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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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Media Partner



Launching Gulf Travel Show

TRAVTALK will be media partners for the first ever virtual event titled "The Gulf Travel Show" on Nov 23 and 24, 2020. This event will connect 40 sellers from the ME with buyers from across the globe.

TT Bureau

This is a very unique opportunity that will enable you to meet with new partners from across the globe in the comfort of your own home or your office. Over two days you can attend specific sessions that will focus on new businesses or speak about the new strategies whilst you make your own time to pre-book



appointments with the team. For sellers there will be a host of interesting features that will definitely

enhance their business potential whereas for buyers there will be specialised incentivised programmes that will provide an opportunity to walk away with great prizes as a winner whilst you build new connections

Contd. on page 5 ►

Gulf Travel Show (GTS) with its proprietary exhibition software will help you recover, rebuild and innovate relationships and products. Also, it will help grow your brand.

Regional office for UNWTO in Riyadh

At the 112th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, **HE Ahmed Al-Khateeb**, Saudi Arabia's Minister for Tourism, announced the establishment of the UNWTO Regional Office for ME in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Shehara Rizly

The new UNWTO Regional Office will serve as a hub for the UNWTO to 13 countries in the Middle East. The office will focus on building long-term growth for the sector and human capital development in the travel and tourism sector in the region. The office will also include a dedicated Statistics Center whose objective is to become the leading authority on tourism statistics for the region.

Reiterating his continued support to the UNWTO,



HE Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Minister for Tourism
Saudi Arabia

His Excellency **Ahmed Al-Khateeb**, Saudi Arabia's Minister for Tourism, said, "International cooperation and the role of the UNWTO are more important than

ever. I am therefore very excited that Saudi Arabia will become home to the first-ever UNWTO Regional Office, which aims to support growth at a national and regional level. We hope this will provide a model for future collaborations around the world. Tourism not only boosts economies, it also builds bridges between cultures. In Saudi Arabia, we are very aware of the transformative power of tourism on the economy and people. We may still be a young destination, but tourism is at the forefront of Saudi Arabia's vision for the future." 🌅

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Israel, a new source market

With the recent signing of the agreement between the UAE and Israel, the travel and tourism industry has its eyes set on a brand new source market, hitherto known yet to be explored. **Salih Gozcu**, Chairman, BTB Tours, shared his view on this important source market.

TT Bureau

BTB Tours is a young and dynamic DMC based in Dubai serving more than 50,000 guests from Turkey, CIS market and have been the first to announce an agreement with Israeli tour operators. In terms of the profile of travellers to the UAE, it is still a very early stage to determine the type of travellers, their requirements and

spending capacity. However, according to Gozcu, "For many years they wanted to see the UAE, so I can say, everybody will be the target market at first. By next year, we will have a much clearer profile of the Israeli travellers but at the moment they just want to see the country."

"Currently, in terms of outbound destinations, Greece, New York, Turkey, Azerbaijan and some

European countries are popular. Israel's population is over 9 million and it is a rich country. All the tour operators we have connected with are very interested to sell the UAE. I can see that Israel will boom and this will be a new strong source market for the UAE in the next few years."

Lavish spenders

Gozcu says that the main requirement will be 5-star and 4-star city hotels with Dubai and Abu Dhabi taking the bulk of the share. "They will travel mainly for cultural tours and to see the city and the attractions. The second will be for shopping. The average stay will be five to seven nights. We do not know yet about their

average spend, but they are good spenders. From what we know, in other countries like Turkey, per person they spend around US\$ 1,000-2000 in seven nights. But it is very important that they have kosher food. If hotels will not have that, I do not think they will get a share of the Israel market."

BTB Tours agreement with Israel tour operators

He reiterated, "In my opinion the UAE-Israel normalisation agreement is a very positive news for the travel industry. Israel is a market from where people have always been keen to visit the UAE but due to political reasons were unable to do so. When it opens, I am



Salih Gozcu
Chairman
BTB Tours

very positive that the travel movement between the two countries will yield very good results business-wise to both parties.

In the beginning tourism will be the main reason, but in the future they will invest and buy properties and

contribute to the economy. BTB have signed an agreement with three operators in Israel, one of which is the biggest operator in Israel, Mono Tours. The owner was here few weeks ago and we have met tourism boards, hotels and other partners to start collaborating for getting groups from Israel to the UAE. The initial projection is to have 1,000 tourists every week. It will be a 12-month, all year-round business, even in the summer I believe we can get a share in this market. I am scheduled to go to Israel again next month to make sure everything is in place for our partnership and that the UAE will be on top of every Israeli traveller's agenda." 🌟

“We have met tourism boards, hotels and other partners to start collaborating for getting groups from Israel to the UAE. The initial projection is to have 1,000 tourists every week. It will be a 12-month, all year-round business”



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Tourism BreakingNews

■ New Istanbul Airport outfitted with 'Digital Duty Free Zone'

■ Second Saudi International Airshow welcomes 'Women in Aviation' for the first time

■ Emirates introduces its second daily flight to Bahrain

■ Heritage Aarah Maldives welcomes GCC travellers

■ Abu Dhabi amplifies global tourism revival with return to UFC Fight Island

■ Miral announces major milestones on Yas Bay, USD 3.26bn development

■ flydubai to resume flights to the Maldives from October 27

■ MakeMyTrip forays into the United Arab Emirates

■ Etihad Airways and MCI Middle East join hands to support UAE's event industry

■ New Portugal passport collection centres open in Abu Dhabi and Dubai

■ RAKTDA to launch UAE's highest restaurant at Jais on Oct 1

■ WTM London 2020 goes virtual-only

■ Emirates adds Moscow to its growing network

■ Dubai's events industry stages a grand comeback

■ Abu Dhabi tourism investment funds Egypt hotel project

■ SriLankan Airlines to play pivotal role in ME as Sri Lanka reopens for tourism

EVENT TALK

OCTOBER 2020

TRAVTALK Digital Conclave
15 (Thu) 11 am (UAE)
<http://travtalkmiddleeast.com/>

NOVEMBER 2020

Gulf Travel Show
23-24 (Mon-Tue) 11 am - 5 pm (UAE)

Testing before departure

At a recent conference, **Alexandre de Juniac**, IATA's Director General and CEO reiterated the new call for systematic testing of all international travellers before departure as this would enable governments to safely open its borders without quarantine.

TT Bureau

The key to restoring the freedom of mobility across borders is systematic COVID-19 testing of all travellers before departure. This will give governments the confidence to open their borders without complicated risk models that see constant changes in the rules imposed on travel. Testing all passengers will give people back their freedom to travel with confidence. And that will put millions of people back to work," said **Alexandre de Juniac**, Director General and CEO, IATA.

He reiterated, "We did not come to this decision lightly. The integration of systematic testing into the

tered in the departure country are accepted on arrival."

"If you look at the uptake in travel since the cautious re-opening of borders beginning in June, the results have been dismally disappointing. International travel was at just 8% of its year-ago levels in July. There were little signs of improvement in August. So the summer travel season did not deliver any real bounce to the industry's restart. And it is hard to see a major uptick in corporate travel amid the concerns of a second wave of COVID-19 infections. Quarantine measures are killing the industry's recovery. Some 83% of travellers in a recent 11-market survey said that they will not travel if there is a chance of being quar-



Alexandre de Juniac
Director General and CEO
IATA

agreed that they are willing to undergo testing as part of the travel process."

Addressing challenges

He continued that challenges need to be addressed as follows.

Cooperation: We will work with the airports and

“Some 83% of travellers in a recent 11-market survey said that they will not travel if there is a chance of being quarantined at their destination. That is a very clear signal that this industry will not recover until we can find an alternative to quarantine”

These are giving us practical knowledge of what will be needed to do testing on the scale that would be required for a full industry restart.

But we firmly believe that testing must be done before departure. This seals off the system. In addition to giving governments the confidence to reopen borders, this approach will also boost passenger confidence knowing that everybody on the aircraft has been tested. And, by doing it in the travel process which is tightly managed, we are avoiding issues of quality control or fraudulent results.

Availability: Testing technology is rapidly developing. Roche and Abbott, for example have tests that meet most criteria but need medical personnel to administer them. The speed at which testing capabilities are advancing tells us that we will have deployable options in the

coming weeks. And by signaling now that this is the industry's preferred option, we are sending a strong message to the market that should accelerate development and earmark aviation as a big customer.

Global Standards:

Testing will only be meaningful if results at departure are accepted on arrival. This is where the leadership of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) CART process which brings together governments, the health authorities through WHO and the industry — will be critical.

We are proposing that governments agree to testing standards through ICAO. The CART process has been efficient so far with the 'Take-off' guidelines being widely accepted and implemented. We will be working closely with ICAO and the health authorities to make this next step a success as well.

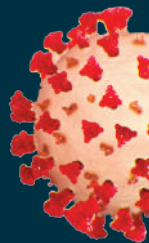
Public Opinion

■ IATA's public opinion research revealed strong support for COVID-19 testing in the travel process. Some 65% of travellers surveyed agreed that quarantine should not be required if a person tests negative for COVID-19.

■ Passengers' support for testing is evident in the following survey results:

- 84% agreed that testing should be required of all travellers
- 88% agreed that they are willing to undergo testing as part of the travel process

■ In addition to opening borders, public opinion research also indicated that testing will help to rebuild passenger confidence in aviation. Survey respondents identified the implementation of COVID-19 screening measures for all passengers as effective in making them feel safe, second only to mask-wearing. And, the availability of rapid COVID-19 testing is among the top three signals that travellers will look to for reassurance that travel is safe (along with the availability of a vaccine or a treatment for COVID-19).



travel process will present logistical challenges and impact how people travel, it will need testing manufacturers to develop tests that can be deployed that are fast, accurate, scalable, affordable and easy to use. And, considering the potential scale of the testing required, non-medical personnel will need to be able to operate it effectively and it will need governments and health authorities to agree on common standards so that tests adminis-

anted at their destination. That is a very clear signal that this industry will not recover until we can find an alternative to quarantine," de Juniac stated.

He added, "We believe that an alternative to quarantine is systematic 100% testing of all travellers before departure. And the same public opinion poll tells us that this is what passengers will accept. 84% agreed that testing should be required of all travellers, while 88%

other partners on how to include systematic testing in the travel process. Testing should not be a permanent fixture, so we could be creative with solutions. It's a challenge, but we have done it with the growing footprint of security in the travel process. And we should not forget that there are many testing programmes in place as part of the travel bubble or travel corridor concept that is being pursued bilaterally by some governments.

Global Connectivity

■ International travel is 92% down on 2019 levels. Over half a year has passed since global connectivity was destroyed as countries closed their borders to fight COVID-19. Some governments have cautiously re-opened borders since then, but there has been limited uptake because either quarantine measures make travel impractical or the frequent changes in COVID-19 measures make planning impossible.

■ The economic cost of the breakdown in global connectivity makes investing in a border-opening testing solution a priority for governments. The human suffering and global economic pain of the crisis will be prolonged if the aviation industry—on which at least 65.5 million jobs depend—collapses before the pandemic ends. And the amount of government support needed to avert such a collapse is rising. Already lost revenues are expected to exceed \$400 billion and the industry was set to post a record net loss of over \$80 billion in 2020 under a more optimistic rebound scenario than has actually unfolded.

AHIC focus on future plans

The 16th edition of the Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) took place from September 29 to October 1, 2020, addressing how the hotel industry can 'Transform Tomorrow'. The three-day event was packed with critical insights from industry leaders.

 Shehara Rizly

The programme featured over 60 speakers and was broadcast live from pop-up studios across Dubai. Each day, it was hosted in a new location with select live audiences, streamed onto a virtual platform purposed for both onsite and virtual attendees. Safety protocols were strictly observed onsite.

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of Bench Events and Founder of AHIC,


said, "We have had to start from scratch and imagine what bringing the hotel investment industry together would look like in September 2020. It's a very different scenario to what we have done in the past as the industry has changed, our community's needs have changed and the regulations governing events have changed. However, what remains constant and more pressing than ever, is the need for the industry to come together, connect, share information,

challenges and solutions and be inspired. AHIC is an important opportunity for the industry to demonstrate its resilience and how it is evolving to bounce back stronger.

Now more than ever, the industry needs to gather and work together to 'Transform Tomorrow'. We believe collaboration plays a key role in these challenging times, which is why 'AHIC on the Road' is the perfect forum at which to connect with fellow industry leaders, exchange experiences and learnings, and most importantly, plan for the future." "Over three days in both live and virtual sessions, we will tackle the transformation of business



Jonathan Worsley
Chairman of Bench Events and
Founder of AHIC

into future-proof operations; a business able to succeed in the 'new normal' of 2020 and beyond, where travel restrictions, changed operating environments and a tighter hold over costs will put pressure on owners and operators alike," he added. 

Meet new partners from across the globe

► Contd. from page 1

or revisit some of the earlier clients and rekindle the existing relationships.

Gulf Travel Show (GTS) with its proprietary software will help you recover, rebuild and innovate relationships and products. This is a virtual event that will introduce you to buyers, help grow your brand and build long-term profitable business connections.

At a time when costs are curtailed yet finding the right partner in a specialised event will be the way forward to further promote the travel and tourism business. At TravTalk we have been working more closely with the industry during the pandemic, keeping

the positive vibes by conducting various trade shows, webinars and online newsletters on a regular basis. Partnering as media in this roadshow will be another addition to keep the industry positive.

FactFile

■ Over two days you can attend specific sessions that will focus on new businesses or speak about the new strategies

■ For exhibitors there will be a host of interesting features that will definitely enhance their business potential whereas for buyers there will be specialised incentivised programmes

■ At a time when costs are curtailed yet finding the right partner in a specialised event will be the way forward to further promote the travel and tourism business

“‘AHIC on the Road’ is the perfect forum at which to connect with fellow industry leaders, exchange experiences and learnings, and most importantly, plan for the future”

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Thailand shares real-time insights

Connecting 48 exhibitors from Thailand with over 250 buyers from the GCC for a whole day of networking sessions at the first-ever 'Amazing Thailand Virtual Roadshow' which concluded recently, showed the interest and confidence of the travellers. Some exhibitors and agents shared their comments with TRAVTALK.



Sellers



Jidapa (Jill) Niladhanadon
Director of Business Development
Veranda Resort & Villas Hua Hin Cha Am - MGallery
Veranda High Resort Chiang Mai - MGallery
Veranda Resort Pattaya Na Jomtien - MGallery

“Overall, it was a great event for buyers and sellers. The virtual mart site looked like a real exhibition which gave the feeling of being present at the real event. The buyers were around, some came as per appointment, some didn't but came later and some did walk-in.

We had two representatives with 18 meetings. The buyers showed positive sentiment of travelling opportunity soon for both business (healthcare) and leisure. Our specific point of contact (SPOC) was around prior and during the event.”



Karuna Amarnath
Senior Director of Sales
Four Seasons Resorts
Thailand Koh Samui

“Overall experience is great as we are able to meet new prospect accounts from Middle East market during this event. On the good side at this event, clients were able to visit our booth and download documents/ sales resources directly from our page.

We were able to update the latest news on the situation in the GCC countries on covid and movement with their region at this event which was really helpful for us. SPOC's role was excellent and he was very helpful during the event.”

Buyers



George Joseph
Holidays Manager
Trinity Travel UAE

“The Amazing Thailand Virtual Roadshow 2020 was a great experience. It was very simple to manoeuvre without any hindrance to all the booths, chat and even speak to the sellers. The video/ audio chats were highly commendable. We exchanged views and connected with ease. The Tourism Authority of Thailand presentations in the session hall were very well highlighted and had a great wealth of information.”



Muhammad Idrees
Manager - Saudi Wings
Holidays - Riyadh KSA

“The Amazing Thailand Virtual Roadshow was great. Destination Thailand is very popular among the Middle Eastern travellers. It is a very diversified destination. The show was very useful as I connected with 30 suppliers and gained knowledge about the destination, especially high-end luxury products. Overall, coordination was up to the mark.”



“I can rate my overall experience as 8 out of 10. The virtual set-up of the expo, especially the screen right in front of the virtual exhibition hall gave me an impression of being almost present at the expo. Exhibitors were listed clearly and access to all the exhibition booths was easy.

People are itching to travel, and I see a demand for detox holidays growing in the coming season. My clients prefer to stay in the individual/boutique property with less crowd. They want to travel to a destination, which is preferably three to four hours by flight. Overall, the entire expo was well coordinated.”



Sapna Aidasani
Marketing Manager
Pluto Travels

“In our profession of travel and tourism, we always 'bond', therefore regardless of challenging situations and difficulties, we always find ways to stay connected. Thanks to the organisers and exhibitors, I got the opportunity to participate in the Amazing Thailand Virtual Roadshow. It was great to connect and re-connect again with partners from the hospitality and travel industry to plan the next step of collaboration and learn more about local products.



Aga Pytlík
General Manager
Pan World Travel Tourism

The roadshow proved to be very beneficial; local partners were open to discussing the B2B offers and sharing information relative to re-opening the destination with terms and conditions. I was able to connect with more than 15 exhibitors via direct conversation, chats and exchanging the contact details for future collaboration; all this was possible due to full technical support and supervision by the organisers. The list of the exhibitors was impressive, and I believe each travel agent could find suitable partners based on the company portfolio.”

“The Thailand roadshow was amazing because we got the opportunity to meet with partners during the special virtual event. I managed to attend almost 30 booths from 8:30am until 5:30pm. I got to know a lot more about the Asia market from the exhibitors. It was a very well organised and excellent show as during this time when you cannot physically connect with outbound tourism destinations, technology enables us to connect with them with a show of this nature.”



Darl Bugarin
Orbit Travel and Tours
Doha Branch



Janet Moses
Tour Consultant
Al Tayer Holidays

“The event was very well organised and I was able to reach out to suppliers. Also, I have received replies from most of the suppliers via emails. It was very good to connect considering the COVID situation. Both business and leisure at the moment are super slow as the borders are closed. While the latest travel data reflects the dire situation that we face, it is very useful when speaking with our business clients about their urgent needs. We also know that real-time insights are critical to detecting shifts in traveller behaviour and sentiment so that we can plan appropriately for the future. I liked the user-friendly site and the meeting was rescheduled according to my convenience. Overall, the event was good and very useful.”

SINGAPORE AIRLINES



Singapore Airlines Expands Digital Distribution Capabilities Through *KrisConnect* Programme to Enhance Customer Experience on Trade Partner Platforms in the UAE

As part of Singapore Airlines' (SIA) efforts to deliver an enriched experience to customers, a wider range of fares and personalised content will be provided to its travel trade partners in the UAE from February 2021. This comes via an expansion of SIA's KrisConnect Programme¹, which leverages new distribution technology to make available improved content and functionality through partner platforms. In launching KrisConnect in 2018, SIA was one of the first airlines in Asia-Pacific to take advantage of this new technology.

From 07 February 2021, SIA-appointed agents in the UAE that participate in the KrisConnect Programme will benefit from improved speed-to-market, access to the widest range of fare products including personalised content, and the ability to offer customised products to their customers, such as bundled packages and negotiated fare deals. This, in turn, elevates the booking experience for customers through increased levels of personalisation and acknowledgement of their KrisFlyer status.

To ensure maximised accessibility of the KrisConnect Programme in the UAE, travel agencies and other external partners can take advantage of multiple ways to access the new content and functionalities. SIA will make content available through traditional Global Distribution System partners such as Amadeus, Sabre and Travelport, as well as new technology partners, including but not limited to Aaron Group, Duffel, HitchHiker, PKFARE, TPConnects, Travel Boutique Online, Travelfusion, TravelNDC and Verteil Technologies.

In addition, SIA's travel agent portal, AGENT360, will be launched in the UAE to allow travel agents direct access to content via the KrisConnect Programme.

Singapore Airlines General Manager Gulf and Middle East, Christian Stenkewitz said the KrisConnect Programme was part of Singapore Airlines' commitment to becoming the world's leading digital airline.

"We are pleased to launch the KrisConnect Programme and AGENT360 in the UAE and are excited to be able to work with our trade partners to bring our NDC product to the market," Mr Stenkewitz said.

"Launching the KrisConnect Programme from 07 February 2021 is a direct result of our investment in digital technologies that allow us to better service our travel trade partners, who in turn will be able to provide even more personalised options to our mutual customers."

Over the coming months, SIA will work closely with the wider travel trade to ensure that they are provided with the information and guidance they require to connect to the KrisConnect platform.

SIA will conduct virtual industry workshops in the UAE from November to provide travel agent partners with more detailed information on the KrisConnect programme and gather feedback from GDS and Aggregator partners. Further details of the industry workshops will be provided in the coming weeks.

For more information on the KrisConnect Programme, please visit:

<https://developer.singaporeair.com/apis/ndc>

¹ The KrisConnect Programme makes use of Application Program Interface (API) technology, such as those from, IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) programme as well as other proprietary APIs, to extend booking, servicing and information functionalities to external parties. This allows existing partners to access improved content, and new partners access to functionality hitherto limited to SIA's website or requiring subscription to Global Distribution Systems, such as making and management of flight bookings, checking on flight status information, access to KrisFlyer-related information and more.

Discovering Southwest Germany

Looking at hitherto known destinations in the much loved destination of Germany, the first webinar exploring the diverse Southwest Germany concluded recently with participants from UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

 Shehara Rizly

1.8 million overnight stays from GCC in 2019

Starting off the webinar, **Yamina Sofo**, Director – Sales & Marketing, German National Tourist Office shared that in 2019, there had been 1.8 million overnight stays from GCC nationals. Sofo gave an overview of the destination and reiterated that Germany is an 'Arab travellers' paradise' as it has all the different activities much loved by the clientele. From sightseeing to cultural and historical areas with many castles, shopping areas that include some of the most famous luxury brands, 287 Michelin star restaurants, many areas that offer a wide range of halal food options and a medical tourism destination for GCC travellers. The special video she shared expressed the vibrancy of the destination. Germany is now open for travel for certain categories such as medical travellers, students, diplomats, business and event participants with a valid Schengen visa. As UAE is in the 'safe list' there is no necessity to quarantine but there are mandatory documents that need to be provided prior to flying to the destination.

Sofo reiterated that Emirates and Etihad are operating flights to Frankfurt and Munich and GCC visitors are able to travel, except for leisure. "Currently we are running the campaign 'Discover Germany from home' until it opens for leisure, at that time we will have a new campaign. Every two weeks all countries in the Schengen region meet in Brussels and an update is shared regarding the current situation. We are currently talking with OTAs and partners for Q4 and beginning of 2021

to promote Germany for our clients. All safety measures are being carried out in all areas, especially hospitality and attractions."

An all year-round destination

Natalie Dietl, Sales and Marketing Manager, State Tourist Board Southwest Germany, welcomed everyone from the sunny side of Germany and shared the fastest way to the area which is via the Stuttgart Airport, which is the sixth largest airport in Germany with 'Restaurant Top Air', the world's only airport with a Michelin star. Bordering France from the West and Switzerland from South, and 20 minutes from Stuttgart Airport to city centre, this is an area rich with many experiences. Stuttgart, Black Forest and Black Forest Highlands, Lake Constance and Swabian Alb are some of the areas in Southwest Germany. She explained the many historical and traditional areas with castles and lakes that make the German Riviera where one can visit and explore as well as the more modern areas are well received. From authentic museums to high-end dining restaurants to river boat cruises that are one-of-a-kind are some of the key highlights presented about the destination. Dietl also mentioned the special training programme for travel agents about the destination 'Time to go cuckoo' and requested that they have a look at the site.

Dietl shared that four of the most famous areas were Heidelberg, Tübingen, Baden-Baden and Konstanz. She reiterated that there are nine privately owned luxury hotels in



Yamina Sofo
Director – Sales & Marketing
German National Tourist Office

Southwest Germany; three in the northern area, five in Black Forest area and four in the Lake Constance area. She also mentioned the many excursions that one can enjoy from Southwest Germany. "It is an all year-round destination, especially popular in spring and summer due to the many activities and skiing and Christmas market in winter. It is best to spend at least



Natalie Dietl
Sales and Marketing Manager
State Tourist Board
Southwest Germany

one week to explore Southwest Germany," she added.

Unspoiled nature and highlands in Black Forest

Christian Gross, Head of Incoming/MICE – Hochschwarzwald Tourismus (Hochschwarzwald Tourismus GmbH – (Black Forest Highlands) was the next speaker to share about the naturally unique



Christian Gross
Head of Incoming/MICE –
Hochschwarzwald Tourismus
(Hochschwarzwald Tourismus GmbH –
(Black Forest Highlands)

destination that is both picturesque and breathtaking for every visitor. He explained about the many activities that can be enjoyed at the Black Forest Highlands include from canoeing to hiking or biking or just gliding from tree-tops, taking a boat cruise or a cable car to enjoy the spectacular view.

It is situated on an altitude of 700 to 1,000 metres above land with beautiful lakes and naturally unique landscapes. Bordering France and Switzerland and getting across in the famous 'deutsche bahn' (train) is a good way to get around. With the City-Ticket, the train journey does not finish at the station. It can be used on suburban trains, subways, buses and trams in the respective area of validity.

City of fashion

Angela Rieger, Sales & Tourism Manager – Outlets Metzingen, shared the perfect 'shopping destination' for the GCC travellers. She started off by describing the rich history from 1820 when the first textile factory opened and the significant entry of the tailor shop by 'Hugo Boss' in 1923, followed by the opening of its first factory sale in Metzingen in



Angela Rieger
Sales & Tourism Manager
Outlets Metzingen

1972 and starting off the destination as 'Outlet City Metzingen' in 1995 which today receives about 4 million visitors. Rieger stated that the 'City of Fashion' has the largest Hugo Boss outlet, which is over 5,000 square feet in size and every outlet is spacious as a special shopping paradise. She reiterated the VIP services available for the many clients from the GCC with special helicopter services, Muslim prayer rooms, halal food, shopping shuttles and the nearby historical area offers an additional excursion during the visit.

The destination has over 130 of the biggest fashion and home brands that go on very special rates from 30% to 70% in their flagship stores in the Outlet city. From Prada to Nike, the fashion arena houses all brands that entail the GCC lifestyle. All outlets are spacious with a very unique look and feel to the whole area. A new addition earlier this year has more brands in store with various dining options and among the upcoming areas would be a brand new beauty treatment area with some new properties such as signature Marriott collection that would come up within the next two or three years. 

Updates

“We are currently talking with OTAs and partners for Q4 and beginning of 2021 to promote Germany for our clients. All safety measures are being carried out in all areas, especially hospitality and attractions”

— Yamina Sofo

“It is an all year-round destination, especially popular in spring and summer due to the many activities and skiing and Christmas market in winter. It is best to spend at least one week to explore Southwest Germany”

— Natalie Dietl

“The many activities that can be enjoyed at the Black Forest Highlands include from canoeing to hiking or biking or just gliding from tree-tops, taking a boat cruise or a cable car to enjoy the spectacular view”

— Christian Gross

“Outlets Metzingen has over 130 of the biggest fashion and home brands that go on very special rates from 30% to 70% in their flagship stores in the Outlet city”

— Angela Rieger

UAE's highest restaurant in RAK

RAK Leisure, (RAKL), the lifestyle subsidiary of RAK Hospitality Holding (RAKHH), will launch 1484 by Puro on October 1, 2020. The highly anticipated restaurant located atop the Jais Adventure Peak is named for its height of 1,484 metres above sea level and is the UAE's highest restaurant offering.

 TT Bureau

Located next to the Jais Adventure Centre, 1484 by Puro offers guests magnificent views of the peaks and valleys of the Hajar mountains alongside a refreshingly delectable menu. Ideally positioned on the mountain-facing façade of the Jais Adventure Peak, an entire side of the venue consists of ceiling to floor glass windows that open up to uninterrupted views

of the serene landscape, framed by year-round sunny blue skies and breathtaking sunsets, where guests can marvel at the spectacle of warm evening hues and the far-reaching mountains beyond. The dining offering incorporates fresh locally sourced ingredients, expertly crafted into a series of dishes that promise to appeal to the diverse array of guests that make their way up to the Jais Adventure Peak. The restaurant is the latest venture by



Puro, an independent dining concept with two exist-

ing restaurants at Al Marjan Island and at the Jais Viewing Deck Park.

Alison Grinnell, CEO of RAK Hospitality Holding, shared, "Jebel Jais is one of the most popular landmarks in the Emirate of

Ras Al Khaimah, offering visitors a host of bucket-list adventures that guarantee memorable experiences. With the opening of 1484 by Puro at the Jebel Jais Welcome Center, visitors can now enjoy an all-encompassing experience at

the standalone destination that is the Jais Adventure Peak, home to thrilling adventure attractions such as the Jebel Jais Flight, Jais Sky Maze, and the Jais Sky Tour."

The venue will operate in line with the highest safety and hygiene measures, recommended by internationally recognised bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), as well as will adhere to federal directives. Stringent measures include a maximum seating capacity of 76 guests, sanitary equipment and the adoption of the necessary distancing measures. 🌅

With the opening of 1484 by Puro at the Jebel Jais Welcome Center, visitors can now enjoy an all-encompassing experience at the standalone destination that is the Jais Adventure Peak, home to thrilling adventure attractions such as the Jebel Jais Flight, Jais Sky Maze, and the Jais Sky Tour.

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Revitalising the hospitality industry

Senior executives from Viceroy, Jumeirah, Rosewood, Marriott International, and DAMAC highlighted the measures their companies are taking to ensure the safety of guests while continuing to provide superior guest experiences, at a webinar as part of its 'Back to Business' series.

In their opening remarks, the five panellists provided Business Council members and partners with important updates relating to key properties operating in the U.A.E. and the anticipated reopening of additional properties. Future operation plans in a post COVID-19 environment, including for recently opened properties, such as the Viceroy



Jonas Malheiro
Vice President Sales & Marketing for Europe & Americas, Jumeirah Group

Malheiro stated that Jumeirah's roots and DNA are embedded in the U.A.E. The signing of the Abraham Accord is a 'remarkable' development in the region. Jumeirah has been working to gain consumer confidence in returning to hotels. Its strategy has three pillars. The first pillar is – partnering with a certified health & safety lab that can help guests stay safe at Jumeirah. The Jumeirah Al Naseem hotel was the first to get the 'stay safe' seal. They now have seven properties with this stamp and others are on their way. The second pillar focuses on food and beverage industries as people still want to have these experiences. They created two pop-up restaurants, French Riviera and Sol at Burj Al Arab. These have seen huge demand with the local U.A.E. community. The third pillar is, revamping the value proposition. There is a huge demand from a niche market of wanting to have complete privacy in hotels. Keeping this in mind, they have upgraded and enhanced in-room amenities.

Updates

We are looking at good opportunities in the coming months with the signing of the Abraham Accord — **Jean Faivre**

The first pillar is – partnering with a certified health & safety lab that can help guests stay safe at Jumeirah. The second pillar focuses on food and beverage industries, while the third pillar is, revamping the value proposition — **Jonas Malheiro**

Rosewood Abu Dhabi has a Sunday to Thursday business component and on the weekend it becomes very much a staycation option — **Craig Senior**

These residential units never closed and continue to be on high occupancy, in fact they even saw an increase in occupancy — **Sandeep Walia**

The urban market has not been doing as well as resorts. Urban hotels are averaging a 30% occupancy. Many of these hotels have been buying this occupancy with a race to the bottom in terms of pricing — **Bill Walshe**



Jean Faivre
Senior Vice President – Hospitality
DAMAC Hotels & Resorts

Faivre stated that DAMAC has 1,300 units in Dubai. Last year, they opened the Paramount Hotel which consists of 1,200 residential units attached to it. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hit right after the ramp up of the hotel, however the hotel remained open given its business model of offering both residential and hotel properties. In the past few months, they have seen a strong influx of serviced apartment requests and occupancy in this business area. The Maison brand has clawed back since the start of the pandemic. However, it is not at the same rate but at 80% occupancy, thanks to local business. On the Paramount Hotel side, occupancy has not recovered, though they are seeing small signs of recovery. Speed to market is very important and they have taken up marketing activities to maintain some level of acceptable occupancy. They have been applying all rules and safety measures and trying to make customers feel as comfortable as possible. Responding to a query on whether they are actively scouting for additional hotel operators, he said, "We have signed an HMA with Rotana and are talking with many hotel operators about other opportunities. We are looking at expanding and developing our hospitality arm further. We are looking at good opportunities in the coming months with the signing of the Abraham Accord."

Washington D.C., were also discussed. The speakers underlined how they remain committed to delivering stellar customer service that has differentiated them from their peers. Hosted by the U.S. U.A.E. Business Council as part of its 'Back to Business' series moderated by **Danny Sebright**, President – U.S. - U.A.E. Business Council.



Sandeep Walia
Vice President U.A.E.
Marriott International

Walia feels blessed to be in the U.A.E. – one of the safest and cleanest countries. He stated that the U.A.E. is doing an excellent job in safeguarding the people living there and the biggest fact for him has been the speed of the response of the country, which has been more successful at curtailing the spread than in other countries. He added that Marriott has been taking a lot of initiatives and has opened 80% of their hotels in the U.A.E. Business comprises of four pillars – residents, staycationers, regional travellers and international travelers. Residential-based properties are a bit of a hedge in the group of hotels. These residential units never closed and continue to be on high occupancy, in fact they even saw an increase in occupancy. As for staycations, people didn't want to travel far but beach resorts got a lot of business as did desert properties. Food and beverage operations are important too – 40% of revenue comes from F&B, they still have seen some business here. Moving forward, they expect regional travel will start first, then international travel. In this regard, Oman will open up soon and Saudi has partly opened up. The 'young at heart' rather than just the young in age have been the first to be back in hotels. Some of the brands that cater to these populations (like the W) have seen more demand.

Senior reiterated their 'Commitment to Care' policy has been introduced globally and this policy is guided by the WHO and local health authorities. In terms of Abu Dhabi, they have created a wellness programme to entice visitors back to the retail outlet/leisure amenities of Al Maryah Island as well as the Rosewood property. Replying to a question on what differentiates Rosewood Abu Dhabi from other Abu Dhabi hotels, Senior said that during this pandemic the property has remained open. This is partly because there is a residential component as well as the hotel. Al Maryah is an up and coming location in Abu Dhabi, just minutes away from major attractions including the Louvre Museum and Saadiyat Island. When the property opened, Rosewood had the 'sense of place' angle – Rosewood is known for bringing local culture to all properties globally. Rosewood Abu Dhabi has a Sunday to Thursday business component and on the weekend it becomes very much a staycation option from a leisure aspect for visitors from both Dubai and Abu Dhabi.



Craig Senior
Director of Global Sales
for Middle East & Africa,
Rosewood Hotel Group



Bill Walshe
CEO
Viceroy Hotel Group

Walshe stated that some properties have been hit harder than others. Hotels dependent on large business conventions have been incredibly hard hit. In other cases, drive-to markets that have open spaces – like at a resort in Snowmass – have had a decent summer. There are different stories in different locations. He added that the pandemic had an immediate impact and the role of hospitality leaders is to stabilise the situation as much as possible. This involves putting processes and protocols in place for guests to feel comfortable to return."

Walshe shared that the urban market has not been doing as well as resorts. Urban hotels are averaging a 30% occupancy. Many of these hotels have been buying this occupancy with a race to the bottom in terms of pricing. He doesn't agree that this is the right thing to do – it should be more about courage than cost. The younger guest is a bit more courageous – sometimes this bumps up against a line in which hoteliers have to ensure that more conservative guests feel safe as well. Walshe says he has to run de-escalation training to defuse situations when guests may be refusing to wear masks – he never thought he'd have to do this.

Sofitel Dubai JBR reopens

After a six-month period of transformation, Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach welcomes its visitors back to their property to discover what they have in store for you and to indulge in French luxury and Arabian hospitality throughout your stay.

TT Bureau

The Walk, Dubai: Sofitel Jumeirah Beach, Dubai, is set under an infinite summer sky located in the très chic part of town – The Walk, the promenade at the beachfront leisure destination, 'The Beach'. Here the holiday spirit is always in fashion and the days are eternally long. Sofitel Dubai

Jumeirah Beach welcomes all guests to where the land meets the azure waters of the Arabian Sea, as they reopen after a six-month long transformation.

The hotel lobby showcasing state-of-the-art architecture is waiting to welcome guests. The hotel is contemporary yet warm and welcoming, adorned with blue and brown ac-

cents throughout. The design of the brand new lobby consists of beige and blue marble tile décor; the beige tiles reminding guests of Dubai's desert sands, while flashes of blue marble evoke gemstones found in the Arabian Gulf.

The retail avenue

The hotel has created an enhanced retail experience with elegant arches and facades to bring the French style luxury and Mediterranean chic to the lobby. This is in keeping with the atmosphere of the 'The Walk', the cornucopia of international restaurants, the heart of fashion retail



For more information about their staycation offers, please visit:

<https://www.sofitel-dubai-jumeirahbeach.com/offers/summer-staycation-uae-residents-offer/>

and beachside boulevard for strolling.

Guest safety

For Sofitel Jumeirah Beach Residence, knowing how to care for their guests and reassure guests that they will receive a safe welcome in their hotels is a part of their DNA. To ensure all guests remain safe during their stay, they have implemented new standards to ensure social distancing measures, throughout the

hotel, specifically in hotel public areas as per Accor ALL Safety guidelines.

UAE residents' staycation offers

Located in the beautiful Jumeirah Beach Residence, less than five minutes from Dubai Marina, the Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach offers exciting staycation offers to UAE residents. Sofitel welcomes all residents to #LiveTheFrenchWay through the art

of indulging with their UAE resident staycation offer starting from AED 400 with complimentary breakfast and 25% discount on other food and beverage outlets. Whether you fancy reclining at their pool, working out at Sofitel Fitness – their leisure facility with complementary sauna and steam room access along with a health club, or indulging in a relaxing massage at European Spa, everything you need is right where you are. 🌞

Sofitel welcomes all residents to #LiveTheFrenchWay through the art of indulging with their UAE resident staycation offer starting from AED 400 with complimentary breakfast and 25% discount on other food and beverage outlets.

STATISTICS

Domestic tourism outpaces int'l

ForwardKeys has conducted recent studies of July flight data and airport traveller volumes that reveal the world is splintered into two spheres – increasing domestic tourism and the rising importance of lesser-known airports.

The most resilient airports by volumes in July

When examining the regional airports worldwide to determine the busiest airports according to departing traveller volumes – Dallas (USA), Chengdu (China), Moscow Domodedovo (Russia) and Sharjah (UAE), despite being in the minus, are still ahead of the pack of other major airport hubs. The one region to watch in terms of recovery appears to be APAC with the region down by 54.3% in bookings compared to the MENA region, which has been hit the hardest at -79%. It's possible that this is due to the passenger numbers depending so much on international travellers.

Top 5 Busiest Airports by departing traveller volumes per Region (July)

AMERICAS -64%			Europe -73%		
Departure airport	% YoY	%Share	Departure airport	% YoY	%Share
Atlanta (ATL)	-59%	5.4%	Paris Charles De Gaulle (CDG)	-69%	
Dallas Fort Worth (DFW)	-46%	5.0%	Moscow Domodedovo (DME)	-32%	
Denver (DEN)	-47%	4.6%	Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS)	-71%	
Chicago O'Hare (ORD)	-65%	3.6%	Madrid (MAD)	-74%	
Los Angeles (LAX)	-71%	3.2%	Moscow Sheremetyevo (SVO)	-72%	
Asia Pacific -54%			Middle East & Africa -79%		
Departure airport	% YoY	%Share	Departure airport	% YoY	%Share
Chengdu (CTU)	-12%	3.6%	Dubai (DXB)	-87%	
Guangzhou (CAN)	-35%	3.5%	Doha (DOH)	-72%	
Shenzhen (SZX)	-13%	3.4%	Sharjah (SHJ)	-25%	
Shanghai Pudong (PVG)	-48%	3.0%	Muscat Seeb (MCT)	-40%	
Kunming (KMG)	-20%	2.9%	Riyadh (RUH)	-80%	

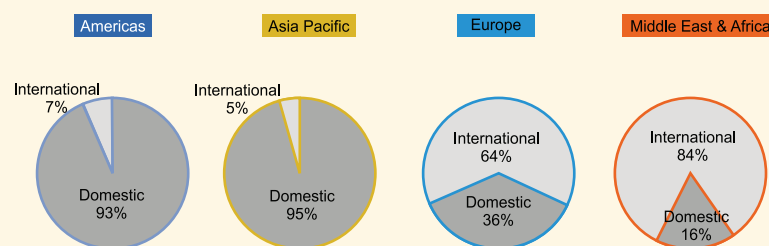
Travellers originating or continuing their trip at the specific location/airport between 1 – 31 July 2020 versus same period in 2019

Source: ForwardKeys Travellers Statistics

The growth of domestic travel during COVID-19

In North America, domestic travel accounted for around 93% vs 77% July 2019 of total travel within the region for that month. Dallas led the pack as the busiest airport this year, but Denver came in a close second. To clarify the US trends, the busiest in terms of volumes was Atlanta but Dallas performed better in July as it registered the lowest YoY amongst the listed top five, followed by Denver. Within the APAC, where also domestic travel registered around 95% of total travel (vs 66% July 2019), Chinese travellers contributed 68% of total air travel in the region. Non-tier 1 Chinese city airport Chengdu (CTU) proved to be the most resilient among top five departing airports in the region, followed by Shenzhen (SZX). They registered a year-on-year decline of around -12%, far below the regional average for July (-54%). Not surprisingly, Europe showed a different landscape with international traffic accounting for around 2/3 of total air travel (64% vs 79% July 2019). Even more so for the Middle East and African region, where international departures registered 84% of total departures in the region.

Domestic vs International travel per Region



Travellers originating or continuing their trip at the specific location/airport between 1 – 31 July 2020 versus same period in 2019

Source: ForwardKeys Travellers Statistics

Travel impact for the ME & Africa

SOJERN : The Middle East and Africa, like the rest of the world, is carefully monitoring the opening of its borders to residents and tourists, and working through phasing the lifting of lockdown restrictions. As expected, this is having a noticeable impact on travel intent and confidence to and from the region. Let's look at how some of the key destinations are being impacted by these developments.

How and where are restrictions being lifted?

Over the last month the Seychelles and Reunion Islands have reopened, while the popular honeymoon destination of Mauritius remains closed, and is expected to open in October. In August, Saudi opened land entry for its citizens from the UAE,

Bahrain and Kuwait, with Kuwait also reopening its borders to residents. Abu Dhabi residents no longer require ICA approval to return, but tourists cannot yet enter the emirate. Qatar has moved to Phase 3 of restrictions which now allows for inbound flights from low-risk countries, and increased capacity in restaurants and malls,

it is aiming for Phase 4 in September. Much like other countries and regions globally, the relaxing of travel restrictions, reopening of local activities such as restaurants and shops, and the lifting of quarantine periods on entry for those whose COVID-19 test is negative, will all directly influence upcoming travel decisions.

Travel demand to the UAE fluctuates

With the region remaining cautious of inbound international travel, we see initial signs of recovery from domestic travel. However, as the UAE prepares to tackle localised outbreaks amid warnings of a 'second wave', travel searches and bookings are likely to suffer.

Domestic hotel searches in the UAE have been relatively volatile over the last month, with some peaks and drops notably around the weeks commencing on August 3 and August 24. These variations in volumes likely reflect local staycation offers running over different timeframes, and the summer holidays coming to an end. However, we are now

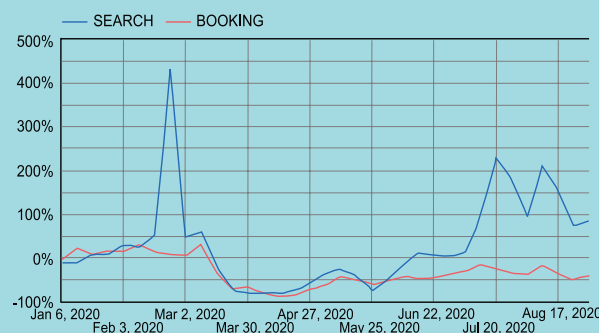
seeing local searches up-tick again at 85% year-over-year (YoY), while traveller confidence has remained relatively flat, now at -39% YoY. When looking at international travel we have started to see an overall increase for hotel searches in the UAE, the highest since the COVID-19 pandemic took a hold in the region at -61% YoY.

Year-Over-Year Hotel Searches and Bookings to the UAE - Domestic vs International Origin

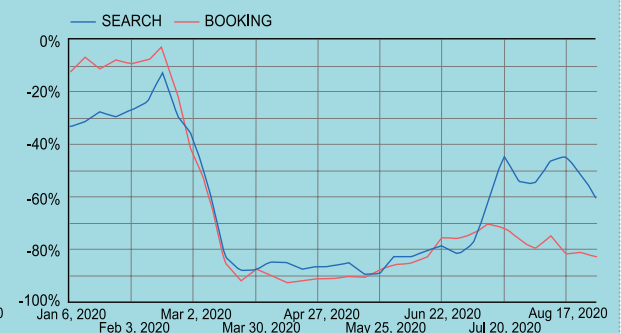
Positive signs of recovery for the Middle East and Africa

We continue to see positive signs of recovery across the region on our Sojern Real Time COVID-19 Travel Dashboard. By indexing all volumes back to March 30 (the beginning of the travel recovery from the pandemic) there is a mutual upward trend in hotel search volumes across the Middle East and Africa. The UAE and Bahrain in particular saw a sudden increase in travel intent from July 6, with Kuwait searches growing more steadily, reaching similar levels by August 24, overtaking search volume increases to the UAE.

Searches YoY% and Bookings YoY% - Domestic



Searches YoY% and Bookings YoY% - International

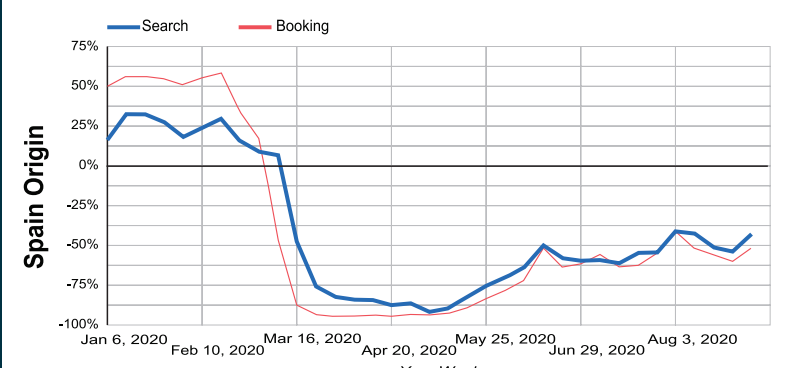
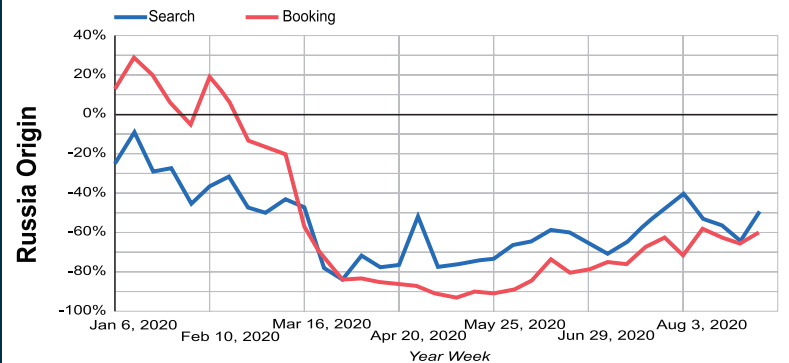
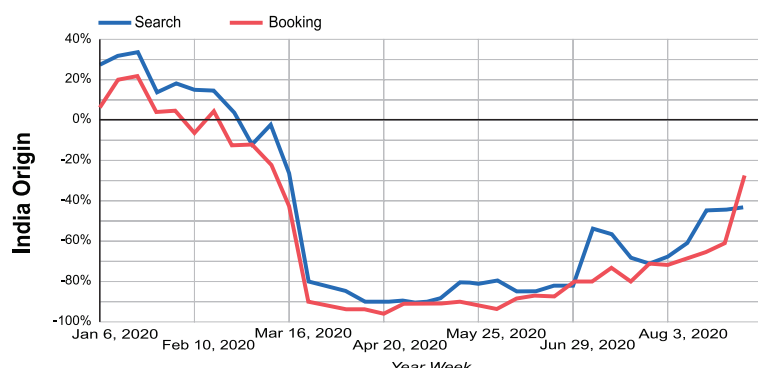
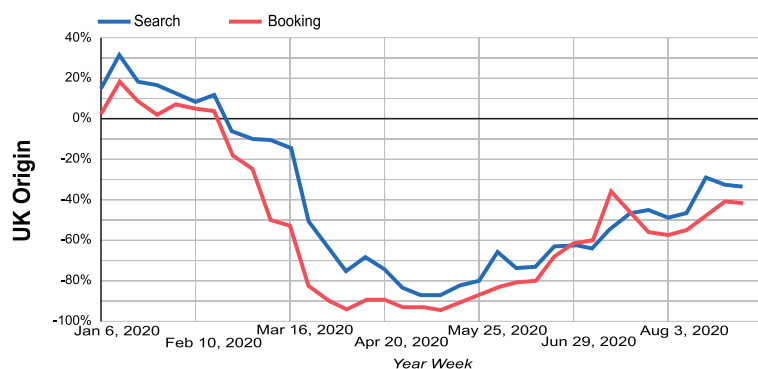


Year-Over-Year Global Outbound Flight Searches and Bookings

Russia and India see strong upticks in travel searches to Dubai and the UAE

When broken down by the Emirates (Abu Dhabi and Dubai), although Abu Dhabi remains closed off to tourists at the moment with only residents allowed to return, there has been a strong increase in

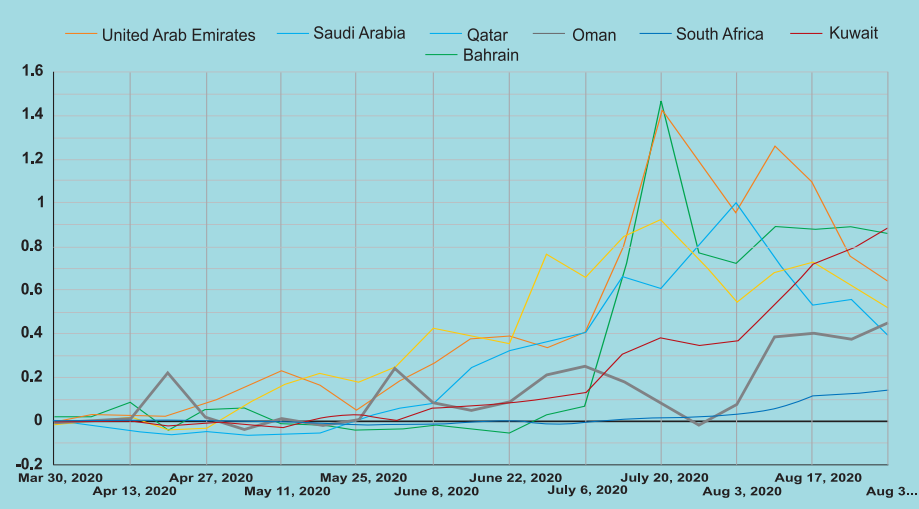
searches to travel to Dubai and to the UAE overall, particularly from Russia and India. This not only highlights how traveller behaviour reflects local restrictions such as entry to Abu Dhabi, but also the demand for international travellers that is building up.



Year-to-Date Hotel Searches to the Middle East and Africa – Indexed to March 30, 2020

Travel interest rising globally

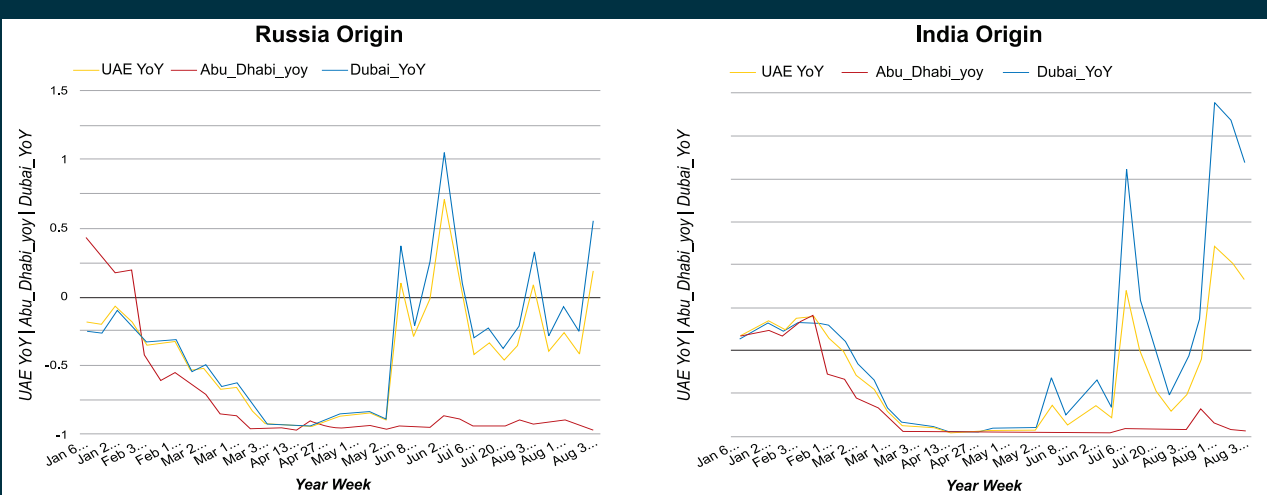
Global travel intent continues to regain momentum as travellers feel more confident in the safety precautions being taken to reduce the spread of the virus. For example, as hotels, attractions, and airlines continue to implement social distancing and new sanitising procedures, and governments provide updates on which destinations are ‘safe’ for travel, larger volumes of travellers feel comfortable in planning their next trip. Countries such as the UK, India, Russia, and Spain have displayed a steady increase in outbound flight searches and bookings since April. Taking the UK as an example, outbound flight searches are now only 33% below 2019 levels, showing a huge growth in travel intent from April where volumes were almost 90% below searches at the same time in 2019. This general pattern of growing travel intent and confidence goes a long way to explaining the strong increase in hotel searches we have seen into the UAE. This suggests that despite the dynamic conditions and changes in government rules and restrictions, travellers are regaining confidence in their ability to travel and therefore continue to dream of their next holiday destination.



Year-Over-Year Flight Searches to the UAE

Staycation plans continue to lead the way for travel in 2020

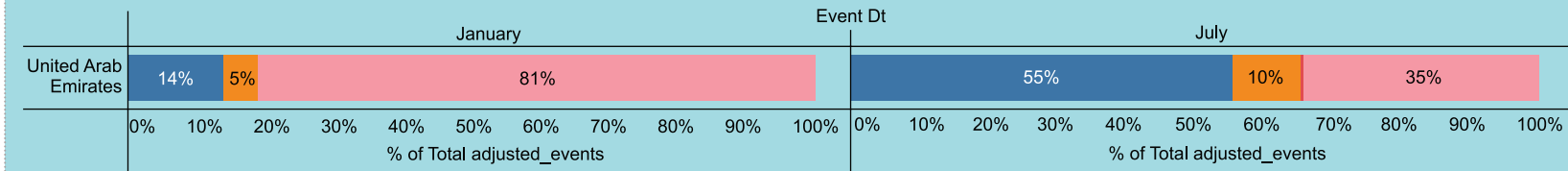
Despite the spikes and dips in travel intent and confidence that were observed over August, it is clear that the traveller mindset continues to be local first. When comparing the distance from which a traveller is searching from based on their origin, between January 2020 and July 2020 there has been a 41% increase in travellers searching and booking hotels within a 0-30 mile radius of their destination to the UAE.



Hotel Search and Booking Volumes to the UAE – Distance From Origin



Distance - Country Level Comparisns across Months



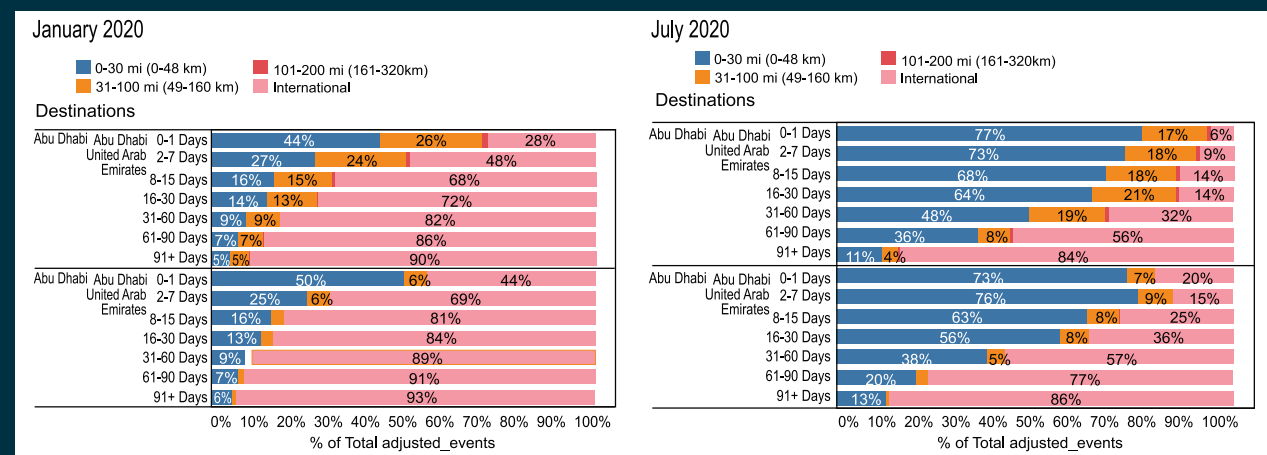
And while the traveller mindset in the UAE tends to lend itself to searching and booking within a relatively short window time between 0-7 days, the lead time to distance of hotels trend is even more profound when comparing January to July.

There have been noticeable increases in the 0-1 day booking window from 44% in January 2020 up to almost 80% in July 2020.

Hotel Search and Booking Volumes to the UAE – Lead Time Relative to Distance From Origin

The Middle East and Africa, like most other regions, are showing positive signs of recovery domestically, as well as internationally.

Although travel intent and confidence is growing, as travel restrictions and lockdowns continue to be implemented, there is understandably some volatility in traveller confidence. Russia and India are some of the key markets showing strong upticks in travel intent to the UAE, and for domestic trips, search and booking lead times are getting increasingly shorter.



Domestic travel picking up

Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) took place in a brand new format, addressing how the hotel industry can 'Transform Tomorrow.' As the hosts of the second day of AHIC at Rixos Premium JBR property, **Mark Willis**, CEO Middle East & Africa at Accor, shared his views about the event and the industry.

 Shehara Rizly

Q In terms of investment, what are your thoughts on the UAE, KSA and Middle East hospitality investment market as a whole?

KSA remains a very solid market for investment, which is in alignment with the 2030 vision. There is a very big push taking place for Giga projects and Accor is involved in discussions regarding these potential projects for our brands.

In the UAE, we see a trend for opportunities which are geared towards rebranding and conversions of existing brands,

with a select number of new developments coming up.

These new developments are very unique in terms of proposition, which allows us to look at the possibility of bringing some of our existing brands into the market which are new for the region, as well as look into new concepts which may not be available in the market yet. For Egypt, we can still see good momentum between new

developments and re-branding opportunities.

Q As a hotel investor management company what are the main challenges faced during the crisis and what areas is your business currently focusing on?

For now, in terms of development opportunities, for the Middle East we are focusing on takeovers and conversions, while looking for new developments that will

allow us to bring in new products and brands into the market that will not compete with the existing offerings. These include leisure destinations, all-inclusive concepts and lifestyle geared brands.

Q When do you think revenue will start kicking in for investors in the industry? Will it be 2021/2022?

We see the recovery for the region coming back in three phases in the next 18-24 months.

Phase 1 will focus on local tourism until border restrictions are lifted and travel requirements are eased. This will be followed by

Phase 2 which will include regional short-haul travel within the Middle East region. The last Phase will be the third one, which will take place once long-haul travel sees less restrictions as well as travel requirements being lowered.

Q Will Q4 be better for the industry? If so, please explain.

We see positive signs in the market, especially in the UAE, since the borders were reopened and travel restrictions were eased. During the summer months we have seen positive demand from short-haul regional markets as well as some long-haul inter-



Mark Willis
CEO Middle East & Africa
Accor

national markets such as the UK and France. For other countries in the region such as Morocco, KSA and Egypt, even though it is all driven by the local market, we still see positive recovery signs through staycations. 🌅

“ For the ME we are focusing on takeovers and conversions, while looking for new developments that will allow us to bring in new products and brands into the market ”

Grand Millennium Tabuk opens

Prince Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, The Governor of Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, inaugurated in the university city of the University of Tabuk the Grand Millennium Tabuk Hotel of the Higher Education Fund, in the presence of the Minister of Education and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the University Higher Education Fund, **Dr. Hamad Al Sheikh**.

 TT Bureau

The hotel is managed by Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA, one of the fastest-growing hotel management companies in the region, and is conveniently located on the Doha Road

close to Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Airport. Guests can sink into the nostalgic era by choosing from a sprawling list of 218 luxury rooms, suites and a Royal Suite spread across six lavish floors of the hotel, with the fascinating view of Tabuk City, Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia. Every room is designed keeping in mind the heritage of the Hejaz Railway Station exploding from every inch, especially the photographs and wall-art that reflect the trains of the bygone era.

The hotel outlets include



Al Maksoura (The cabin) All-day dining restaurant, Juzurna Arabesque restaurant, Al Multaqa (The gathering place) Lobby

Café and Al Manzar Pool Lounge in addition to a grand ballroom for weddings and events with a total space of 1,082 sqm

with a total capacity up to 800 people, five meeting rooms with a total meeting space of 283 sqm equipped with state-of-the-art modern technology and a pre-function/welcome area with a total space of 536 sqm. The hotel also includes a large recreation area with outdoor and indoor swimming pools for adults and kids. 🌅



Every room is designed keeping in mind the heritage of the Hejaz Railway Station exploding from every inch, especially the photographs and wall-art that reflect the trains of the bygone era.

Innovation key to revival

The travel industry has seen its share of setbacks and managed to bounce back quickly from each disaster. The global pandemic has had an unparalleled and devastating impact on the aviation industry with airlines grounding their entire fleets for months, says **Maher Koubaa**, Amadeus Executive Vice President Airlines, Middle East, Africa and Turkey.

Over 60 per cent of flights were cancelled worldwide, with bookings in April 2020 alone dropping a staggering 95 per cent compared to the same month in the previous year, and 75 million jobs are said to be at risk. Yet there is light at the end of the tunnel as some countries have started to open their borders and air travel is tentatively resuming.

Looking to the future, we foresee a number of potential trends for the aviation industry.

Focus on delivering a frictionless traveller experience
Through innovative solu-

tions like the Altéa Passenger Service System (PSS), customer preferences can be addressed at every stage of the reservation process, as airlines can use secure customer data to customise services.

Improve airline systems to allow for agility

Key to agility is the seamless integration between airline systems from inventory to reservation, departure con-

trol, and offer management; all core PSS capabilities.

Collaboration and consolidation in aviation

It is likely that consolidation and concentration will lead to a major industry reshaping in all regions. We also anticipate a number of significant changes in the aviation landscape with new codeshare and interline agreements between different parties.

“Through innovative solutions like the Altéa Passenger Service System (PSS), customer preferences can be addressed at every stage of the reservation process, as airlines can use secure customer data to customise services”

Updates

“The newest airline to have adopted the Altéa suite, TAAG Angola Airlines, the flag carrier of the Republic of Angola, recently said it is excited to be able to streamline its operations thanks to Amadeus’ technology. “In these times of uncertainty, we are reassured by dependable partners like Amadeus, that we can rely on to take our airline to its next stage of growth. We look forward to getting back to flying and continuing our expansion drive in the region and internationally with Amadeus at our side.”

— **Dr Rui Carreira**
Chief Executive Officer for
TAAG Angola Airlines

Explore smart revenue models

Amadeus has incorporated Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning algorithms into its revenue

management solutions. Although these solutions often rely on historical data to understand behaviours, Altéa has shown great resilience in the current

market context, building models where there is no precedent upon which to rely. Altéa also detects the patterns of recovery at different market, country and route levels, and these patterns help airlines make quick, efficient, and smart revenue management business decisions.



Maher Koubaa
Amadeus Executive Vice President
Airlines, Middle East, Africa and Turkey

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

Domestic travel picking up

Domestic market has become more important today, as people are compelled not to travel as most borders are yet to open. **Rajitha Rajapakse**, Head of Sales & Marketing at Explore the Wonders, shares with us some insights on the real deal behind the scene.

Shehara Rizly

What type of travel will be more popular; inbound or outbound?

Overall, people will prefer to engage more in domestic travel / staycations as there are many great deals and value for money offers. This is not only in the UAE as we have seen this pattern in many countries. This is the reason why EU opened its borders first for the EU nationals. Having said that, travellers without kids have opt-

“Villas with private pools have become very popular as compared to traditional hotels over the last two months. There is immense demand for this type of accommodation”

ed for international travel too provided the procedures are not challenging. As a result, we have seen a good trend towards Maldives, which was one of the first destinations to open its doors to UAE nationals / residents.

What are the reasons for domestic tourism to be more popular?

I won't say that staycations are popular right now but as people have no other choice, they are forced to take them, especially UAE nationals as

everyone was indoors for more than five to six months, which is not normal at all for everyone. As a product, villas with private pools have become very popular as compared to traditional hotels over the last two months. There is immense demand for this type of accommodation.

Will international travel pick up by end of the year or next year?

International travel will certainly take more time to pick up. This is because many expatriates have lost their jobs. Usually each family in the UAE (expatriates) tend to take at least one holiday annually and many take more than one. This is how budget destinations

such as Georgia and Armenia became popular over the last two to three years. Unfortunately, this trend will not regain its momentum until the middle and lower middle-class income group becomes stronger.

What will be the purpose of travel?

From what we see, travel will be purely for leisure. The frequency of travel will reduce. This is because people will tend to save more than usual due to the uncertainty of their jobs.

How will travellers requirements change?

While confidence will be the main aspect, the travel-

lers will be more concerned about the correct procedures for PCR tests when travelling to a destination and while returning to the UAE. Many are confused on the returning procedures as some of the requirements keep changing on daily basis.

What will their take be on hotels and attractions? Will they still travel with their kids?

We haven't received any international travel request for any families. However, clients were confident to take staycations with kids.

Will there be changes in luxury travel?



Rajitha Rajapakse
Head of Sales & Marketing at
Explore the Wonders

More and more people are opting for luxury travel / luxury hotels as they feel safer with the quality of these products and the procedures they follow as compared to budget hotels. Also, great deals are being offered for these high-end hotels, hence people are availing this opportunity.

Restarting business events

As the city gathers momentum with the resumption of conferences, meetings and exhibitions, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) has formed a new Business Events Stakeholders Committee, reinforcing its commitment to engaging with the industry and re-establishing its place at the heart of Dubai's economic growth and development as a knowledge hub.

TT Bureau

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai Tourism, chaired the committee's inaugural meeting on September 14 at Dubai World Trade Centre, updating members on the progress in reactivating the sector in the aftermath of the global COVID-19 pandemic and facilitating discussions around opportunities and challenges.

Comprising key industry stakeholders, the committee, which will meet regularly throughout the year, provides a platform for two-way dialogue around the continuous strategic and operational development of Dubai's competitive position as a host city for international business events. Among the participants in the inaugural session were senior officials from airlines, venues, hotels, destination management companies (DMCs) and professional congress organisers (PCOs). Organisations represented included Emirates, Dubai World



HE Helal Saeed Almarri addresses the Business Events Stakeholder Committee 2

“We have been working closely with industry stakeholders to ensure a framework is in place to resume business events that can be best-in-class while at the same time prioritising the health and safety of all participants”

— His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri

Trade Centre, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, Alpha Destination Management, MCI Middle East and Expo 2020 Dubai.

Enabled by clear guidelines from Dubai Tourism and an aligned approach taken by stakeholders across the public and private sectors, the industry is looking to rapidly and safely rescale, with local business events resuming from September

15 and international business events set to return from October 1. Upcoming events in the city include The Airport Show (October 26-28), Annual Radiology Meeting (November 1-3) and Cityscape's 2020 Real Estate Summit (November 16-17).

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai Tourism, said, “Guided by the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and the follow-up of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council, Dubai has steadily reopened key economic sectors, building on the support that was provided throughout the pandemic and the measures put in place to minimise its impact. In line with this, we have been working

closely with industry stakeholders to ensure a framework is in place to resume business events that can be best-in-class while at the same time prioritising the health and safety of all participants.”

“The formation of this committee underlines the collaborative approach we have sought to take across all our activities and in relation to all the tourism sub-sectors and reinforces our commitment to supporting our stakeholders and ensuring Dubai leads the global post-pandemic recovery. Business events play a critical role in driving economic development and knowledge growth in Dubai and, with the city's status as the Middle East's undisputed hub for conferences, exhibitions and meetings, the resumption of activity here will have an impact on the wider region,” he added.

Underpinning the resumption of business events this month are guidelines for organisers and venues that prioritise the health and safety of all parties involved, while at the same time facilitating the meetings, conversations, networking and learning opportunities that attendees seek. These complement the measures already in place across other touch points across the city, including airports, hotels, attractions and dining establishments that have already paved the way for the resumption of tourism since July 7.

Linda Lewis, Vice President of Global Sales Middle East and Asia Pacific at Jumeirah Group, stated, “It is an honour to



His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri
Director General of Dubai Tourism
Southwest Germany



Samir Hamadeh
General Manager
Alpha Destination Management

“Conducting this face-to-face event is in itself a message to the world that Dubai is on track for recovery. I believe the initiatives we will all implement, can help speed up the recovery and can help us be the first winners”

— Samir Hamadeh

participate in the inaugural meeting of the Business Events Stakeholders Committee. Jumeirah Group welcomes the formation of such an entity, as it reinforces the immense support that Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing provides to our industry through a diverse calendar of business events. Collaborative efforts of this scale and nature will undoubtedly support the ongoing recovery of the hospitality industry, as a platform to meet new industry players, reconnect with peers, and share insights and best practices to ensure we move forward as strongly as possible.”

Ajay Bhojwani, Managing Director, MCI Middle East, shared, “As the economy continues to open, allowing the MICE and live events sector to resume activities and start holding events again, it is imperative that it is done in the best possible manner with compete health and safety regulations in place and followed by every single stakeholder in the industry. Hence, this initiative of having one voice and bringing all

stakeholders together by Dubai Business Events is timely and perfect to ensure all key players are aligned and working together to build confidence that events can be run in a smooth manner. The tourism and MICE sector is an integral contributor to the economy of Dubai and to ensure this continues to grow and move forward, an aligned vision and working collectively will be a major ingredient for success as we all strive to rebuild the sector.”

Samir Hamadeh, General Manager, Alpha Destination Management, said, “I'd like to thank Dubai Business Events for this initiative and for gathering these industry professionals to promote Dubai as a safe destination that is ready to welcome meetings and business events. Conducting this face-to-face event is in itself a message to the world that Dubai is on track for recovery. We all have to start somewhere, and I believe the discussions held today and the initiatives we will all implement, can help speed up the recovery and can help us be the first winners.”

“Collaborative efforts of this scale and nature will undoubtedly support the ongoing recovery of the hospitality industry, as a platform to meet new industry players, reconnect with peers, and share insights”

— Linda Lewis

“The tourism and MICE sector is an integral contributor to the economy of Dubai and to ensure this continues to move forward, an aligned vision and working collectively will be a major ingredient for success”

— Ajay Bhojwani

RAK promotes domestic tourism

RAKTDA hosted a two-day re-familiarisation experience for its valued partners in the UAE. Participants included Managing Directors and CEOs from leading travel agencies including BCD Travel Dubai, Al Naboodah Travel & Tourism Agencies, Sharaf Travel & Tourism Group, Trans Arabian, Cozmo Travel, Al Tayer Travel, Deira Travel and IBYTA.

 TT Bureau

The curated two-day itinerary was aimed at providing greater insights into Ras Al Khaimah from a domestic travel perspective, given its combination of cultural offerings alongside natural and sprawling landscape, including 64 km of stunning beachfront and striking mountain range with the UAE's highest peak – Jebel Jais. Participants in the programme experienced renowned hos-



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pitality with global brands including Rixos Hotels as well as dinner at the Ritz Carlton Al Wadi. They also received a preview of 1484, the highest restaurant in the region located atop Jebel Jais, which is set to formally open on October 1, 2020.

While travel in 2020 has come to a virtual standstill, Ras Al Khaimah is witnessing the green shoots of recovery driven through many of its initiatives including becoming the first safe city worldwide to be certified by global risk management leader Bureau Veritas as well as the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). By re-

cultivating domestic travel and offering value added opportunities to local tourists, the destination wrapped up its 12-week long shortcation summer campaign to the success of over 15,000 rooms nights which helped catapult Ras Al Khaimah as the leading destination year-to-date in RevPAR across the UAE and the GCC. 🌅



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Park Inn by Radisson in Jeddah

Park Inn by Radisson, the upper midscale hotel brand that delivers stress-free experiences has announced the opening of its first hotel in Jeddah. The newest addition brings the Group's portfolio to over 45 hotels, resorts and serviced apartments in operation and under development, accelerating Radisson Hotel Group's expansion across the country.

 TT Bureau

A gateway to the holy city of Makkah, Jeddah attracts travellers from across the globe as a centre for international business and a canvas for public art. Located within close proximity of King Abdulaziz International Airport, the Park Inn by Radisson Jeddah Madinah Road is about 25 km from the heart of the city,

making it an ideal location for both business and leisure travellers.

In addition to celebrating the opening of its latest addition to its growing portfolio in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Radisson Hotel Group is also marking another milestone in the Group's commitment to balanced leadership, and its drive to improve diversity and inclusion within its business.

Maram Kokandi, General Manager of the Park Inn by Radisson Jeddah Madinah Road made history, with her appointment as the world's first female Saudi General Manager in the global hospitality industry.

Tim Cordon, Area Senior Vice President, Middle East & Africa, Radisson Hotel Group, said, "We are delighted to open our first Park Inn by Radisson in the city of Jeddah. Radisson Hotel Group aims to continue expanding its position in the Saudi market with modernised and exceptional hotel experiences across leisure, dining, fitness, wellness and sustainability. Our

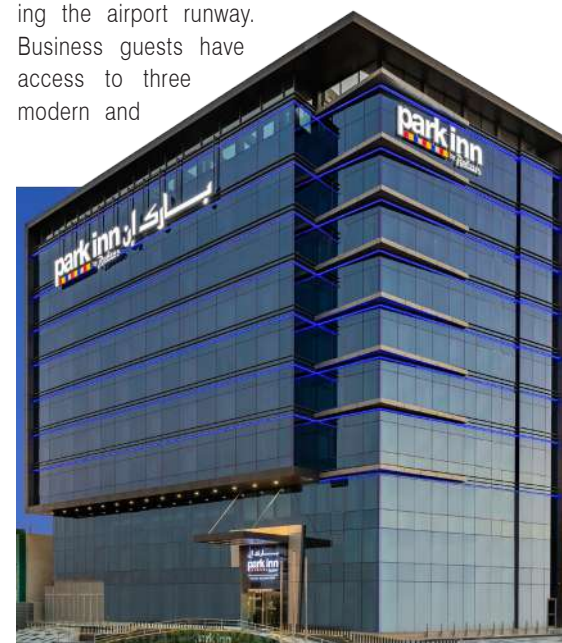
aim is to become the go-to hotelier for local guests and business travellers whilst empowering the Saudi working population simultaneously."

Park Inn by Radisson Jeddah Madinah Road offers vibrant environments with a touch of colour, contemporary design and friendly personalised service. The hotel consists of 84 contemporary rooms and suites where guests can rejuvenate in a relaxing environment.

Guests can fuel their culinary cravings at one of the hotel's casual dining spaces. Those seeking to relax and recharge can enjoy the spa and fitness

centre, with separate areas for men and women, or head up to the runway lounge for a dip in the pool while overlooking the airport runway. Business guests have access to three modern and

spacious meeting rooms which offer free high-speed Wi-Fi and audiovisual equipment. 🌅



“Located within close proximity of King Abdulaziz International Airport, the Park Inn by Radisson Jeddah Madinah Road is about 25 km from the heart of the city, making it an ideal location for both business and leisure travellers”

SOJERN Corporate Office

Sojern has appointed **Aman Kothari** as Chief Financial Officer. In his new role, Kothari will oversee all aspects of finance, including financial planning and analysis, accounting, tax, and treasury. Bringing nearly three decades of finance experience to the role, he will be tasked with helping the company execute on its mission to become the number one direct demand generator for hotels, attractions and destinations worldwide. Prior to Sojern, Kothari served in executive finance roles at both private and public companies. At Auction.com, he served as CFO. Before Auction.com, Kothari was Senior VP, Global Controller and Chief Accounting Officer at Yahoo.



W DUBAI – THE PALM Dubai

W Dubai – The Palm announced the appointment of **Peter Katusak - Huzsvar** as General Manager. In his new role, Huzsvar will oversee all aspects of the 349-bedroom hotel, including destination restaurants. A main disruptor in the hospitality industry, he embodies the vibrant and playful elements of the W brand, having previously held roles with the 'luxury rebel' brand across three continents. Huzsvar was the pre-opening General Manager for W Dubai, Al Habtoor City in 2015. Huzsvar rejoins the company after two years as the General Manager of Accor's luxury lifestyle hotel SO/VIENNA.



RAMADA DOWNTOWN Dubai

Ramada by Wyndham Downtown Dubai announced the appointment of **Moustafa Abdelfattah** as its new Director of Sales and Marketing. He will also take on the role of Group Director of Sales for the GCC market of R Hotels. Abdelfattah brings in more than 10 years of hospitality experience. In his new position, he will lead the sales and marketing team in developing and implementing new strategies and campaigns, generating new business, and strengthening the property's existing partnerships. As Cluster Director of Sales for R Hotels, he will be responsible for increasing the GCC market share of the group's properties.



NOVOTEL & IBIS WORLD TRADE CENTRE AND IBIS ONE CENTRAL Dubai

Anoop Dhondoo joins as Cluster General Manager for Novotel, Ibis World Trade Center and Ibis One Central. He began his career in 1998 in various front and back of house roles in luxury hotels in Mauritius & the UK. In 2012, he took on the mantle of General Manager at Ibis Jakarta Tamarin. The Middle East welcomed him in 2019 as a Complex Hotel Manager for Ibis World Trade Centre and Ibis One Central.



IHG Riyadh

To lead IHG's business in Saudi Arabia, **Bastien Blanc** has been appointed as Managing Director, KSA and Bahrain. In his current role with IHG, Blanc is responsible for leading the operations across IHG's portfolio of hotels in the Middle East and Africa, including KSA. In his new role, Blanc will be responsible for driving both growth and performance for IHG in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. With extensive experience of working in KSA, Blanc has been deeply ingrained into the market. He has also been leading IHG's Saudization efforts which he will continue to drive further in his new role. Blanc will continue to report to Pascal Gauvin, Managing Director, IMEA, IHG.



ARJAAN DUBAI MEDIA CITY AND CENTRO BARSHA Dubai

Rotana Hotel Management has appointed **Timur Ilgaz** as the Cluster General Manager for Arjaan Dubai Media City and Centro Barsha in Dubai. Ilgaz has been associated with Rotana for over 13 years. Ilgaz has managed and lead The Cove Rotana Resort, Al Ghurair Rayhaan and Arjaan by Rotana, pre-opening and operation of Amwaj Rotana in JBR and the successful renovation project of Jumeirah Rotana in Dubai. In his new position, Ilgaz will oversee the two properties, focusing on commercial growth and strategic directions.



RAMADA BY WYNDHAM HOTELS Ajman

R Hotels has appointed **Ravi Santiago** as Cluster General Manager of Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham Ajman, Ramada by Wyndham Beach Hotel Ajman, and Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche. He brings in over 25 years of expertise spanning various industries with 15 years in the hospitality sector. Santiago has been with the R Hotels group since 2009. Before taking the helm as Cluster General Manager he was the Group Financial Controller for the seven properties of R Hotels in the UAE. Santiago earned his MBA from University of Northampton, UK and also has a PGD in Business Administration from University of Wales, UK.



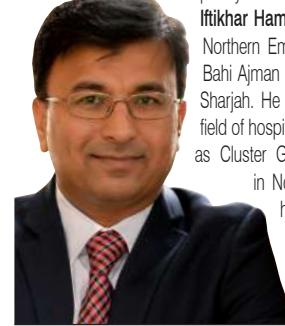
RADISSON BLU HOTEL Ajman

Eric Masalawala joins the Radisson Blu Hotel, Ajman as Director of Rooms with more than 13 years of hospitality experience in various roles. Masalawala started his career as Service Manager in 2007 at the iconic Radisson Hotel Dubai Deira Creek before joining the Ramada Jumeirah Hotel as Front Office Manager in 2012. In 2016, Masalawala accepted a new challenge as Front Office Manager and later Rooms Division Manager at the Hilton Abu Dhabi which was rebranded as Radisson Blu Hotel Abu Dhabi Corniche in 2019. His new appointment will be his third stint within the Radisson Hotel Group portfolio and he is excited to return back to the family.



BAHI AJMAN PALACE HOTEL AND CORAL BEACH RESORT SHARJAH Ajman and Sharjah

Hospitality Management Holding family has appointed **Iftikhar Hamdani** as the Area General Manager – Northern Emirates handling overall operations of Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel and Coral Beach Resort Sharjah. He brings 22 years of experience in the field of hospitality. Last year he completed 10 years as Cluster General Manager of three properties in Northern Emirates under R Hotels. He has revolutionised the industry with his commitment to carry out projects on environment, community and charity work.



Nofa Resort Riyadh opens doors



Located only 98 km from Riyadh's City, the Nofa Resort Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel is nestled in a mesmerising landscape of golden sand dunes. The resort features 57 secluded luxury villas and bungalows designed in an elegant African style, with premium amenities including a private swimming pool and garden.

"The Nofa Resort Riyadh, A Radisson Collection Hotel, is an iconic and exceptionally exclusive product which we previously operated as a private members-only resort. We have received numerous requests from individual guests wanting to experience the beauty of this Safari jewel in the Saudi desert and we are excited that the hotel is now publicly bookable and

accessible to everyone," said **Tim Cordon**, Area Senior Vice President, Middle East & Africa. "The international travel ban in Saudi Arabia has also been a driving force for the local demand with many searching for a peaceful sanctuary to escape to, while feeling completely free and safeguarded from the contraction and spread of COVID-19," he added.



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Tourism
BreakingNews



TRAVEL
TALK

DISCOVERING CENTURIES-OLD TREASURES

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority welcomes the announcement of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to include four sites in Ras Al Khaimah within its tentative list of Global Heritage Sites.

In addition to the Julfar, Shimal, Jazirah Al Hamra and Dhaya sites recognised by UNESCO, Ras Al Khaimah also offers guests exposure to its rich history, through observation of tribal traditions, and further extensive archaeological sites spanning 18 historic fortifications, castles and towers dating back to the bronze age.



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