | Statistics as on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

64 CLIENT GOVERNMENTS

144 COUNTRIES OF OPERATION

225M APPLICATIONS PROCESSED

care4green

Your Safety Our Priority

# Reconnecting with partners

The first-ever virtual event, Gulf Travel Show, connected many inbound and outbound agents with partners from across the globe. Some countries have already opened to UAE nationals whereas some others are open to GCC. At the event, agents were able to connect with partners and discuss the latest in the travel arena while updating themselves with the new normal.



**Beverly Au Yong**  
Area Director  
Singapore Tourism Board  
Middle East

“Singapore Tourism Board is delighted to have participated in the Gulf Travel Show organised by TravTalk. The event gave us an opportunity to reconnect with our valued partners from the region and engage in many meaningful conversations with them. We also participated in some outstanding panel discussions, led by stalwarts of the travel industry. This show has brought together industry experts, world-class speakers and attendees from across the region under one roof, allowing them to engage, connect and better their relationship.”



**Leyla Mahmudova**  
Regional Manager – Middle East,  
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

“It is important nowadays to continue engaging with international partners. Due to the COVID-19 and travel restrictions which do not allow us to travel and participate at the exhibitions physically, virtual shows seem to be the best solution. Due to COVID-19, most of the trends are about 'safe travel'. The questions that I get mostly are about COVID-19, and what Azerbaijan is doing to secure safe travel, and of course SAHMAN (Sanitation and Hygiene Methods and Norms Programme) project.”

“Having an assigned Project Manager really made our participation easy. There was no hassle for both buyers and exhibitors. We had interesting meetings with buyers and received requests for Business Mutual Agreement for tourism revival. Most importantly, the Gulf Travel Show gave us the opportunity to present our plans and updates of our destinations to the global market. Almost 70 per cent of our meetings were from the Middle East, 20 per cent from Asia and 10 per cent from others.”



**Dwight Jaret Salac**  
Managing Director  
Pink Lily Travel, Philippines

“I must say, the platform was perfectly done. I would strongly recommend it moving forward for such events. However, the team was very supportive, and messages were sent when needed so the walk-ins picked up. Thank you all for an amazing event and I am looking forward to the next one.”

— Cluster Assistant Director of Sales, DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island, DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah and DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Corniche Hotel & Residences – Q1 2020



**Gabriela Petra**



**Seema Pande**  
Head Elev8 Representation & Consulting (representative Universal Resorts in GCC and Middle East)

“Gulf Travel Show did not disappoint. The pre-set appointments were professionally selected, and the team assisted us in confirming relevant appointments. On the days of the show, the GTS team was present and hands-on in ensuring that appointments were carried out in a timely manner and were very efficient in driving footfall to our booth. Both days were filled with relevant appointments from all destinations with focus on the Middle East. The buyers were mainly looking for a better understanding of Maldives and the Universal Resorts portfolio. Some also asked for DMC recommendations.”



**Muhammad Idrees**  
Manager  
Saudi Wings Holidays Riyadh

“It was a lovely experience, we gathered a lot of information and had many fruitful discussions although hybrid, we will definitely achieve mutual goals. It was the first time that such an event took place virtually connecting many countries on one platform. The sessions in the auditorium were really good as we were able to listen to key industry personalities sharing their wealth of knowledge with the trade especially at this point of time.”

“GTS started off well with a welcome address by HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, SCTDA followed by a welcome by Raki Phillips, CEO of RAKTDA and a keynote from San Jeet, Director of DDP Group. It was reassuring to hear from industry veterans, sharing their valuable insights and thoughts on tourism recovery and the new normal. I was particularly interested in meeting with all the participating tourism boards to get updates on their destinations with regard to their travel guidelines, restrictions and opening dates and other future plans.”



**Namratha Rose**  
Travel Influencer

“Frankly the website was quite interactive, it was like walking through a real exhibition hall. The entire process was smooth and the options to chat, make calls, download the brochure and contacts were flawless. I had a good number of meetings I could attend on both days. Outbound travel especially to destinations like Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Azerbaijan are my key interests, so it was good to find them there. The COVID protocols were quite clear for the destinations and the participating hotels have assured us of the precautions they have taken for a safe environment.”



**Santosh George**  
Director – Business Development  
Yathra Travels



**Marko Muthig**  
Regional Director Sales Asia TUI  
Hotels and Resorts

“This is a new way of chatting for getting business and connections of the time being. I think the virtual show can keep people stay connected when we cannot travel to see or meet each other. We were able to meet and chat on virtual stand buyers from Middle East and other destinations.”



**Karim Nawar**  
Director of tourism - Areejalalo travel  
Saudi Arabia

“It was a great show, I met a lot of companies and listened to the sessions with key industry speakers in the auditorium. My interests were airlines, tourism bodies and DMC's and I managed to meet and network with them at the Gulf Travel show.”



**Kai Miethig**  
Certified tourist guide by Bahrain  
Tourism and Exhibition Authority  
and Member of The International  
Ecotourism Society Bahrain Chapter

“Congratulations! As a participant at the first ever virtual Gulf Travel Show, I was very impressed by the presentation, platform, show designed, entrance, hall, introduction and organization prior with meeting arrangements was an absolutely exciting experience. The different communication varieties included in the platform to exchange information, video clips of the exhibitors, download possibilities were very helpful.”

# Preparing hospitality for 2021

The inventiveness of the hospitality industry has been on show this year as businesses large and small have scrambled to adapt to the new world. As a productivity expert, here are some of the important things I think should help prepare us for 2021, says **Simon Hedaux**, Founder and CEO of ReThink Productivity.

## Cleanliness

Guests want to feel that they are safe. I've been reassured staying in hotels that publicise their COVID specific cleaning guidelines and I have also resorted to cleaning a kitchen myself, when staying in an apartment, with fingerprints over the units. My belief was visible prints means possible virus.

Efficiency minded venues have turned to new tech-

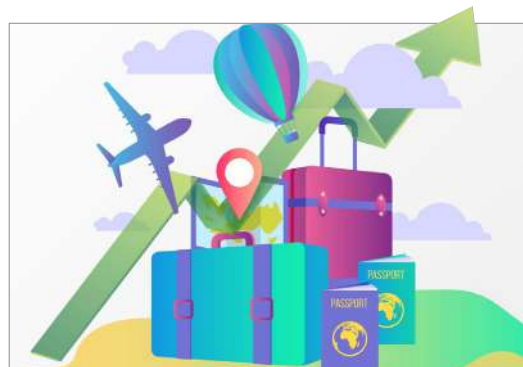
nologies to take on the extra cleaning. For example, some hotels are testing robot vacuum cleaners and back of house areas can use robot floor scrubbers. Application of a nano technology film to surfaces offers high cleaning standards, quicker cleaning times and fewer chemicals too. Cleaning is a significant cost, so developments that speed up housekeeping and cleaning are worth considering.

## Be flexible

I'm more likely to stay at hotels that have been understanding when I needed to change my plans. When the UK lockdown prevented my planned trips, one hotel group allowed me a full refund for my COVID cancellation. A second booking with a different hotel group returned only half of my booking cost. Guess which hotel I will choose when I next need a hotel room in London? Customer loyalty has always mattered in hospitality and I believe it always will.

## Match resources to workload

When cashflow is tight and the operation is changing,



it's the perfect time to look at your salary spend and team rotas. The best approach is to use a workload driven model that uses inputs like the number of rooms or tables occupied and work-study standards to plan the hours needed on each shift. Workforce management solutions offering colleague engagement modules proved an added benefit,

providing businesses a two-way communication route with their teams.

Adversity also brings opportunity. Use the enforced downtime to get decorating and maintenance jobs done without losing capacity at busier times. Look to revive food and event revenues by using outside areas for drive-in or socially distanced open

air and tented events. There is a pent-up demand for the new horizons that travel brings and the small treat that is eating out. Manage your business carefully now and get ready for the better times that will surely come.



**Simon Hedaux** is the founder and CEO of ReThink Productivity, a world leading productivity partner which helps businesses to drive efficiency, boost productivity and optimise budgets. In just ten years it has become one of the leading productivity consultancies – helping some of the world's biggest businesses get ahead.

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

“ Use the enforced downtime to get decorating and maintenance jobs done without losing capacity at busier times. Look to revive food and event revenues by using outside areas for drive-in or socially distanced open air and tented events ”

## Travel with confidence with eTravel Assistance!



Download the App



Get eTravel Alerts



COVID-19 Pandemic Assistance



And many more services..



Scan the QR code or visit [aetatune.amaglobalassistance.com](https://aetatune.amaglobalassistance.com) for more information.

\*Terms & Conditions Apply



in partnership with



AMA GLOBAL ASSISTANCE



# Promoting 'Malaysia, Truly Asia'

Middle East has been one of the key markets for Malaysia since time immemorial. Although the pandemic has temporarily suspended international travel, Tourism Malaysia is proactively keeping the trade and visitors informed of the many initiatives undertaken to return once the borders open. **HE Mohamed Hasril Abdul Hamid**, Consul General, Consulate General of Malaysia shares with TRAVTALK.

 Shehara Rizly

## What are initiatives taken by the Consulate to support tourism to Malaysia from this market?

The Consulate General of Malaysia Office, through Tourism Malaysia (TM) Dubai, continues to undertake initiatives promoting Malaysian tourism despite the current COVID-19 pandemic that has adversely impacted global tourism. During the pandemic, promotional activities has been done through digital means such as on-line webinars and social media campaigns.

## Among the promotional activities undertaken by TM office include:

- Online webinar with industry players and partners from GCC to share their insights about the

market trends and how it has been affected by COVID-19, as well as travellers' expectations and behaviour in the future when they plan for their holidays once borders are open. The webinar had provided a great opportunity for the Malaysian hoteliers & tour operators to learn valuable inputs for them to strategise once the market is open;

- Online training for the front liners to keep them updated on the Malaysian tourism products;

- Social media campaign during Ramadan this year to promote Malaysian cuisines, so that potential travellers would be aware of Malaysian food when they visit Malaysia. TM office had also collaborated with WEGO Middle East (the largest online travel marketplace in the Middle

East) and succeeded in engaging with huge social media audiences to watch cooking demonstrations by one of the Malaysian top chefs, Dato' Ismail.

## Malaysia is one of the most favoured destinations by the GCC mainly because it caters to the requirements of the travellers. What initiatives would the Consulate and the government take to ensure that family tourists will revisit the destination?

We continuously promote and position Malaysia as a safe family destination in the GCC with the branding of 'Malaysia, Truly Asia'. At this moment, we do not think that there would be a shift in the market segment, especially now as travellers feel safer and have more confidence in travelling with members of their family rather than with others.

ensure their safety. We hope through this confidence building, they would consider revisiting Malaysia when we reopen our borders.

The government also continues to provide updates on the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and status of COVID-19 in the country, as well as requirements to enter Malaysia, through various channels including media briefings, and postings on its social media platforms to ensure the public and potential visitors are kept abreast of the latest situation in Malaysia. For example, if you look at the government websites, they contain information with regard to the latest situation as well as the guidelines in place – from the management of COVID-19 procedures at point of entry, home assessment tool, and many other health and safety protocols.

We also understand that safety and hygiene will be on top of the mind of travellers or a family when they choose a destination for holiday. Therefore, it is very important for us to continue building confidence in travellers on Malaysia through various media engagements and social media postings on what the government and tourism stakeholders are implementing to

At the same time, our TM office also continues to engage with our industry players in Malaysia to ensure that they are well prepared to fulfil the needs of this market segment and always keen to strengthen their relationships with travel agencies in the GCC. This would eventually allow them to formulate, design and tailor-make the most attractive travel



HE Mohamed Hasril Abdul Hamid  
Consul General, Consulate General of Malaysia

“We continuously promote and position Malaysia as a safe family destination in the GCC with the branding of 'Malaysia, Truly Asia'. At this moment, travellers have more confidence in travelling with members of their family rather than with others”

packages that meet the market's needs.

## What are the safety and health measures the country is currently putting in place to prepare when the border opens for GCC or international tourists?

Currently, the Malaysian Government implements comprehensive and nationwide safety and health measures, as well as standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are in line with the international protocols and standards. These guidelines need to be followed by Malaysian

nationals, expatriates in the country and foreigners who are allowed entry into the country during Malaysia's Recovery Movement Control Order. This generally refers to expatriates with valid Malaysian working visas, student visas, and members of the Malaysia My 2nd Home programme.

All costs including the PCR tests and hotel stay (including meals) are to be borne by the individuals and payment has to be made before flying to Malaysia through the mobile app 'MyQR'. 🌅

## Updates

Under the current SOPs at the point of entry, for example, it is compulsory for all travellers who are allowed entry to Malaysia to download the mobile apps 'MySejahtera' and 'MyQR by MyEG' for contact tracing and payment purposes. PCR tests will then be conducted upon their arrival at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). They are also required to undergo 14-day quarantine at designated facilities/hotels determined by the government.



# Ireland presents its key offerings

Ireland became one of the most popular destinations mainly due to the famous movie 'Game of Thrones' which attracted many visitors to the destination within a very short period of time. The first in a series of two webinars for the GCC was concluded last month with a record number of participants, based on luxury travel to the destination.

 Shehara Rizly

Starting off the session was **Siobhán Naughton**, Marketing & Trade Executive Middle East & Asia Tourism Ireland. She gave a brief about the destination and the many offerings around the island. She reiterated that since 2018, UAE nationals were given the opportunity to travel visa free to Ireland and at the same time the short stay visa waiver scheme allows other GCC visitors who enter UK on the general C visit visa to also visit Ireland without an Irish visa and it is valid for a period of 90 days. However, the requirement to quarantine for 14 days was still in practice but she said that they will keep the trade informed if there was a change to the regulations.

Connectivity plays a key role in the promotion of any destination; the island of Ireland is well serviced by the main carriers in the GCC such as Emirates and Etihad as well as the other international carriers such as KLM, British Airways, Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa. Naughton explained that GCC travellers look for five main themes in the



**Siobhán Naughton**  
Marketing & Trade Executive  
Middle East & Asia  
Tourism Ireland

**Gillian Costelloe**  
Business Development Manager  
& Creative Planner,  
Emerald VIP Services

**Deirdre Purcell**  
Cluster Sales Director  
North America and Entertainment  
Markets, MHL Hotels

**David Wardell**  
Tourism Development Manager,  
Irish National Stud and Gardens

**Alison Johnston**  
Head of Tourism  
Kildare Village

destination; luxury experience, city breaks, coastal touring routes, golf experience and screen tourism. She further reiterated that screen tourism has placed Ireland on the map over the past few years. About 80 per cent of the Game of Thrones was screened in the destination, Star Wars was also screened there.

Speaking on the luxury aspect of the destination, **Gillian Costelloe**, Business Development Manager & Creative Planner, Emerald VIP Services was the next to share about their bespoke services. Established in 2011, the company consists of directors with a very strong background in corporate aviation. They are an in-

ternational transport and tour provider with a fleet of executive vehicles. They offer bespoke experiences in Ireland, UK and Africa. Their services include bespoke and creative itineraries, dual or tri destination offering, escorted or self-drive tours, commissionable or net rates, full or partial services, both luxury high-end and mid-range with centralised service offering. The private 'Riverdance' experience offers a demonstration from the lead dancer, travellers are given the opportunity to learn the history of Irish dance and receive a special gift. Travel is all about experience and most in the GCC prefer luxury with a touch of class and elegance and

the Emerald VIP services are definitely geared for it, concluded Costelloe.

**Deirdre Purcell**, Cluster Sales Director North America and Entertainment Markets, MHL Hotels introduced the many properties under its aegis in the destination of Ireland in Dublin and other areas much preferred by the GCC clientele. She mentioned some of the key well-known brands such the Intercontinental in Dublin, which is located just 25 minutes from the Dublin airport, others such as Westin and Powerscourt hotel resort and spa under the autograph collection are some of the key accommodation offerings by the MHL hotels.

ing the estate to explore the many activities offered to all ages.

**Alison Johnston** of Kildare Village presented some of the most interesting areas in Ireland to be visited by the GCC travellers. She is no stranger to the GCC market and most agents already work with her for tours to the Kildare Village part of the Bicester Village. She reiterated that there are many modes of transportation to get to the area and the high-end in-

## Updates

“GCC travellers look for five main themes in the destination; luxury experience, city breaks, coastal touring routes, golf experience and screen tourism”

— **Siobhán Naughton**

“Travel is all about experience and most in the GCC prefer luxury with a touch of class and elegance and the Emerald VIP services are definitely geared for it”

— **Gillian Costelloe**

“Westin and Powerscourt hotel resort and spa under the autograph collection are some of the key accommodation offerings by MHL hotels”

— **Deirdre Purcell**

“Many programmes are on offer to all visitors interested in different areas of breeding thoroughbred horses or visiting the estate to explore the many activities offered to all ages”

— **David Wardell**


“High-end international brands and the local brands are promoted throughout the year with great discounts as much as 60 per cent”

— **Alison Johnston**



**David Wardell**, Tourism Development Manager, Irish National Stud and Gardens shared details of the many programmes on offer to all visitors interested in different areas of breeding thoroughbred horses or visit-

international brands and the local brands are promoted throughout the year with great discounts as much as 60 per cent.

The webinar concluded with a quiz to be answered by the trade partners. 

# Exploring Berlin's diversity

Berlin apart from its famous wall memorials, diverse culture, lifestyle, unique products and brands that will not be available anywhere else in the world, also offers the best healthcare facilities in Europe. The recent Berlin Lifestyle and Healthcare webinar concluded with a very good number of participants from the GCC region.



'Lake Titisee ©Hochschwarzwald Tourismus GmbH'

 Shehara Rizly

The host **Yamina Sofo**, started off the session with the current situation in

shared some information about the destination as a whole – how it has become one of the most sought-after destinations for medical travel mainly

“The 16 Federal states in Germany have different or unique rules for each state, hence they should be carefully checked before sending the travellers on medical tourism”

— Yamina Sofo

Germany and requested to be on guard with the regulations that change every day due to the pandemic situation. She further reiterated that the 16 Federal states in Germany have different or unique rules for each state, hence they should be carefully

due to its state-of-the-art, modern and superior healthcare facilities.

Taking over from her was **Ralf Ostendorf**. He shared about the destination of Berlin and the many diverse offerings it has to entice the GCC

“Partners in Berlin specialise in various medical conditions and the network connects with patients to give a seamless experience to them as well as their family and friends that accompany them”

— Ralf Ostendorf

checked before sending the travellers on medical tourism. She requested to log into the site and find out details at this point of time. In her extensive presentation she

visitors, from the famous Berlin wall memorials, to uniquely Berlin products and brands that will not be available anywhere else in the world. He further reiterated the importance



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



**Ralf Ostendorf**  
Director Market Management Market  
& Media Relations Asia, Australia,  
Middle East, Berlin Tourismus &  
Kongress GmbH



**Stefan Boeckle**  
Director  
Vivantes International Medicine,  
Vivantes Hospital Group.

tients receive equal treatment which comprises high quality state-of-the-art facilities and the best medical practitioners and consultants. He further reiterated that he understands the necessities of the GCC travellers as he has already visited some of the private hospitals in Dubai and they are of superior quality, the same way as the Group.

the facility and how they treat their international patients from the point of a single inquiry. He emphasised that both local and international pa-

He further reiterated that languages spoken include English, Arabic, Russian and Polish etc. and that the hospital Group of Vivantes was


“Both local and international patients receive equal treatment which comprises high quality state-of-the-art facilities and the best medical practitioners and consultants”

— Stefan Boeckle

Finally, **Stefan Boeckle** shared the importance of



Lake Constance (Bodensee), Southwest Germany

renowned for its superior and high-quality medicine, four-star hotel experience, affordable healthcare with patient safety and wellbeing as the highest priority. These unique features have given them an edge over others and ensure a seamless healthcare and lifestyle experience for all medical visitors. 

# Maldives kickstarts ME Campaign

In adherence to the ongoing “Rediscover Maldives...the sunny side of life” campaign, Visit Maldives has started a radio promotion with Al Khaleejiya for the Middle Eastern region. The purpose of this two-week campaign is to promote the destination and the unique experiences available in Maldives.

TT Bureau

The campaign aims to inform prospective travellers from the Middle East about the safety measures that are imposed in the Maldives and ensure them that Maldives is a safe haven.

Al Khaleejiya is one of the most popular radio channels in UAE, and the highest ranking Khaleeji channel in the region. By utilising the channel's weekly reach of 480,000+, their exclusive audience of 379,000, and their week-end reach of 223,000 listeners, this campaign would reach out to Emiratis on a mass scale, aiming to create inspiration for choosing



Maldives as their preferred holiday destination.

With the reopening of major Middle Eastern borders, tourists are able to visit Maldives more frequently now. Thus, ef-

forts in the Middle Eastern market have increased in order to regain the market share and increase tourist arrivals from the GCC and the KSA region. This is carried forward by utilising campaigns such as the

joint campaign with dnata travel and promotions with Emirates Woman, targeting potential segments. Under the Rediscover Maldives campaign, a series of webinars were also conducted for

the travel trade of the Middle East market and other key markets.

The airlines operating from the Middle Eastern region include Emirate Airlines, Qatar Airways

and Etihad Airways. In addition to this, flydubai has started its operations to the Maldives on October 27, 2020. While tourist arrivals from the Middle East to the Maldives showed a 15.1 per cent increase, with a record of 60,003 arrivals in 2019, current arrival trends since the reopening positions the UAE market 3rd in terms of arrivals from the date of border opening.

Visit Maldives is currently conducting major marketing activities in key markets such as Global Campaign with CNN, integrated webinar sessions in China, and the recent participation in WTM Virtual 2020 in the UK. 🌅

# Philippines' beaches beckon

The Philippines offers innumerable attractions, beckoning visitors to its crescent-shaped beaches dusted with talcum powder-like sand; uninhabited tropical islands, lush impenetrable jungles bristling with unique wildlife, historic cities, diverse local cuisine & culture, and much more.



TT Bureau

The 27<sup>th</sup> World Travel Awards have recognised the Philippines as Asia's leading beach destination and Asia's leading dive destination in 2020. This is the Philippines' fourth time winning Asia's Leading Beach Destination and second time winning Asia's Leading Dive Destination. The award-giving body also declared the

Philippine Department of Tourism as this year's leading tourist board in Asia, besting 11 nominated countries. "We are truly honoured and thankful for the accolades given to the Philippines at the 2020 World Travel Awards Asia. These recognitions are certainly an inspiration to the industry as we safely and gradually reopen our destinations for tourism. These would not be possible without the combined

efforts from our tourism stakeholders, local government units, partner agencies, and our fellow Filipinos who have tirelessly promoted our country's attractions, products

and culture," said Tourism Secretary, **Bernadette Romulo-Puyat**.

This is the Philippines' fourth time winning Asia's Leading Beach Destina-

**“We are truly honoured and thankful for the accolades given to the Philippines at the 2020 World Travel Awards Asia. These recognitions are certainly an inspiration to the industry as we gradually reopen our destinations for tourism”**

tion and second time winning Asia's Leading Dive Destination, following a number of nominations for categories since 2006. In fact, this is also the second time for the Department of Tourism (DOT) to win Asia's Leading Tourist Board.

Both the Philippines and the DOT have the following remaining nominations under the World category:

- World's Leading



**Bernadette Romulo-Puyat**  
Tourism Secretary  
The Philippines

Beach Destination 2020: Philippines

- World's Leading Dive Destination 2020: Philippines
- World's Leading Island Destination 2020: Siargao
- World's Leading Tourist Board 2020: the Philippines, Department of Tourism
- World's Leading Tourist Attraction 2020: Intramuros 🌅

# RAKTDA to recognise frontliners

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) announced its collaboration with the Frontline Heroes Office to offer curated dedicated packages and benefits for frontline professionals as a sign of recognition for the key role they play in protecting the nation.

TT Bureau

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, RAKTDA took quick action and launched several support initiatives aimed at its hospitality, leisure and development partners to lay the strong foundations for the sectors' recovery. The Authority has now made strong strides towards achieving its recovery goals and aims to pay it forward to the nation's heroes, who made these achievements possible

by putting themselves on the frontline in service to the country and ensuring the population's wellbeing and safety.

As part of this programme, RAKTDA has secured the partnership of various tourism and hospitality entities in Ras Al Khaimah to offer a host of benefits, preferential rates and discounts to the UAE's frontline heroes when visiting the emirate. Partners include ToroVerde Ras Al Khaimah, Suwaidi Pearls, Adventurati



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

amongst others, through whom frontline professionals can avail experiences

and outdoor activities at discounted rates. Several hospitality partners across the emirate have also launched dedicated packages and inclusive offers to honour the country's heroes, and offer them a well-deserved chance to relax, recoup and re-energise. Hotel partners include the

Hilton Hotels and Resorts in Ras Al Khaimah, The Cover Rotana Resort Ras Al Khaimah, Marjan Island Resort and Spa and many more. "We recognise the immense efforts and dedication of our frontline heroes over the past year while ensuring the nation's safety and wellbe-

ing. We would like to take this opportunity to honour their commitment to this responsibility and show our gratitude through a series of dedicated offers and benefits that they can avail when they visit Ras Al Khaimah," said **Raki Phillips**, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority. He adds, "It is with great pleasure that we welcome the nation's heroes for a well-deserved break to enjoy the emirate's diverse entertainment and hospitality offering."

**“It is with great pleasure that we welcome the nation's heroes for a well-deserved break to enjoy the emirate's diverse entertainment and hospitality offering”**

# Dubai's retail tourism bonanza

Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE) has announced details of its comprehensive 2021 Retail Calendar, with citywide events, activations and experiences set to fully support the emirate's economic and tourist development goals. The calendar is packed with 15 festival campaigns spread throughout 2021.

TT Bureau

With this year's Dubai Fitness Challenge and Diwali already completed, plus the UAE National Day celebrations poised to begin, the announcement of DFRE's annual programme for 2021 reinforces the city's status as the premier destination for holidays as well as memorable lifestyle and retail experiences.

ly with the sector to help it reopen strongly, continue to drive sales and reinforce consumer confidence. This year-round support has empowered the entire retail community, from brands to malls and established a solid foundation for continued growth.

**Ahmed Al Khaja**, CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), said, "The announcement



**Ahmed Al Khaja**  
CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE)

We have learned many lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic; with the events of 2020 helping to shape a new focus on what is required to host major events in the months and years ahead. The new 2021 calendar offers a strategic platform of retail events, promotions and entertainment that will help to ensure Dubai stays safe and at the forefront of the world's important retail destinations.

Dubai's retail sector is an area of major economic importance, and by working closely with our strategic partners, we will continue to provide opportunities for sustainable growth and

2020 and concludes on January 30, 2021. The seven-week mega event will kick off with huge concerts featuring regional and global music superstars plus spectacular fire-

visitors. The calendar also includes initiatives built around dates and events that are important to the city's various communities but also welcome the full spectrum of nationalities



**“We have learned many lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic; with the events of 2020 helping to shape a new focus on what is required to host major events in the months and years ahead”**

Dubai's retail community received the full support of the government as well as key partners and stakeholders who all work close-

of a new, full, busy and exciting calendar of retail events in Dubai for 2021 is a positive indication of progress from this year.

development and achieve the emirate's retail and tourism objectives."

The 2021 Retail Calendar coincides with the 26th edition of the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), which begins on December 17,

works displays. The 2021 Retail Calendar features all of Dubai's favourite events, shopping festivals, family promotions, lifestyle activations, citywide sales and unique experiences that continually delight residents and attract

that call Dubai home, such as Diwali, Chinese New Year, Ramadan and Eid. Lifestyle events include the Dubai Fitness Challenge, the citywide health and wellbeing initiative, which grows in popularity every year.

# Ireland focus on GCC market

In their new campaign, Ireland will focus on luxury accommodation, attractions and experiences for the GCC market. On December 7, 2020 at 3pm UAE time, the second webinar will be conducted by Siobhan Naughton Marketing and Trade Executive Tourism Ireland with key partners from the destination.



**Siobhan Naughton**  
Marketing and Trade Executive  
Tourism Ireland

“In this special webinar for travel trade from the GCC & India you will learn about a lot of the amazing things that you can do on the island of Ireland when the time is right to travel again. We would like to showcase some of the fantastic accommodation offerings, amazing landscapes, uncongested open spaces and activities that are waiting to be enjoyed on the island of Ireland. We would like to target all travel trade who are interested in learning all about what the island of Ireland has to offer as a world-class tourist destination. These webinar sessions are extremely important in order to keep the island of Ireland front of mind with travel trade as an amazing destination for their clients to travel to when the time is right. Travel trade will learn about the COVID safety measures that have been put in place by Irish industry to ensure that visitors can enjoy their visit to the island of Ireland in a safe and secure manner. We mainly focus on luxury accommodation, attractions and experiences for the GCC market.”



**Eimear Lafferty**  
Leisure Markets Manager,  
Northern Ireland

“Titanic Belfast is a visitor attraction opened in 2012, a monument to Belfast's maritime heritage on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard in the city's Titanic Quarter where the RMS Titanic was built. It tells the stories of the Titanic, which sank during her maiden voyage in 1912, and her sister ships RMS Olympic and HMHS Britannic. The building contains more than 12,000 square metres of floor space, most of which is occupied by a series of galleries, private function rooms and community facilities.”



**Avril Collins**  
Marketing Manager  
Ireland's Blue Book

“Ireland's Blue Book is a romantic collection of over 50 Irish Country House Hotels, Manor Houses, Castles and Restaurants. These stylish hideaways are the perfect choice for your client's holiday in Ireland. Activities vary from golf, fishing, spas and cookery schools or just relaxing in comfortable surroundings.”



**Joe Shannon**  
CEO, G Golf  
Ireland

“I will present information on a selection of the luxury golf packages that we offer at G Golf Ireland. This will include our pitch video and information on the Legends Tour event in August 2021 at Rosapenna Golf resort, hosted by Paul McGinley. There are incredible opportunities for amateur golfers to play with high profile professionals. G Golf Ireland is the DMC for the event. I will also share more details on the marketing material on our Irish golf packages and our/Failte Ireland COVID Charter.”



**Siobhan Byrne Learat**  
Founder & CEO  
Adams and Butler

“After being a hotelier for 11 years in Killiney, she set up Adams & Butler, the first high-end travel company in Ireland. She is well versed in Arabic and Middle Eastern history hence she will be able to share a lot of insights about the travellers and their requirements.”

 **Tourism Ireland**

Diamond Hill

Learn about luxury travel to the island of Ireland and the safety measures that have been put in place to ensure a seamless customer experience when the time is right to travel again.

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Monday - 3PM UAE Time**

**Register Now!**

Scan this QR code to Register



# Travel impact in the ME & Africa

The uncertainty around travel, and the ever-changing restrictions as a result of the pandemic, continue to have a negative impact on the economy across the region. In the second quarter of 2020 the Saudi economy shrank by 7% and unemployment rose to 15.4%. Also, the Dubai economy may take until 2023 to recover to 2019 levels says the latest report by Sojern.

## Key Market Updates

United Arab Emirates (UAE) residents from specific countries, and tourists entering Dubai, are required to present negative COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests prior to their flight, or on arrival in the country. The

uncertainty around travel, and the ever-changing restrictions as a result of the pandemic, continue to have a negative impact on the economy across the region. For instance, in the second quarter of 2020 the Saudi economy

shrank by 7% and unemployment rose to 15.4%. It has been suggested that the Dubai economy may take until 2023 to recover to 2019 levels. In order to combat these negative figures, Dubai has introduced a one-year remote working visa for tourists, and Bahrain plans to ex-

tend visit visas for free until January 2021. Due to the restrictions on international travel, airlines have been hugely impacted by the pandemic, in most cases even more so than hotels and attractions. However, some airlines have

developed creative 'offers' to ensure safe, and easy travel. For example, Etihad has included the cost of a COVID-19 PCR test in its airfare for passengers departing from Abu Dhabi. This focus on safety is important in ensuring travellers

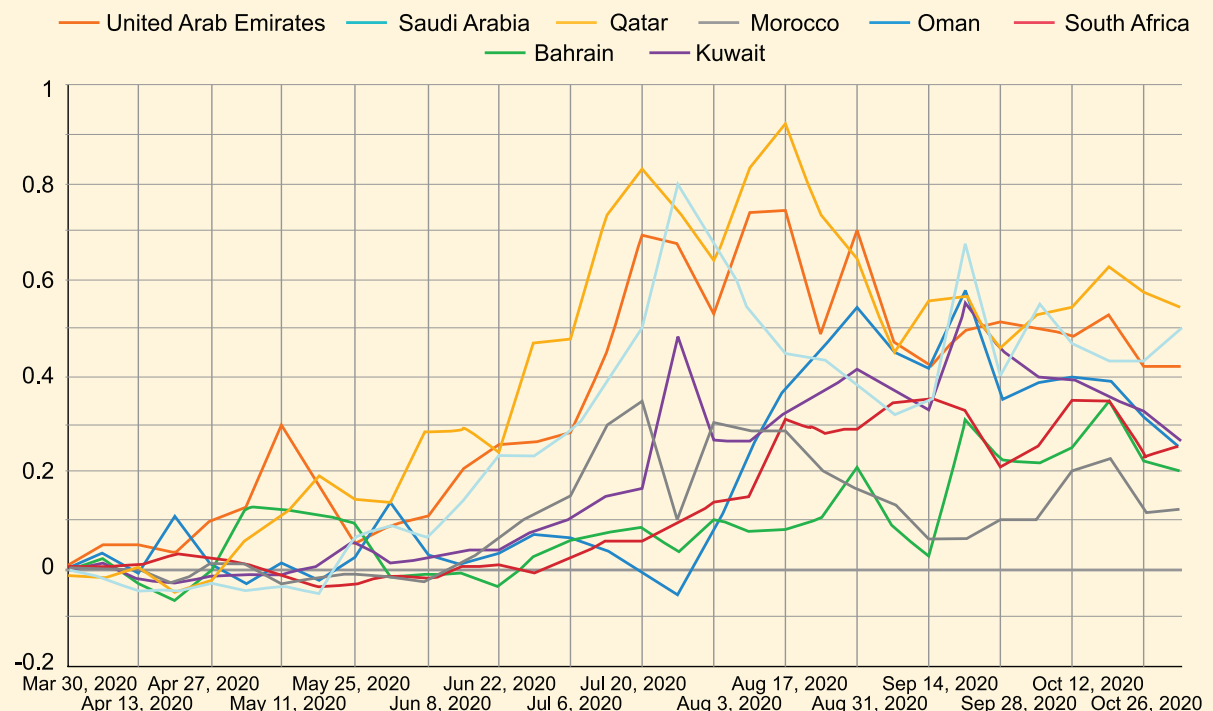
feel comfortable making longer trips again. However, while some areas are opening up and relaxing restrictions, others are still having to implement new ones. Oman recently ordered a two-week night curfew, closing all beaches.

## Global Travel Intent to the Region Remains Steady

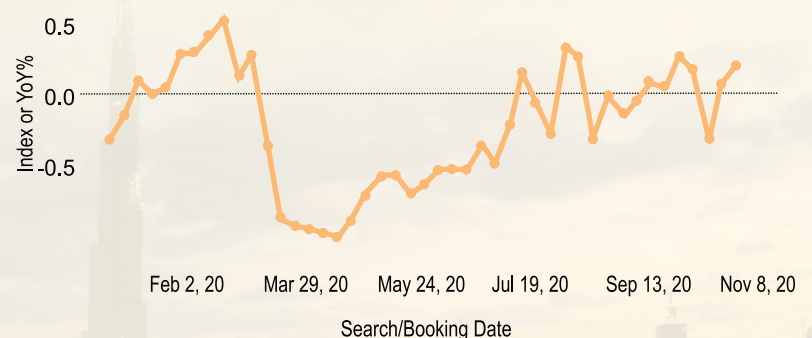
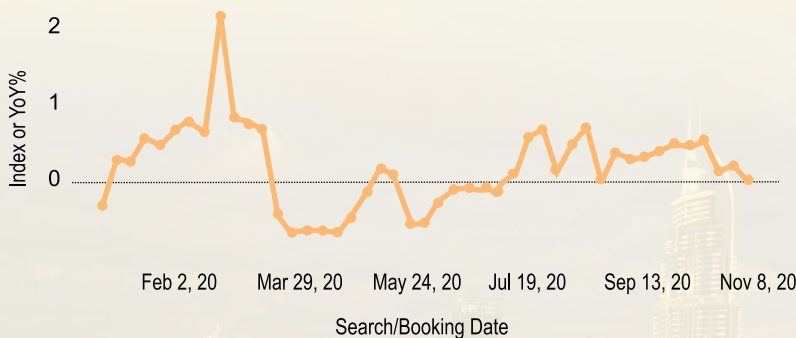
### Change in Hotel Search Volumes in Middle East And Africa - indexed to w/c 30th March

Observing our Sojern Real Time COVID-19 Travel Dashboard, by pegging the index back to the week of 30th March (the beginning of the recovery from the pandemic), we can see positive signs of increasing global travel intent into the region. Searches to the UAE are currently at an index of 0.42 year-to-date (YTD), which is a significant increase in intent since March.

Similarly, searches to Saudi Arabia have an index of 0.49, and 0.54 for Qatar, which is leading the pack in the Middle East and Africa in terms of recovery in hotel searches.

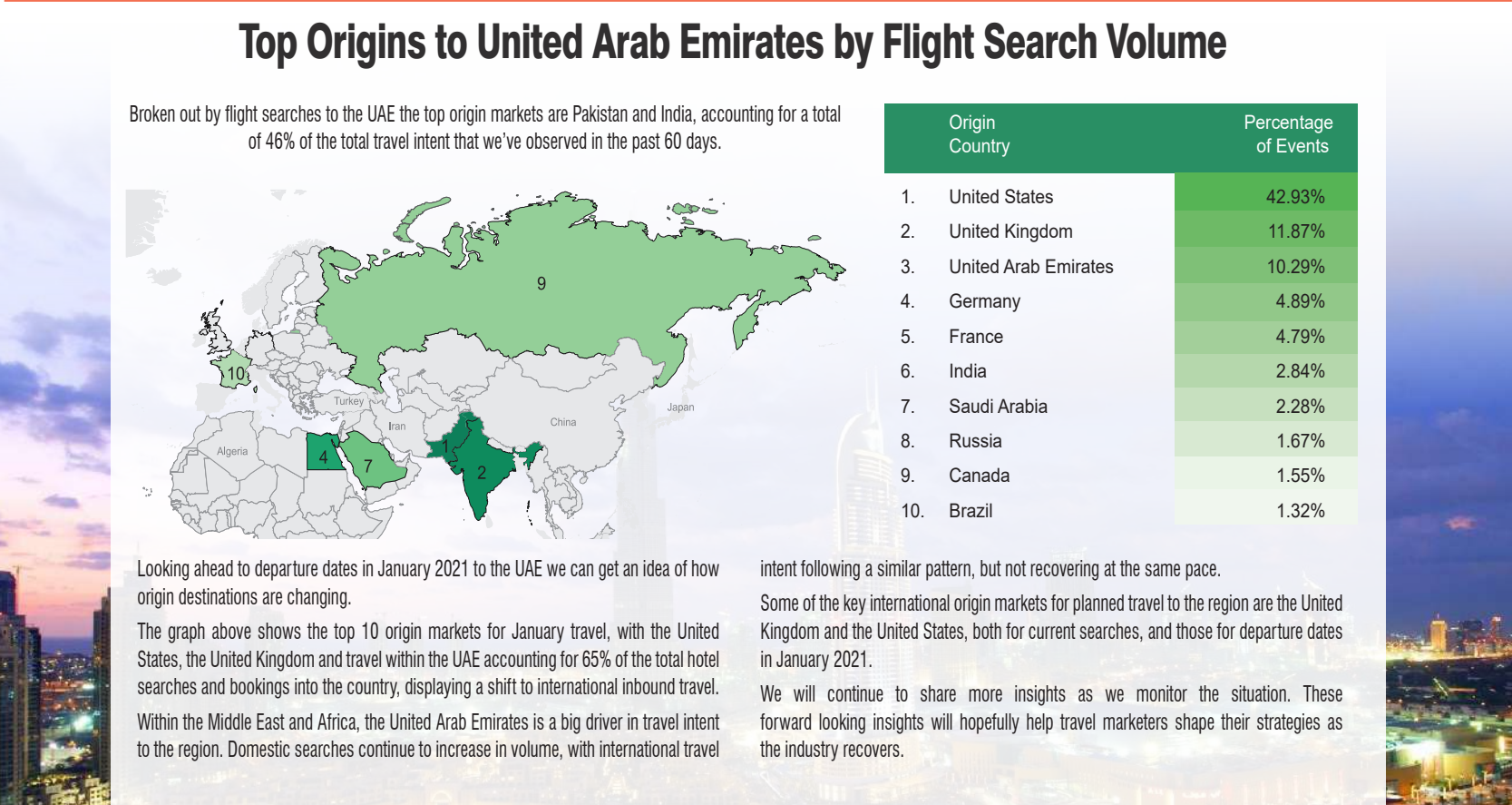
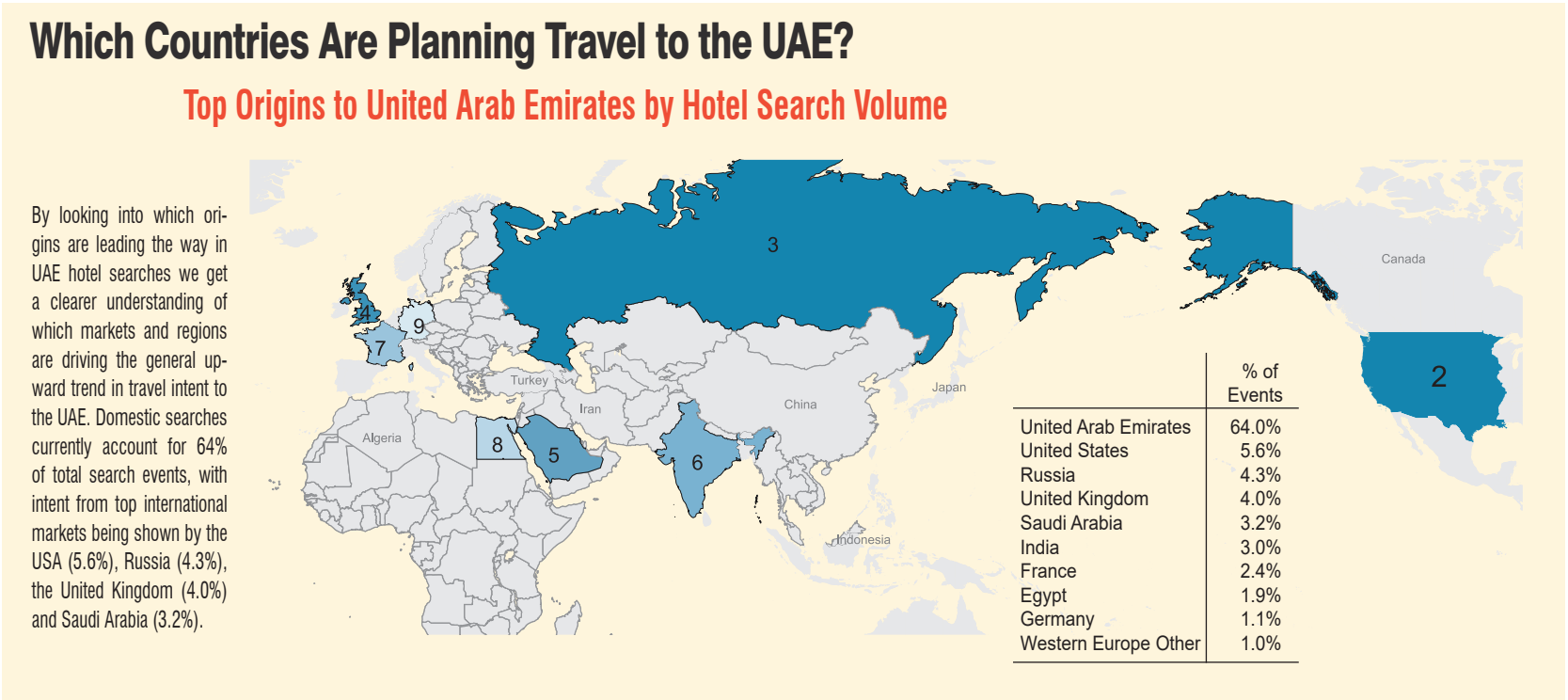
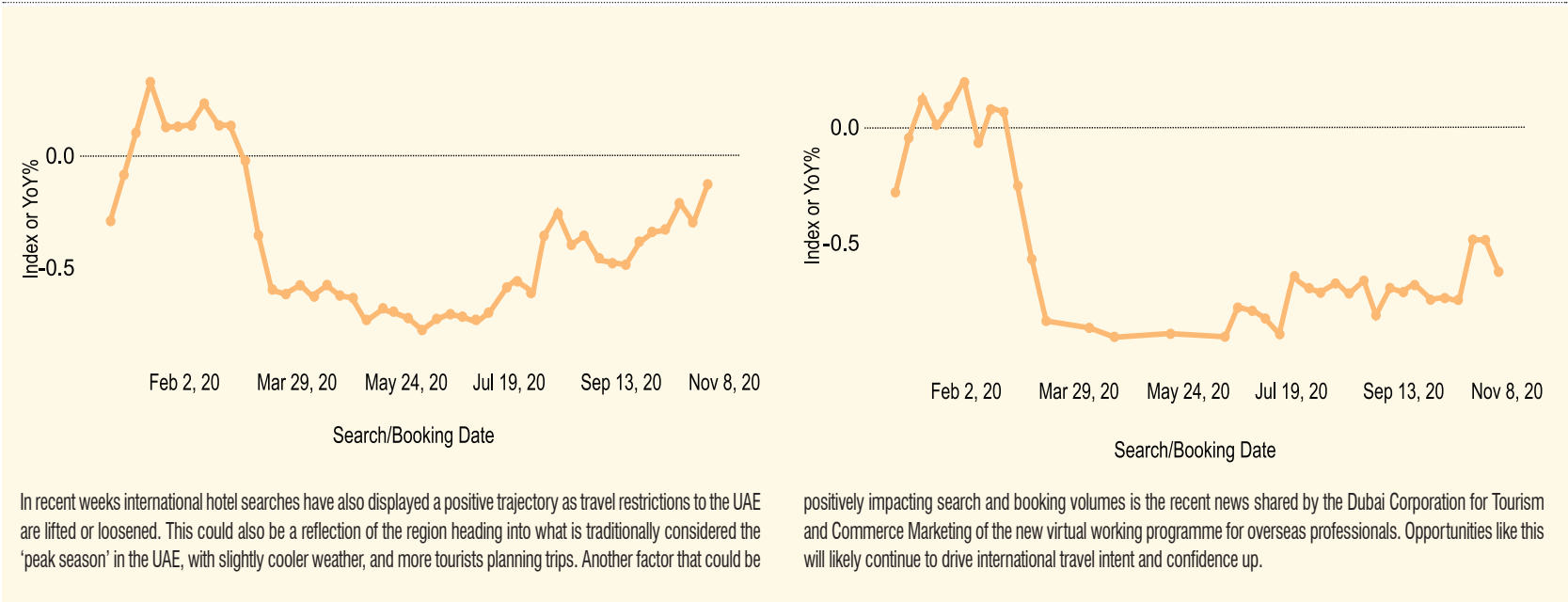


## UAE Hotel Searches and Bookings Continue to Increase



Albeit a gradual improvement, we continue to see positive signs of uplift in domestic hotel searches and bookings within the UAE. Year-over-year (YoY) domestic bookings in particular are looking healthy at 16% above 2019 levels.

This means that bookings are starting to look more similar to those experienced last year, which was consistently the case through February to March before COVID-19 hit. Since then, levels have mostly been down YoY.



# Digital ecosystem will be key

COVID-19 is not the first virus outbreak that the world has witnessed. However, the main distinction in the way the world is combatting this, as compared to SARS, Ebola, and the Spanish flu, is that we have technology on our side today, says **Benjamin Boesch**, Chief Digital Officer at VFS Global.

Every aspect of human interaction – from healthcare, access to essential goods and services, our work or social lives – has managed to make a more or less smooth transition to becoming digital-first. While we can do everything possible to shield ourselves from the virus, technology plays a key role today in ensuring we have all the information needed to keep safe and navigate through a new way of life.

In the MENA region, vital sectors are transforming

technologically and we can witness hospitals and clinics using digital technologies efficiently to curb the spread of the virus as well as enabling distance learning and remote work. Each sector and the respective governing authority have a role to play in leading the digital transformation the region is currently undergoing.

## Existing technology innovating itself

This is a crucial time for businesses to re-evaluate their strategies for the

near future, and we predict those that embrace technology as part of their blueprint to fare far better than the rest. The travel ecosystem witnessed tools that were far ahead of other industries and have proven especially apt to cater to our current situation. For example, VFS Global has been employing the convenience and security of mobile biometric systems to offer travellers the option of 'Visa At Your Doorstep' that enables them to accept visa applications and register the traveller's biometric data from the

comfort and safety of the traveller's home or office.

## The emergence of new technology

The pandemic has given impetus to many new strides in technology, especially in healthcare, beginning with testing kits, contact tracing. Technology is now enabling people

to better understand risks in their immediate surroundings and to respond with physical distancing and other preventative measures accordingly. Successful examples include the AI Hosn UAE app which detects if an individual has been in close proximity to someone who had contact with someone

infected with COVID-19. A chatbot service titled 'Virtual Doctor' asks vital questions that help it to deduce if a person is at risk of getting COVID.



**Benjamin Boesch**  
Chief Digital Officer at  
VFS Global

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

“This is a crucial time for businesses to re-evaluate their strategies for the near future, and we predict those that embrace technology as part of their blueprint to fare far better than the rest”

# Al Jaddaf Rotana opens doors

Rotana announced the highly anticipated opening of its 35<sup>th</sup> property in the UAE, in the prestigious Al Jaddaf district of Dubai. In the presence of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mana bin Khalifa al Maktoum, Al Jaddaf Rotana Suite Hotel Dubai was officially inaugurated, further cementing the group's expanding footprint and commitment to the region's thriving hospitality sector.



The striking 318-room property comprises of 14 floors, creating a dramatic and eye-catching addition to the burgeoning Al Jaddaf district. The property offers an array of different room types, including king rooms, family rooms & twin rooms. It is also home to 248 spacious and eloquently designed three-, two- and one-bedroom suites, making it the perfect destination for families, couples and business travellers alike.

Speaking at the official opening, **Guy Hutchinson**, President and CEO of Rotana, said, "It is an honour to have His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mana Bin Khalifa al Maktoum in our presence to mark this momentous day

and to him we extend our sincere gratitude. Today, we celebrate the hard work and dedication of so many talented Rotana individuals who helped bring this property to life, despite the challenging circumstances. I am grateful to the team at Al Jaddaf Rotana and the wider Rotana team, whose vision, resilience and determination have allowed us to reach our goal of a 2020 opening as originally planned. Al Jaddaf Rotana represents a huge milestone for Rotana. As a homegrown brand, we are committed to further developing and diversifying the hospitality industry in the UAE in line with the government's broader economic and tourism objectives."

Al Jaddaf Rotana features five distinct dining experiences, catering to a variety of tastes and preferences.



Timo, the signature Italian restaurant promises authentic Italian fare in an elevated and stylish setting.

The List Bar, radiating European style and elegance, serves a selection of expertly crafted beverages. For a hot beverage and delectable sweet treat, guests can relax in The Tea Room, a cozy enclave in the buzzing hotel lobby. Chic pool bar Aquarius channels resort style elegance, serving

Fitness & Wellness Club with professional instructors, adhering to all UAE government health and safety protocols around sanitisation and social distancing. A beautifully landscaped outdoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, and multiple

operations. With over two decades of hospitality experience in the UAE, Omar is perfectly positioned to guide the hotel through the launch phase and into a successful 2021. He said, "Al Jaddaf Rotana Suite Hotel Dubai represents an incomparable fixture in Dubai and the UAE. We are committed to offering innovative ways to improve the guest experiences that embody the Rotana way of living. The concept of creating moments of 'Treasured Time' is central to this promise. The district of Al Jaddaf has much to offer guests in the way of unique experiences and I am confident this hotel will become the property of choice for those seeking a comfortable, easily accessible and stylish home away from home for either business or leisure."



a selection of snacks and beverages -- perfect for guests to savour while unwinding by the pool.

Al Jaddaf Rotana Suite Hotel Dubai features Bodylines

massage treatment rooms provide the perfect refuge for relaxation.

**Haytham Omar**, General Manager is at the helm of

# Healthy appetite for leisure travel

Under the aegis of the Gulf Travel Show some very interesting panel discussions were held with industry leaders. The CEO of DDP Group San Jeet conducted an interview with **Jamel Chandoul**, Senior Vice President Retail, Middle East and Africa, Amadeus and **Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont**, Managing Director, Amadeus Gulf.

## Why did Amadeus conduct this particular study?

Since the onset of COVID-19, there has been a great deal of speculation about what travellers will do or not do. We felt the traveller community needed to be part of this important conversation. For over a decade, we have cultivated a global community of leisure travellers through CheckMyTrip, which is an award-winning travel management platform.

We decided to ask this community directly for their opinions on the topic in order to get the most transparent and accurate view of how COVID-19 has or has not impacted their confidence in travel.

## What is the overall message the industry should take away from your study?

Travellers have not lost their appetite for leisure travel. The majority of



**Jamel Chandoul**  
Senior Vice President Retail  
Middle East and Africa, Amadeus

them are itching to go as soon as it's permissible and safe for them to do so. They intend to continue using every major mode of travel (air, hotel, rail and car), even those who said they were less comfortable will continue to do so. They also want more control over their travel experience,

which means customising traditional packages to suit their expectations and needs. Personalisation is going to be an even bigger component than before COVID-19.

Lastly, we found travellers placing a higher premium on support from travel agents. They see a great deal of value on problem solving at all stages of the trip.

- 63% of all those surveyed globally were open to custom travel experiences, either advised by travel agents or designed themselves (70% globally)

- With an array of uncertainties still unfolding,

Amadeus sees the potential for travel sellers to play a bigger role in helping consumers successfully navigate their options throughout all phases of their trip experience to strengthen confidence.

## What are the most important insights for travel agencies now as well as in the future?

Travellers want to go farther, longer and less often. This means travel agents need to help their clients make the most of their time and monetary investment. The primary reason for travel overall is to reconnect with family and friends (64% cited this vs 52% globally), with a greater desire

for an unfamiliar setting by 22% (40% globally). Travel agents should gear their consultation more towards helping travellers meet these two objectives. And there is opportunity.

Nearly 82% of respondents in the Middle East (vs 72% globally) say they would consider international trips once restrictions are lifted. COVID-19 is definitely influencing travellers' choice of destination. Whether it's the severity of the disease, recovery status or measures to prevent the disease – travellers will need reliable sources of information to make decisions. Travel agents can play a key role in their decision-making process.

**“The primary reason for travel overall is to reconnect with family and friends (64% cited this vs 52% globally), with a greater desire for an unfamiliar setting by 22% (40% globally)”**

## What do your findings show when it comes to when we can expect a full recovery?

Our research reveals how a portion of travellers feel about their travel planning, and use of travel modes, insurance and agents at a specific point in time. Traveller attitudes and ultimate behaviour are subject to a variety of forces, including government restrictions and quarantines, plus supplier capacity.

## Your study says that travellers now place a higher premium on support and problem solving. What do you mean by this?

Most of us expect our holidays to go smoothly, with only a minor problem or

two that we can manage ourselves. It is only after you experience a serious

**“Nearly 82% of respondents in MEA say they would consider international trips once restrictions are lifted, but only 55% say they expect to have the same or more budget for leisure travel as they did before (vs 69.6% globally)”**

issue that you realise the value of support – having an actual agent that has your back and can solve problems along the way instead of just saying sorry and hoping you have a better experience next time around. By problem solving, I mean tracking down viable options when your flight is unexpectedly cancelled due to government re-

strictions, ensuring your luggage can catch up with you at the next des-

tination if there are delays and finding reliable dining choices for your family in an unfamiliar setting.

## How is Amadeus helping their customers / other travel agencies utilise these findings to sustain and grow their business in spite of the continuation of COVID-19?



**Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont**  
Managing Director  
Amadeus Gulf

We see five key opportunity areas for agencies to further strengthen their operations and staff to address the expectations and needs resulting from our study. One of these is around Dynamic and Diversified Offerings – we encourage our customers to re-evaluate their current portfolio and look for ways to explore and test new travel niches such

as catering to celebratory milestones and more customised international immersion experiences with partners. We also think travel sellers should consider adding health and safety services such as telemedicine and pharmacy networks to their repertoire. Another opportunity we see is for travel sellers to Transform their Systems and Channels – basically, this means ensuring the right data and content can be accessed and deployed in each channel throughout the organisation.

## What other interesting findings did you observe specifically from MEA participants? How would you characterise their views

## towards leisure travel going forward?

- Nearly three-quarters of all travellers say they want to travel within the first three months of restrictions being lifted. The challenge travellers face is more about when, where and how they can best venture out. For example, nearly 82% of respondents in MEA say they would consider international trips once restrictions are lifted, but only 55% say they expect to have the same or more budget for leisure travel as they did before (vs 69.6% globally). From how far, to how long, to how often – travellers are clear about what they are willing to consider to start travelling again. Another opportunity we see is for travel sellers to Transform their Systems and Channels. 🌟

# Winners announced at GTS

Under the patronage of **HE Mohamed Hasril Abdul Hamid**, Consul General of Malaysia and **Shahrin Mokhtar**, Director – Tourism Malaysia, Dubai, the much-awaited draw for the fantastic prizes at the first-ever virtual event, Gulf Travel Show which took place on November 23-24, 2020 was announced on November 26 at the Tourism Malaysia Office.



<b>George Joseph</b> - Trinity Travel - United Arab Emirates	2 DAYS 1 NIGHT in <b>KUALA LUMPUR CITY</b> for 2 persons	<b>Aqeel Abbas</b> - Great Wall Company W.L.L. - Kuwait & Pakistan	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Parkroyal Resort - Penang</b> for 2 persons
<b>Rosette Pavita</b> - Mohamed Al Geziry Consultancy - United Arab Emirates	2 DAYS 1 NIGHT in <b>KUALA LUMPUR CITY</b> for 2 persons	<b>Sebastian Kuckart</b> - Webbeds - United Arab Emirates	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Lexis Hotel Port Dickson</b> for 2 persons
<b>Umaima Tinwala</b> - Umaima Tinwala - United Arab Emirates	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Aloft - Langkawi</b> for 2 persons	<b>Sanafrhman</b> - Aldar Travel - Bahrain	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>RASA Sayang Resort &amp; spa - Shangri-La</b> for 2 persons
<b>Ala Eldin Musa Ali</b> - Jeddah Space Travel - Saudi Arabia	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>THE ANDAMAN RESORT Langkawi</b> for 2 persons	<b>Rania Kimrakji</b> - Royalty Consultants - United Arab Emirates	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>ST-Regis Langkawi</b> for 2 persons
<b>Denveer Paul Quadros</b> - Elaiwah Tourism - Kuwait	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Sunway Pyramid Hotel</b> for 2 persons	<b>Murtaza Zainuddin</b> , Manager - Alomma Holidays Tourism & Travel - Kuwait	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>THE RIZ- CARLTON Langkawi</b> for 2 persons
<b>Jehan Fernando</b> - Gosaibi Travel - Bahrain	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Sunway Pyramid Hotel</b> for 2 persons	<b>Kareem Meri</b> - Alkazemi Travel & Tourism - Kuwait	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Lexis Hotel Port Dickson</b> for 2 persons
<b>Kunwer Ahnad Ghazali</b> - Kapico Travels & Tourism - Kuwait	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Westin Hotel Langkawi</b> for 2 persons	<b>Sabeena Sampya</b> - Al Miqat Travel - United Arab Emirates	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Parkroyal Resort - Penang</b> for 2 persons
<b>Mohammed Bourghol</b> - Airport Passes - Kuwait	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>KUALA LUMPUR CITY</b> for 2 persons	<b>Mohamed Rafi Noor Mohamed</b> - Arja Travel & Tourism Co. LLC - Saudi Arabia	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>DESARU COAST</b> for 2 persons
<b>Ronald B. Pabello</b> - Bahraini Tourism and Travel Bureau - Bahrain	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Golden Sand Resort Penang</b> by <b>Shangri-La</b> for 2 persons	<b>Shibu Chellappan</b> - Lets Go Tourism LLC - United Arab Emirates	6 DAYS 5 NIGHTS for 2 persons <b>PORT DICKSON – MELAKA HISTORICAL CITY – KUALA LUMPUR</b>
<b>Rohit Rao</b> - Sower & Seed FZE - United Arab Emirates	3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS in <b>Sunway Clio Hotel</b> for 2 persons		

# There is a silver lining on the horizon!

The German National Tourist Board, Spanish Tourism Board, Austrian National Tourist Office, Tourism Ireland and Switzerland Tourism hosted an event to network with travel partners.



## Singapore Tourism powers TravelRevive by ITB Asia

TravelRevive, powered by ITB Asia and Singapore Tourism Board (STB), took place on November 25-26, 2020 at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre.

Leading the way with rigorous protocols and innovative solutions for the end-to-end visitor journey, TravelRevive was the first pilot tradeshow to trial the newly

developed 'hybrid event' tradeshow prototype for safe business events, safe itineraries, and digital enablers in Singapore. TravelRevive was the first international travel tradeshow to take place physically in Asia Pacific during COVID-19, with both local and foreign attendees and exhibitors. A total of close to 1,000 local and international attendees came together to exchange ideas, bridge knowledge gaps,



and reimagine the future of travel. The collaborations are a boost to the MICE industry in Singa-

pore and demonstrate that international event organisers remain confident in Singapore's

position as a Global-Asia node for MICE, and as a launchpad for regional expansion.



**MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL**  
**Europe, Middle East and Africa**

Marriott International announced **Satya Anand** has been appointed President of Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), a division that encompasses over 75 countries and territories.



Anand was most recently the company's Chief Operations Officer, Luxury & Southern Europe and Global Design for EMEA. In his new appointment, Anand will spearhead Marriott International's post-COVID-19 recovery approach across the region, working with his team to inspire travel again. Under his leadership, the region's 998 hotels will deliver enhanced cleanliness and sanitisation levels.

**AMADEUS**  
**Dubai**

Amadeus has appointed **Jamel Chandoul** as Senior Vice President Retail Middle East and Africa, effective January 1, 2021. He will also assume a regional leadership role responsible for the Travel Channels business across the Middle East and Africa. Chandoul joined Amadeus in 2011 as Head of Global Sales for Amadeus Rail. In 2014, he took over the position as General Manager of Gestour in Strasbourg after the company's acquisition by Amadeus. He was subsequently appointed as Commercial Director of Amadeus France and managed both roles from 2016 until this year.

**RADISSON BLU HOTEL**  
**Cairo Heliopolis**

Radisson Blu Hotel, Cairo Heliopolis is pleased to announce the appointment of **Yasser Bahaa** to the position of General Manager.



With more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he has a proven successful track of driving best practices to position brands into market leaders. Bahaa is a customer-centric & result-driven passionate hotelier with varied experience in ME & GCC. At Radisson Blu Hotel, Cairo Heliopolis, his aim is to deliver excellent best-in-class service, memorable and the highest quality of guest experiences while driving and delivering consistently a strong financial performance.

**IHG HOTELS**  
**Dubai Festival City**

IHG Hotels at Dubai Festival City announces the appointment of veteran hotelier **Thomas Schmelter** as Area General Manager of IHG Hotels at Dubai Festival City overseeing four properties and the Dubai Festival Arena. Originally from Germany, Schmelter joined the cluster Hotels on October 1, 2020 and is responsible to drive the performance of InterContinental, InterContinental Residences Suites, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Dubai Festival Arena by InterContinental at Dubai Festival City. Schmelter is a seasoned hotelier and comes to this position with more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry within IHG.

**TRAVELPORT**  
**New York, USA**

Travelport has appointed **Jennifer Catto** as its new Chief Marketing Officer. Catto is an award-winning marketing executive, with two decades of leadership experience at both fast-growth and established companies. Most recently, she held the role of Chief Marketing Officer of Telaria, a data-driven software platform designed to monetise and manage premium video inventory. In her new role, Catto's responsibilities include elevating Travelport's brand, enhancing lead generation and defining and communicating a new confident, distinct and compelling company narrative.

**SHERATON DUBAI CREEK HOTEL & TOWERS**  
**Dubai**

**Goran Stojkovic** has been appointed General Manager for Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel and Towers. In his last role as a Hotel Manager in Ritz Carlton DIFC, Stojkovic and his team maintained long stay occupancy and remained focused on guest satisfaction which is now benefiting the hotel. In his new role, he plans to elevate the essence of one of the most iconic properties in the old part of Dubai along with revamping the F&B outlets by bringing to the table his extensive experience in the field.

**JUMEIRAH SAADIYAT ISLAND**  
**Abu Dhabi**

Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort has appointed **Savino Leone** as General Manager. Joining the hotel as of November 1, 2020 with more than 25 years of hospitality experience, Leone has held previous roles in countries including Japan, Egypt, the UK, Dubai and France. He is committed to driving luxury service, quality standards and developing teams. Under his leadership, Leone aims to maintain and exceed its leading reputation as a luxury hotel in the region. Leone has more than three years' experience in leading luxury Jumeirah Group hotels.

**SHERATON OMAN HOTEL**  
**Oman**

Sheraton Oman Hotel has announced the appointment of **Samir Messaoudi** as General Manager of the hotel. He brings nearly two decades of experience to his new role; his last appointment was Hotel Manager at JW Marriott Marquis Doha, Qatar since June 2019. Messaoudi has been associated with Marriott International since 2006 joining The Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay, CA. He has worked in various roles in the US before moving to the ME in 2010. Messaoudi joined the Sharq Village & Spa, a Ritz Carlton Hotel as the Director of Banquets and gained thorough F&B experience in his roles in Doha, Dubai, Jakarta and Oman.

**ACCOR**  
**UK**

As part of its new organisation, in line with its asset-light model and its strategic priorities, 'Focus, Simplify & Expand', the Sales, Marketing, Distribution and Loyalty expertise is the responsibility of **Patrick Mendes**, appointed to the role of Group Chief Commercial Officer. He will be in charge of increasing revenues and accelerating the development of innovative services and powerful solutions. He joined Accor Group in 2005 to head Global Sales. Promoted to COO Luxury and Midscale Brands in South America in 2011, he was promoted to CEO South America in 2015, and joined the Executive Committee in early 2017.

**Maiden flydubai flight lands in Tel Aviv**

The first scheduled commercial flight operated by flydubai from Dubai International (DXB) landed at Tel Aviv

Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV) on November 26 at 11:35 to a water salute. The inaugural flight was flown by Cap-

tain Patrick Gonzenbach and Emirati First Officer, Abdulla Al Shamsi.

On board the aircraft was a delegation led by Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer, flydubai. They were met on arrival by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, along with a delegation that included the



CEO of Ben Gurion International Airport Shmuel Zakay and representatives from the aviation in-

dustry. **Ghaith Al Ghaith**, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said, "Today's inaugural flight sees the

air transport agreement realised. The creation of these direct air links will support the development of commercial ventures across a number of sectors helping to drive success and prosperity. We look forward to welcoming the first passengers from Israel as they come to explore the UAE."



Platinum Partner

Gold Partner

Silver Partner



Thank you

Exhibitors



For further details, contact: [crisna@ddppl.com](mailto:crisna@ddppl.com), [sonia.butalia@ddppl.com](mailto:sonia.butalia@ddppl.com)

*Safe Haven surrounded by  
pristine blue waters*



Fly from the Middle East to the  
Maldives via Emirates, Etihad Airways,  
Qatar Airways and Fly Dubai.

**REDISCOVER**  
Maldives ...the sunny side of life

