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UAE'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE MONTHLY

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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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Media Partner



Growing connections

The first one-of-a-kind virtual event in the GCC in the post pandemic era kicks off on November 23 and 24 with two days of connecting the industry leaders on a networking platform like no other. SCTDA and RAKTDA have partnered as Gold and Platinum sponsors respectively.



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, SCTDA

“The Gulf Travel Show redefines the way we promote travel and tourism, providing a platform to showcase how we are building on what we achieved during the COVID-19, and planning for a stronger future post COVID-19. Such shows and events are crucial to communicate Sharjah’s tourism story and showcase our tourism assets to the local, regional and international markets. Through innovative solutions, GTS connects exhibitors and buyers worldwide under one virtual show to present their unique brands. It also offers an opportunity for direct access to target markets, including one-on-one video meetings. Sharjah is inviting all the visitors to witness our natural attractions set against the latest tourism and hospitality projects, especially in Khorfakkan and with the new road linking the eastern coast town to reach Kalba from Sharjah.”



Raki Phillips
CEO
RAKTDA

“We are really excited to be Platinum sponsors for the Gulf Travel Show. This virtual platform gives us the opportunity to showcase Ras Al Khaimah as one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in the region. We look forward to connecting with our partners and re-introducing them to why Ras Al Khaimah is the perfect destination in the new normal era of travel. Ras Al Khaimah is known as the natural emirate with 64 km of pristine beach front, a beautiful topography from the desert and the mangroves.”



Marko Muthig
Regional Director
Sales Asia
TUI Hotels and Resorts

This will be a good opportunity to build confidence and to communicate to the partners our health and safety preparedness in welcoming their guests when the border opens.”

“We at TUI Hotels and Resorts will be showcasing our properties, namely, Robinson Club Maldives, Robinson Club Khao Lak, Robinson Club Noonu, Robinson Club Cyprus, TUI Blue Nam Hoi An and TUI Blue Bahari Zanzibar. We are participating at GTS with an aim to reconnect and build new relationships with our travel trade partners in the Middle East.



Hyunsun Hong
Regional Director, MENA
Korea Tourism
Organization

“Gulf Travel Show gives us an opportunity to remain connected with the travel trade amidst these unprecedented times. Prior to the show, KTO has also been active digitally, organising webinars and social media campaigns. KTO has continued to promote the destination and remain connected with our audience. We will distribute e-brochures, trade presentations and educate the trade on risky and risk-free destinations post COVID. Korea is nowhere in the list of Top 75 infected countries.”

Contd. on page 3 ▶

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travel and tourism
in and outside the Middle East.

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Fairmont
BAB AL BAHR

► Contd. from page 1

Accessing target markets



Gulf Travel Show (GTS) with its proprietary exhibition software will help you recover, rebuild and innovate relationships and products. Although this is a virtual event, our goal is the same as live events- to introduce you to buyers, help grow your brand and build long-term profitable business connections.

Countdown to the Gulf Travel Show has begun; buyers are eagerly waiting to reconnect with their partners and suppliers are geared up with the latest safety measures. Tourism is raring to start and the first time ever Gulf Travel Show promises to stimulate travel on November 23-24, 2020. National tourism boards have already started preparing for the event and the exciting hosted buyer programme promises quality meetings with the right partners. As the brand suggests, it's time to resume, restart, reconnect, reimagine, rethink, reengage and reignite travel with the perfect blend of personalised services and technology.

Buyers



Sapna Aidasani
PR and Marketing
Manager, Pluto
Travels

“ I am participating as a buyer at the Gulf Travel Show on November 23 and 24 and expect all the travel industry partners from hotels to DMCs, tourism boards, transport companies to OTAs and travel influencers and bloggers to come and experience one of the best GCC travel exhibitions over two days of solid networking and connecting with industry partners. Let's connect and grow together at the Gulf Travel Show. ”



Muhammad Idrees
Manager – Saudi
Wings Holidays,
Riyadh, Kingdom of
Saudi Arabia

“ I will be participating as a buyer at the Gulf Travel Show on November 23 and 24, so hope to meet good suppliers and exhibitors, to meet the mutual goal. It is two days of networking with industry leaders that will be able to share knowledge on the need of the hour. ”

Exhibitors



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

“ We have a special participation at the Gulf Travel Show which takes place on November 23 and 24. We will be taking part in interesting panel discussions. You can watch our videos and receive many informative and valuable inputs about destination Germany. ”



Namratha Rose
Travel Influencer,
Dubai

“ I'm attending the Gulf Travel Show on November 23 and 24, so come on over online and let's all meet up and network with the travel fraternity across the globe. See you soon. It is the perfect opportunity to learn and understand the new trends in the market whilst connecting with all our industry partners. ”



Zaki Ahmed
Officer VIP Luxury
Concierge, Al Mosafer
Riyadh, Kingdom of
Saudi Arabia

“ I will be attending the Gulf Travel Show on November 23 and 24. It will be a pleasure to meet all the exhibitors and suppliers. It is a really good platform to extend business networking and meet with our existing suppliers as well as get to know some new properties and partners that will be present at the show. ”

Inputs by Shehara Rizvi

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Ajman Corniche

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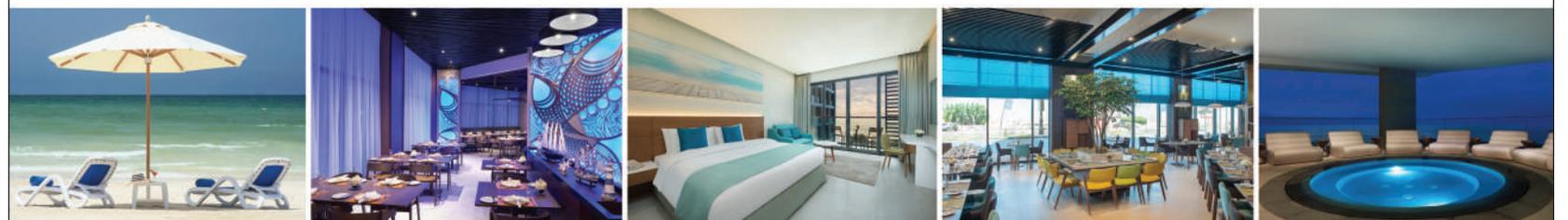
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Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche is operated by R Hotels under a franchise agreement with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts.

A new era of disruption and resilience

The pandemic ushered in disruption across the globe, however the resilience of travel, tourism and hospitality industry seem to be steering in a new era for the sectors. **Frank Trampert**, Managing Director and CCO, International, Sabre Hospitality Solutions and **Abdul-Razzaq Iyer**, Vice President, Sabre Travel Network Middle East share their thoughts with **TRAVTALK**.

Frank Trampert,
Managing Director and CCO,
International, Sabre, Hospitality Solutions



Frank Trampert
Managing Director and CCO,
International, Sabre Hospitality
Solutions

What changes do you see in travellers today?

The new 'staycation' trend is something that is impacting the changes amid travellers. For hotels, leveraging on this and attracting a new segment of guests i.e. people living close to the property or less than 15 km away, could be a new way of raising hotel revenue.

How has the hospitality landscape changed?

Hoteliers sell much more than just a hotel room; they provide restaurant services, meetings and incentive services. They can enrich guest experience by selling theatre tickets, city tours and other in-destination experiences. These are new revenue opportunities that a hotelier should be utilising. Hoteliers should consider going beyond the simple accommodation and think about themselves as retailers of an extended customer experience – all through smart technology.

Abdul-Razzaq Iyer,
Vice President, Sabre Travel network ME



Abdul-Razzaq Iyer
Vice President
Sabre Travel network Middle East

How are travellers coping with the new normal?

Travellers' appetite to travel has increased after these travel restrictions, but they are waiting for the right time to start flying again. We see high volume of travel searches for coming months; hoping that travel restrictions will be eased, or a vaccine will be out. These searches won't materialise into actual bookings until travellers trust the process and feel safe to travel again. They are looking for travel agents to provide them with accurate and reliable updates on safety and health measures for airlines, hotels and destinations. Some are looking for new destinations that are less popular or least impacted by the pandemic. This is an opportunity for travel agencies to support travellers with a new personalisation definition that is based on health and safety measures. We are working with travel agencies to equip them with intelligent solutions and data analytics tools to help them respond to these new travel behaviours.

Are they travelling for business or leisure?

The travel industry is witnessing faster recovery for the leisure segment. Business travellers and employers will need the reassurance of new safety protocols and lifted travel restrictions before they are open to flying again. Even then, business travel will be scrutinised and prioritised based on economic value to the company.

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

Dubai becomes global case study

As one of the first few cities in the world to safely and effectively restart the events sector, Dubai has become a global case study in hosting live events, with the full reopening of its leisure events sector on September 15, paving the way for event organisers to host a packed programme of live entertainment under social distancing rules and other safety guidelines due to the pandemic.



Dubai is providing UAE residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy a spectacular lineup of live entertainment, lifestyle and sporting action following the restart of the city's events sector, further reinforcing the emirate's position as an international events hub and one of the world's safest destinations. In organising the feast of entertainment, event organisers have made the health and safety of attendees and artists their top priority and are committed to ensuring there is full compliance with the

wide range of precautionary measures implemented at event venues. Among the safety requirements are thorough sterilisation of venues before, during and after events, provision for contactless payments and digital tickets and mandatory thermal scanners or contactless temperature checks, in addition to wearing of face masks by venue staff, performers and attendees at all times and adherence to 30 per cent audience capacity to allow for sufficient social distancing space during the event. Below is a snapshot of

the upcoming events that the city has in store from Dubai Calendar.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT PaRUS Music Festival 2020, 3 – 5 November 2020, Jumeirah Beach Hotel

One of Dubai's biggest music festivals featuring artists such as Soso Pavliashvili, Grigory Leps and Leonid Agutin, is making a grand return with exciting performances due from artists of various genres.

COMEDY Omid Djalili, 7 November 2020, Dubai Opera:

A multi-award-winning comedian, Omid Djalili is a familiar face both on the screen and on stage for his work in films such as Mamma Mia 2, and the West End in London.

Laughter Factory, 12 – 20 November 2020: Dubai's longest running comedy night returns with a brand new lineup with Yorkshire funnyman Tom Wigglesworth, Markus Birdman, one of British comedy's most experienced performers, and the highly talented Jimmy McGhie, who completed

a 2019 sellout tour of Australia and New Zealand.

The schedule:

12 – 13 November: Movenpick JBR
14 November: Zabeel House by Jumeirah, The Greens
19 November: Grand Millennium Barsha Heights
20 November: Grand Millennium Business Bay & Hilton

**ART & CULTURE
Dubai Design Week,
9 – 14 November 2020,
Dubai Design District:** The six-day event brings the regional and international design community to-

gether to promote creativity and showcases a variety of innovations such as architecture, products, furniture and interior design.

**SPORT
Dubai Fitness Challenge, 30 October – 28 November 2020, City-wide:** Dubai Fitness Challenge, the city's flagship fitness initiative is returning for its fourth edition with a packed programme full of free classes, sporting events, group workout sessions and healthy eating tutorials across the city.

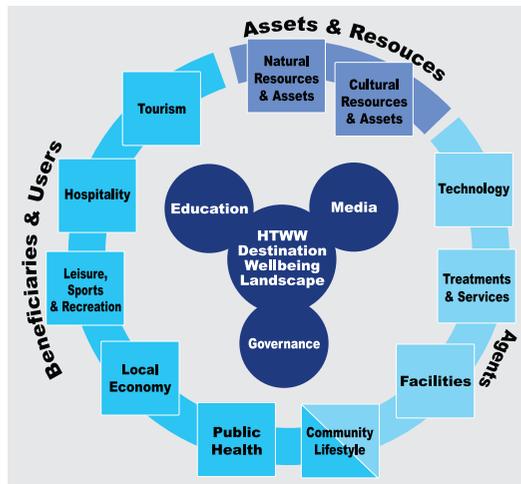
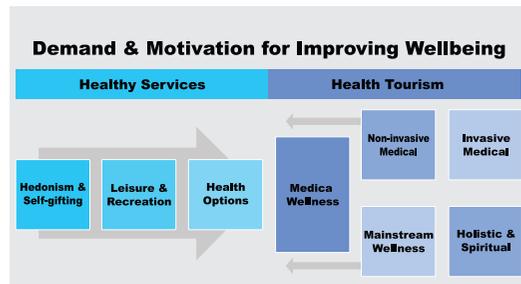
Health, wellbeing & travel

Every destination, project or business can have its very own contribution to guests' wellbeing. To define this unique contribution, however, is not a straightforward task. Hotels and resorts, wellness centres, hospitals, retreats, etc. would need to find their very own understanding of wellbeing, says **Laszlo Puczko**, CEO & Co-founder, Health Tourism Worldwide.

Travelling for health is not a new or novel phenomenon. People have been seeking solutions, services or destinations that can provide services and benefits for curing certain illnesses or preventing others for centuries. At the same time health or more holistically, wellbeing has become a very important topic as well as a goal to more and more people. Apart from travelling for health purposes being either medical or wellness, consumers look for healthy alternatives during their leisure activities.

We are convinced that health tourism resources, services and brands will gain even stronger importance than ever before. We understand that both destinations and service providers can take part in health tourism in many ways and at various levels. As our pioneering report for UNWTO & ETC (2018) established, "Travel (and consequently tourism) is an activity that can contribute to the creation or the improvement of wellbeing such as feelings of contentment, satisfaction and happiness by sup-

“For a wellbeing-oriented project to be sustainable, it has to take both global trends and local characteristics seriously”



porting, facilitating and initiating the improvement of mental and emotional health, work-life balance, self-realisation, and the ability to connect with oneself and others.”

Every destination, project or business can have its very own contribution to guests' wellbeing. To define this unique contribution, however, is not a straightforward task. Hotels and resorts, spas, wellness centres, hospitals, clinics, retreats, hot springs, etc. would need to find their very own understanding of wellbeing. Cities, regions and other destinations can also define their contribution, for example, three Alpine countries in Europe,

creating the concept of Alpine Wellness.

We recognise that for a wellbeing-oriented project to be sustainable and profitable, as well as successful, it has to take both global trends and local characteristics seriously.



Laszlo Puczko
CEO & Co-founder
Health Tourism Worldwide

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

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64 CLIENT GOVERNMENTS

144 COUNTRIES OF OPERATION

225M APPLICATIONS PROCESSED

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Impact of COVID-19 On UAE's hospitality workforce

CatererGlobal.com's Annual Industry Event highlights the impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality recruitment community, including its effect on mental health and wellbeing. This study reveals that 67 per cent of the hospitality workforce will plan a career move within the next 12 months.

New, independent research conducted by CatererGlobal.com – the leading global hospitality job board – has revealed its 2020 insights into the hospitality sector. Surveying 1,500 respondents globally, hospitality industry workers in the Middle East made up 46 per cent of respondents. Launched during CatererGlobal's Annual Insight Event held this year in webinar format, the findings focus on key themes currently affecting the hospitality industry, including training and development, wellbeing and leadership, and the impact of COVID-19.

The report uncovered significant findings regarding the industry's mental health and wellbeing, with over half (54 per cent) of respondents admitting to feeling as though the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their mental health and wellbeing – citing 'feelings of isolation', 'concern for own and others' health' and 'concern for financial / job security' as factors which caused the most worry.

Notably, though the pandemic caused significant concerns for employee's mental health, less than a third (32 per cent) of respondents cited their employers as offering any formal or structured support



Jeremy Vercoe
Manager
EMEA_CatererGlobal

to address such issues. Of the employers who do offer support to address mental health & wellbeing, 62 per cent of their workforce have utilised the service, demonstrating the necessity of these initiatives. On a reassuring note, 72 per cent reported feeling physically safe in their roles.

"At CatererGlobal, we regularly consult with clients on the importance of mental health and wellbeing for employees. Within the hospitality sector, we are aware this has not always taken the limelight in industry discussions but, in the aftermath of the pandemic, it is arguably more important than ever before. These findings highlight a real need for employers to provide more structured and visibly available support surrounding mental health and wellbeing, above and beyond physical safety, presenting a significant

Industry Insight Event 2020

Mental Health & Wellbeing



As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic...

- Concern around job or financial security:
- Concern about health of friends or family members:

Leadership

How do you feel towards your employer as a result of their handling of the COVID pandemic?

11%	Not positive at all
8%	Not positive
22%	Neutral
28%	Positive
31%	Very positive

Do you feel your employer has communicated regularly enough throughout the pandemic?

56%	Yes
31%	No

Do you feel your manager has set clear expectations of the job during the crisis?

55%	Yes
32%	No

Training & Development



Do you feel your manager provides suitable support to develop your career?

50%	Yes
36%	No

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Does your employer offer structured support to address mental health & wellbeing?

50%	No
32%	Yes

62% Have utilised it



Training & Development

NOT receiving training outside of current department: 20% (F&B), 14% (Hotel management), 14% (Housekeeping)

ARE receiving training outside of current department: 20% (F&B), 14% (Hotel management), 14% (Housekeeping)



Training & Development

Within the next 12 months: 87% planning to make a career move

54% looking to develop their career by changing employer

27% want to develop their career with a new role, within the same establishment

Training & Development

On a scale of 1-10, 10 being most important, what are you looking for in your next role?

- Career programme and improved career opportunities:
- Better work-life balance:
- A better company culture:
- A better location and public transport connection:
- A higher salary:
- Improved benefits (holiday/pension/bonus etc):
- Flexible working options:
- New experience and challenges:

opportunity to better look after teams across the business," commented **Jeremy Vercoe**, Global Manager, CatererGlobal.com.

2019 results for the CatererGlobal survey revealed a highly mobilised UAE workforce, with results this year similarly noting the high propensity for change, with 67 per cent of respondents stating that they're looking to make a career move within the next 12 months – with 54 per cent of those looking to develop their career by changing their employer.

"These figures continue to cause concern and should, rightly, cause employers to sit up and consider how they might change the course for any staff considering leaving. At CatererGlobal, we spend a lot of time working with

clients to minimise churn as businesses who retain staff witness an array of benefits, from higher staff morale, to lower employment costs, particularly where overheads such as visas and medical are involved. Since we saw high rates of planned mobility last year, we've been giving this an extra focus with clients, however, this year's results indicate that, across the industry, there is still a lot more to be done," Vercoe continued.

In relation to their employers' handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, 59 per cent cited feeling positive towards their employer, while one in five (19 per cent) reported not feeling positive. Over half (56 per cent) felt their employer communicated regularly throughout the pandemic while one in three (31 per

cent) felt they were left in the dark. Similarly, 55 per cent felt their employer set clear expectations of the job during the crisis, while 32 per cent did not.

Training and development were addressed, both in the findings and webinar discussion. In relation to the pandemic, 43 per cent said their employers had provided training in order to 'upskill' their staff outside of their current department, yet only half (49 per cent) of respondents claimed their businesses delivered staff programmes in response to the pandemic.

"While this is a promising start, there is still a significant opportunity to provide greater training and development across multiple key business themes, to allow teams to thrive both professionally and with their state-of-mind," added Vercoe.

More broadly relating to the effects of the global pandemic, one-third of respondents (33 per cent) indicated they were placed on unpaid leave, 15 per cent were asked to work from home and 17 per cent were made redundant. Just 22 per cent continued to work as usual without any change. 🌟

“These findings highlight a real need for employers to provide more structured and visibly available support surrounding mental health and wellbeing, above and beyond physical safety, presenting a significant opportunity to better look after teams across the business”

Wyndham helps Ajman community

In the presence of His Highness Sheikh Dr Abdul Aziz Bin Ali Bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, CEO of Al Ihsan Charity Association, Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche signed a partnership agreement with the organisation to reinforce its commitment to give back to the Ajman community.

TT Bureau

To help the less fortunate people in Ajman, the three hotels pledged to provide freshly-packed meals to select families supported by the organisation. The hotels will also place charity boxes at their reception where the guests can voluntarily extend aid through monetary donation. As part of the cooperation, the hotels will lend a hand to the different projects by Al Ihsan Charity Association including clothes and linen donation, hosting day trips for orphans, and tree planting, to name a few.

Ravi Santiago, Cluster General Manager of Wynd-



Wyndham hotels Ajman - Al Ihsan Charity Partnership

“Our hotels have a long-standing relationship with Al Ihsan Charity Association and we are honoured to work alongside them with the common goal of helping those in need”

— Ravi Santiago

“We thank the Wyndham hotels Ajman for their incessant support throughout the years. Ajman has a close-knit community and Al Ihsan is fortunate to have companies who enthusiastically express their intention to help needy families”

— Dr Haqqi Ibrahim

effect of the pandemic, we were able to further reflect on the value of compassion and altruism. We hope that our simple gestures will inspire fellow groups and individuals in Ajman to reach out to less privileged members of the society.”

Dr Haqqi Ibrahim, Executive Director of Al Ihsan Charity Association, said, “We thank the Wyndham

hotels Ajman for their incessant support throughout the years. Ajman has a close-knit community and Al Ihsan is fortunate to have companies who enthusiastically express their intention to help needy families, especially during this period. With our cooperation, we can let them feel that we will get through all these challenges together.”

Enhance your food & beverage menu with premium bread and pastries from The Bakery

Based at ibis Styles Jumeira,
The Bakery caters exclusively to B2B market

The Bakery, located at ibis Styles Jumeira, now offers extensive varieties of bread and pastries aimed exclusively at B2B market. Managed and operated by R Hotels, The Bakery focuses on delivering first-rate products to its target clientele including cafes, restaurants, and catering companies.

Its bespoke selection of freshly-baked goods features assorted bread from sourdough to cornbread, doughnuts to croissants, and more; as well as luscious pastries such as differ-



Leonora D'souza
Pastry Chef



ent kinds of pies, tarts, and cakes. Some of its specialty cakes are the classic chocolate cake, the must-try limoncello cake, and swiss rolls with flavours ranging from raspberry to pistachio.

The Bakery is headed by Pastry Chef Leonora D'souza, who highly specialises in the craft of creating mouth-watering and eye-catching confectioneries.

She has more than 15 years of culinary experience gained from the hotel, restaurant, and cruise industries across Asia and Europe.



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Bookings and Inquiries:

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ibis Styles Jumeira is operated by R Hotels (member of R Holding) under a franchise agreement with Accor Hotels

Personality of the Month

A new dynamic leader

Ravi Santiago has a multi-faceted role at R Hotels as Cluster General Manager for the Wyndham hotels in Ajman and Group Financial Controller. We take a look at his interesting journey over the years. Kicking off his career journey with the crème de la crème of Sri Lankan hospitality as Financial Controller opening the popular Global Towers Hotel in Marine Drive, Colombo Sri Lanka in 2004.

 Shehara Rizly

A qualified Accountant spanning over 25 years of experience in different fields, treaded on his new journey over 15 years ago in his homeland, Sri Lanka.

Santiago has worked with the pioneers of Sri Lankan hospitality, viz. stalwarts like Chandra Mohotti, Prema Cooray and Shanthi Kumar – legends who have actually ensured that hospitality in the pearl of the Indian Ocean grew from strength to strength to what it is today, of international acclaim. Santiago shares how he received the perfect training in the field of hospitality with the legends themselves.

He states, “Being a neophyte to the hospitality industry, I wanted to learn about the industry, hence Chandra Mohotti, the CEO of Global Towers at the time assigned me to landmark properties in Sri Lanka, including Galadari, Holiday Inn and other five-star properties in Co-

lombo which provided me a launchpad to begin my hospitality journey.”

Santiago ventured into various fields as a professionally qualified management accountant from CIMA (UK), CGMA. He pursued his MBA from the University of Northampton, UK and has a PGD in Business Administration from the University of Wales, UK. His knowledge and experience in different fields such as manufacturing, processing, logistics, telecommunications, travel and tourism, property management and the hotel industry for almost 25 years has given him an edge over the years.

Forte in finance and revenue

Achieving that perfect ‘number’ at the end of the day as revenue and return on investment has been his forte which gained him prominence not only in Sri Lanka but in the UAE as well. Kicking off his career from Global Towers in Marine Drive, Santiago pursued further in his hos-

pitality career as he was appointed as General Manager Finance to manage five-star properties with Aitken Spence Hotel Management in Sri Lanka in 2007. After this stint, Santiago furthered his career move by joining R Hotels in the UAE as Cluster Financial Controller in 2009; at the time Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman was already operational and ready for opening Ramada Downtown Dubai.

Over the past almost 11 years he has been with the group as Financial Controller, however with the pandemic setting in, he was called upon to take the role of General Manager for three important properties in Ajman. Today, he is Cluster General Manager for Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman, and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche and also Group Financial Controller.

Ready with contingency plans

According to Santiago, it is a distinct advantage to be proficient with numbers, especially during this pandemic. It gives a clear picture of resources and funds, which is a very well-balanced outlook for a General Manager. He was appointed in the new role during the peak of the pandemic, but his coordination with the management and owners really brought in something more to the table. He shares, “When the pandemic hit us, one of the first things requested by the management was to ensure that all staff are retained and we devised a sensitivity analysis, a way forward with varying scenarios. At a time when others were thinking of how to survive, we already had our contingency plans set for different conditions, which made a big difference to us.

None of our seven properties were closed dur-

ing the period and when things started easing, we began campaigning for staycations. To date this has been the most successful campaign as many locals and expats started to avail the offers on staycations and our team



Ravi Santiago
R Hotels Cluster General Manager for the Wyndham hotels in Ajman and Group Financial Controller.

“Over the past several months we have actually experienced an influx of domestic tourists from all emirates. Today, occupancy is above 70 per cent going up to almost 90 per cent during weekends”

really worked very hard to bring in something new that would attract the customers. So over the past several months we have actually experienced an influx of domestic tourists from all emirates. Today, occupancy is above 70 per cent going up to almost 90 per cent during weekends mainly due to the passion and commitment of the team. As I mentioned before, our management has always placed motivation of staff as a key to success, hence the probability of staff seeking employment

elsewhere is scarce as they are well looked after in every possible manner. Today, this success has gone one step further and we are on the lookout for new staff members to join our team,” concluded Santiago.

FactFile

■ Santiago is a professionally qualified management accountant from CIMA (UK), CGMA. He pursued his MBA from the University of Northampton, UK and has a PGD in Business Administration from the University of Wales, UK.



'Cruising will pick up gradually'

Winter cruising in Dubai is customary every year as there are as many as 200 ship calls which bring in many cruise visitors. However, this year may be a little different with the pandemic setting in. One of the pioneers in cruise tourism in Dubai, **Lakshmi Durai**, CEO of Travel Matrix shares insights about the industry.

T Shehara Rizly

QThe pandemic has affected the travel industry quite hard, which has also affected the cruise business. In your opinion, when will the cruise business pick up?

COVID-19 is a global pandemic and the cruise industry has been affected equally like any other travel segment. The entire cruise community is working hard and taking various measures to ensure that the health and safety of the guests, crew and the communities that they visit are given top priority. There is already

resumption of few cruises in Europe. With the new enhanced protocols, we are confident that we will see the cruise business picking up gradually.

QWhat will be the new initiatives taken by the cruise operators to ensure safety for their customers?

The cruise industry is a leader in responsible tourism and the cruise lines work rigorously and go extra lengths to ensure the health and safety of their guests and crew onboard. The enhanced health measures and the new protocols will include everything from pas-

senger health screening, sanitisation, medical facilities etc. to responsible physical distancing and hand washing.

QDo you see any behavioural changes in customers?

There are quite a huge number of passionate cruisers who are addicted to cruising. These regular cruisers, who missed cruising this year, are desperately waiting to get back to cruising.

Almost all the cruise lines are having great offers now and we are already seeing cruise bookings coming in from our regular cruisers for 2021 sailings.

QWill customers prefer shorter cruises?

We do not see the guests reducing the duration of their cruises. However, currently they prefer the cruises in close-by destinations

like the Mediterranean and Northern Europe for next year. We expect the demand for other destinations to pick up by early 2021.

QEvery year many cruise ships dock in Dubai, will there be any cruise line coming in this year?

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the upcoming winter cruise season in all destinations across the world. Dubai is a popular and highly preferred destination for winter cruises. The cruise season in Dubai has always been very successful and the cruises will sail when the time is right.



Lakshmi Durai
CEO
Travel Matrix

“Almost all the cruise lines are having great offers now and we are already seeing cruise bookings coming in from our regular cruisers for 2021 sailings”

FactFile

■ Guests currently prefer the cruises in close-by destinations. We expect the demand for other destinations to pick up by early 2021

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Berlin lifestyle & healthcare

Germany is one of the most favoured destinations by GCC travellers mainly due to its diversity and its high class medical facilities. The capital of Berlin is popular amongst travellers as it is home to some of the most state-of-the-art healthcare facilities apart from its diverse lifestyle.

 Shehara Rizly

Q In November 11 at 11am a special webinar will be hosted by the tourism board. **Yamina Sofu**, Director, Sales & Marketing – German National Tourist Office, Gulf countries and **Ralf Ostendorf**, Director Market Management, Market & Media Relations Asia, Australia, Middle East – Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, share more details of the event

Yamina Sofu

Q Could you share with us an overview of the webinar?

We would like to highlight the importance of the destination of Germany to the Gulf region and will focus with 'Berlin Lifestyle & Healthcare' webinar on the city of Berlin that accommodates all the requirements of the GCC travellers, from diverse leisure facilities to excellent health and wellness services.

Q Who will be your target audience?

Travel and tourism professionals i.e. OTAs, travel agencies, tour operators, MICE representatives, and medical tourism agencies.

“ With “Berlin Lifestyle & Healthcare webinar”, we are promoting the destination Germany and introduce an in-depth overview of the city of Berlin with its diverse offerings by partnering with visitBerlin, Berlin Health Excellence and Vivantes Hospital Group **”**

— Yamina Sofu

Q What benefits does the audience receive?

They can explore the diversity of the city of Berlin and its highlights through an informative and educational webinar with an opportunity for instant and live interaction, and get to know about Berlin's Wellness and Medical offerings including the Vivantes Hospital Group.

Q In terms of GNTO, what is the role that you will play?

Since its launch in 2005, the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) has been actively promoting destination Germany across the GCC region through various projects and collaborations with German partners.

With 'Berlin Lifestyle & Healthcare webinar', we are promoting the destination Germany and introduce an in-depth overview of the city of Berlin with its diverse offerings.

Ralf Ostendorf

Q Do you have any figures that you can share in terms of the numbers from GCC that visited Berlin over the past few years, as they have been promoting the destination as a medical touristic destination?

Berlin is one of the most visited cities in Germany by GCC nationals as it ticks all the boxes for their travel requirements from great family attractions, excellent shopping centres and superb sightseeing opportunities to high-quality hospitals and professional medical care that matches the expectations in the Gulf region. This includes Arabic speaking staff, familiar with Islamic culture and tradition as well as the availability and easy access to restaurants offering halal food.

Over the years, the 'Health & Wellness'

sector in Germany has gained an excellent reputation worldwide, offering a healthcare system that is considered to be among the best in the world, well-known for its high-quality standards and excellent value for money.

In the year 2019, Berlin witnessed an increase of its international medical travellers by 14.7 per cent compared to the year 2018, welcoming nearly 9,000 international medical travellers to its medical and wellness facilities. GCC nationals represented 12 per cent of the total medical visitors to Berlin in the year 2019.

Q Could you share a brief about the 'Berlin Health Excellence Initiative'?

'visitBerlin' has been actively engaged in promoting health tourism since 2010. Working together with Berlin Partner for Business and Technology, visitBerlin wishes to further strengthen Berlin's profile as "Europe's Health Capital" through its "Health Excellence – Health Capital Berlin" initiative. In this context, visitBerlin's role is to communicate and advertise health tourism products



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



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

“ In the year 2019, Berlin has witnessed an increase of its international medical travellers by 14.7% compared to the year 2018, welcoming nearly 9,000 international medical travelers to its medical and wellness facilities. GCC nationals represented 12% of the total medical visitors to Berlin in the year 2019. **”**

— Ralf Ostendorf

and services in selected target markets.

visitBerlin cooperates with a network of partners that include representatives of Berlin's medical services, accommodation, trade and tourism sectors. The objective is to expand the existing healthcare tourism infrastructure with its wide-ranging competencies and broad spectrum of services and increase its external visibility and profile. Berlin Partner

(the Berlin-Brandenburg Health Capital cluster) supports and interlinks actors from the areas of business, healthcare and politics with a view to continuously expand top-class services for the region and global healthcare market. The Health Excellence Initiative is funded by the Berlin Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises. www.berlin-health-excellence.com

View of Berlin city centre and Berlin Television Tower, ©VisitBerlin, Photo: Wolfgang Scholvien



What are the areas the Berlin Health Excellence partners specialise in?

A wide range of medical departments are professionally covered – Bariatric Surgery, Cardiac Surgery, Cardiology, Dentistry, Dermatology, Diabetology, ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat Medicine), Fertility Medicine, General, Vascular and Visceral Surgery, Gastroenterology, Gynecology, Laser Medicine, Naturopathy, Nephrology, Neurosurgery, Neurology, Orthopedics, Ophthalmology, Oncology, Pediatrics, Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery, Pneumology, Prevention and Diagnostics, Psychiatry Rehabilitation, Rheumatology, Sleep Medicine, Transplant Medicine and Urology.

What can you offer to attract the medical tourists from GCC? (halal food, Arabic speakers etc.)



Tempelhofer Airport © visitBerlin, photo: Dagmar Schwelle

Everyone interested in coming to Berlin can enjoy professional service from all partners of the Berlin Health Excellence network and can directly contact the medical providers with the relevant personal medical documents. Berlin offers Halal eateries, Muslim-friendly hotels, mosques for prayers and

a lot more to make visitors feel welcomed and safe. Hospitals also have Arabic speaking staff.

GCC travellers will always have a group that will accompany them, how will you accommodate them?

When it comes to ac-

commodation there are offers from the hospitals, but there is something to suit every taste in Berlin – everything from simple guest houses to luxurious five-star hotels.

A medical stay in Berlin involves much more than just the treatment.

A complete physical recovery depends on many other factors. The city's numerous specialised service providers offer a wide range of services and cater for the special needs and expectations of Arabic patients and their families.

FactFile

- Since its launch in 2005, the GNTO has been actively promoting destination Germany across the GCC region
- visitBerlin cooperates with a network of partners that include representatives of Berlin's medical services, accommodation, trade and tourism sectors

Brandenburger Tor © iStockphoto.com / sbofiso

Germany
The travel destination 

#Discover
Germany
FromHome

Join the Berlin Lifestyle & Healthcare Webinar
11th November @ 11:00am GST



What leisure travellers seek

In Amadeus' Destination X study on traveller sentiment amidst COVID-19 nearly 82 per cent of respondents in MEA say they would consider international trips once restrictions are lifted, but only 55 per cent say they expect to have the same or more budget for leisure travel as they did before.

TT Bureau

To travel or not to travel? Undoubtedly this is one of the top questions millions of leisure travellers in the Middle East and around the world are asking themselves, their family, and peers. The focus of Amadeus's latest research explores the leisure traveller's mindset towards planning and purchasing upcoming travel amidst the realities of COVID-19.

To do this, Amadeus got the opinions of +8,500 CheckMyTrip users from around the world through a quantitative and qualitative survey. The research gives us very good reason to be hopeful about the travel industry's future.

Amadeus's research findings, outlined in the eBook Destination X: Where to Next – What Leisure Travellers Want in a COVID-19 World, show that consumers have a healthy appetite for travel despite the ongoing challenges and unknowns that still

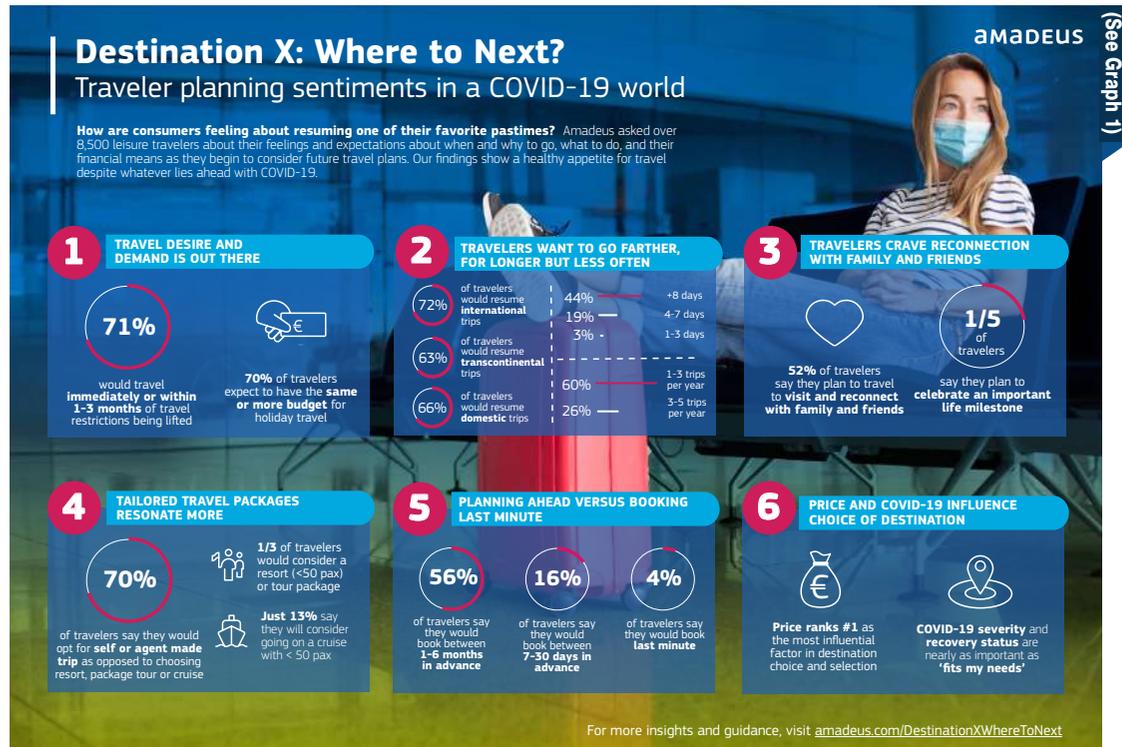
lie ahead. The Amadeus study reveals that:

Travellers want and have the means to get back out there

Nearly three-quarters say they want to travel within the first three months of restrictions being lifted. The challenge travellers face is more about when, where and how they can best venture out. For example, nearly 82 per cent of respondents in MEA say they would consider international trips once restrictions are lifted, but only 55 per cent say they expect to have the same or more budget for leisure travel as they did before. From how far, to how long, to how often – travellers are clear about what they are willing to consider, to start travelling again. (See Graph 1)

Details increasingly matter

Travellers' appetite for flying, staying at hotels, and travelling by train and rental car remain



overwhelmingly strong. Yet nearly 84 per cent of travellers surveyed in the MEA region say information on COVID-19 prevention measures are 'very important' to know upfront before they book a hotel, with 75 per cent saying the same for air travel. Price continues to play a role in decision-making, but other COVID-19 related factors now

Enabling travellers to successfully navigate the many variables, such as changing border restrictions, airline and hotel capacity adjustments, and other operational twists and turns, will go a long way to get people travelling again

weigh in as travellers take their time to fully evaluate both their destination and transit options. Customisation and personalisation are key cornerstones of the trip. (See Graph 2)

Contingency plans are no longer optional

Travel insurance grows in prominence with the young and old. At least one-third of all respondents say they are seeking more travel insurance coverage than before COVID-19. Specifically, 79 per cent of those surveyed globally see insurance as a necessity when travelling internationally. Flexibility to make changes or collect refunds are just one part of the leisure traveller's overall insurance cost benefit equation.

Travel agents are far from passé

Travellers now place a higher premium on problem solving and support, especially for longer journeys. 70 per cent of all those surveyed were open to custom travel experiences, either advised by

travel agents or designed themselves. With an array of uncertainties still unfolding, Amadeus sees the potential for travel sellers to play a bigger role in helping consumers successfully navigate their options throughout all phases of their trip experience to strengthen confidence.

Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont, Managing Director of Amadeus Gulf, says, "Millions of travellers are out there dreaming of their next adventure. They need the travel industry to share what measures are being taken to help keep travellers safe. Enabling travellers to successfully navigate the many variables, such as changing border restrictions, airline and hotel capacity adjustments, and other operational twists and turns, will go a long way to get people travelling again."



Discover Ireland virtually

Earlier this year, Ireland started promoting the destination to the GCC, however the pandemic delayed its discovery. You can explore the luxurious escape with luscious greenery on 18th November 2020 at 11am with **Siobhan Naughton**, Marketing and Trade Executive Middle East and Asia, Tourism Ireland and partners from the destination. Naughton shares more with **TRAVTALK**.

 Shehara Rizly

Could you share an overview of the webinar?

This webinar will focus on luxury travel to the Island of Ireland and the safety measures that have been put in place to ensure a seamless customer experience when the time is right to travel to our beautiful island again. The different areas we will be focusing

on are – Island of Ireland luxury product offerings including key attractions and accommodation providers, screen tourism and coastal touring routes.

What will be the theme, concept and focus for the webinar?

Tourism Ireland along with our Island of Ireland industry partners will give travel trade from the GCC a



Siobhan Naughton
Marketing and Trade Executive
Middle East and Asia, Tourism Ireland

luxury Island of Ireland product update and also showcase how GCC and expat travellers to the Island of Ireland will continue to have a safe, memorable and seamless visit to our shores when the time is right.

How many webinars will you conduct?



There will be two webinars; the first will be held on November 18, catering to the travel trade from the GCC and the second on December 7, that will cater to both GCC and India travel trade.

Are there any incentives for the agents that attend the webinar?

There will be a special certificate of attendance provided to all the agents that will attend the webinar.

Will this webinar more for GCC travellers as in locals or for both locals and expats that live in the GCC countries?

We mainly target GCC nationals and the luxury expat travellers.

“This webinar will focus on luxury travel to the Island of Ireland and the safety measures that have been put in place to ensure a seamless customer experience when the time is right to travel to our beautiful island again”



Scan this QR code to Register

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

18 November 2020, Wednesday - 3PM UAE Time

Register Now!



Sailing at Deira Islands

As the boating season approaches, Nakheel has set sail with their latest new marine destination in Deira Islands for all boating enthusiasts. The latest offering during the peak sailing season for the UAE boat owners and tour operators is, access to two new, exclusive island destinations in the Arabian Gulf.

TT Bureau

The boating and yachting fraternity can now escape for day trips or overnight stays at Deira Islands, Nakheel's new coastal city in the north of the emirate, and at a private island off Dubai Waterfront, in the south.

Aqil Kazim, Chief Commercial Officer, Nakheel, said, "We are expanding our marine facilities to reflect the continued growth in the UAE's leisure boating industry. Easily accessible from all seven emirates, and able to accommodate boats and yachts up to 165 metres long, our exciting new destinations will appeal to marine enthusiasts



across the country, and further secure the country's position as a premium destination for the sector. Nakheel is also bringing new marinas to Deira Islands to meet the growing demand for mooring facilities. Our Palm Jumeirah marinas are almost at full capacity, with over 400 members."

HE Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai Tourism, said, "Both domestic and international marine tourism play a key role in distinguishing Dubai as a world-class destination. Boat owners and tour companies alike will enjoy these new destinations along Dubai's

world-class coastline, and further contribute to this growing sector."

Deira Islands and Dubai Waterfront complement Nakheel's original leisure boating destination at Antarctica Island at The World, visited by more than 700 yacht and boat owners last

"We are expanding our marine facilities to reflect the continued growth in the UAE's leisure boating industry. Nakheel is also bringing new marinas to Deira Islands to meet the growing demand for mooring facilities"

— Aqil Kazim

"Both domestic and international marine tourism play a key role in distinguishing Dubai as a world-class destination. Boat owners and tour companies alike will enjoy these new destinations along Dubai's world-class coastline, and further contribute to this growing sector"

— HE Helal Saeed Almarri

year. Access to all venues is free to Palm Jumeirah marina members, with other

boat owners welcome for a nominal fee depending on the boat size. 🌅

Careem rides high on safety

In light of the pandemic the Dubai-based ride-hailing group, Careem, quickly took precautionary measures, ensuring the highest levels of safety in its rides. These measures have been taken in all the 13 countries in which Careem operates, and the focus is on wearing masks, using hand sanitisers and disinfecting cars daily.

TT Bureau

At Careem, it is important to offer safe and reliable rides that are as easy and seamless as possible for all customers, according to Gheed El Makkaoui, General Manager of Careem in the UAE. He takes us through the following safety measures which are being implemented at Careem.

Masks and Personal Protective Equipment: To ensure the safety of everyone around us, Captains are following personal safety protocols, including wearing a mask at all times. We have equipped them with quality hygiene kits in partnership

with Lifebuoy, including hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes.

Captain self-certification and cleanliness: Our Captains are trained to follow high standards of safety. Before going online they confirm that they are wearing a mask, are in good health, have disinfected their car/delivery vehicles prior to starting work and have cleaning supplies.

We've instructed our Captains to keep the car ventilated prior to trip start. This will help circulate fresh clean air into the car.

Automated quality monitoring: In line with our commitment to a safety-first approach, we created an automated algorithm that evaluates a Captain's performance and behaviour, processing more than a million data points



daily, including customer feedback, and other trip-level data. Data-driven, automated actions are taken on a daily level, allowing us to offer better quality service through constant education and

strict actions against serious or repeat offenders.

Introducing intercity rides between Dubai and Abu Dhabi: Careem has launched a new 'City to City' service flow in the UAE

that allows customers to request for a Careem ride to pick them up from their doorstep to any location in Abu Dhabi, all they need to do is obtain a negative COVID-19 test, not exceeding 48 hours, and we will take care of their travel and in-ride safety needs.

Careem Kids and Max car types: Captains are thoroughly cleaning Careem Kids Cybex car seats with disinfectant wipes before each ride. All seats are professionally deep cleaned regularly by our partners – Champion Cleaners. Careem also offers rides that fit up to four passengers at a time while adhering to the distancing guidelines. 🌅

Careem has launched a new 'City to City' service flow in the UAE that allows customers to request for a Careem ride to pick them up from their doorstep to any location in Abu Dhabi, all they need to do is obtain a negative COVID-19 test

Conrad debuts in Abu Dhabi

One of Abu Dhabi's most prestigious hotels was rebranded on October 1, 2020, following the signing of a management agreement between Hilton and H.H. Sheikh Suroor Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan. The property, Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers, is the first in Hilton's luxury portfolio to operate in the UAE capital.

 TT Bureau

One of five towers which form the Etihad Towers complex, the hotel features unique venues for social activities, including 12 dining concepts, luxurious spa, private beach, three swimming pools, and outstanding conference and event facilities. Its 576 guest rooms, suites and residences offer incredible views of the Arabian Gulf, whilst also providing easy access to one of the world's most exclusive retail collections at The Avenue at Etihad Towers.

Jochem-Jan Sleiffer, Hilton's President for the Middle East, Africa and Turkey, said, "Abu Dhabi



is a world leading destination and remains a historic city for Hilton as a location where we began welcoming guests in the UAE almost 50 years ago. We are proud to be working with H.H. Sheikh Suroor Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan to bring this iconic hotel to our portfolio and look forward to providing luxury Conrad service at Etihad Towers."

H.H. Sheikh Suroor Bin Mohammed Al Nahyan commented, "Etihad Towers is the embodiment of modern and sophisticated luxury and I am delighted to be partnering with Hilton to open Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers. Abu Dhabi's global reputation will be further enhanced with the presence of the luxury Conrad brand, a suitable addition to the

world-class retail and dining options available at this landmark development."

Nils-Arne Schroeder, Global Head for Conrad Hotels & Resorts, said, "The debut of Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers in the capital of the UAE marks a significant milestone for

the brand as we grow our portfolio in iconic locations around the world to better meet the needs of discerning travellers everywhere. This hotel is perfectly placed to offer guests a truly inspired stay with personalised connections to the local cultural and artistic experiences for which

Abu Dhabi is known, all anchored by Conrad's signature intuitive guest service."

Conrad Hotels & Resorts combines contemporary design, sophisticated amenities, and personalised service to provide exceptional travel experiences. 

576 guest rooms, suites & residences offer incredible views of the Arabian Gulf, easy access to one of the world's most exclusive retail collections at The Avenue at Etihad Towers



Grand Heights Hotel Apartments

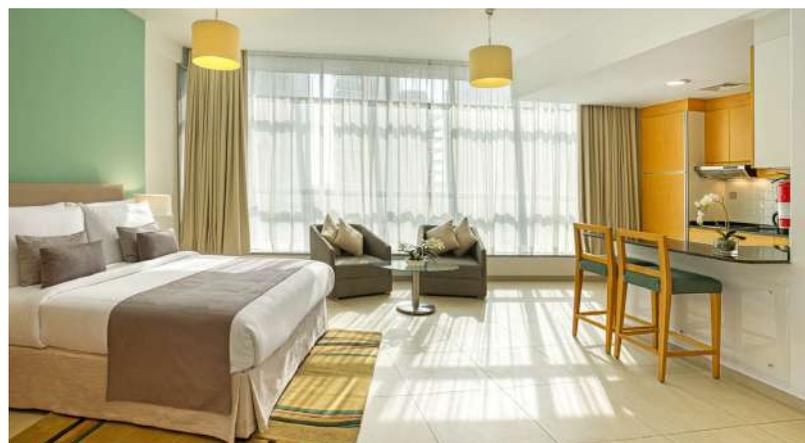
Grand Heights Hotel Apartments has officially opened in Dubai's dynamic Barsha Heights district, making an exciting new addition to hotel-apartment living in the heart of the city. Grand Heights Hotel Apartments is ideal for guests seeking affordable high-quality accommodation in a prime location.

 TT Bureau

Ideally located close to Dubai's Sheikh Zayed Road and major transport services, including the Dubai Metro, Grand Heights Hotel Apartments features 184 fully equipped studios and one-bedroom apartments. Each generously sized apartment boasts modern furnishings

and amenities. A refrigerator, electric hotplate, microwave and washing machine can be found in the kitchen, while the living space offers flat screen TVs and a comfortable seating area, making the apartments ideal for guests who appreciate home conveniences.

Accommodation options range from a 36 sqm Classic Studio with a



guests seeking affordable high-quality accommodation in a prime location. Guests will enjoy convenient access to Dubai's major attractions and key business districts.

"Grand Heights Hotel Apartments is perfect for individuals that want to have all of the comforts of home in a prime, central location. Whether guests are planning a short trip to Dubai or are looking for a place to call home for the long-term, they will enjoy unrivalled convenience and value with us," commented **David Thomson**, Vice President of TFG Hotel Management Company. 

Grand Heights Hotel Apartments offer all of the comforts of home in a prime, central location. Whether guests are planning a short trip to Dubai or are looking for a place to call home for the long-term, they will enjoy unrivalled convenience and value with us

king-size bed, which is perfect for individuals or couples, to a spacious 63 sqm Premier One-Bedroom Apartment that can accommodate families of up to four and features a pull-out sofa bed

in the living room and two bathrooms.

After a busy day of meetings or exploring the city, guests can enjoy Grand Heights Hotel Apartments' comprehensive range of

leisure facilities, including a swimming pool and sun deck, a fully equipped gymnasium and a steam room. Managed by property developer, The First Group (TFG), Grand Heights Hotel Apartments is ideal for

The region's 'Peak Season' Expected to continue through Domestic Travel

SOJERN : Airlines across the ME and Africa (MEA) are beginning to expand their flight networks and in some cases, open for service for the first time in months. Saudi Arabia partially lifted its suspension on international flights from the Sept 15 and the kingdom will end all restrictions on air, land and sea transport for Saudi citizens "after Jan 1 2021", with dates to be announced in Dec.

It has also been announced that a total of 43 countries will be granted permission to enter Jordan for tourism. These countries will be classified into three categories (red, yellow and green) with varying restrictions. Although travel is opening up across the region, the United Arab Emir-

ates (UAE) has issued an updated list of fines for offenders of COVID-19 safety measures, having reported its highest daily rise in infections in September.

Although travel restrictions continue to be relaxed, domestic travel remains more popular than international travel, and this is dis-

played in the latest search and booking trends. One recent announcement which will likely positively impact domestic travel is the announcement made by the Dubai government in September. They will be offering a retirement programme that offers resident expatriates and foreigners the chance to

retire in the emirate. The "Retire in Dubai" scheme will allow eligible residents aged 55 and over to apply for a retirement visa that would be renewable every five years. The increase in retired expatriates will provide a larger pool of people with time on their hands to explore the local areas.

As we now head into the peak season of travel in the UAE, we continue to see a strong trend towards domestic searches and bookings, leading the way with an uplift of 101% year-over-year (YoY) on searches and 21% YoY on bookings from the week commencing from September 28.

We also see an upward trend in international traveller intent and confidence in the UAE, with searches and bookings showing an upward tick standing at -51% and -69% YoY respectively, as cases continue to remain comparatively lower compared to what can be observed in other parts of the globe.

Year-over-Year hotel searches and bookings to the UAE - Domestic vs international origin

Searches YoY% and bookings YoY% - Domestic



Searches YoY% and bookings YoY% - International



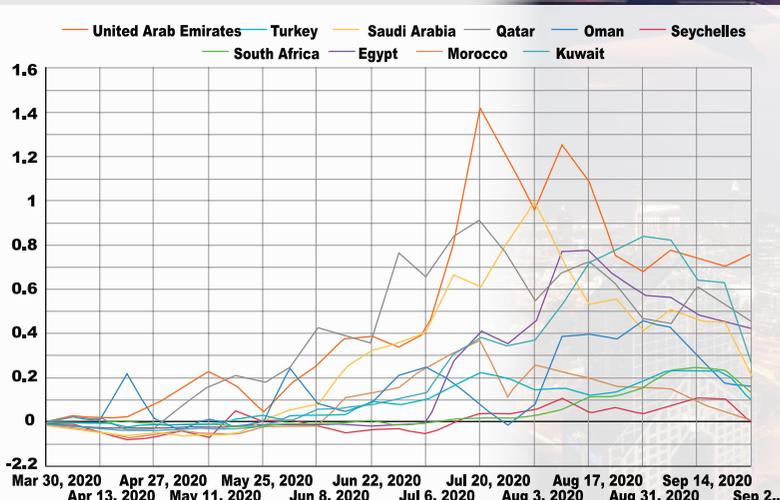
International Travel Intent also on the Rise Within the UAE

Our Real-Time COVID-19 Dashboard continues to display an upward trend in travel intent from all origins to the UAE.

The main exception to this pattern is a dip in intent was recorded in mid-August as a result of summer holidays coming to an end, students getting ready to return back to school, and summer promotions of staycations coming to a close. Levels of intent have since started to improve which may partly be attributed to the seasonal improvement in weather in the UAE as the end of the year approaches.

Year-to-Date Global Hotel searches to the ME and Africa - Indexed to March 30, 2020

Increases in traveller confidence in the MEA countries displayed below may be attributed to the recent announcements of travel restrictions being relaxed, encouraging travellers to consider MEA destinations for their next trip.



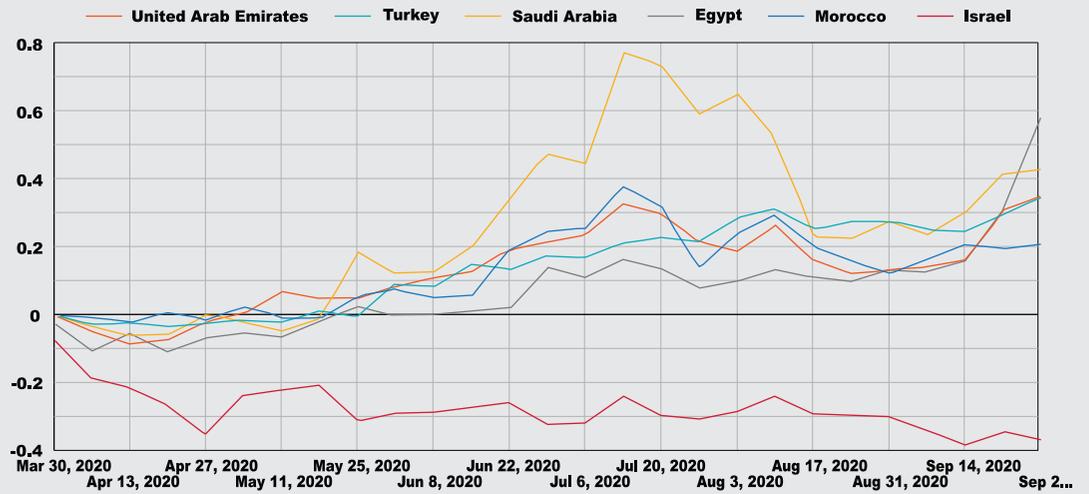
Year-to-Date Global Hotel Bookings to the ME and Africa - Indexed to March 30 2020

Future Travel Intent to the UAE Most Notable From India, Russia and Saudi Arabia

Increases in travel intent over the past few weeks can mostly be attributed to India, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

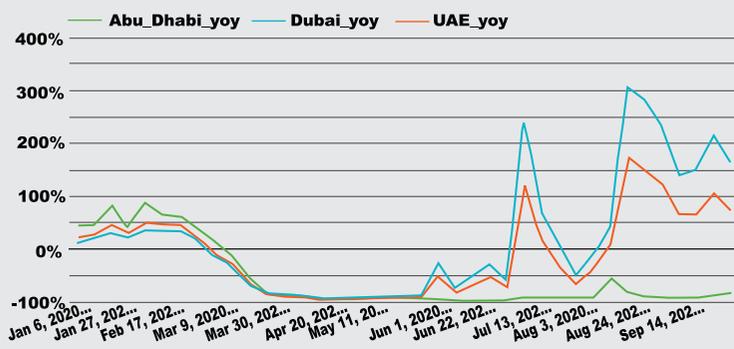
Promotions have been running in these particular markets which have subsequently led to the increases in inbound search volumes to the UAE, particularly Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

As restrictions in travel to the Emirates continue to change, we expect to see these trends shift accordingly.

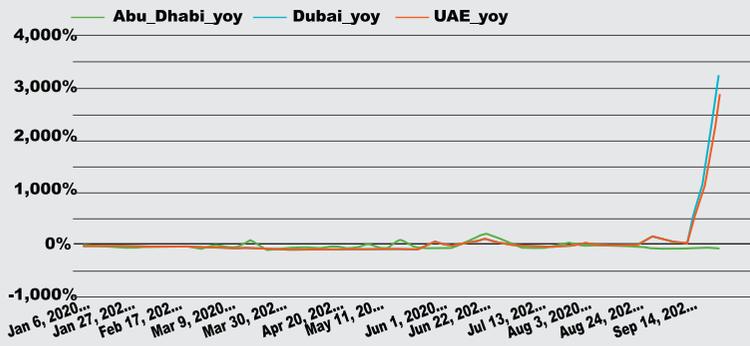


Year-over-Year global flight searches to the UAE, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi

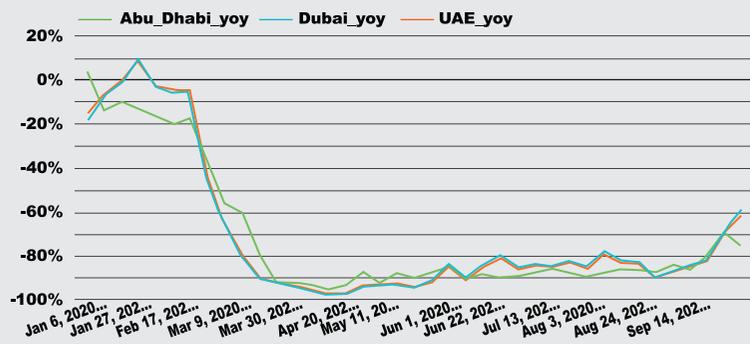
Origin = India



Origin = Russia



Origin = Saudi Arabia

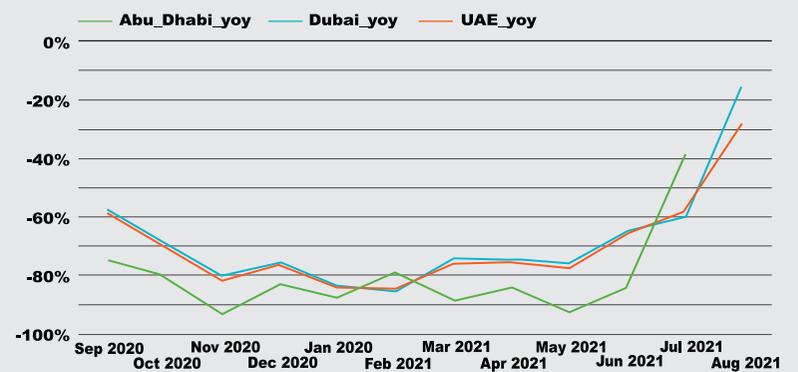


Travel in 2021 for the UAE

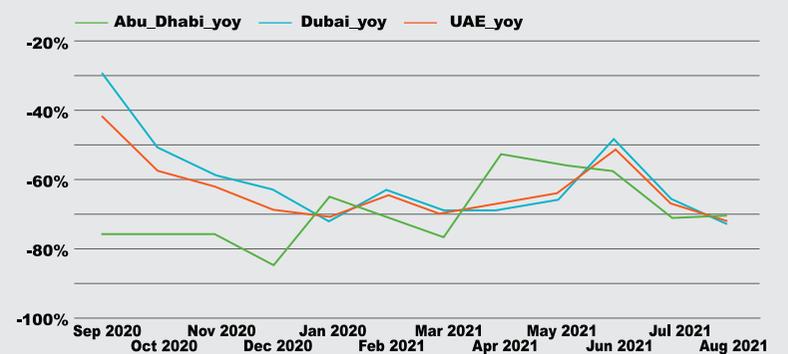
Forward looking international flight intent continues to remain down YoY, however we do see some positive signs in 2021. Taking inbound flight searches for future departure dates from Italy as an example, there is a strong trajectory upwards as we head into the peak season for the UAE as the weather begins to cool, becoming more desirable for international tourists. Inbound searches from Italy to the UAE in August 2021 currently stand at -27% YoY. Inbound searches from India and the US also show signs of growth throughout 2021. However, the volumes currently infer that travellers in these origins are searching for trips with a shorter lead time, up by 24% YoY in October 2020 for India and down just 57% YoY in October 2020 for the US. We expect international search volumes to continue increasing as the situation around the pandemic stabilises, bringing more certainty and confidence in the way in which travellers can move more freely.

Year-over-Year global flight searches to the UAE, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi - future departure months

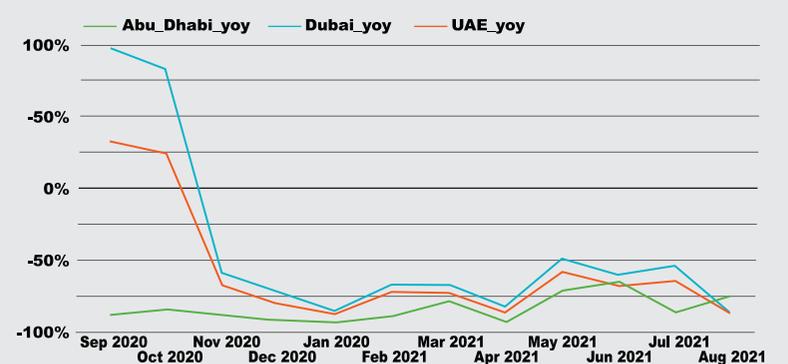
Origin = Italy



Origin = US



Origin = India



The Middle East and Africa continue to show positive signs of domestic recovery, and international travel is picking up. Peaks in travel intent from Russia, India, and Saudi Arabia have had an impact in the growing increase in travel to the region from global origins, and Italian travellers are keen to travel to the UAE in the second half of 2021. We will continue to share more insights as we monitor the situation. These forward looking insights will hopefully help travel marketers shape their strategies as the industry recovers from this outbreak.

New global mobility hierarchy

The latest research from the Henley Passport Index based on exclusive data from IATA shows that the pandemic has completely upended the seemingly unshakeable hierarchy of global mobility that has dominated the last few decades, with more change still to come, says **Philippe Amarante**, Director of Henley & Partners Dubai.

At the beginning of the year the US passport was ranked in sixth position on the Henley Passport Index — the original ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa. Americans could travel hassle-free to 185 destinations around the world. Since then, that number has dropped dramatically by over 100, with

the precipitous decline of US passport power and American travel freedom is seen as a clear indication of its altered status in the eyes of the international community.

Other significant changes in the once-solid global mobility hierarchy paint an equally vivid picture of the chaos caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of 2020, the Singapore passport was

“The UAE has been the biggest climber on the Henley Passport Index over the past decade. The country's remarkable upward momentum on the index has been attributed to a number of factors, including the nation's determination to position itself as a prominent player within the Middle East”

US passport holders currently able to access fewer than 75 destinations, with the most popular tourist and business centres notably excluded.

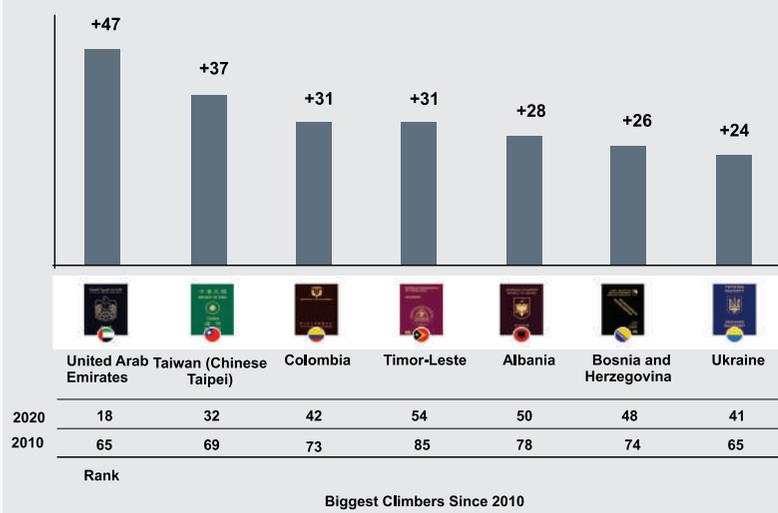
As criticism of the country's pandemic response continues to mount, and with the US presidential election just weeks away,

ranked second globally, with passport holders able to access an unprecedented 190 destinations globally. However, under the current travel restrictions, Singaporeans can travel to fewer than 80 destinations around the world.

Unsurprisingly, those countries whose cor-

Biggest Climbers and Fallers on the Henley Passport Index: 2010 to 2020

The two graphs show the countries that have climbed the highest up the Henley Passport Index rankings over the past decade, as well as those that have fallen most sharply over that period.



onavirus responses have been criticized for being inadequate have taken the greatest knock when it comes to the travel freedom of their citizens. Brazilian passport holders were able to access 170 destinations without acquiring a visa in advance in January. Currently, approximately only 70 destinations are accessible.

The decline in mobility and passport power for countries such as India and Russia have been less dramatic, but neverthe-

less indicative of an overall shift. Russian citizens had access to 119 destinations prior to the COVID-19 outbreak but can currently travel to fewer than 50 destinations.

At the beginning of the year, Indian passport holders could travel to 61 destinations without a visa but due to virus-related restrictions, they currently have access to fewer than 30 destinations.

Without taking the various pandemic-related travel

bans and restrictions into account, Japan continues to hold the number one spot on the Henley Passport Index, with a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 191. Singapore remains in second position, with a score of 190, while Germany and South Korea are tied third, each with a score of 189. EU member states continue to perform best overall, with countries from the bloc taking up most of the spots in the index's top 10.

The UAE has been the biggest climber on the Henley

Passport Index over the past decade. The country's remarkable upward momentum on the index has been attributed to a number of factors, including the nation's determination to position itself as a prominent player within the Middle East.

Lorraine Charles at Cambridge University's Centre for Business Research, says, "While the UAE may not be able to compete with Saudi Arabia – the regional hegemon – in terms of military strength and economic power, the projection of its soft power is uncontested in the GCC, making the UAE an embodiment of inspiration for other GCC countries."



Philippe Amarante
Director
Henley & Partners Dubai

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

Emirates launches biometric path

As part of Emirates' commitment to continuous innovation and an unmatched customer experience, the airline has launched an integrated biometric path at Dubai International Airport (DXB). The contactless airport experience is now open to Emirates passengers travelling from and through Dubai. The integrated biometric path will give passengers

a seamless travel journey from specific check-in to boarding gates, improving customer flow through the airport with less document checks and less queuing.

Utilising the latest biometric technology – a mix of facial and iris recognition, Emirates passengers can now check-in for their flight, complete immigration formalities, enter the



Emirates lounge, and board their flights, simply by strolling through the airport. The various touchpoints in the biometric

path allow for a hygienic contactless travel journey, reducing human interaction and putting emphasis on health and safety.

Adel Al Redha, Emirates' Chief Operating Officer said, "The state-of-the-art, contactless biometric path is the latest in a series of initiatives we have introduced to make sure that travelling on Emirates is a seamless journey and gives customers added peace of mind."

The biometric touchpoints are currently installed at select First, Business and

Economy Class check-in desks in Terminal 3 at DXB; immigration gates including a 'smart tunnel'; Emirates' premium lounge entrance at concourse B as well select boarding gates.

Areas where biometric equipment are installed will be clearly marked and additional units will be installed at each touchpoint in the future.

UAE events industry reviving

The year has been quite challenging with the pandemic taking over and disrupting processes in the hospitality industry. Last month, for the first time, owners and management teams from the hospitality industry came together and discussed some of the key areas in the industry.



Robin Rossmann
Managing Director
STR

“ These recent months have remained incredibly challenging even with eased restrictions on travel. There has been additional demand flowing to UAE hotels with a lift from the staycation market, but performance levels have remained well below historical averages with full recovery not expected for years. Now the focus is on this post-summer period, which would usually feature conferences, events and a great deal of corporate demand. Our forward-looking intelligence shows that the United Arab Emirates has higher occupancy on the books than most markets we are measuring around the world. This would

indicate that the recovery trend line is moving in the right direction even if so much remains uncertain. ”



Christophe Landais
Chief Executive Officer, Action
Hotels Company

“ The Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) 2020 will be remembered for the creativity, reactivity and resilience of the Bench Events management in action to turnaround in five months from an unprecedented desperate situation with the last-minute cancellation of the conference in April to a success in September. Most evidently this year the ambience was not there, however AHIC was kept alive in all its stakeholders' minds for the future. ”

“ It was encouraging to see discussions at AHIC increasingly focusing on a collective industry appeal to reimagine hospitality in the wake of the global standstill without solely looking at the bottom line. As of late, the grand contributor to this discussion that adds real value, de-risks investments and maximises space is mixed-use projects creating efficiencies of scale through disruption, complementing brands and the creation of a community. In the new normal, this approach will prove pivotal for the recovery of the industry and for its positive uptick in a region that has demonstrated potential for growth, the establishments of futuristic cities and innovative smart solutions across all verticals. AHIC's sessions addressed all these pressing topics and paved the road to new hospitality in 2021. We now need to work together as an industry to make that happen! ”



Marloes Knippenberg
CEO
Kerten Hospitality



Adeeb Ahamed
Managing Director
Twenty14 Holdings

“ Twenty14 Holdings was part of AHIC's opening session. Being an asset owner, my outlook for the hospitality sector remains long-term. We remain bullish about the prospects of the sector and see this period as an opportunity to assess our properties, closely monitor the changing trends of global travellers, and place our future investments along these evolving patterns. We are committed to creating a balanced portfolio of distinctly designed assets that offer well curated experiences for customers and maximises returns for investors. This period is being used to redraw relationships with operators and other stakeholders through better strategic communication, as well as reassessing the investment scope to hybridise the investment portfolio. The ever-evolving changes in trends need to be observed, collated, and translated into investable goals going forward. ”



Floor Bleeker
Chief Information Officer
Middle East & Africa, Global
Accor Strategic Programs,
Accor

“ Finding ways to hold safe live events is of critical importance to the recovery of our industry. It was really great to see colleagues and friends and to share a real stage with several leaders in the hospitality technology industry in the Middle East. The content of the conference was inspiring and educational. During our session we discussed the importance and the role of technology in the transformation of the industry as we adjust to operating in a new normal, and how the adoption of technology is key to the new customer journey and the hotel operating model. ”



Bani Haddad
Founder and Managing
Director, Aleph Hospitality

“ It was great to be part of AHIC again this year and it was especially nice to be able to interact with other delegates in a live environment again, despite the comprehensive precautionary measures that were taken. I really enjoyed our panel session on alternative hotel management options, especially as we have experienced a surge in demand for third-party management from both hotel owners and international hotel brands at Aleph Hospitality, which has resulted in doubling our hotel portfolio this year. Our panel discussion confirmed the acceleration of the shift we are seeing in the industry from brand-managed hotels to

franchising. I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Bench Events team for putting together a fantastic hybrid event in a time our industry needs it most, with a thought-provoking programme and a stellar line up of speakers. ”

“ During such an unusual year it felt really exciting to attend and speak at AHIC's physical event. I shared my wonderful experiences about leading F&B for Hilton EMEA and how we plan to tackle the challenges that lay ahead, relying heavily on my team who act as dedicated F&B consultants within the business supporting our operators and owners. I believe that the importance of F&B in hotels cannot be understated, if executed effectively it creates a halo effect for the hotel, making it such an important driver for the hotel business. I left feeling galvanised by speaking to and hearing from my industry colleagues. ”



Emma Banks
VP of F&B Strategy and
Development EMEA, Hilton



Jennifer Pettinger-Haines
Programme Director of AHIC
and Managing Director Middle
East, Bench Events

“ Reflecting on the sessions and discussions that took place at AHIC 2020, it was interesting to note that the industry is expecting a flood of distressed assets to come onto the market with the general consensus that this is likely 6-12 months away. When this does happen, there could still be a gap in buyer and seller expectations when it comes to hotel investment. Whilst the region is seeing interest from international investors, regional investors with available cash have been actively looking for hotel assets in other parts of the world, in particular in Europe and the US, and they will continue to do so. We haven't seen the real 'bargains' yet though, but when they do start to hit the market, there is going to be a lot of competition from buyers. On the flip side, hotel owners with cash reserves are using this time to refurbish or renovate their properties, and as cash remains king for existing asset owners, they are looking for ways to generate cashflow from the local market to keep cash flowing through the business. ”

WTM London and Travel Forward will be virtual-only shows in November 2020



The shows will take place on 9-11 November and are set to be the main virtual travel trade events of 2020

WTM Virtual to feature one-to-one meetings, conference sessions, roundtables and speed networking

WTM London – the event where Ideas Arrive – and Travel Forward – the travel and hospitality technology event co-located with WTM London – will be entirely virtual in November.

Live shows had been set to take place at ExCeL London (2-4 November 2020); however, the continuing travel restrictions, imposition of quarantine requirements and local lockdowns across Europe mean that our events will be fully virtual experiences.

WTM Virtual will take place from 9-11 November, offering delegates the chance to arrange one-to-one virtual meetings to do business, attend conference sessions and roundtables, take part in speed networking and more.

WTM London's Senior Director Simon Press said: "We have worked tirelessly to organise a physical show, but the increasing number of travel restrictions and the uncertainty around the world means it will be impractical for many overseas visitors to attend in person.

"Additionally, there remains uncertainty around business events and conferences being allowed to take place in the UK. The official deadline for this decision being the 1st October.

"However, thousands of travel trade professionals from around the globe will still be able to meet and do business in an extensive range of virtual sessions, to help the industry recover, rebuild and innovate."

The virtual show will also see an investment summit in partnership with ITIC – International Tourism & Investment Conference – and a new Marketing Forum and masterclass workshop in partnership with The Five Percent.

The WTM Virtual will have four virtual theatres to host webinars and debates, including the Responsible Tourism.

Furthermore, a virtual version of Travel Forward is being shaped up and will combine virtual exhibition, free virtual conference sessions and speed networking for start-ups to meet investors.

With the theme "Resilience, Innovation, Response", **Travel Forward Virtual** will add a technology-based approach in supporting the recovery of the travel and tourism industry.

Richard Gayle, Event Manager for Travel Forward said: "Travel Forward is the event that embraces fresh concepts and innovative projects to inspire delegates. This year, running Travel Forward virtually will allow us to connect even more with global travel tech companies wanting to promote themselves to the world.

"We are confident Travel Forward Virtual will offer delegates all the support and ideas about how the industry recovery and more solutions to overcome the biggest challenges facing the travel industry."

London Travel Week (30 October-5 November 2020)

London Travel Week will be returning virtually providing attendees with a chance to learn, network and innovate in the week leading up to WTM Virtual.

During London Travel Week, there will be six **Speed Networking sessions** on offer so that exhibitors, brands and destinations can meet before the virtual show and form business connections.

London Travel Week will also provide the perfect forum to celebrate the achievements of those in the travel and tourism industry through virtual awards ceremonies such as the **World Travel Leaders' Awards** and the **Responsible Tourism Awards**.

The week will also see summits on Wellness, BAME Tourism, LGBT Tourism as well as Destination Briefings and Press Conferences allowing countries and brands to showcase their activities in the last few months to recover, rebuild and innovate.

The **UNWTO, WTTC & WTM Ministers' Summit** will gather tourism ministers and the private sector with a mixture of live and virtual events to set out a roadmap for a safer, greener and smarter future for the sector.

The summit is the largest annual gathering of tourism ministers and pledges to bring together about 100 ministers along with 100 industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and experts to help develop the manifesto through a Delphi process.

Simon Press concluded: "We made the decision to transition to a virtual-only event after a great deal of consultation with our industry partners, sponsors, delegates and staff. Our main objective has always been to deliver a global show bringing travel professionals from the seven continents, and we are now channelling our energies into the creation of an outstanding, large-scale digital gathering that will enable the travel industry to connect, to network, do business and learn about this new consumer environment."



Indigo: a new address downtown

The highly anticipated Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown has officially opened its doors in the heart of Dubai. From art-inspired rooms and suites to versatile dining outlets and inspiring works of art throughout the property, Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown is an impressive, design-lead addition to the Downtown Dubai neighborhood.

 TT Bureau

The hotel offers 269 perfectly designed rooms inspired by the historical story of Dubai Creek, with sheesha lamps and artistic wallpaper displaying iconic landmarks of Dubai. The stunning mother of pearl seen in the spa-inspired bathrooms is luxury in itself. Every corner of the hotel exudes creative characteristics, with over 200 pieces of authentic art from local artists sourced in collaboration with Alserkal Cultural Foundation, Tashkeel and XVA gallery, as well as the beautiful intricately designed carpet created through a partnership with the Fatima Bint Mohammed Bin Zayed Initiative (FBMI).

Striking works of art are showcased in many areas of the hotel, including the four food and beverage outlets on the varying floors. The property's social eatery, Open Sesame, is a modern take to Emirati heritage, with

souk inspired stalls and embroidered abaya patterns in the entrance, whilst the rich aromas of Café Rider Custom Roastery fills the air. The second floor is home to the lively pool-side bar and shisha lounge, Orange Feels, that boasts a trendy Aperol bar overlooking the infinity pool with Bali inspired hanging chairs for the picture-perfect opportunity. To celebrate the opening of this boutique hotel in the heart of Dubai, Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown is excited has announced tempting new offers available to both residents and tourists in the UAE.

Be the First to Explore

Be the first to explore Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown and its fresh design, welcome distractions, and untold stories of its vibrant neighbourhood with rates from AED 300++ per night. The exclusive offer is valid for stays by 27 December 2020.



Grab the Pooch and Wag on to a PetCation

Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown welcomes all furry friends to join their owners at the hotel for a pawesome getaway. Enjoy a getaway with your four-legged companion, which includes a delicious breakfast at the neighborhood favourite Open Sesame, with your pet's own personal food and water bowl. Take your four-legged friend to a memorable staycation with pawsitively great rates starting from AED450 per standard room, per night.

Hey Ladies...Let's Add a Little Ying to your Yang!

Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown has designed the perfect ladies staycation offer for groups of girls who are looking for an exciting and memorable experience at the hotel.

Kick off your Staycay relaxing by the Instagrammable infinity pool with the girls. When the sun starts to go down, it's time to get the party started! Sip on some bubbles with a complimentary bottle of pro-secco in your room

whilst getting glammed up for the evening activities. Gather the gang and refuel after a chilled day at Open Sesame where you can indulge in a tempting selection of dishes, whilst sipping on not one but two complimentary house beverages per person.

Hotel Indigo Dubai Downtown will offer a late check-out to the ladies, subject to availability. Rally up the girls and head for a fantastic staycation with rates starting from AED999 per room per night for two guests. 🌟

Palm Fountain enter Guinness Records

The Palm Fountain at The Pointe, Dubai's premier lifestyle and dining destination by Nakheel, has secured the Guinness World Record for the World's Largest Fountain after a breathtaking launch streamed live across the world.

 TT Bureau

The magical show was attended by distinguished guests, residents and tourists, who watched in awe as The Palm Fountain broke the record in tune to an exclusive song – Dubai is another planet, produced to reflect the city's vibrant and inspirational spirit. A celebration of Dubai's creativity and

ambition, The Palm Fountain is spread over 14,000 sq ft of sea water and is the only multi-coloured fountain in the city. The fountain's super shooter stands tall at 105 metres and comes alive with over 3,000 LED lights.

Omar Khoory, Managing Director of Nakheel Malls, which operates The Pointe, said, "Nakheel extends its grati-



tude to Dubai's leadership as we secure the

coveted title of World's Largest Fountain. This is

an historic moment which further underscores our commitment to bringing new and unique experiences to the city for the benefit of all stakeholders. As pioneers of retail and lifestyle destinations in Dubai, we look forward to the inspiration it will bring to visitors at The Pointe, residents of the UAE, our retailers, tourists and the international community." 🌟

Tourism Breaking News

- Al Habtoor Hotels offer 24/7 kosher in-room dining in UAE
- Hyatt announces plans for first Hyatt hotel in Cape Town
- Dubai's Palm Fountain takes Guinness World Records title for World's Largest Fountain
- Ministry of Economy, Dubai Chamber and Google to support retail and tourism sector
- World's first Bear Grylls Explorers Camp to open in Ras Al Khaimah
- Radisson Group launches Radisson Individuals with 10 new hotel signings across EMEA in Q3 2020
- Dubai becomes global case study for hosting live events
- Emirates launches contactless airport experience at DXB
- SCTDA partners as Gold sponsor for the Gulf Travel Show 2020
- 41st edition of FITUR to be held from May 19-23, 2021 in Madrid
- Marriott introduces new content on digital platform for meetings and events
- Airport Show Hybrid format planned for May 2021
- Dubai further enhance visitor experience with reopening top attractions
- Elaa revolutionises travel in Saudi Arabia with a new cost-effective digital solution
- Sabre highlights power of technology for travel recovery
- RAKTDA partner as Platinum sponsors for the Gulf Travel Show
- STB and Expedia partner to boost tourism recovery in ten overseas markets
- UAE Ministry of Economy includes tourism promotion in the six track recovery plan

RAS AL KHAIMAH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Ras Al Khaimah



Alka Winter joins as Vice President, Destination Marketing & Communications, responsible for spearheading the authority's multi-faceted communications strategy at a time when effective multi-channel messaging and storytelling is critical. She is a seasoned communications professional with more than 18 years of strategic planning and delivery in senior roles spanning the Middle East and North America.

RAS AL KHAIMAH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Ras Al Khaimah

Iyad Rasbey takes on the role of Executive Director, Destination Tourism Development, based on his proven track record of successfully developing business from new and existing source markets in his previous position as RAKTDA's Director of MICE and leveraging his more than two decades of tourism industry experience. Rasbey joined RAKTDA in 2018 and has since played a pivotal role in the execution of key projects.



RADISSON BLU HOTEL SOHAR

Oman

Salah Hamdan Mohammed Al Mamari has been appointed as General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel, Sohar. He joined the hotel in 2014 as Rooms Division Manager and was promoted to Executive Assistant Manager in 2018. Al Mamari's promotion reinforces Radisson Hotel Group's commitment to nurture and shape careers of talented Omanis in the industry. In his new role, Al Mamari will continue to administer the entire hotel management and operations and set strategic plans to continue realising the hotel's functional and hospitality goals.



AMAALA

Saudi Arabia

AMAALA, the ultra-luxury destination located along Saudi Arabia's north western coast, has appointed hospitality industry veteran **Victor Clavell** to the role of Chief Operating Officer. Clavell steps into a role that will see him lead the operations division across the destination and its three communities – Triple Bay, The Coastal Development, and The Island. With over 30 years of experience, Clavell is well-known for his ability to turnaround properties and create clear distinction from the competition – a skill that will be crucial in establishing and growing AMAALA as a global destination.



IHG HOTELS AND RESORTS

IMEA Region

Leanne Harwood, currently MD of IHG's Australasia and Japan (AUJ) region has been appointed Pascal Gauvin's successor. Leanne joined IHG in 2005 and embarked on a range of leadership roles in Commercial, Operations and Sales, paving the way for her appointment as MD, AUJ in January 2018. Harwood has built excellent relationships with owners and industry leaders through her work with the Australian Accommodation Association (AAoA) and Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF), while remaining a strong advocate of sustainability, and culture, diversity & inclusion.



AL BALEED RESORT SALALAH BY ANANTARA AND ANANTARA AL JABAL AL AKHDAR RESORT

Oman

Siraj Memon has been appointed Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing for Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort and Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara. He has been promoted in August 2020 to this new role from his previous assignment at the Salalah property as Director of Sales. He served as a vital member of the pre-opening team for both resort.



RADISSON BLU HOTEL, DUBAI MEDIA CITY

Dubai



Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City has appointed **Claudia Pittau** as its new Front of House Manager. Pittau who hails from Sardinia Italy, has been with the property since a year holding the position as Guest Relations Manager. In her new role, Pittau will oversee front office, concierge and the pool while working with the relevant departments to drive new projects, incremental revenue & overall guest satisfaction and creating memorable moments for the guests.

RIU

Dubai

Riu Dubai, Nakheel's 800-room joint venture with Spain's RIU Hotels & Resorts, is set to open in December 2020, bringing a new hospitality concept to Dubai and marking the 100th RIU establishment worldwide. **Nader Ghosheh Sayfi** is named General Manager of the resort, which will be the first attraction to open at Nakheel's Deira Islands coastal city. Sayfi has spent his entire 27-year hospitality career with RIU, running 10 resorts and opening several five-star, all-inclusive properties, including, most recently, the Riu Palace Tikida Agadir.



SHERATON GRAND SHEIKH ZAYED ROAD & SHERATON DUBAI CREEK HOTEL & TOWERS

Dubai



Nikhil Nair has joined as Cluster Marketing Communications & Public Relations Manager. He was previously the Cluster Marketing Communications & Public Relations Manager for Delta Hotels by Marriott Jumeirah Beach, Dubai, Four Points by Sheraton Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai and Four Points by Sheraton Downtown, Dubai.

SOJERN's new solutions to drive bookings

Sojern, a leading provider of digital marketing solutions for travel, announced the addition of metasearch to its Multichannel Digital Marketing Platform designed for hotels, attractions and destinations. Now travel marketers can access all major digital marketing channels from a single provider – meta-

search, display, native, video, connected TV, search, and social.

For more than a decade Sojern has built tools to help customers drive more direct bookings to their websites. Underpinned by proprietary data science and machine learning technology, Sojern's Traveller

Platform leverages travel data sourced from thousands of partners around the globe to provide unprecedented insight into the traveller path to purchase. This information is then used to optimise digital marketing campaigns in real-time to reach travellers in the right channel at the right time.

"Like everyone in travel, Sojern was significantly impacted by COVID-19. It hasn't exactly been 'down time' for us, but we used the past few months to focus our business strategy and double-down on what's working – building a robust suite of solutions to drive bookings for hotels, attractions and destinations," said

Kurt Weinsheimer, Chief Solutions Officer. "Putting it simply – we built the most intelligent multichannel digital marketing platform for travel in existence today." These enhancements were driven by Weinsheimer and Sojern's new Vice President of Product, **Dave Goulden**, who joined at the onset of the pandemic and has been working

diligently to ensure Sojern's solutions are ready to power long-term booking growth for clients. "We believe travel will come back even stronger than before, so we're investing now to make sure we can be the best partner to our customers worldwide long after the pandemic has ended," said Goulden.



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Design
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is printed on behalf of
Durga Das Publications (Middle East) FZE
at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd.,
C-52, DDA Sheds Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110020

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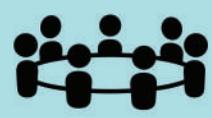
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WORLD FIRST BEAR GRYLLS EXPLORERS CAMP NOW OPEN IN JEBEL JAIS, RAS AL KHAIMAH

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

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

www.beargryllscamp.ae

