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Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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Media Partner



Reality check on 'new normal'

Over the years, Middle East has proved time and again their resilience by overcoming crises. Although some stringent measures will apply, it is evident that the tourism industry will start operating with a new normal in place. Some key industry leaders share their thoughts on the new normal.



Nia Niscaya
Deputy Minister for Marketing,
Ministry of Tourism and
Creative Economy,
Republic of Indonesia

“Middle East is a very important market for Indonesia. The length of stay and spends by ME tourists is more vis-à-vis tourists coming from other countries. About 60 per cent of the ME arrivals are from Saudi Arabia and Dubai is also the hub for tourists coming to Indonesia from all over the world. Our marketing strategy at this point of time is focused on domestic tourists. For international tourists, we have reconnected with the market with Visit Indonesia. We have been discussing through webinars the measures we are taking with the government to combat the pandemic. Window booking will become shorter and then the demand will be lower, but the supply will be higher so competition will be very hard. When we reopen, we will invite visitors to a cleaner, safer & healthier Indonesia.”



Daks Gonzales
Head of Middle East market,
Philippine Department of
Tourism

“We strongly believe that recovery will happen before the end of this year. There are strong indications from the markets that they will be restarting travel. The current scenario is ideal for the so-called 'armchair generals'. We have to go back to our drawing boards, and come up with answers to the four W's – who, what, where and why and how, the H. The key is to go into focus marketing and work through partnerships. Our market-based stakeholders have already shared that over 70 per cent of their clients are looking into travel arrangements and that is a very positive sign. For Middle East, we have been informed that both residents and locals are looking at bookings, so the moment it opens they will be travelling. We will be working with the trade and consumer partnerships.”



Nandini Lahe-Thapa
Senior Director – Tourism
Marketing and Promotion,
Nepal Tourism Board

“For Nepal, tourism is one of the most important industries and this pandemic has set the industry back, but as a tourism board we are lobbying with the government to come up with packages for the trade. We are also working on recovery and revival strategies. The new normal when destinations open will no longer be the unique places to visit but the health, hygiene and sanitation protocols a destination has in place at every level of your travel. That is something we have been focusing on. We will also be promoting environmental and sustainable tourism. Middle East is an important yet untapped market for us – we are reaching out stronger than before and our subtle messaging campaign on social media will also help. At this point of time we are rebranding Nepal.”

“Singapore Tourism Board is making use of this time to ensure all areas are addressed in terms of health, hygiene and safety for all travellers. The current pandemic has led to more awareness about hygiene and safety. In the past, people took it for granted but now when it comes to a destination or purchase, the decision will be based on hygiene and safety. In terms of strategy we are instilling confidence in the audience. For the Middle East market, the audience have always been digitally savvy, so our focus will be based on the digital side. Apart from that Middle East has key opinion leaders and influencers, this is another strategy we will use besides leveraging technology to engage people online, partner with trade and consumer brands and keep everyone engaged.”



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director – (Middle
East) International Group,
Singapore Tourism Board

“In the market the bookings have been remodeled and what we have done is on a multi-platform we have decided to identify where in our technology platform we need to make investments. We have been growing so fast and our customers are our partners and at this time we have focused on cleaning up, working on amendments and cancellations. We are doing our best to prepare for the new normal with our technology we provide our customers information so we want to provide good information, good content making our customers more involved. Secondly we are understanding the customer needs; especially our customers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE – the first market will be the domestic market that will pick up, so we our understanding their requirements. Third reason, we have over 250 travel guides in Saudi Arabia and we will educate them about travel safety within the destinations.”



Muzzammil Ahussain
Executive Vice President –
Consumer Travel, Seera Group

“We need to learn to live with the corona virus and the world must go on. We are seeing a lot of easing in laws so we started to see our occupancies grow. In the past few weeks in our three properties in and around Bangkok we have seen occupancy going up to 90 and 100 per cent in mid-week, so this shows the changes in how people travel. We still feel there will be changes in the way people have to travel, they don't have to go to office anymore. We can see people are working from the hotel maybe on Sunday and Monday, so we can see this as a trend. The Middle East has been resilient, it has closed down 30 per cent of the hotels as compared to countries which closed down 70 per cent. When we look at occupancy, especially Saudi, the rate from 39 per cent went up to 49 per cent. Hence, we are seeing a lot of positive traits coming into the market from the region. For us, it is very straight forward why this market is so important to us. Tourists from the region are the second highest spenders after the French.”



Paul Wilson
Executive Vice President –
Commercial, Cross Hotels
and Resorts

Tourist numbers could fall 60-80% in 2020

International tourism was down 22 per cent in Q1 and could decline by 60-80 per cent over the whole year with 67 million fewer international tourists up to March, which translates into US\$ 80 billion in lost exports. UNWTO has outlined three possible future scenarios depending on how the crisis unfolds.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a 22 per cent fall in international tourist arrivals during the first quarter of 2020, the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows. According to the United Nations specialised agency, the crisis could lead to an annual decline of between 60 per cent and 80 per cent when compared with 2019 figures. This places millions of livelihoods at risk and threatens to roll back progress made in advancing

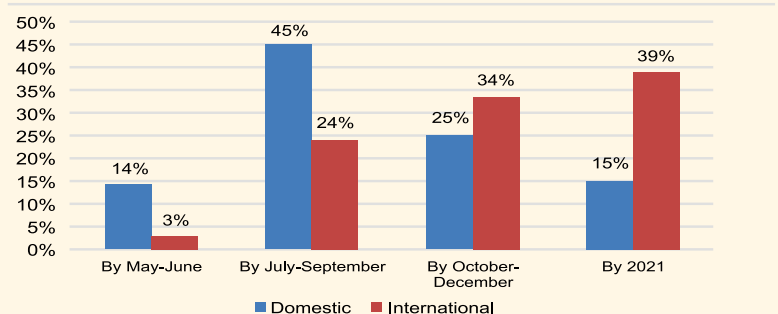
the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO said, "The world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labour-intensive sectors of the economy."

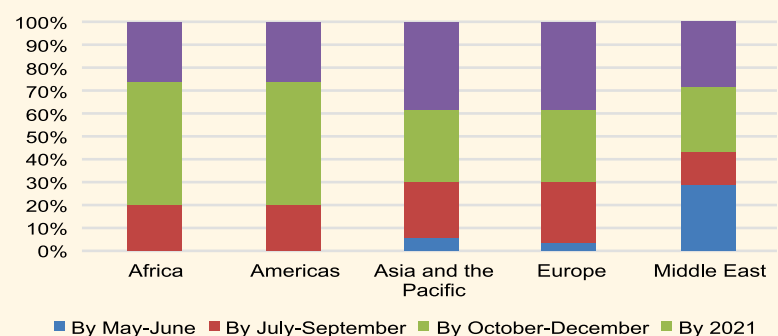
Available data reported by destinations point to a 22 per cent decline in arrivals in the first three months of the year, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Arrivals in

March dropped sharply by 57 per cent following the start of a lockdown in many countries, as well as the widespread introduction of travel restrictions and the closure of airports and national borders. This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about US\$ 80 billion in receipts (exports from tourism). Although Asia and the Pacific shows the highest impact in relative and absolute terms (-33 million arrivals), the impact in Europe, though lower in percentage, is quite high in volume (-22 million).

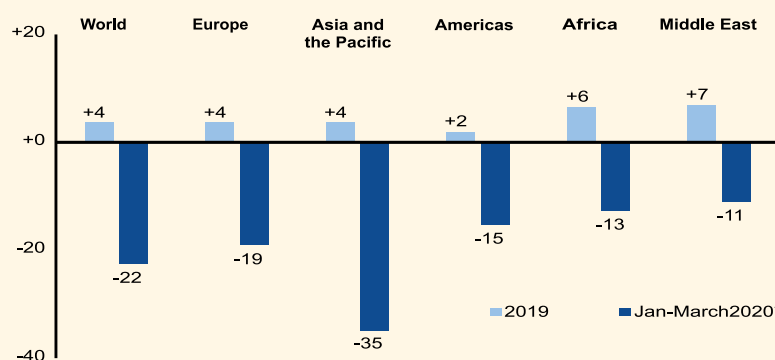
When do you expect tourism demand in your destination will start to recover?



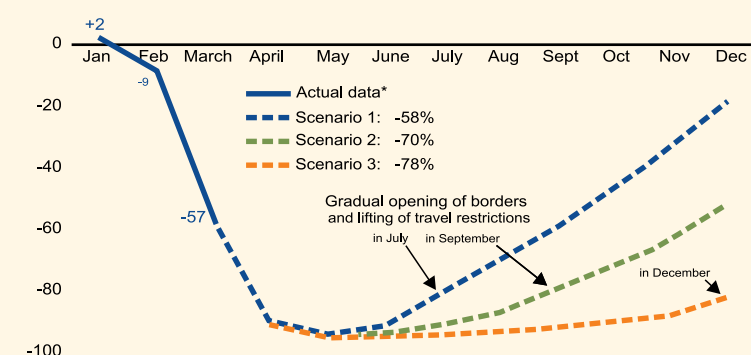
When do you expect international demand for your destination will start to recover?



International tourist arrivals, 2019 and Q1 2020 (% change)



International tourist arrivals in 2020: three scenarios (YoY monthly % change)



* Actual data through March includes estimates for countries which have not yet reported data. Source: UNWTO
Note: The scenarios presented in this graph are not forecasts. They represent alternative monthly change in arrivals based on the gradual opening of national borders and lifting of travel restrictions on different dates, still subject to high uncertainty.

International tourism 2020 scenarios

Prospects for the year have been downgraded several times since the outbreak and uncertainty continues to dominate. Current scenarios point to possible declines in arrivals of 58 per cent to 78 per cent for the year. These depend on the speed of containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders.

The following scenarios for 2020 are based on three possible dates for the gradual opening up of international borders.

- Scenario 1 (-58%) based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions in early July
- Scenario 2 (-70%) based on the gradual opening of international

al borders and easing of travel restrictions in early September

- Scenario 3 (-78%) based on the gradual opening of international borders and easing of travel restrictions only in early December.

Under these scenarios, the impact of the loss of demand in international travel could translate into:

- Loss of 850 million to 1.1 billion international tourists
- Loss of US\$ 910 billion to US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism
- 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk

This is by far the worst crisis that international tourism has faced since records began (1950). The impact will be felt to varying degrees in the different global regions and at overlapping times,

with Asia and the Pacific expected to rebound first.

Experts see recovery in 2021

Domestic demand is expected to recover faster than international demand according to the UNWTO Panel of Experts survey. The majority expects to see signs of recovery by the final quarter of 2020 but mostly in 2021. Based on previous crises, leisure travel is expected to recover quicker, particularly travel for visiting friends and relatives, than business travel.

The estimates regarding the recovery of international travel is more positive in Africa and the Middle East with most experts foreseeing recovery still in 2020. Experts in the Americas are the least optimistic and least likely to believe in recovery in 2020, while in Europe and Asia the outlook is mixed, with half of the experts expecting to see recovery within this year.



Launching
a **COVID-19** training
module for the tourism industry

Covid SMART

A training and certification
programme to ensure that
the tourism industry is ready
to fight **COVID-19**

www.covidElearn.com

The programme is designed by
WHO certified persons to promote
safe travel and provide tour operators and
travel agents with the confidence
to thrive once again

Breaking News

- Lufthansa to resume flights from Dubai to Frankfurt from June 1
- Geneva on track to welcoming GCC travellers again soon
- The Middle East's tourism entertainment sector under the spotlight at ATM Virtual
- Staycations and domestic travel to lead GCC tourism recovery from COVID-19
- Aviation tops the agenda at ATM Virtual
- Maiden webinar by Spain tourism received great appreciation from the industry
- Etihad Holidays to be operated by UK's dnata Travel Group
- IATA calls on KSA government to support aviation in the face of COVID-19 crisis
- GNTB expands its successful Empathy Campaign #DiscoverGermanyFromHome
- Etihad Airways increases number and frequency of special flights worldwide
- Leisure and hospitality assets reopened with safe measures in place
- HSMAl introduces ROC@Home for hoteliers

Hospitality reinvents itself

In the attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19, our region in Asia Pacific and Middle East reacted swiftly. However, the hospitality industry is reaching out to the needy. It's simply enhancing the interaction from pure service to an unforgettable human gesture, says **Diane Thorsen**, Hospitality Design Director, Gensler.

Our hospitality and leisure clients constantly face challenges, but the entire industry is reeling from the unprecedented impact of COVID-19. These are difficult times, but travel will resume in time. We also recognise that great hotels not only anticipate market changes, they are able to react quickly to unusual situations. Given this unprecedented crisis and downturn in occupancy, we believe we can shape the future of hospitality by partnering with owners and operators considering the following:

Reinvest in existing properties

"Given the uncertainty of the current situation, one of the smartest investments in hospitality right now is to reinvest in existing properties. Hotels in key urban and resort locations will be the first to recover, owners who can move quickly can take advantage of the current closures and low occupancies to be ready to compete effectively in the new market that will emerge as the crisis sub-

sides, one in which business travel is radically refined, and wellness and environmental safety are paramount guest concerns," says **Seth Matson**, Vice President – Design and Technical Services, Luxury MEA.

Balancing personable interaction and technology

For many years, hoteliers have used technology to create guest profiles to better recognise new and repeat guests. This crisis presents additional opportunities for technology to be applied to ensure that guests feel safe. Technology will continue to play an evolving role in the hospitality landscape, even more so in a post COVID-19 world. The guest's mindset will continue to adapt to the

integration of technology in the overall brand experience. In luxury brands, the experience of high-end, customised service and touchpoints for the guest are key to the brand standards. Balancing the integration of technology whilst maintaining the human interaction and expectation of the customer will be key.

Support local

We believe that as the market opens, the expats across the region will choose to travel locally at first sharing experiences through social media. This experience has evoked a great sense of gratitude and a willingness to support the local community. Designers will continue to embed the local culture and craft to sensitively reflect the ethos and sense

of place. Local materials and innovative experiential offerings will continue to create interest for the hospitality industry. Farm to table and support of local farms will shape the F&B offering with organic produce and healthy offerings taking precedence.

Cultural tourism

The new social distancing norms will impact any spaces where large gatherings may occur. Hoteliers will look to manage their offerings to begin with, so that the experience is within a smaller, more exclusive group. What is important is that we reinvent ways to manage this to retain interest in cultural tourism. This will ensure support of the UAE Louvre Abu Dhabi, and the planned openings of Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi in Saadiyat Cultural District. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosts the yearly Haj which was cancelled in 2020 but hoteliers see this as

an opportunity to reinvest and refurbish.

Repurpose spaces and buildings

Assess and validate your hotel's current business model and operating concept and assess the possible reuse or repurposing options within the property including alternative rental and lease models for specific spaces. The hospitality industry, being one of the most human-intensive industries, has an opportunity to reinvent itself with the aim of focusing on what matters most – connecting people with place in the most sustainable way, with human interaction at the core. 🏡



Diane Thorsen
Hospitality Design Director
Gensler

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

“The hospitality industry, being one of the most human-intensive industries, has an opportunity to reinvent itself with the aim of focusing on what matters most – connecting people with place in the most sustainable way, with human interaction at the core”

PIA signs distribution agreement with Amadeus

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has reached a landmark agreement in distribution with Amadeus, giving PIA full access to Amadeus' global travel seller network. Through

this new agreement, Amadeus-connected agencies will now be able to book PIA's full suite of domestic and international inventory through the Amadeus Travel Platform. Given the unprece-

dent challenge that the travel industry is facing, never before has distribution strategy and reach been more important for an airline.

"This deal brings us international presence in markets we didn't have to date, ensuring that more travel agencies across the globe can book and sell our offer," says **Abdullah H. Khan**, General Manager, Public Affairs Division, PIA.

amadeus

Speaking on the occasion, **Arshad Malik**, Chief Executive Officer, PIA, says, "Especially in the current environment, when there is so much uncertainty, a strong partner like Amadeus gives us the technology and distribution capabilities we need to reach our expansion targets. We have made substantial investments to restructure our busi-

ness the past year, laying the ground to capitalise on our growth potential in both domestic and international markets."

"Our cutting-edge technology and unsurpassed global distribution network are now at PIA's service, to enable the airline to meet its business goals," comments **Maheer Koubaa**, Executive

Vice President, Airlines, Middle East, Turkey & Africa, Amadeus. He adds, "At Amadeus we pride ourselves on our central principle to provide our airline partners with the most efficient and cost-effective mean to reach travel sellers across the globe. At the same time, we strive to give our travel agency network access to the widest and richest range of content in order to service their travellers."

“This deal brings us international presence in markets we didn't have to date, ensuring that more travel agencies across the globe can book and sell our offer”

Abdullah H. Khan

UNWTO guidelines for tourism sector

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has released a set of guidelines to help tourism sector emerge stronger from COVID-19. The guidelines highlight the need to act decisively, to restore confidence and, as UNWTO strengthens its partnership with Google, to embrace innovation and the digital transformation of global tourism.

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The guidelines were formulated in consultation with the Global Tourism Crisis Committee and aim to support governments and private sector to recover from an unparalleled crisis. Depending on when travel restrictions are lifted, the United Nations specialised agency warns that international tourist arrivals could fall by between 60 per cent and 80 per cent. This puts 100-120 million jobs at risk and could lead to US\$ 910 billion to US\$ 1.2 trillion lost in exports.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO said, "These guidelines provide both governments and businesses with a comprehensive set

of measures designed to help them open tourism up again in a safe, seamless and responsible manner. They are the product of the enhanced cooperation that has characterised tourism's response to this shared challenge, building on knowledge and inputs from across the public and private sectors and from several UN agencies as part of the UN's wider response."

Safety and security protocols for tourism recovery

The new guide, a follow-up of the Recommendations for Action already endorsed by the Committee, is focused on seven priorities for tourism recovery based



Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General
UNWTO

on the pillars of mitigating the economic impact, developing safety protocols and coordinated responds and fostering innovation. The guidelines highlight the importance of restoring the confidence of the travellers through safety and security protocols designed to

reduce risks in each step of the tourism value chain. These protocols include the implementation of check procedures where appropriate, including temperature scans, testing, physical distancing, enhanced frequency of cleaning and the provision of hygiene kits for safe air travel, hospitality services or safe events.

Innovation key as UNWTO builds on Google partnership
The UNWTO guidelines

“These guidelines provide both governments and businesses with a comprehensive set of measures designed to help them open tourism up again in a safe, seamless and responsible manner”

also highlight the opportunity to foster a digital transformation of destinations, companies and employees with initiatives such as the free online training with the UNWTO Online Academy and the implementation of apps such as the Hi Card to improve international interoperability at airports and hotels. The role of technology in promoting social distancing in hotels and

tourist destinations is also highlighted.

This comes as UNWTO strengthens its partnership with Google. Through this enhanced collaboration, the UN agency will work with Google to promote digital learning and online skills training so as to provide new opportunities across the global tourism sector. "We are thrilled to be working more closely with Google. The past weeks have highlighted the enhanced role technology plays in our lives and furthering the digital transformation of tourism will make the sector more resilient and create opportunities for people all around the world," added Pololikashvili.

DTTAG revamps Executive Committee

The Dubai Travel and Tour Agents Group (DTTAG) has been restructured with the appointment of **Asim Arshad**, CEO, Orient Travel, as the President of the Group along with **Sumit Acharya**, Managing Director, BCD Travel, as the Vice President. Industry stalwarts from leading travel agencies have been included in the Executive Committee.

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The group has also revamped the Executive Committee to include industry stalwarts from leading travel agencies, namely Jamal Abdulnazer, CEO, Cozmo Travel; Aubrey Heldt, General Manager, Kanoo Travel; Savio Vaz, Vice President, dnata Travel; Nasir Khan, CEO, Al Nabooda Travel; Jayaram Iyer, Managing Director, Sharaf Travel; Narendra Bhatia, Managing Director, Team Travel; and



Asim Arshad
CEO
Orient Travel

Santosh Cheriyan, Regional General Manager, Akbar Travel.

As is the case with other industries, it is held that in order to effectively manage the travel industry businesses and contribute to re-energising the market, cooperation amongst a community of members and professionals that share similar interests and challenges will undoubtedly contribute towards the swift recovery of the travel business once there is return to normalcy in flight schedules.

DTTAG's Executive Com-

mittee members have been actively working closely with many travel companies and entities in order to coordinate and devise the best strategy to steer their businesses out of the challenges they are currently facing due to COVID-19. Managing the impact of the post COVID-19 scenario on the travel industry and potential changes to consumer behaviour and expectations are key areas of focus for DTTAG and its members in the immediate future.

Therefore, DTTAG is playing a pivotal role in facilitating a forum for travel agency members to interact with one another with



Sumit Acharya
Managing Director
BCD Travel,

the goal of meeting needs of a variety of consumers and simultaneously achieving their own business goals through support and cooperation offered by the group's members and government organisations involved with the travel and

tourism industry. DTTAG, which enjoys the ongoing support of EmQuest, a division of the Emirates group and other associate members, has embarked upon an aggressive membership drive among the travel agency community by demonstrating value and effectively representing them with various airlines, government departments, IATA and other partners in the travel industry.

FactFile

■ Managing the impact of the post COVID-19 scenario on the travel industry and potential changes to consumer behaviour and expectations are key areas of focus for DTTAG

DTTAG is playing a pivotal role in facilitating a forum for travel agency members to interact with one another with the goal of meeting needs of a variety of consumers and simultaneously achieving their own business goals



The way forward for a post-COVID era

The COVID-19 pandemic has ensured that implementation of health and safety standards has become the new way forward whether it is a destination, attraction, eatery or wellness escape. **SanJeet**, Managing Director, DDP Group spoke with some of the industry experts about the future post COVID-19.



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director (Middle East) International Group -
Singapore Tourism Board

These are unprecedented times for lot of us, it's the largest challenge we have gone through for Singapore but at the same time I think it is exciting to see the new changes and the new norms for everyone. It is a time that we really need to sit back, reset and relook at the things we were doing in the past.

What happens now going forward; have we lost the year 2020? What are you going to look at in 2021 in light of the new post COVID and living with COVID?

COVID is here to stay and I don't think that it is going to go away anytime soon, but that doesn't mean that we stop everything. I think our tourism industry has always been very resilient and recre-

ated and this is really the time to come through and show how we can pull through the year. These will be exciting times, we have to deal with it and how to deal with it is something everyone is asking today. Current pandemic has created hygiene factors like cleanliness to come up very strongly as it was mostly ignored in the past but now when it comes to a destination or purchase, the decision will totally rely on hygiene and safety. In terms of strategy we are instilling confidence in the audience so this is something we are working on strongly, specifically for the Middle East market, they have always been digitally savvy, everyone has everything on the phone so our market focus will be based on the digital side. Apart from that Middle East has key opinion leaders and influencers, this is another strategy we use and we leverage on technology to engage people online, partnering with consumer brands and keeping everyone engaged.

Social distancing practices

I think this is done all over the world now, not only in Singapore, this has impacted the way people do business and we as consumers in how we interact with people. It is definitely typing up with the hygiene, health and safety issues, largely we see that people will avoid peak travel periods and will travel in smaller groups than before. We can see these changes, they are going to avoid crowds and go and explore less crowded areas. Things will change a lot. The industry will take

“ Right now and even before COVID, we have increased funding to the trade and it has strengthened our partnerships and we will not stop, hence we will reach out even to partners of the partners, extending as much as we can ”

some time to resume, during this time we can re-innovate to ensure efficiency taking into consideration safety measures. As consumers or people it goes both ways, depends on which business you are in as well.

When will you start cruising again in Singapore?

Cruise in Singapore was affected earlier same as amusement parks, restaurants all were hit early so we have started an accreditation campaign so that it helps build confidence for both consumers and business. Cruise will resume soon. I believe it depends on the bilateral agreements between the countries, it will might happen soon but when we open our borders, it will be the time you will see some movements. For Singapore, we are taking this and opening up the country, we are now in phase 1 in June and for phase 2 a date is to be fixed yet. Middle East has always been a very lucrative market as you see Saudi is opening up so Middle East standards are high, business travellers will also come up,

individual travellers, female travellers and others will gradually begin.

Will travel be more expensive?

I think the price will be balanced. We are working with the airlines as a government and believe that it will work out well.

Will there be any incentives for travel trade?

Partnership has been an integral part of the Singapore Tourism Board. In fact right now and even before COVID, we have increased funding to the trade and it has strengthened our partnerships and we will not stop, hence we will reach out even to partners of the partners, extending as much as we can. We are actually looking at more partnerships and reaching out to more customers so that is what we are looking at. We even teamed up with one of the iconic nightclubs in Singapore and we looking at a virtual party bringing in international concert with virtual reality to recreate and redefine with all our partners.

Beverly Au Yong, an experienced marketer and BD professional, has worked across multiple disciplines ranging from consumer products to legal and tourism. She held the position of Area Director for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia before moving to Dubai to cover the Middle East and Turkey markets. Her most exciting projects while in STB include the production of a reality TV show and organising the first Singapore Festival in Moscow which involved more than 60 partners from Singapore and more than 25,000 visitors over two days.



Daks Gonzales
Head - Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) for the
Middle East Market

I want to thank for the vision to extend positive insights and the chance to continue to a way forward through these tough and challenging times that our beloved tourism industry is in, but I am confident that collectively we will be able to achieve the results we desire.

What happens as we now go forward; have we lost the year 2020? What are you going to look at 2021 in light of the new post COVID and living with COVID? And what will be your new marketing strategy?

We don't believe that the year 2020 has ended, we strongly believe that there

is hope to recover sometime very soon before the end of the year. There are very strong indications from the market that we will be looking forward to.

This scenario is actually very ideal for the so called armchair generals, they really love this. We have to all go back to our drawing boards and the truth is that we simply have to answer the four W's – who, what, where and why and how. The key is to go into focus marketing and to work through partnerships, my stakeholders believe that this will lead to ultimate efficiency in driving results, so yes the mood is still very positive for a recovery within 2020.

Will the strategies for 2021 be the same or different?

The two things will be the same, as I mentioned earlier it is putting more emphasis on focus marketing identifying your W's and your H's and the two sides haven't changed through trade and through social media. Our communication strategies will have to change and evolve and this is something that will keep us always on our toes. For example, what we are communicating right now in marketing 'dream and wake up in the Philippines' that is the current message but we are ready to look forward with new ones next week and in a couple of months, when the time is right. We have to always

“We don't believe that the year 2020 has ended, we strongly believe that there is hope to recover in some time before the end of the year. There are very strong indications from the market that we will be looking forward to”

be on our toes and look into the state of development.

Social distancing

Social distancing is something we have to oblige for our clients. In the case of Philippines, there are stakeholders who are very much prepared to provide the service for this kind of clients. The second is that we are looking forward to the regulators and we are following them. Philippines have some unique places when it comes to beaches for example Boracay islands which already reduced its capacity even before COVID-19. It was and remains to be COVID-free, the groups of islands named Palawan in the Philippines is a green zone and for other destinations everyone is kept busy in ca-

capacity building it as per the new norm. Even in other parts of ASEAN are all preparing to adapt to the new rules and regulations social distancing and this will be further practiced when opened. The industry is putting these up as soon as it starts.

When do you expect the first wave of ME tourists to come to the Philippines?

Our market based stakeholders have already shared that over 70 percent of their clients are looking into travel arrangements and that is a very positive sign. So as soon as regulations are in place and supply chain is starting, I'm sure there is going to be an announcement. So both residents and locals are looking

at booking, so the moment it opens they will be travelling.

Any thoughts on pricing in travel?

It will be going both ways. There might be strict social distancing so my stakeholders will have clients who prefer social distancing but there can be another segment that will bargain for it, certain stakeholders are prepared to service that market as well. The ball is on the side of the airlines, so the cost will drastically have an effect on the cost of a package holiday. On other services like accommodation will be ready to flex depending on what the client is looking for, all segments will have a different way to look at.

Working with private sector is important, any incentives offered to them?

Part of the key strategy is partnership, so we are constantly in touch with our market stakeholders and together currently with our Philippines stakeholders we are providing them with regular updates and positive



developments. This initiative started even before the COVID situation, our partners on the onset in terms of the partnership has strengthened with local Philippine stakeholders and we work together with them in a positive way. As soon as the regulator of supply chains starts working, all will fall in to place. We are very strong on partnerships as we constantly engage with them. We will be working with the trade and consumer; these are the partnerships we are looking at and we are trying to constantly updating the 4 W's so these are the combinations we are looking at present. Personalised service clients is another segment we focus on and we are prepared to provide services necessary to generate commitment from our partners to personalise the experience.

Daks Gonzales is the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT), Head, for the Middle East Market. He has previously served as Head of DOT offices in Europe and Boards of various international tourism organisations.



Nandini Lahe-Thapa
Senior Director at the Nepal Tourism Board is Head of the International Marketing and Promotion Dept.

COVID has unleashed globally and the whole world is affected by it. For Nepal, tourism is one of the most important industries and this pandemic has set the industry back but as a tourism board we are lobbying with the government to come up with packages for the trade.

We are also working very hard on recovery and revival strategies, so that is what we have been busy with and the new normal when destinations open up, it will no longer be the unique place to visit but the health, hygiene and sanitation protocols a destination has in place at every level of your travel; that is something we have been focusing on and we just completed a draft which started out as a small document but now it has become huge and very practical document with inputs from

many of the trade experts. This document is very important as everyone in the trade will read it carefully so that they will be well aware of the new norms and share this knowledge with their staff and the customers as well. We are using this opportunity to promote environmental and sustainable tourism, so that's what we have been focusing on.

What are you going to look at in 2021 in light of the new post COVID and living with COVID?

Tourism is a major part of Nepal and currently we are looking at a recovery strategy that will work well for us. We are focusing on the domestic market over the next few months, then regional markets like India, China and the Middle East. We are really well connected with the Middle East and it is a very important source market for us.

When we talk about the Middle East, we have divided them into three groups – one is market per say locals, expat market is divided to two long haul and the Indian expats that live there, Philippines, Singapore coming into get away. Indians living there sending their parents to Nepal this is another market and the locals from Middle East. They need 7-star facilities, so we are looking at the niche market as well, and surprisingly numbers may not be huge but we are trying our best to focus on adventure and mountaineering destination for Middle East adventure and thrill seekers.

“Middle East is an untapped market for us, so we are definitely making sure to have a good partnership. We are reaching out stronger than before and our subtle messaging campaign on social media will also help”

We have now come up with a 75-page document over the past few weeks featuring every segment of the travel industry starting with the airport, transportation, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel or rafting companies, tour or adventure companies and we have a tourism think tank so at the end of the day we have to give it to them and literally we have included all segments and sent across to them. This will be the new bible for the travel and tourism industry. Second phase will be the opening, it depends on how many can fly in terms of capacity like 10-seater, how many passengers can be accommodated safely with the social distancing regulations etc, so this protocol is being prepared now.

Will there be a change in price?

There will definitely be a price change, though when it comes to travel agents to attract customers, the realistic cost is passed on to the customers. They need to invest on their sanitisers and other safety protocols so until the things start looking more stable the price

ing will be a problem as it will be a more realistic approach.

Any incentives for the trade?

We are collaborating with the trade and airlines so we are looking at working closely to ensure a good partnership. Middle East is an untapped market for us so we are definitely making sure to have a good partnership. We are reaching out stronger than before and our subtle messaging campaign on social media will also help. At this point of time we are rebranding Nepal to be a strong brand with a whole lot of activities. It will have 3 W's which is a Wow destination, Wild destination and Wellness especially for the Middle East market.

Nandini Lahe-Thapa, Senior Director at the Nepal Tourism Board is Head of the International Marketing and Promotion Dept. With over three decades in the tourism industry, Thapa is also one of the founder team members of the Nepal Tourism Board. She brings with her a huge cache of hand-on experience and in-depth knowledge in driving Nepal's tourism in the global market.

Discover Andalusia from home on June 10



After a successful first webinar session on Madrid and Barcelona – the popular areas of Spain, a second session will consist of another region which is quite close to the travellers of the GCC as it has the history and culture which bonds them to the destination.

 Shehara Rizly

Starting from July, the entry of foreign tourism to Spain in safe conditions will resume. Tourism needs security at origin and destination. The Spanish government will guarantee that tourists will not run any risk and that they will not bring any risk to Spain. Spanish tourism, in addition to its art, culture, gastronomy, beaches and landscape, will add two more hallmarks – health and safety and environmental sustainability.

Spain will drop its two-week quarantine period for foreign arrivals from July, the country's government has confirmed. Travellers must inquire with their national authorities about the exact travel conditions before starting their trip, as the reopening will be progressive and depending on the evolution

of the circumstances. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has pledged visitors and the sector's workforce will be kept safe. Spain attracts more than 80 million tourists a year.

Guidelines for safe reopening

The Spanish Secretary of State for Tourism in coordination with the Health Ministry has published 12 guides detailing the specifications for the 'safe reopening' of Spain's tourism industry and helping reduce the spread of COVID-19. The guidelines, drawn up by the Institute for Spanish Tourist Quality (ICTE), contain specifications for service, cleaning and disinfection, maintenance and risk management. They are designed to instruct the sector, which accounts for 12 per cent of Spain's GDP, to restart its activity with 'maximum safety' and boost the confidence of travellers.

Educating industry specialists

In order for tourists to know exactly what they can do in the country it is extremely important at this point of time to keep the travellers informed of the most important facts and areas that may be placed in their bucket list. So, from the Spain Tourism Board in Abu Dhabi, a tri-series of webinars are ongoing with educating industry specialists about the destination.

The first webinar by the Spain Tourism Board was concluded successfully with participants from all over the United Arab Emirates and GCC. **Daniel Rosado Bayon**, Director of the Spanish Tourism Office in Abu Dhabi, conducted the session with a general update about the country, connectivity, weather etc. He stated that last year Spain

This tri-series of webinars will ensure that everyone obtains knowledge about the sights, food, shopping, cultural, historical and art focused areas within the varied cities in Spain

received more than 83 million visitors. Then a poll was held on the right side of the screen for the visitors to interact; the first poll was, "What are the barriers for coming to Spain?" there were four criteria given – connectivity, lack of knowledge of the destination, lack of cultural ties, and visa issues. About 46 per cent stated visa issues were a barrier and 36 per cent cited lack of knowledge about the destination, so this webinar focused on the second aspect and provided the knowledge necessary.

There were several videos shown throughout the webinar which gave an opportunity to the visitors to take a closer look of the destination and its offerings. In this session, Madrid and Barcelona were the key areas in focus. It was a very comprehensive presentation by Rosado about the many activities that can be done, the historical, cultural and entertainment options for families, individuals travelling for leisure, honeymooners, youth, adventure and MICE visitors etc.

Agents who participated in the webinar were very happy with the polls that gave them an opportunity to voice their concerns. At the end of the session the questions were answered by Rosado. He stated that the next two sessions to be held on June 10 and June 17, 2020 would have a lot more knowledge to pass on. He further explained that by July there may be a possibility of more airports opening and travel beginning to revive.

Second webinar on Andalusia for GCC

Rosado stated, "We want to provide an opportunity to all those interested in learning more about the varied destinations within Spain, some are more known than others and this tri-series will ensure that everyone obtains knowledge about the sights, food, shopping, cultural, historical and art focused areas within the varied cities in Spain. In

this second session, our focus will be on Andalusia or in Spanish, Andalucia. The region is also world famous for bullfighting, great climate, flamenco, gastronomy like tapas, fiestas, beaches and diverse geography. So, join us once again and learn about a rich destination that has the most interesting offerings for all ages."

Al Andalus was the name given by the Muslims during the Middle Ages to the Iberian peninsula. Nowadays Andalusia is the southern region of Spain, which offers a great variety of landscapes, from the mountain range of Sierra Nevada to the coastal towns in the Mediterranean sea. Andalusia is famous for its stunning beaches, fabulous monuments such as the Cordoba Mosque or the Alhambra Palace, flamenco and gastronomy. Other regions such as Valencia will also be covered in this journey through the wonders of Spain. 🇪🇸



Do not miss out the next webinar and discover Spain as never before on June 10 at 11 am UAE time and the third one on June 17, 2020. For more details log on to www.tourismbreak-ingnews.ae or www.travtalkmiddleeast.com



SHUROOQ reopens its leisure and eco-tourism destinations across Sharjah

Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq) is going the extra mile to ensure that all its hospitality, eco-tourism and leisure destinations, which are scheduled to open in a phased manner, will strictly adhere to the UAE Government's health and safety protocols.

 TT Bureau

Shurooq has announced the completion of a sterilisation and disinfection drive across its properties, and has opened its doors to their popular leisure and entertainment destinations, Al Qasba, Al Majaz Waterfront, Al Noor Island, The Flag Island, Heart of Sharjah, Mleiha Archaeological & Eco-tourism Project, Khorfakkan Beach, Maraya Art Centre and 1971-Design Space. In addition, its state-of-the-art City Sightseeing Sharjah (CSS) buses have begun to ply, transporting guests to tourist sites across the emirate.

Shurooq's hospitality offerings including The Chedi Al Bait, Sharjah and all three Sharjah Collection properties – Al Badayer Retreat, Al Faya Retreat and Kingfisher Retreat – are offering attractive staycation packages for individuals, couples and families, and will be offering these hotel stays in line with the UAE's precautionary health instructions and guidelines aimed at combating the spread of COVID-19.

Safety measures across leisure destinations

With entertainment destinations permitted to reopen in the UAE under strict safety

guidelines, Shurooq is once again reopening access across all its destinations, attraction areas and restaurants. Apart from restricting visitor numbers in keeping with the physical distancing protocols in place, and operating 30 per cent of its F&B capacity, the entity is implementing additional safety measures such as digital and thermal temperature readings of all guests, a walk-through sanitisation booth, regular disinfection of common areas during opening hours, single entry and exit points, no entry without masks policy, and clear and visible two metre physical distancing stickers, amongst others.

In accordance to the national precautionary measures and rules, visitors aged 60+ or 12 and below will not be permit-

ted to access Shurooq's destinations, with exceptions to its hospitality destinations which are welcoming families from all ages.

Public spaces in focus at staycation destinations

At Shurooq's hospitality destinations, preparations for welcoming guests commence even before their arrival, and the safety and cleaning protocols continue on their arrival and throughout the course of stay to reassure guests of their well-being. For instance, all touchpoints in public areas such as door handles, elevator buttons, counter tops, table-tops and railings are thoroughly sanitised periodically using safe and approved chemicals and agents; hand sanitisers are in place in all guest rooms and at all


We are working closely with the government authorities to ensure that all recommended precautionary and preventive measures are in place for our guests to enjoy a well-rounded destination experience



public spaces; temperature readings of resident, non-resident guests, and staff members are taken; and protocols are also in place for staff in the kitchens, restaurants, and in-room dining.

Enforcing health & safety protocols

According to **Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer**, COO of Shurooq, "As we embark on the reopening phase of our leisure destinations, as well as wel-

coming our guests across our prime hospitality properties, the health and safety of our guests and staff remain paramount. We are therefore working closely with the government authorities to ensure that the highest standards of hygiene are maintained, and that all recommended precautionary and preventive measures are in place for our guests to enjoy a well-rounded destination experience." 



Dh282 bn stimulus package for recovery

In the presence of senior government officials, diplomats, CEOs, business owners and investors from the UAE's public and private sectors, the sixth edition of the Sharjah Economic Ramadan Majlis explored how the UAE's economic stimulus packages have positively impacted major industry sectors, markets and businesses, and recommended response strategies for recovery.

TT Bureau

The Majlis was convened on a virtual platform under the theme, 'Impact of the UAE Stimulus Plan on Economic Stability and Growth'. It was organised by the Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), in collaboration with the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Sharjah FDI Office (Invest in Sharjah). The virtual session focussed on four key pillars – economic stimulus package and enhancement of investors' confidence, lessons learnt from the crisis, vibrant key sectors and creative experiences, and wise vision.

Highlighting the comprehensive economic support packages rolled out by the UAE to fend off the impact of the COVID-19 on the business sector, **H.E. Abdulla Al Saleh**, Under Secretary of the Foreign Trade and Industry, UAE Ministry of Economy, said, "As part of the long-term stimulus plan to speed up recovery and encourage investments, the UAE government's economic stimulus package targeting the financial and private sector has totaled Dh282 billion till date, and will be focused on sectors most directly affected by the pandemic including SMEs."

"We will benefit from the efficiency of government policies related to financial and trade sectors together with the competence and close collaboration of companies

“The government of Sharjah has been targeting every single sector from aviation and free zones to ports, SMEs and more, as the COVID-19 impact has been felt across all sectors”

H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal



H.E. Abdulla Al Saleh
Under Secretary of the Foreign Trade and Industry, UAE Ministry of Economy



H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal
Executive Chairman, Shurooq



H.E. Fahad Al Gergawi
CEO, Dubai Investment Development Agency (Dubai FDI)



H.E. Hussain Al Mahmoudi
CEO, Sharjah Research Technology and Innovation Park (SRTI)



Najla Al Midfa
CEO, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Centre (Sheraa)



Mohamed Juma Al Musharrkh
CEO, Sharjah FDI Office

operating in both the public and private sectors, which have enabled the nation to overcome economic crises in the past. This is not only a health crisis, but the impact is being felt everywhere – business, economy, social life, culture, relations between nations, travel and tourism, and more. The pandemic has led us into a new era of working and doing business. We are accelerating into the digital economy earlier than imagined – our digital goals for 2030 are now being realised in 2020 due to the onset of COVID-19," he adds.

H.E. Marwan bin Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman, Shurooq further reiterated the vital role of the UAE government in providing timely reassurance to the business community through the introduction of a host of stimulus packages. "The government of Sharjah has been targeting every single sector from aviation and free zones to ports, SMEs and more, as the COVID-19 impact has been felt across all sectors. Sharjah's current three-month stimulus package is based on the existing realities and may be extended upon reviewing the situation."

H.E. Fahad Al Gergawi, CEO, Dubai Investment Development Agency (Dubai FDI) noted, "This is an overall reality check for our lives, our government strategies and commitments, and

our corporate policies. The government and the nation were put on virtual work mode over one weekend, and we did not falter. We are adapting to our new realities and we will come out of this stronger, not just as a nation but as one world. Although some sectors such as tourism, aviation, petrochemicals, and retail took a severe hit, some are seeing a rise in prominence including technology, R&D, healthcare, education and the food business. The UAE's preparedness on the digital front is paying dividends now and these high priority sectors will see significant investments in the future."

Discussing how leveraging technology could provide new benefits and opportunities, **H.E. Hussain Al Mahmoudi** – CEO, Sharjah Research Technology

and Innovation Park (SRTI), said, "As a nation, the UAE has proven its ability in harnessing technologies and adopting digital transformation strategies to improve productivity and boost economic output. We have transitioned from a phase of fear to learning, and this pandemic has been instrumental in accelerating our journey to a more digitally powered world. Emerging technologies are today transforming business interactions and daily lives and going forward, will continue to drive advances in education, economy, healthcare, and society."

According to **Najla Al Midfa**, CEO, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Centre (Sheraa), "SMEs have had a busy time in the wake of the global pandemic as despite the setbacks in certain sectors,

it has also brought forth many opportunities for other sectors. A bottoms-up approach is what Sheraa is focusing on to stimulate SME growth. Our most significant initiative is the US\$1 million solidarity fund launched by Sheikha Bodour Bint Sultan Al Qasimi, Chairperson of Shurooq, to help startups impacted by COVID-19. The fund will provide emergency funding in the form of grants to startups that had strong business models but are reeling under the current circumstances. The fund will also integrate start-ups through supply chains for products and services procured either by Sheraa or by its partners in Sharjah."

On his part, **Mohamed Juma Al Musharrkh**, CEO at Sharjah FDI Office, outlined the number of initiatives the Sharjah Investors Services Centre (Saeed) has done to support investors and their needs during their 'remote working' periods. He said, "We have launched a series of initiatives to support all of our new and existing clients varying from investors and business owners in Sharjah, whose requirements vary from renewing trade licenses or arranging necessary documentations to help in their decision of changing their lines of products and services in light of the current COVID-19. Our initiative also includes allocating a number of our staff personnel who are mobile and working to attend to all of our client's needs directly from their homes and through contactless delivery of paper work. This is part of our strategy to make sure continuity of work and operations for our clients and maintaining the highest standards of happiness and health."

AvaniSHIELD extends to MICE facilities

Following the roll out of AvaniSHIELD, a programme promoting heightened safety and hygiene measures at Avani Hotels and Resorts worldwide, the brand is now looking to introduce a new set of measures for its MICE facilities. Avani+ Riverside Bangkok Hotel will be the test pilot in rolling out the new MICE programme.

TT Bureau

The brand's flagship hotel – Avani+ Riverside Bangkok Hotel will be the test pilot in rolling out the new MICE programme, including new measures in seating arrangements and food preparation guidelines for group catering, before being gradually adopted by the other properties worldwide.

As an extra precaution in the post 2019-nCoV world, Avani will be making the following guidelines mandatory for properties with MICE facilities:

- Adjusting the maximum capacity of meeting space to facilitate physical distancing.

- Introducing spaced out seating for all types for meeting room set-up.

- Rolling out temperature checks for the attendees, who will also be provided and encouraged to wear face masks at all times.

- At city hotels, putting a cap on the number of guests during coffee and lunch breaks and introducing clear floor markings to ensure physical distancing. At resorts, coffee and lunch breaks will be set up outdoors.

- At city hotels, adding bandwidth capacity in order to accommodate demand for online conferences and webinars.

- Mandatory temperature checks for contractors, suppliers and third-party partners who will also be required to wear face masks and gloves at all times during the pre-event setup as part of Avani's 'Trusted Partner Programme'.

- All incoming luggage, boxes and supplies will be sanitised prior to entering hotel premises.

- All stationery will be disinfected with a UVC (Ultra Violet C) device. Stationery displays will be replaced with an 'upon request' system to reduce environmental waste.

- Ballrooms and meeting rooms will be thoroughly disinfected with a potent



A dedicated AvaniSHIELD agent will be on hand to oversee implementation of new cleaning protocols and adherence to the latest health and safety guidelines

Ecolab solution that meets EPA standards.

- Food and beverages will be prepared in the back of the house. Buffet displays will be replaced with live cooking stations hidden behind plexiglass screens.

- Culinary team members wearing protective masks and gloves will be the only staff allowed to handle and serve food.

- Guests will be offered complimentary face

masks and hand sanitiser or alcohol wipes.

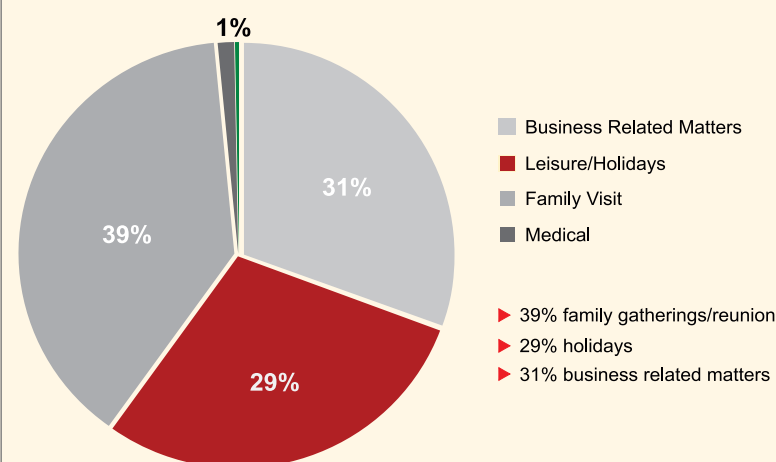
- A dedicated AvaniSHIELD agent will be on hand to oversee implementation of new cleaning protocols and adherence to the latest health and safety guidelines. 🧼

Guest and traveller trends post COVID-19

The purpose of travel will vary in the post COVID-19 era, according to a survey shared by Hala Matar Choufany, HVS President – Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

As per the findings of the HVS survey, 39% will be family gatherings or reunions, 29% will be holidays and leisure travel whilst business related travel will stand at 31% with medical travel declining to 1% of travellers.

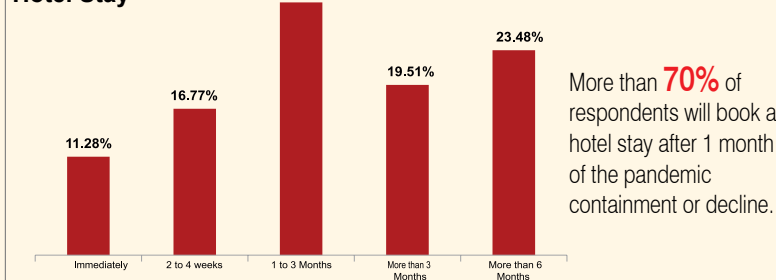
Purpose of Travel



Hotels vs. Others

Over the past few years there were various disruptors to the hotel industry as more people relied on home stay concepts and finding listings over reputed portals that would give them flexibility. According to the HVS survey, over 70% of respondents preferred to book a hotel stay after the lockdown. In terms of the type of accommodation preferred by the guests, 66% responded in favour of internationally branded hotel chains mainly due to the safety measures and guidelines in place.

Hotel Stay



Type of Accommodation



RAKTDA safeguards hospitality sector

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) has announced a strategic partnership with Bureau Veritas Certification (Bureau Veritas) to launch the 'Safeguard Assurance Program' – an initiative to ensure that all operations within the hospitality sector resume safely and efficiently.

TT Bureau

The renowned world leader in testing, inspection and certification services, Bureau Veritas, will support the Authority in implementing stringent health, safety and hygiene measures across all Ras Al Khaimah hotels to mitigate any possible risks for employees and guests and provide complete peace of mind. The partnership will

see Bureau Veritas conduct an independent audit, with all costs covered by RAKTDA, under its 'SafeGuard Assurance Program' for 45 hotels, as part of the RAK 'Stay Safe' Hotel campaign. The additional audit process serves to further validate the safety and hygiene measures and processes already put in place by the Authority in partnership with Government Authorities and takes its 'Stay Safe'

Hotel Certification to the next level.

Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, comments, "The Authority looks forward to working with Bureau Veritas, marking a first of its kind partnership between the entity and a tourism board in the region, as hotels in Ras Al Khaimah begin to welcome guests and visitors back. We have embarked on this partnership to support Ras Al Khaimah's hospitality providers and assist them in protecting and building trust among their employees and clients to be able to restart their business efficiently. The aim of Bureau Veritas' 'SafeGuard



Raki Phillips, CEO, RAKTDA

Assurance Program' is to ensure our partners adopt an adequate health, safety and hygiene procedures and that they are effectively implemented, resulting in a certificate and compliance label to reassure guests."

Marcel Hochar, Senior Vice President Middle East and Central Asia at Bureau Veritas, shares, "For almost 200 years, Bureau Veritas' mission has been to shape a world of trust. Adapting to the current sanitary

crisis, we have developed the 'Safeguard' label designed to certify that appropriate safety standard, training and cleaning protocols are achieved to allow businesses in general and the hospitality sector in particular, to reopen with confidence. With this label, today we have the ability to address the new expectations of our society in terms of health and safety. We are very honoured to be partnering with RAKTDA in their proactive endeavour to make a difference for their employees and guests and demonstrate their readiness to receive them in a healthy and safe environment throughout the emirate." 🇦🇪

“The aim of Bureau Veritas' 'SafeGuard Assurance Program' is to ensure our partners adopt an adequate health, safety and hygiene procedures and that they are effectively implemented”

Exploring Al Ula's tourism potential

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) gave a global audience of over 2,500 industry leaders and stakeholders insight into AlUla's journey to become an international tourism destination with arts, culture and community at its heart at a recent webinar hosted by bench events.

TT Bureau

The panel, titled "Arts and Culture: Inspiring a future of tourism development in ancient landscapes," saw a team from RCU join former Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova; Jean-François

and Artistic Director at Desert X; and Callum Lee of BOP Consulting.

The audience learned about RCU's goal to contribute towards the Kingdom's Vision 2030 programme by creating 38,000 jobs, contributing SAR 120



Abdulrahman AlSuhaibani
Director of Museums and Exhibitions
RCU

This discussion was part of Hospitality Tomorrow's wider efforts to facilitate conversations among industry leaders and stakeholders on accelerating the momentum for recovery, in part by making the connections needed to build the understanding, relation-



Nora AIDabal
Arts and Culture Programming Director
RCU

ships, unity and actionable ways to support the industry's recovery.

During the panel, **Abdulrahman AlSuhaibani**, Director of Museums and Exhibitions at RCU, who conducted research into AlUla's ancient civilisations

as part of his doctorate at the Sorbonne University in France, said, "For me, AlUla means the past, the present, and the future. It is an exceptional place. The human presence in AlUla began more than 200,000 years ago and continues until our time. This has left a diversity and richness in the archaeological remains, and also in the community today."

The cultural development of AlUla is guided by a Cultural Manifesto created to guide the sensitive and sustainable growth of the town, along with its partnerships with global hospitality brands to develop hospitality infrastructure in harmony with

AlUla's unique natural and human heritage.

The panel also discussed the energising role played by the arts in both the development of AlUla and in engaging the local community. **Nora AIDabal**, Arts and Culture Programming Director at RCU, said, "It's really important to us to establish AlUla as a cultural hub for creativity and artistic exchange. We've developed multiple arts workshops, including with Desert X: We had the artists work not only on the exhibition itself but also within the community. So, the community was really part of this experience." 🇦🇪

“The human presence in AlUla began more than 200,000 years ago and continues until our time. This has left a diversity and richness in the archaeological remains, and also in the community today”

Charnier, Scientific Director at Agence Française pour le Développement d'AlUla (AFALULA); Neville Wakefield, Creator

billion to Saudi GDP, and hosting two million annual visits, all while protecting and preserving AlUla's history and cultural heritage.

Keep the Bravo and Echo seats open?

The International Air Transport Association has shared a series of guidelines with the airlines and airports around the world for restarting passenger flights amid COVID-19 pandemic. While the proposed temporary layered approach for bio-security measures are aimed at instilling confidence among passengers and have been received well by the airlines as well as airports.

...and with reasons, say the aviation experts.

Here is a round-up of views from members in the airlines/aviation industry

Saleem Amanulla, Senior Vice President, Airport Operations, Oman Air, says that the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and airlines have expressed their concern regarding 'empty middle seat' that will seriously impact the airline survivability and it's not a long-term solution.



Saleem Amanulla
Senior Vice President, Airport Operations,
Oman Air

However, in the interim Oman Air will follow the guidelines as it is expected that in the first couple of months the traffic is expected to be low and Oman Air will be able to follow 'empty middle seat' guidelines.

While the passengers may not really want to think pragmatically now, the airlines certainly have to when they resume operations after remaining closed for almost two months.

Kurt Hofman, Austria-based Aviation journalist and an industry expert, says that even if airlines resume passenger flight operations, the load will be so low that the middle seat question may not even arise. "The airline industry and the allied industries that cater to airlines are so badly affected that out of the 16,000 aircraft parked around the world today at 700 different airports, 2,800 will never come back to skies.



Kurt Hofman
Austria-based Aviation journalist and an
industry expert

cabin safety and measures taken to sustain the same.

It's no surprise that airlines argue against keeping the middle seat free even as passengers are left feeling unsafe due to the close proximity with another person.

The air in an office is exchanged four times an hour and inside an aircraft, it is exchanged 20 to 30 times an hour. Airlines will have to do a lot of explanation to its passengers regarding the

Aviation industry has to bring back the confidence for its own interest. In any case, since the passenger travel sentiment will have gone through a lot of thoughts and evolution, there may not be a big rush in air travel in the near and foreseeable future and the loads will be low. Air travel will get a lot more serious now. It will no longer be funny and exhilarating."

Salam Al Kindi, Head of Corporate Affairs, Salam Air, an LCC based in Oman is of the opinion that leaving the middle seat open is not a very viable option. "When the passengers are equipped with masks and gloves, the distancing factor can be relaxed. Moreover, the multi-layered screening bio-checks for all passengers will ensure that those with symptoms do not continue with the travel. As for asymptomatic cases, even if you leave the middle seat free, that doesn't ensure the mandated distance."



Salam Al Kindi
Director of Corporate Affairs
Salam Air

the travelling public's expectations but will also be backed up by science."

Another industry expert, from one of the leading airlines in Europe, echoes the same view. He says, "When flights do resume, social distancing is going to continue being a challenge. Keeping middle seats free isn't an effective distancing measure as proximity to passengers in front and behind isn't addressed. However, airlines and international health authorities continue to work together to explore options which will not only satisfy

Science certainly needs to be explained by the airlines to its passengers, even if it means sharing widely in all social media platforms, the educative film produced by IATA, explaining the safety of cabin air. The words of Vincent Feuillie, Air France's Medical Consultant may well ring as sonorous notes to all concerned when he says that it's not the air inside the cabin that puts you to risk, but the surface you touch.

"If the situation continues to improve, the fun can come back, perhaps by this year end. But passengers will remain alert and for all good reasons," says **Captain Nandkumar**, Airbus Fleet Training Manager.



Captain Nandkumar
Airbus Fleet
Training Manager

"Leaving the middle seat vacant may psychologically instill more confidence in a passenger. However, a seat with an approximate width of 18 inches does not really comply with the mandated physical distancing. Screening passengers before boarding, use of face masks combined with the downward airflow in the cabin along with High Efficiency Par-

ticulate Air (HEPA) filters on all modern aircraft may reduce the chances of spread of COVID in an aircraft. This fact needs to be brought to the attention of the passengers convincingly," Nandkumar says.



“Leaving the middle seat vacant may psychologically instill more confidence in a passenger. However, a seat with an approximate width of 18 inches does not really comply with the mandated physical distancing”



Raajeshwari Ashok is a writer, blogger & a communications expert who has more than a decade of airline experience. She can be contacted at Instagram (June_gemini16), Twitter (Raaj Ashok), and Blog (raajashok.wordpress.com)



Hosts webinars at ATM Virtual

Travtalk Middle East will be hosting two important sessions at the ATM Virtual, which will be conducted from June 1 to 3, 2020. The sessions will be moderated by **SanJeet**, Managing Director, DDP Publications.

TT Bureau

The first session will focus on Middle East: The new Asian source market, with three key speakers from Asian tourism boards – **Beverly Au Yong**, Area Director (Middle East) International Group, Singapore Tourism Board; **Daks Gonzales**, Head for the Middle East Market, Philippines Department of Tourism (DOT); and **Nandini Lahe-Thapa**, Senior Director at the Nepal Tourism Board & Head of the International Marketing and Promotion Dept. Their focus will be



to understand 2020 and 2021 strategy to explore UAE and Middle East as a source market. When they

will expect the first wave of tourism to come from the Middle East? Would the focus on Europe change

for this year? How they will change their marketing strategy for the GCC market? What makes this market a lucrative one? This discussion will help the industry understand this global pandemic and the way forward in the long-term.

The second session will focus on 'The new normal: What the future looks

like for the hotel and tourism industry.' This will be a discussion on the new normal which will be the outcome post COVID-19 lockdown and the various strategies and measures taken by tourism boards and hotels in ensuring regulations and standards to be implemented.

The speakers at this session include **Nia Niscaya**, Deputy Minister for Mar-

The second session will have a discussion on the new normal which will be the outcome post COVID-19 lockdown and the various strategies and measures taken by tourism boards and hotels



Sanjeet
Managing Director
DDP Publications

keting, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia; **Muzzammil Ahussain**, EVP, Consumer Travel of Seera Group; and **Paul Wilson**, Executive Vice President – Commercial, Cross Hotels and Resorts.

Geneva ready to welcome GCC travellers

Following the improving situation in Switzerland in connection with COVID-19, and the constant decrease in the number of new and active infected cases, the city of Geneva has started to open up while still maintaining the necessary security measures to ensure the health and safety of citizens and visitors.

TT Bureau

Starting from May 11, Geneva's restaurants, shops, markets, travel agencies, museums, libraries and sports facilities were reopened with precautionary measures being applied. The reopening plan consists of different phases where each entity in Geneva will gradually take a step closer to being fully operational. On June 8, Phase 3 will take effect and swimming pools, theatres, cinemas, zoos, botanical gardens, animal parks and mountain transport services will be open to the public again.

"We are optimistic about the current situation in Geneva and looking forward to more positive developments highlighted with the opening of airports for international flights soon," says **Franck Romanet**, Market Manager GCC & India at Geneva Tourism & Conventions Foundation. "With the restrictions in Geneva being lifted and with more airlines announcing their return flights and connecting the GCC to our city, we hope to see more and more tourists from the GCC region travelling again to their favourite destination, Geneva," Romanet continues.

Every year Geneva welcomes the highest numbers of travellers from the GCC compared to other Swiss cities. This is linked to Geneva's diverse offerings, natural scenery and unique shopping opportunities which Arab travellers look forward to. The number of halal food restaurants and the hotels with Arabic speaking staff makes travellers from the Middle East region feel at home when visiting Geneva. Another important factor which makes Geneva an appealing destination for Arabs is its medical offerings which have a positive international reputation thanks to the num-

ber of clinics and hospitals available, the cutting-edge technology deployed and the research institutes which pave the way to create new treatments and medicines for different conditions. Arab travellers usually head to Geneva to do regular check-ups, treat certain ailments or for recreation purposes.

Once the flight connections are back on schedule, the city of Geneva will be ready to take its visitors on a journey of discovery to enjoy dream moments and create everlasting memories. A stroll on the shores of Geneva's lake with views of the Jet d'Eau

"We are optimistic about the current situation in Geneva and looking forward to more positive developments highlighted with the opening of airports for international flights soon"



on one side and the magnificent Jura mountains on the other; a visit to one of the world's unique museums to observe Geneva's fascinating history; or visiting the birthplace of the World Wide Web where

the starting point for the development of websites saw the light in 1989 at CERN in Geneva; and more will be waiting for the travellers to reignite their senses and enjoy the adventure of travel again.

How will hotels rebound from COVID-19?

As the pandemic started to take hold globally in February, hoteliers began projecting an impact lasting more than a year. Tom Ito, Principal, Gensler talks about what can be done to rebuild the trust of hotel guests and give them confidence to return safely to hotels.

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Ample short-term responses to create a safer hospitality experience amidst the COVID-19 crisis are being discussed now. However, we need to focus on long-term measures too. Let's take a look at what hotels can do to sustain themselves in the long-term.

Continue to be beacons for the community

In the weeks and months since the beginning of the pandemic, hotels have stepped up to serve a higher purpose for their communities.

“Can meeting spaces be resilient enough to host a wedding or convention, but serve as a medical triage space in a future emergency? This type of agility can provide a real value for hotels and their communities”

nities. The 'Hospitality for Hope' initiative, for example, provides rooms to house healthcare workers, adapt as temporary healthcare spaces, and house the unsheltered.

Post-pandemic, we can expect hotels to embrace an even stronger sense of social responsibility as they engage and welcome back their communities.

Think local first

In the immediate future as the country begins to reopen, hotels will be the hub that welcomes their communities with activities, events, and local hospitality. Until

people become comfortable again with airline travel, we'll see an initial focus on local and drive-to destination travel, reinforcing the importance of localisation and community connections.

Promote a culture of safety

Hoteliers must balance safety measures with a sensibility that helps guests feel welcome and at ease. Some measures will be tangible and immediate — things like touchless technology, keyless entry, and mobile payments that are tied to the individual guest. Other measures such as air filtration systems, UV light sources, disinfecting sprays, healthy materials, and new housekeeping protocols will communicate to guests that their safety is a primary concern.

Lean into human connection

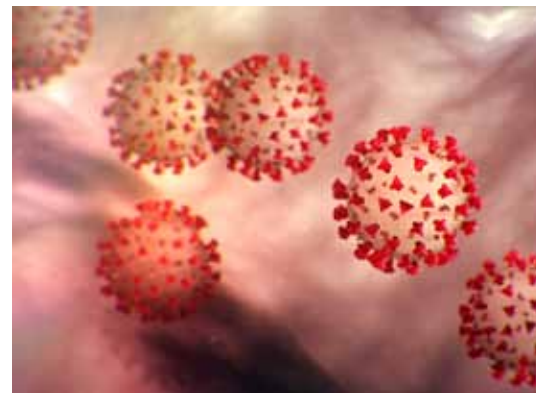
As technology, digital interfaces, and mobile connectivity become more prevalent, we have to remember that human interaction creates the memorable moments hotels are known for. There's still nothing more comforting than a friendly face and a warm smile.

Prioritise well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that a sense of safety speaks to our overall well-being. Hotels have already made great efforts to create wellness programmes. As in the workplace and aviation sectors, we can expect well-being and health to go further and become the standard of a hotel stay.

Build-in resilience

There is no denying that



people eventually will resume travelling and return to hotels. What's also likely is that a new crisis will emerge someday, demanding that hotels be ready. The pandemic experience gives us the opportunity to rethink the future of hospitality. How can we create spaces that are flexible and support a business model that is responsive to the next crisis? Can meeting spaces be resilient enough to host a wedding or convention, but serve as

a medical triage space in a future emergency? This type of agility can provide a real value for hotels and their communities.



Tom Ito
Principal, Gensler

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

Mindful meetings at Mandarin Oriental

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has introduced an exclusive 'Booking with Confidence' group meeting offer. Valid till January 31, 2021, The Group will waive any cancellation fees should government and travel guidelines lead to event cancellation, provided that advance notice is received at least 30 days ahead of the event.

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Meeting planners can enjoy a range of group concessions and will have the unique opportunity to create meeting environments conducive to success with Mindful Meetings by Mandarin Oriental, a global initiative designed to enhance and en-

Wellness enhancements include healthy and invigorating menu choices, yoga sessions, guided meditations, digital wellness and jet lag tips, massage and movement breaks, custom spa events, expert health talks and group exercise activities

ergise meetings and conferences with creative wellness-centric solutions. Examples of wellness enhancements include healthy and invigorating menu choices, yoga sessions, guided meditations, digital wellness and jet lag tips, massage and movement breaks, custom spa events, expert health talks and group



exercise activities to help participants feel refreshed, motivated and ready to absorb information, implement

new ideas, and establish connections, which are more important than ever in challenging times.

The 'Booking with Confidence' offer is applicable to group bookings with a minimum of 10 rooms over a duration of two nights or more, and includes the following benefits:

- Complimentary Mindful Meeting Wellness Break which features a 30-minute guided wellness activity such as meditation or yoga for participants in the meeting space
- One complimentary guest room per 20 guest room nights paid
- One complimentary room upgrade to a suite

per 20 guest rooms paid (subject to availability)

- Complimentary Wi-Fi for attendees registering online for Fans of MO, Mandarin Oriental's guest recognition programme
- Complimentary amenities for all guests upon arrival
- Room rate applicable three days pre- and post-group arrival
- A dedicated Conference Service Manager on-site
- A two-night complimentary stay for a site inspection prior to the event

ATM Virtual to focus on Chinese travellers

With the spread of coronavirus under control and domestic leisure travel growing, ME travel professionals are looking to China to initiate international tourism. One of the most eagerly awaited sessions during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) three-day ATM Virtual event that will take place from June 1-3, 2020 is the Virtual ATM China Tourism Forum.

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The debate will take an in-depth look at the potential of the Chinese outbound leisure market now that China seems to have the viral outbreak under control and domestic tourism is growing once again. Many Middle East travel professionals will be looking for insights into the current state of the market and more importantly, how and when to start planning for inbound Chinese visitors.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director Middle East, Arabian Travel Market, said, "Travel and tourism professionals around the globe will not need reminding that the global industry has been hit badly by the effects of COVID-19 – but in China we are witnessing the green shoots of recovery.

"The relatively swift rebound of domestic travel during the May Golden Week Holiday in China for example, underscores the bullish view of certain analysts regarding China's integral role in leading the global tourism



Danielle Curtis
Exhibition Director Middle East,
Arabian Travel Market

industry post COVID-19's closed borders.

"Some hoteliers in China were reporting occupancy levels for the recent national holiday in excess of 45 per cent with resort markets close to 70 per cent, a significant improvement from the overall average of 30 per cent occupancy, confirming leisure demand is robust."

Specifically, the Virtual ATM China Tourism Forum will focus on the potential recovery of outbound travel and how Chinese travellers have been changing the way that they access information about foreign destinations and

making contacts with local hotels, tour operators and ground handlers.

Moderated by **Dr. Adam Wu**, the panellists for this session, which takes place on day two (June 2) from 11 am to 12 pm GST (8 am to 9 am BST), include **Dr. Taleb Rifai**, Chairman, International Institute of Peace for Tourism (IIPT) and former Secretary General of the UNWTO; **H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority; **Helen Shapovalova**, Founder & Director, Pan Ukraine; **Lisa Dinh**, Tourism Director, VIA Outlets; and **Tony Ong**, Chief Business Officer and Vice President of HCG International Travel Group, which has over 7,000 local travel agents across China focusing on outbound travel.

The experts will share their opinion and experience on how to overcome the current crisis by identifying new buying patterns, new demand streams and innovative ways of reaching customers as well as enhancing existing partnerships. "We have an impressive line-up of tourism experts and Dr. Wu's credentials are exemplary. He is CEO of CBN Travel & Mice and World Travel Online, which is the leading outbound travel portal on the China Wide Web pro-

viding destination information in Chinese to the entire outbound travel trade and millions of Chinese travellers," added Curtis.

With it being a live session, members of the online audience will also have a chance to ask questions, through a Q+A function at the end of the discus-

sion. In addition, viewers will also have an opportunity to share and exchange thoughts and ideas, during a speed networking session, immediately following the panel debate.

Over three days, ATM Virtual, will also feature a host of

that can then be extended into more in-depth meetings where a business need is identified. "For exhibitors from this region, the dedicated networking event will also include one specifically targeting Chinese buyers," said Curtis.

in a post-COVID-19 world, and the resilience of the travel industry, as well as exploring emerging travel technology and sustainability trends, amongst other key topics. Sessions on the first day of the virtual event include, amongst others, 'Communicating and building confidence now' and 'The hotel land-

PANELLISTS



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and
Tourism Development Authority



Dr. Adam Wu
Moderator



Dr. Taleb Rifai
Chairman, International Institute of Peace
for Tourism (IIPT) and former Secretary
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Tony Ong
Chief Business Officer and Vice President
of HCG International Travel Group

“The relatively swift rebound of domestic travel during the May Golden Week Holiday in China underscores the bullish view of certain analysts regarding China's integral role in leading the global tourism industry post COVID-19's closed borders”



Another highlight of ATM Virtual, will be a series of hour-long speed networking sessions, between key buyers and exhibitors, which will culminate in over 1,400 five-minute meetings

comprehensive webinars, live conference sessions, roundtables, speed networking events, one-to-one meetings, as well as facilitating new connections and offering a wide range of online business opportunities.

With up to four live high-level sessions each day, industry experts will address a range of topics including tourism strategies for the future, the hotel landscape

scape in a post-COVID-19 world'. Day two will also include the sessions entitled, 'Bouncing back: Tourism strategies for the future' and 'Catapulting resilience through technology and analytics'. On day three, the event will conclude with the International Travel Investment Conference summit, 'Restructuring to attract sustainable investment and customers in the new world order'.

Radisson announces safety protocol

Radisson Hotel Group announced its Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, a new programme of in-depth cleanliness and disinfection procedures, in partnership with SGS, the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. One of the Group's highest priorities is the continued health, safety and security of its guests, team members, and business partners.

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The company has conducted a thorough review of all existing health and safety processes and worked with a team of experts to develop and validate additional protocols. These enhanced protocols, operational guidance and comprehensive health and safety procedures validated by SGS, will be

adapted based on local requirements and recommendations, to ensure guests' safety and peace of mind from check-in to check-out. Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol will further strengthen Radisson Hotel Group's existing rigorous sanitation, cleanliness and disinfection guidelines at hotels globally.

These guidelines include

hand sanitising stations at all entrances, the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and protective screens, enhanced and recorded cleaning and disinfection frequency, social distancing in all areas of its hotels, including in the meeting & event facilities, training in local Centers for Disease Control, or World Health Organization recommendations and health guidelines, reiteration of food safety standards and comprehensive staff training. Radisson Hotel Group's enhanced cleaning and disinfection guide-

lines have been developed in collaboration with global hygiene solutions provider, Diversey, by uniting best-in-class cleaning and hygiene solutions with reinforced protocols and patented technology designed for healthcare.

"At Radisson Hotel Group, we are committed to delivering a clean and safe environment for our guests and team members. The world has been fundamentally changed by COVID-19, so it is important that we strive to protect all who work, stay and partner with us as we



man of Radisson Hotel Group's Global Steering Committee.

Frankie Ng, CEO of SGS, adds, "SGS' global leadership in the travel & hospitality sector has enabled our network of health and safety experts to develop a comprehensive and straightforward protocol to check management procedures and disinfection status of hotels. Our goal is to ensure that maximum hygiene standards are met, to protect guests as well as Radisson Hotel Group team members." 

reopen our doors to a new era of travel. To do this we have thoroughly examined all areas of the hotel experience, and we are proud to have partnered with SGS to create our Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol programme." says **Federico J. González**, CEO, Radisson Hospitality AB and Chair-

The world has been fundamentally changed by COVID-19, so it is important that we strive to protect all who work, stay and partner with us as we reopen our doors to a new era of travel

Accor redefines hospitality in MEA

Accor is pioneering a new guest safety initiative that redefines the hospitality experience in the Middle East and Africa during these unprecedented times. The ALL Safe Officer' programme will ensure cleaning and hygiene protocols are implemented to the highest standards, and questions and concerns of guests are handled effectively.

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The ground-breaking 'ALL Safe Officer' programme, which is scheduled to be rolled out in the coming weeks, will see every hotel appoint a health and safety officer who will not only ensure cleaning and hygiene protocols are implemented to the highest standards, but will be available to handle guests' questions and concerns. These specially trained officers are the face of Accor's new ALL Safe Accor Programme – a set of rigorous measures designed to protect and reas-

sure guests that are being implemented at its 300 properties region-wide.

Recognising that consumer priorities have drastically shifted following the global COVID-19 pandemic, programme highlights include tailor-made operating protocols, cleaning products technology and team members training developed in partnership with hygiene solutions specialist Bureau Veritas.

The initiative is bolstered by Accor's strategic partnership with global insurance giant AXA, which as of July 2020, will be pro-



viding guests at its 5,000 properties worldwide with free medical support that includes consultations with medical professionals by phone or in the location where they are staying.

"The safety and well-being of our guests is always our priority at Accor and we regularly review and enhance our procedures


and services to adapt to new circumstances or as improved technology becomes available," said **Mark Willis**, CEO, Accor Middle East and Africa.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to change the way we live, work and stay and as the largest hotel group in the Middle East and Africa, we are taking the lead



in reinventing the hospitality experience, introducing dedicated 'ALL Safe Officers' and a rigorous programme of transparent measures that give guests peace of mind and put their health first, which is what they now value most," added Willis.

All guests visiting or staying at Accor properties in the Middle East and Africa

will only be granted access if they are wearing a proper face mask and gloves (provided by the hotel). The group is also working closely with local authorities in each market where it operates to ensure the strictest compliance with policies and guidelines issued to protect guest health and safety during the ongoing pandemic. 

As the largest hotel group in the Middle East and Africa, we are taking the lead in reinventing the hospitality experience, introducing dedicated 'ALL Safe Officers' and a rigorous programme of transparent measures

Emirates' rigorous safety measures

Emirates Airline has unveiled multifaceted measures for employee and customer care at every step of the travel journey, redefining safety and hygiene standards on-board and on the ground. The new measures took effect with the resumption of regularly scheduled passenger flights to nine destinations.

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Emirates is implementing a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the traveller's journey, to enhance the sanitisation of all touchpoints, and ensure the health and safety of customers and employees. **Adel Al Redha**, Emirates' Chief Operating Officer said, "The risk of catching an

infection on an aircraft is already very low, but we have spared no effort in reviewing and redesigning every step, from check-in to disembarkation. Every measure implemented is an additional reduction in risk, and taken altogether, our aim is really to make flying as safe as possible.

We are working with all the stakeholders in Dubai, in-

cluding the airport, immigration, health and aviation authorities to implement such measures, and we will continue to review and consult expert advice for any development and changes. We are all aware that we have to adapt to different practices during this pandemic in our day-to-day activities."

Hygiene kits

Emirates has introduced complimentary hygiene kits to be given to every passenger upon check-in at Dubai International Airport and on flights to Dubai. These kits comprise of masks, gloves, anti-

bacterial wipes and hand sanitiser. The hygiene kits supplement a slew of additional measures already introduced to keep customers safe. Gloves and masks are mandatory for all customers and employees at the airport in Dubai, while only masks are mandated on Emirates flights.

Transit passengers

Customers travelling through Dubai International Airport and transferring onto another flight, will go through thermal screening upon disembarkation. Transfer desks at the airport have also been installed with

protective barriers as a precautionary measure. Airport staff, dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE) will direct customers from a safe distance for extra assistance. Customers will be given an additional hygiene kit at the gate before boarding their connecting flight.

Boarding sequence

The boarding sequence has been staggered and passengers board by row, from the last row to the first, in small numbers. The waiting area has also been modified to ensure all customers observe social distancing. Emirates boarding



Adel Al Redha
Chief Operating Officer
Emirates

agents, dressed in PPE, will facilitate the boarding sequence. The boarding gates are deep cleaned and disinfected after the boarding of every flight. 🇦🇪



IATA principles for industry restart

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced a commitment by the airline CEOs on its Board of Governors to five principles for reconnecting the world by air transport.

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The five principles announced by IATA encompass safety and security, science and technology, economic recovery, environment targets and global standards. "Restarting air transport is important. Even as the pandemic continues, the foundations for an industry restart are being laid through close collaboration of the air transport industry with ICAO, the WHO, individual governments, and other parties. Much work, however, remains to be done. By committing to these principles, the leaders of the world's airlines will guide the safe, responsible, and sustainable restart of



Alexandre de Juniac
Director General and CEO
IATA

our vital economic sector. Flying is our business. And it is everyone's shared freedom," said **Alexandre de Juniac**, Director General and CEO, IATA.

The principles outlined by IATA are as follows:

1. Aviation will always put safety and security first: Airlines commit to work with our partners in government institutions and across the industry to:

- Implement a science-based biosecurity regime that will keep our passengers and crew safe while enabling efficient operations.
- Ensure that aviation is not a meaningful source for the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19.

2. Aviation will respond flexibly as the crisis and science evolve. Airlines will work with all partners to:

- Utilise new science and technology as it becomes available, for example, reliable, scalable and efficient solutions for COVID-19 testing or immunity passports.
- Develop a predictable and effective approach to managing any future border closures or mobility restrictions.
- Ensure that measures are scientifically supported, economically sustainable, operationally viable, continuously reviewed, and removed/replaced when no longer necessary.

3. Aviation will be a key driver of the economic re-

covery. Airlines will work with all partners to:

- Re-establish capacity that can meet the demands of the economic recovery as quickly as possible.
- Ensure that affordable air transport will be available in the post-pandemic period.

4. Aviation will meet its environment targets. Airlines will work with all partners to:

- Achieve our long-term goal of cutting net carbon emissions to half of 2005 levels by 2050.
- Successfully implement the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

5. Aviation will operate to global standards which are harmonised and mutually recognised by governments: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

- Establish the global standards necessary for an effective restart of aviation, particularly drawing on strong partnerships with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Ensure that agreed measures are effectively implemented and mutually recognised by governments. 🇦🇪



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Durga Das Publications (Middle East) FZE
at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd.,
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Dubai Tourism, stakeholders meet

Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) held a virtual meeting with key aviation and hospitality partners to discuss current and post-pandemic strategies and joint initiatives aimed at ensuring the tourism industry's gradual return to normalcy. The meeting also discussed global efforts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

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Presided by the Director General of Dubai Tourism, the meeting was attended by key executives of hospitality groups including Jumeirah, Emaar Hospitality Group, Marriott International, Millennium, Accor, JA Resorts and Hotels, Kerzner International, Al Habtoor Group, Wasl and Rotana, in addition to aviation sector players like Emirates, flydubai and Dubai International Airport.

The partners were briefed on the phased approach being adopted to reopen the tourism sector in Dubai, and the marketing communications and activities in progress across key markets to reinforce Dubai's high global profile including the ongoing #Till We Meet Again digital activation. With the hospitality sector being a key pillar of Dubai's economy, the discussions between Dubai Tourism and partners focused on the steps being taken to pave the way for the reopening of hotels and other tourism facilities across the city, while ensuring adherence to the strictest guidelines and providing opportunities to revive domestic market demand.

As part of overall efforts to create a positive perception and a conducive environment aimed at instilling confidence among travellers who plan to visit Dubai, the meeting also looked at various precautionary measures that have been implemented, both at a city-wide level and across specific sectors including tourism, which represent critical touchpoints for visitors and residents during their stay. One of the key priorities from a marketing

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, commented, "As we look ahead to a gradual reopening of tourism, we will focus on the key elements that have ensured the industry's success over the past decade – creating unique value and delivering an uncompromised guest experience. To achieve this, we rely on the solidarity of our stakeholders who have always played a pivotal role. We hope they will continue to lead from the front in positioning Dubai as a must-visit destination."



Adnan Kazim, Chief Commercial Officer at Emirates Airline, said, "The health and safety of our customers and employees remain our top priorities across our operations, and Emirates has implemented comprehensive measures at every step of the customer journey. This includes thermal temperature scanning before check-in, the mandatory use of masks and gloves for everyone at

the airport, protective suits for our crew and ground employees, physical distancing protocols, modified services to reduce contact, enhanced cleaning of all our touchpoints, and much more."

Neal Jones, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA), Marriott International, said, "In spite of the current situation caused by the global pandemic, Marriott International wishes to emphasise the promising future that awaits the tourism sector in Dubai, and this is largely due to the emirate's visionary leadership and the excellent understanding and collaboration between Dubai Tourism and all its stakeholders in working towards the common goal of positioning Dubai as a leading destination."



Mohammed Al Habtoor, Vice Chairman and CEO, Al Habtoor Group, said, "Dubai with its wide experience in successfully dealing with challenging situations is capable of restoring tourism momentum and paving the way for the hospitality sector to return to its previous state. This is also a view shared by our international hospitality partners who have placed great faith in Dubai's resilience during tough times, as well as in its world-class healthcare system and the range of preventive measures taken across the city such as the effective and regular sanitisation and sterilisation programmes, that will help highlight Dubai as one of the world's safest destinations."

Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said, "Dubai International Airport is prepared to welcome visitors as soon as airports around the world start reopening and pave the way for a phased resumption of air services. As health and hygiene standards will play an influential role in encouraging people to travel, we have put in place a set of health and safety protocols at our airports including all necessary quarantine arrangements and the implementation of sanitisation and disinfection measures to reassure tourists that Dubai is one of the safest destinations to visit."



Ghaith Al Ghaith, CEO of flydubai, said, "As a national carrier, flydubai has been mindful of its responsibilities during these unprecedented times. With the support of our regulator, we have operated 379 all-cargo flights to enable the movement of essential goods. We have carried more than 2,250,000 kgs of cargo to the UAE as well across our network

and beyond. Moreover, we are fully supporting governments and authorities with their repatriation efforts. Since the flight restrictions came into effect, we have operated more than 100 repatriation flights to 19 different countries enabling 14,000 citizens to return home."

Mark Willis, CEO Middle East and Africa at Accor, praised the government's efforts in reopening the markets and supporting the tourism sector. He stated, "Accor is committed to coordinating with Dubai Tourism and all related entities, from both government and private sectors, to ensure we are aligned in making the safety and well-being of our guests and team members our key priority"



perspective is to emphasise the safety and security that Dubai provides, and the clear stringent health and safety protocols issued by the Dubai Health Authority based on international

standards and best practices aimed at containing the contagion. The meeting also discussed the mechanism to ensure adherence to the guidelines, practical solutions to scan and monitor

passengers at Dubai International Airport and the effective management of contact tracing in compliance with privacy standards, following the resumption of air travel.

All participants at the meeting expressed their appreciation for the way in which government – both at the Dubai and UAE level – have dealt with the threat of COVID-19 including the rational

policy decisions that have allowed robust management of the health crisis and mitigation of the economic repercussions by allowing for the gradual reopening of vital sectors like tourism. 🇦🇪



Digital Offerings



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