

Scan & Share



TRAVTALK



TravelTalkMiddleEast.com

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| ■ SCTDA resumes desert tourism | 03 | ■ Refocus on corporate travel | 10 |
| ■ Re-Imagine travel to Singapore | 05 | ■ GCC key source market for Germany | 12 |
| ■ Virtual roadshow to promote Ireland | 09 | ■ SIA launches krisconnect programme for trade | 13 |

Media Partner



A positive beginning

Reopening borders between the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar will be one of the most positive beginnings ushered in the new year 2021.



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Nabodah Travel

“The reopening of land, air and sea borders between the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar is expected to see a surge in businesses between the nations. Dubai's inbound sector is likely to see an immediate

impact as Qatari tourists will begin to return to the emirate. Their spending power and affinity towards luxury properties is likely to underpin stronger demand levels in this segment of the market.”



Stewart Smith
Managing Director – Middle East & Africa, Sojern

“It's no doubt a positive development for the region. A few sectors and regional economies will benefit. We anticipate the opening to be beneficial for both business and leisure travel, particularly to the UAE. I believe in the short-term with COVID-19 restrictions, the increase will be limited, however mid-to-longer term, once vaccines are rolled out more comprehensively, we will see an increase in travel.”

Contd. on page 12 ►

STB roadshow on Feb 3

After a successful virtual roadshow in Aug 2020, the STB will conduct its second virtual roadshow on February 3, 2021 with 15 partners from 10am to 4pm UAE time.



Shehara Rizly

Beverly Au Yong, Area Director – Middle East, Singapore Tourism Board, shared, “Through the virtual trade roadshow, Singapore Tourism Board in the Middle East is offering an opportunity to Singapore stakeholders to share reimagined initiatives and offers with the regional trade partners. Singapore Tourism Board will continue



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director, Middle East
Singapore Tourism Board

to engage its travel trade partners to provide support through these challenging times. The virtual

roadshow provides an exclusive opportunity for the regional travel trade partners to virtually connect with multiple service providers in Singapore.

This platform allows our trade partners to deepen their ties, discuss business opportunity and get updates about the various services, offers and products available in Singapore, following the pandemic.”

Contd. on page 5 ►

Boosting tourism in Bahrain

The re-opening of the King Fahd Causeway will add billions of dollars to Bahrain's economy as visitor levels return to pre-pandemic levels, according to an expert.



TT Bureau

Dr. Ali Al-Moulani, President of the Bahrain Economists Society, hailed the Kingdom's “longstanding tourism and trade ties” with Saudi Arabia following news that the country's travel restrictions will soon be lifted. Saudi citizens will be permitted to travel via air, land and sea from March 31, 2021 following a drop in the number of COVID



Dr. Ali Al-Moulani
President
Bahrain Economists Society

ID cases. A suspension on international flights will be lifted on the same date, according to the country's

Ministry of the Interior. After the travel restrictions are removed, thousands of visitors are expected to cross the King Fahd Causeway linking Saudi Arabia to Bahrain – leading to an anticipated rebound for the Kingdom's tourism and hospitality sector.

Dr. Ali Al-Moulani commented, “Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have had

Contd. on page 12 ►

Medical passport by KSA

In a move to take all preventive precautions and limit the spread of COVID-19, the new medical passport has been launched by the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia.



TT Bureau

Saudi Arabian Government is keen to preserve the health and safety of citizens and residents within its soil from the risk of the spread of novel coronavirus, the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) has developed Tawakkalna App in order to support government efforts aimed at countering COVID-19. Tawakkalna App was

developed to facilitate the issuance of movement permits electronically during the curfew period for gov-

ernment and private sector employees, as well as individuals, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and all relevant authorities during the curfew, thus helping to reduce the spread of the pandemic in the Kingdom.



Dr. Tawfiq Bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah
The Minister of Health

Tawakkalna helps individuals, security, health and private

Contd. on page 12 ►

Digital Offerings



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

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

SCTDA resumes desert tourism

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has announced the resumption of desert tours and related activities in the emirate with strict implementation of the precautionary measures and guidelines issued for desert tours and Sharjah tour operators.

TT Bureau

This latest decision comes as part of the efforts to resume the tourism activities in the emirate and bring them to a normal pace by adopting the highest standards in prevention and safety practices, health protocols, and the implementation of government directives on national health and safety of tourists, visitors, employees, citizens, and residents of Sharjah.

H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of SCTDA commented that the decision is a step forward in the process of the gradual return of all tourism activi-



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman
SCTDA

ties in Sharjah in accordance with the larger plan and in close coordination with all relevant partners from the government and private sectors. Al Midfa highlighted that adherence to the precautionary measures is key as it provides a foundation to rebuild the

momentum of activities in the tourism sector while at the same time ensuring the health of employees and tourists alike, and thereby establishing Sharjah's position as a safe and preferred tourist destination.

He added, "We continue to work closely with all concerned entities to intensify our joint efforts to maintain public health and safety as we take new

steps to launch and implement various major initiatives aimed at enabling the recovery of the tourism sector from the repercussions of the pandemic. We are implementing a strict schedule of inspection of establishments and activities through regular field visits under the supervision of an integrated team of SCTDA inspectors to ensure the issued precautionary measures are being



ing followed and limit the spread of COVID-19."

"With the commitment of tour operators and desert tours establishments to follow the health protocols and implement the highest preventive measures and precautions, we are confident that we will move to the next stage of our recovery plan. We

urge everyone to cooperate with us at SCTDA by putting into practice the guidelines that ensure the safety, health, and security of everyone. We will continue to implement the safety procedures that will help resume the tourism and leisure activities in Sharjah in line with local and international best practices," Al Midfa concluded. 🌅

“We are implementing a strict schedule of inspection of establishments and activities through regular field visits under the supervision of an integrated team of SCTDA inspectors to ensure precautionary measures are being followed”

Misplaced or Lost Checked-In Baggage? Opt for the Checked-In Baggage Protection



Minimum \$1,000 guaranteed payout if the bag is not found within 96 hours of flight arrival.



Receipts for lost baggage content are not required to receive payment.



Covers all bags checked at the airport and last minute gate check-ins.



Get email updates every time there is a change to the status of your lost baggage.

Book **Checked-In Baggage Protection** through Tune Protect **Value Added Services** now!

*Terms & Conditions Apply



in partnership with



Wyndham hotels Ajman extend aid to Al Ihsan

As part of their ongoing partnership with Al Ihsan Charity Association, Wyndham hotels Ajman extended aid to the organisation by offering amenities at the hotels' private beach club.

TT Bureau

Six orphans supported by Al Ihsan Charity completed swimming and diving training courses facilitated by Majellan Sports Marine and Diving Center. On top of diving lessons, the programme also highlighted

the importance of marine and wildlife conservation, and preservation of UAE's natural resources. After passing the course, the students will be assigned with special tasks including participation in different environmental campaigns aimed at keeping the ocean clean and pollution-free.

Ravi Santiago, Cluster General Manager of Wyndham hotels Ajman, commented, "Our team is enthused to be part of this notable programme which trains UAE's future ambassadors of the environment. The younger generation will play an important role in ensuring that our planet thrives." 🌅



TIME Hotels focus on community & environment

TIME Hotels has underscored its commitment to staff welfare and dedication to positively supporting local communities with the launch of the group's 2021 CSR calendar.

TT Bureau

The campaign, which is based around the four pillars of workplace, marketplace, community and environment, has been a mainstay of TIME Hotels' commitment to improving others' lives and forms part of a 12-month programme of initiatives. Each month TIME will focus on a different theme with the year kicking off with team building and strengthening bonds within the workplace. A range of health initiatives will also take place in the first half of the year, as well as a clean-up drive to support environmental goals and a focus on female employees as part of



International Women's Day, Earth Hour and Ramadan will be honoured in March and April, respectively. The second part of the year will begin with a blood donation drive. Breast cancer awareness will occur throughout October and prostate cancer awareness in November, before rounding out the year with a special festive celebration. A happiness initiative will be rolled out

throughout the year, focusing on both employees and hotel guests.

Eddie Ignatius, Corporate Director of Quality & Business Excellence, TIME Hotels, said, "After the difficulties faced within the tourism industry in 2020, staff morale and workplace happiness are now more than ever, of the utmost importance." 🌅

Seychelles launches immunisation campaign

Seychelles, one of the top tourist destinations for GCC travellers, launched its National COVID-19 Immunisation campaign on January 10, 2021.

TT Bureau

Leading by example, the President of the Republic of Seychelles H E Wavel Ramkalawan took the SinoPharm COVID-19 vaccine, making him the first Head of State in Africa to take the first jab.

President Ramkalawan also gave special thanks to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for the donation of 50,000 doses of the SinoPharm COVID-19 vaccine, which was offered during President



Ramkalawan's visit to Abu Dhabi in December. The President added that this is a testimony of the excellent friendly ties that exist between the two nations that have been further consolidated through continuous support for the mutual benefit of both peoples.

"With such a robust vaccination campaign, Sey-

chelles aims to be the first country in the world to vaccinate at least 70% of its over 18 years of age population. From there we will be able to declare Seychelles as being COVID safe," President Ramkalawan emphasised. The President added that the UAE Government would be donating another batch of vaccines to the country soon. 🌅

Amilla partners with Mohamed Al Geziry

Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences, a lush tropical playground in the Maldives, has partnered with Mohamed Al Geziry Consultancy (MAGC).

TT Bureau

Mohamed Al Geziry Consultancy is recognised in the GCC as an indigenously grown industry leader in tourism and hospitality representation.

With two decades of experience with global clients in both the government and private sector, this exciting partnership will actively drive brand recognition of



Amilla Maldives in the Middle East market. Having redefined and rebranded

its enticing and pioneering unique selling points, as well as launching a revolutionary Residence Ownership scheme, the innovative Maldives resort is driving awareness amongst travellers and travel industry players in key strategic markets within the region. 🌅

With two decades of experience with global clients in both the government and private sector, the partnership will actively drive brand recognition of Amilla Maldives in the Middle East market.

► Contd. from page 1

Re-Imagine travel to Singapore

STB's second virtual roadshow to be held on February 3, 2021 will connect travel trade partners from the Middle East with Singapore-based travel stakeholders. **Beverly Au Yong**, Area Director – Middle East, Singapore Tourism Board shares the importance, theme and benefits of the roadshow.

 Shehara Rizly

Q Could you share a brief about the second virtual roadshow by STB?

This roadshow is the second edition of our virtual trade roadshow, with the first one being held in August last year. Through these roadshows we aim to connect local trade partners for business and

networking opportunities with Singapore-based travel stakeholders. The virtual roadshows also give us an opportunity to stay top-of-mind and continue to build our associations with travel trade partners in the region.

The second STB Virtual trade roadshow will be held on February 3 between 10 am to 4 pm UAE

“The virtual roadshow will focus on leisure and MICE outbound travel agents/tour operators from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain”

— Beverly Au Yong

time. During this time regional travel trade partners can register and book meetings to network with Singapore-based travel stakeholders.

The theme of the second edition of the STB Virtual trade roadshow is 'Charting Our Pathways to Tourism Recovery'. The virtual tradeshow is part of STB's regional B2B engagement efforts with the objective to provide GCC travel trade partners to engage with Singapore service providers for business opportunities.

In addition to destination updates, Singapore Tourism Board, ME will also

share 'SingapoReimagine', the new global initiative to reimagine travel for Singapore and the rest of the world, by sparking conversations, stories and ideas to collectively shape the future of the travel sector.

Our travel partners from the Middle East can also expect some immersive virtual tour experiences from Singapore partners and service providers.

Q How many partners will attend the event?

In our first virtual trade roadshow, we organised meetings seamlessly between 14 Singapore tour-

ism stakeholders and over 280 outbound travel agents/tour operators from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. In the second edition, we already have 15-16 Singapore service providers on board who are anticipating fruitful interactions with trade partners from GCC countries.

Q Who are your target audience for the second virtual roadshow?

The virtual roadshow will focus on leisure and MICE outbound travel agents/tour operators from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain.

Q How can one register for the event?

The registration will be open for travel trade stakeholders managing outbound travel services from the GCC countries on a first come first service basis. Interested agents will be able to register to interact with a selected set of Singapore service providers on the registration link published and promoted on TravTalk Middle East B2B platforms. The regional trade partners can choose to chat or have a face-to-face conversation with the Singapore service providers. Each agency is allowed a maximum of two attendees.

Partners @ STB's Virtual Roadshow



Ashley Aw
Senior Assistant Director,
Sales & Marketing
Gardens by the Bay

“Gardens by the Bay is not merely a garden; it's an immersive experience into the world of flora. Every customer to Singapore is a valued visitor and we do see more Middle Eastern visitors with a keen interest to explore our diverse plant life and our famed horticultural attractions. We are looking forward to re-connect with the trade partners and welcome them back when they are ready to visit us.”



Clement Tan Chuon Wei
Assistant Vice President -
Sales International Market
South Asia & Middle East
Wildlife Reserves Singapore

“We will share the latest update on Wildlife Reserves Singapore's four operating parks – Singapore Zoo, River Safari, Night Safari, Jurong Bird Park and how we ensure the safety for every visitor and make it a memorable visit with us. The Middle East market is an important source market for premium offerings from our parks, it is essential to understand the need to curate the right offerings to capture the market.”



Dominic Ong
Senior Vice President Sales
Tour East Singapore

“Our strategy is simple – to continually improve and develop the best holiday programmes in the industry. With our vast experience in the GCC market, we know and understand consumer needs. We invite you to visit us with an open mind. We will be sharing our updated information and activities. The event would be of great help in building relationships in the near future.”

“Travel industry partners from the region will have a good opportunity to hear the latest updates about Singapore Airlines, Singapore as destination and various DMCs joining in from Singapore. We expect a large number of trade partners registering for the roadshow. Despite the roadshow being virtual, trade partners will acquire information in a more focused and interactive manner.”



Fawad Khan
Commercial Manager – Gulf
and Middle East
Singapore Airlines

“As ME is an important market for One Faber Group, we have thoughtfully curated our product offerings to ensure our valuable target customers' needs are met. Other than bridging meaningful connections, the sharing session is important for One Faber Group to create top of mind brand recall and increase awareness for our products and services among the key in-market travel agents.”



Gaurav Choksi
Deputy Manager –
International Sales
One Faber Group

“Our newly implemented DMC Integrated Digital System (DMC IDS) specially caters to incentives, meetings, and leisure group travel. We have handled several successful incentive groups from Dubai, Israel, and Egypt between 2019 & 2020. We will share more information on our DMC Integrated Digital System and cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships at the roadshow.”



Kathryn Loh
General Manager –
Destination Management
Inbound
SingExpress Travel DMC



Regina Koh
Sales and Marketing
Manager
Fareast Hospitality
Management

“We will be showcasing our hotels in the Southern Island of Singapore, Sentosa, Village Hotel Sentosa, The Outpost Hotel & The Barracks Hotel. We will be promoting our hotels in the Middle East market. In terms of MICE and leisure, our objective is to ensure that our hotels have more exposure in the Middle East market.”



Serhan Bektas
Business Development
Manager
Sea Wheel Travel

“At the roadshow we will share a short brief about our company, who we are, what we did, what we are able to do? What are our plans for the future? What is our advantage and what are the benefits for our partners? The GCC market is very important as it is a stable market. We hope to understand the market and agent requirements. We hope to be well known as a local tour operator for Singapore in the GCC in the near future.”



Yvonne Low
Executive Director
The Traveller DMC

“We will be able to connect and engage with our agents/partners and meet them face-to-face through this virtual platform. We will also be sharing with them our new & novel experiences of many Singapore's products offerings under Origin Journeys. Our new offerings such as Professional Congress Organiser will enable them conduct business meetings and conferences.”

Vaccinations and border openings

As the Middle East and Africa (MEA) continue to monitor travel as a result of COVID-19, there have been plenty of updates on travel restrictions and border openings over the last few weeks. Passengers arriving in Dubai from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries no longer require a pre-flight COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test.

With regards to vaccines, Saudi Arabia has approved registration of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and has reopened its borders to international travellers. Oman and Kuwait took similar precautions by closing their borders in December but have since begun welcoming international visitors again. To limit the spread of the virus, strict health and safety guidelines remain in place. In addition to this, in a bid

to boost tourism recovery, Oman has granted visa-free entry to 103 countries for stays of up to 10 days.

The actions detailed above will almost certainly have a positive impact on tourism recovery across the region, and travel intent and confidence will likely grow over the coming weeks and months as a result. However, the region is still being suitably cautious as cases have risen over the past few weeks across the UAE. As

such, the UAE has now been removed from the UK's travel corridor list, meaning that people arriving in the UK will need to self-isolate.

Airspaces reopen as ties are restored with Qatar

The last couple of weeks have brought with them announcements relating to the reopening of borders across the GCC. The most welcomed news was the reopening of the airspace between Saudi Arabia, the

Intent to travel to the UAE has plateaued. This in part could be due to the rising number of cases which has led to the reimplementing of self-isolation periods when travelling internationally to particular destinations.



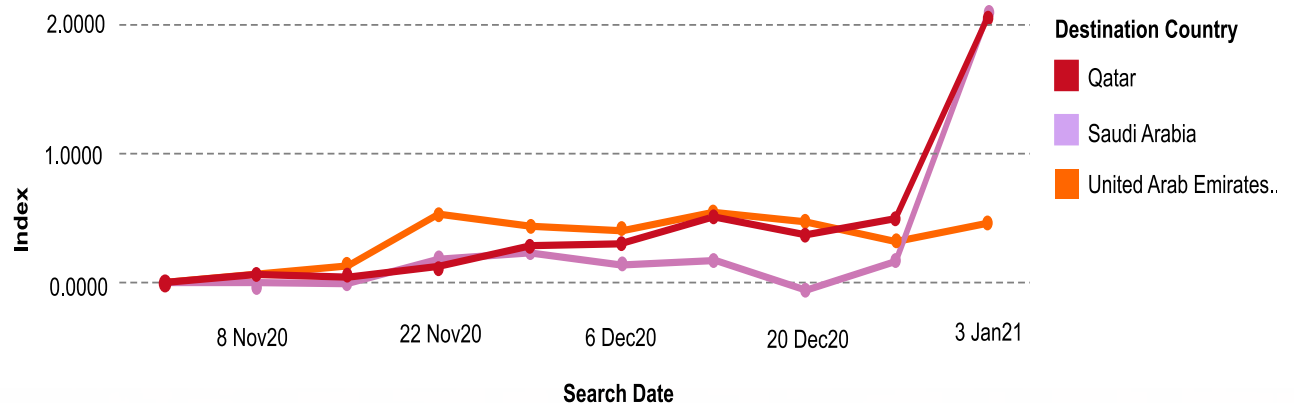
UAE, and Qatar, as a result of full diplomatic relations being restored. Along with this news, and other restrictions being lifted across the region, we are seeing positive international travel intent to the three GCC countries. When looking

at global flight searches to these three destinations, the last few weeks have shown a steep incline in search volumes inbound to Qatar, whereas intent to travel to the UAE has plateaued. This in part could be due to the rising number

of cases which has led to the reimplementing of self-isolation periods when travelling internationally to particular destinations. We would expect over the coming weeks that regional travel intent and confidence will continue to grow.

Global Flight Searches to Saudi, Qatar, and the UAE - indexed to w/c 1st November

When comparing intra-regional travel intent from the last 14 days with searches that have been made over the last week, out of the three GCC countries discussed, Qatar has experienced the most dramatic change with an increase of 70.5%. Although this cannot be linked directly to the news mentioned above, it is clear that intent to travel within the region is growing. This potentially highlights interest in the new opportunities to travel across the borders presented by relations being restored.



Last 7 Days VS. Last 14 Days Regional Travel Flight Searches

	L7D vs L14D e..	L14D vs L28D e..	L30D vs L60D e..
Qatar	+70.5	+39.1	+20.9
Saudi Arabia	+7.4	+108.6	+23.5
United Arab Emi...	+21.9	-6.0	-22.2

The UAE and Saudi Arabia among Top Origins for Qatar

Although domestic travel is leading the way for Qatar, regional hotel searches show that the next two top MEA countries for looking to book a stay in Qatar are the UAE and Saudi Arabia. However, of those planning to fly to Qatar, the United States accounts for 14% of inbound searches over the last 60 days.

Currently Saudi Arabia accounts for almost 5% of flight searches over the last couple of months, surrounded mainly by other MEA origins highlighting high levels of regional travel intent. A positive increase in search volume to Qatar in the last 14 days from Saudi Arabia can be observed as compared to the searches in the last 28 days.

Top MEA Origins to Qatar - Hotel Search Volumes in the last 60 days

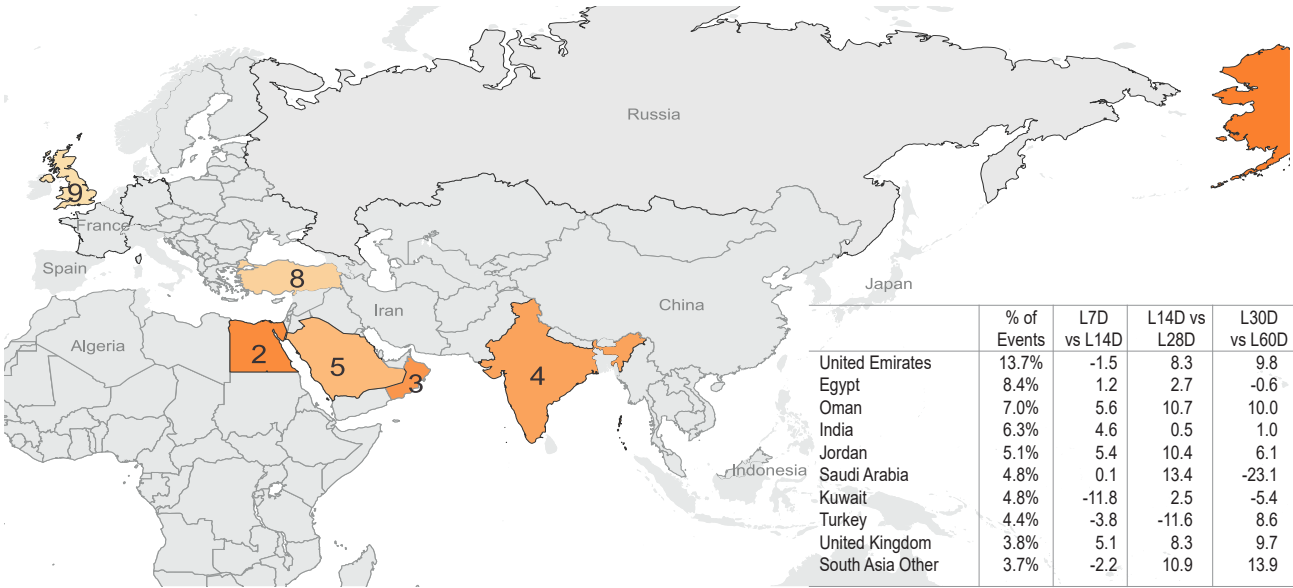
Destination country	Origin Country	Percentage of Events
1. Qatar	Qatar	93.6%
2. Qatar	United Arab Emirates	1.36%
3. Qatar	Saudi Arabia	1.13%
4. Qatar	Turkey	0.98%
5. Qatar	Jordan	0.8%
6. Qatar	Kuwait	0.61%
7. Qatar	South Africa	0.49%
8. Qatar	Egypt	0.27%
9. Qatar	Lebanon	0.25%
10. Qatar	Oman	0.11%

Top Global Origins to Qatar - Flight Search Volumes in the last 60 days

Travellers are Looking for Longer Trips to the UAE

With domestic and regional travel still showing faster signs of recovery than international travel, it is no surprise that booking windows remain short as travellers keep an eye on travel restrictions. This is the picture across Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, as the large majority of searches and bookings are being made two to seven days in advance of the trip. Although the booking windows are short for those looking to travel to the UAE, roughly 60% of trips being planned and booked are for a period of eight days or more. Given the strong lead from domestic travel across the region, especially in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the short booking windows as well as preference for shorter trip durations are understandable.

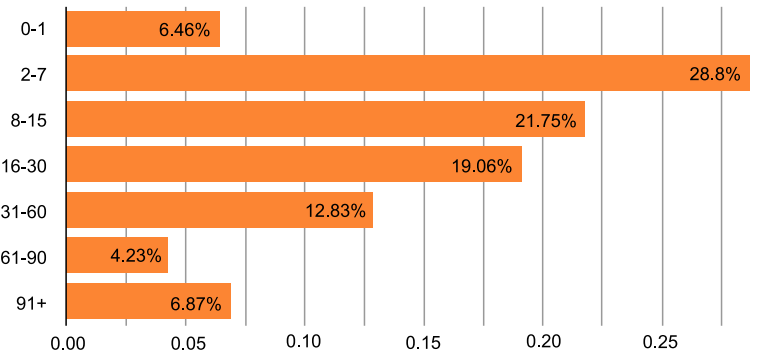
Top Origins to the United Arab Emirates by Hotel Search Volume



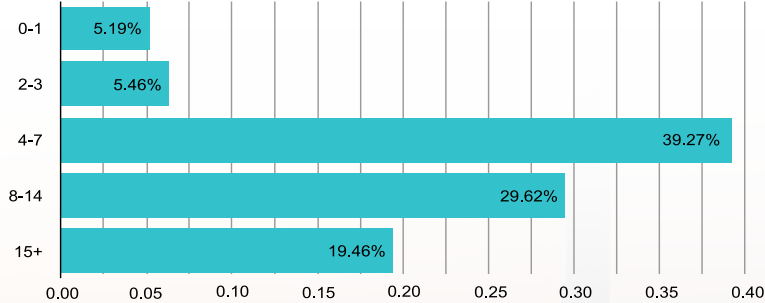
Lead Time and Duration for Key MEA Markets

(UAE)

Search/Book to Travel Lead Time (in Days)

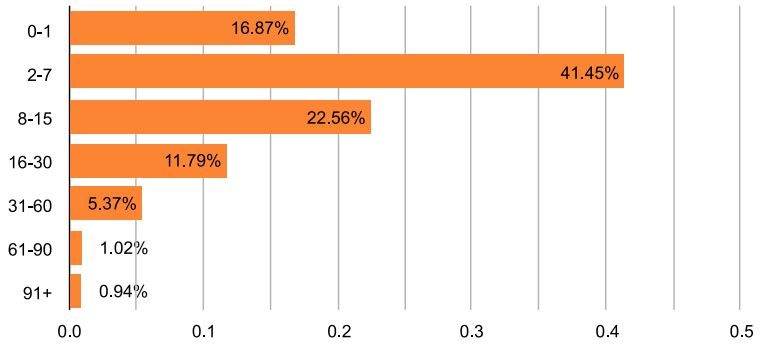


Trip Duration (Days)

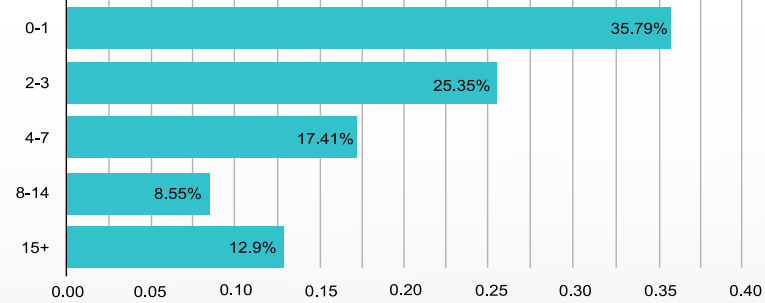


(Saudi Arabia)

Search/Book to Travel Lead Time (in Days)

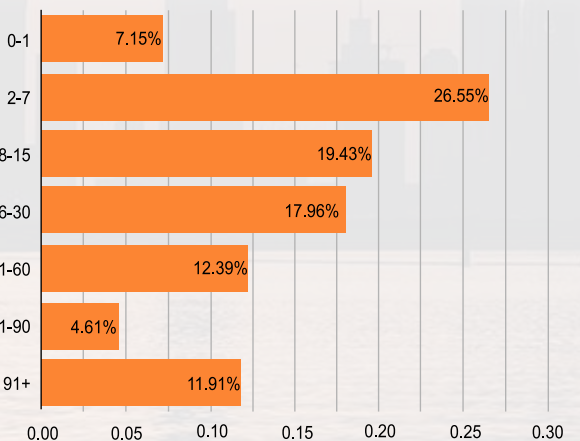


Trip Duration (Days)

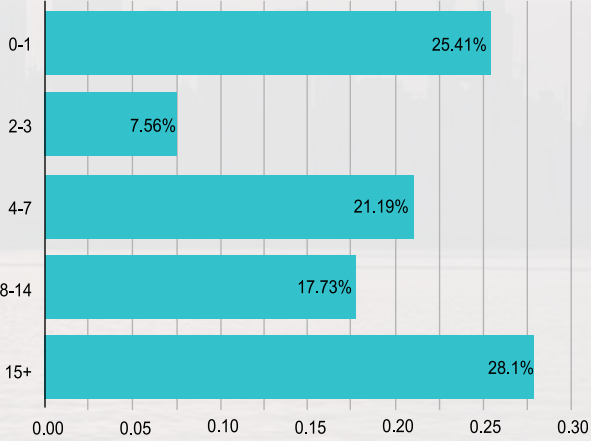


(Qatar)

Search/Book to Travel Lead Time (in Days)



Trip Duration (Days)



2021 has brought with it the opening of borders, updated travel corridors, and developments in the vaccine, which have each undoubtedly had an impact on travel. The newly restored diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar appear to have shone a positive light on travel intent, and intra-regional travel shows very early signs of picking up. We will continue to share more insights as we monitor the situation. Booking windows remain short, and travel remains mostly domestic and regional, but there are positive signs of international travellers growing more confident in booking trips to the region. These forward looking insights will hopefully help travel marketers across the region shape their strategies as the industry recovers.

KUALA LUMPUR

A vibrant metropolis

In a recent poll, Malaysia remains a highly sought-after destination for international travel post COVID-19. Kuala Lumpur remains a bastion for its futuristic skyscrapers, hosting some of the largest malls in Asia. You can also find beautiful murals and street art within each nook and cranny of the city should you wish to explore.

During the virtual launch of a national tourism policy for 2020-2030, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said that the policy would be focused on strengthening competitiveness, encouraging sustainable and inclusive tourism, as well as planning for future disasters. It also seeks to brand Malaysia as an ecotourism destination, with a commitment towards balancing the development and conservation of its natural environment and heritage.

The city of Kuala Lumpur is vibrant with activities blending both nature and modernity alongside a reverence for ancient cultures. Spend a morning stroll through the KL Bird Park which exhibits thousands of colourful birds from various species and sizes, housed within lush trees that resemble Malaysia's pride in rainforests. You can also find an astounding collection of Islamic jewellery and heritage in the Islamic Arts Museum.

For the gastro-adventurous, the hawker centres and street food markets compliment the large variety of high-end restaurants to serve up a cacophony of exquisite tastes. You can also find beautiful murals and street art within each nook and cranny of the city should you wish to explore.

The best way to explore Kuala Lumpur is by ensuring that you have accom-

modation booked in the best locations. One such premium modernistic ho-

tel is Aloft Sentral which is located directly on top of KL Sentral, one of the

main transport hubs in the city, which grants access to almost every area of Kuala Lumpur and the rest of Malaysia.

In no specific order, here are the five things you will love to experience about Kuala Lumpur as your holiday destination.

The Petronas Twin Towers

Of course you will find this on the list as it is a very famous Kuala Lumpur landmark. Walking on the observation deck located on the 86th floor will give you an amazing view of the city and its surroundings. To this day they still stand as the highest twin towers located in the world.

Bukit Bintang

The heart of Kuala Lumpur nightlife – hawker centres, shopping malls to night markets and bars can be found along this strip of road. If you're feeling adventurous the locals will more than help point out the best spots for you.

Masjid Negara

Islam is considered the official religion of the country and the national mosque is where traditional architecture meets modernist values. This mosque can be visited daily and all religions and beliefs are welcome.

Chinatown – Petaling Street

If you are interested to haggle, come here! In the afternoon this street buzzes with all sorts of knick-knacks including tourist items, souvenirs and watches.

Little India – Brickfields

Adding to the multiculturalism that is Malaysia, Truly Asia, you can find several stores with Indian goods and food here. In the night this place comes alive with the aroma of local flavours. 🇲🇾

The city of Kuala Lumpur is vibrant with activities blending both nature and modernity alongside a reverence for ancient cultures. The best way to explore Kuala Lumpur is by ensuring that you have accommodation booked in the best locations.




Virtual roadshow to promote Ireland



Tourism Ireland is gearing up for their first-ever virtual roadshow with the Middle East travel trade on March 8 and 9, 2021 between 14:00 – 17:00 GST. **Niall Gibbons**, Chief Executive, Tourism Ireland and **Siobhan Naughton**, Trade Executive Middle East & Asia, Tourism Ireland share more details on the event.

 Shehara Rizly

Niall Gibbons
Chief Executive
Tourism Ireland


 **How have the tourism offerings in Ireland evolved/ changed with the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Tourism Ireland recently launched our plans for re-starting overseas tourism in 2021. After a devastating 2020 with COVID-19 causing havoc for the travel and tourism industry across the globe, we strongly believe 2021 will see the restart of international travel. Tourism Ireland is actively planning for that restart with a three-phase plan – restart, rebuild and redesign. The priority for 2021 will be to restart tourism to the island of Ireland through a significant kick-start campaign, which will be launched

 **The priority for 2021 will be to restart tourism to the island of Ireland through a significant kick-start campaign, which will be launched across 12 markets, including the GCC, when the time is right to drive bookings and revenue for tourism businesses** 

— Niall Gibbons

across 12 markets, including the GCC, when the time is right to drive bookings and revenue for tourism businesses. It will deliver a very clear 'book now' message to create demand for holidays across the island of Ireland.


 **How is the tourism board working to promote the destination as 'safe' again?**

Tourism suppliers from all sectors across the Island of Ireland have been implementing the newly required health and safety measures without compromising the holiday experience that makes Ireland so special and the great Irish welcome that we're famous for. Tourism Ireland's research consistently highlights the island of Ireland as one of the destinations holidaymakers



Niall Gibbons
Chief Executive
Tourism Ireland

will be most comfortable visiting when international travel resumes. While we in Tourism Ireland certainly don't underestimate the challenges that may lie ahead, we look to 2021 with hope and optimism.


 **What can the trade in the Middle East expect from Ireland's virtual trade show?**

Twenty-five tourism suppliers from around the island of Ireland will be taking part in Tourism Ireland's first virtual trade show in the Middle East. The two-day B2B event in partnership with TravTalk Middle East aims to promote the island of Ireland's exciting holiday experiences and to reassure



Siobhan Naughton
Trade Executive Middle East & Asia,
Tourism Ireland


the travel industry that we are ready to welcome their clients as soon as possible. This virtual event will highlight Ireland's boutique hotels, castles and luxury resorts and self-catering accommodation offerings in addition to the wide variety of superb culinary scene, world-class golf, outdoor, soft adventure and screen tourism experiences on offer across the island, which all boast the necessary safety charter measures.

 **How important is the Middle East traveller and what all are you doing to regain this market share?**

The Middle East is a very

important source market for a number of reasons. There is direct access from the UAE and Qatar to Ireland with Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways and Qatar Airways. UAE nationals can visit the Republic of Ireland visa free. Other GCC nationals can avail of the Irish Short Stay Visa Waiver programme. Tourism Ireland has a strategy to target the ultra-luxury tourism sector and is ensuring that the island of Ireland is ready for the high net worth market.

land industry partners who will showcase the accommodation, attractions and activity offerings across the island. There will also be an opportunity to meet the team from Tourism Ireland who are based here in the region and to discuss how we can all work together to help to promote this exciting destination.

 **Who are your target audience?**


Key GCC travel trade who are interested in educating themselves about the is-

 **This virtual roadshow will be a one-stop shop for GCC travel trade to learn all that they need to know about the island of Ireland and to meet with key island of Ireland industry partners who can assist them with all of their programming needs** 

— Siobhan Naughton

Through hefty invest we're rethinking luxury by creating unique, authentic, only in Ireland experiences which will attract visitors from the Middle East to visit Ireland and guarantee a holiday they'll want to tell their friends about.

land of Ireland and hearing about all it has to offer as a luxury destination.

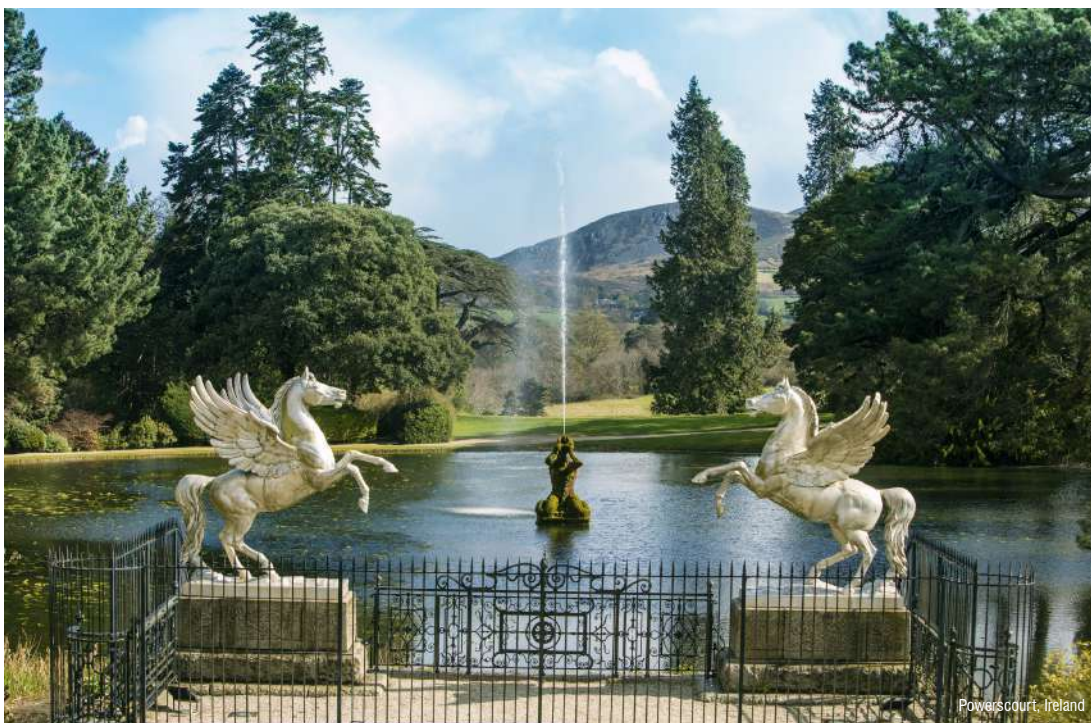
 **What are the benefits of participation at the virtual roadshow?**

This virtual roadshow will be a one-stop shop for GCC travel trade to learn all that they need to know about the island of Ireland and to meet with key island of Ireland industry partners who can assist them with all of their programming needs. It is also a great opportunity to engage with the team from Tourism Ireland who are based here in the region and whose job it is to work with the travel trade in order to ensure that they have all of the necessary tools at their fingertips to be able to promote the island of Ireland to all of their GCC clients as a must see destination. 

Siobhan Naughton
Trade Executive
Middle East & Asia
Tourism Ireland

 **Could you share a brief about the first virtual roadshow by Tourism Ireland?**

Tourism Ireland is looking forward to hosting its first virtual roadshow in association with TravTalk Middle East for GCC travel trade across the region on March 8 and 9, 2021 between 14:00 – 17:00 GST on both days. Over the course of these two days, travel trade will have the opportunity to have one-to-one meetings with 25 key island of Ire-



Refocus on corporate travel

Corporate travel is an integral part in every sector and is a major contributor to the aviation sector. The past few months seemed bleak for the progress of this segment of travellers. **Gerald Lawless**, Ambassador WTTC – Former CEO – Jumeirah Group, converses with three industry professionals to know more about how this segment of travel will change its course.

 TT Bureau

Gerald Lawless & Adel Mardini

Q If, for example, I'm a travel manager of a large corporation, how would I be persuaded to allow private jet travel as opposed to commercial travel for my executives?

I believe for the first time we started seeing there is no availability on private jets due to high demand in the market. 70% of the customers who are flying in private jets are coming from first class and business class. Mackenzie made a study about touch points; If you are flying in commercial airlines, you are exposed to 720 touch points and if you are in

you've got and being able to ensure that it doesn't leak back to the commercial airlines?

I had this discussion with our customers here, passengers and travellers, and all of them showed me that they would keep flying in a private jet because they realised that right now, how important it is to find a private jet, again, it's a different budget. I will not say 100%, but I expect more than 70% of the people to be flying in a private jet because they realised the difference. It's a big difference. You come in 15 minutes before departure time and it takes you maybe 20 to 30 minutes to be out with the luggage. For 15 min-

“If you are flying in commercial airlines, you are exposed to 720 touch points and if you are in flying in a private jet you are exposed only to 30 touch points”

— Adel Mardini

flying in a private jet you are exposed only to 30 touch points. All these indications convince the people, the large corporate companies and the big groups of people to find a private jet. The advantage is an aviation business jet is much better compared to flying in commercial airlines.

Q Do you see then that when the health and safety part eventually goes away because we have a vaccine or because the virus eventually fizzles out, how do you see being able to protect this new business that

utes you will be exposed to only two persons who handle all your stuff.

Q Typically, what is the size of the aircraft?

We have 6-seat, 12-seat, 18-seat, and 24 seats, it depends on the group. We had one group who flew to Beirut with 18 passengers. So they chartered an 18-seat aircraft. We can see right now a new business. There's a new aircraft coming in, which has 50 seats. It's all business class right now, which I will not say is a schedule flight, but they are planning for a tour in Dubai



Gerald Lawless
Ambassador WTTC – Former CEO
Jumeirah Group



Adel Mardini
Founder & CEO
Jetex



Ross Veitch
Co-Founder and CEO
Wego



Anita Mendiratta
Special Advisor to the Secretary
General – UNWTO

and Maldives and Seychelles during this pandemic. This is kind of a tour travel and they will also be sharing the hotel.

Ross Veitch & Adel Mardini

Q What percentage of your bookings do you find are coming in via the web or mobile?

Since the last two months, more than 35 to 40% is coming from digital marketing and social media.

Q Do you have a mobile app you can use to book a plane once you onboard?

We don't have a mobile app because mainly we are focusing on the private terminal and the private jet is a part of the service that we are doing for our customer. We do a concierge service for the airplane and the passenger.

Anita Mendiratta

COVID-19 has changed people's travel habits. It's about less flights, less exposure, less frequency. All of this has recalibrated the world in which we live and by implication the world in which we travel. It is in-

teresting how your segment is a direct reflection of how travellers are now relooking at how they choose to travel. For those who have an opportunity to do it by a private jet, I think the staycation element is important from the point of view of governments around the world. Encouraging domestic travel first is the best way to get the supply chains mobilised. Our world needs travel and our world of travellers need to be able to run around the world and create opportunities, create unity, create understanding. We have just started the development of our regional office in Riyadh. It's going to serve 13 countries of the region.

I think with the rapid testing taking place and the vaccines, the next normal will bring in new

“COVID-19 has changed people's travel habits. It's about less flights, less exposure, less frequency. All of this has recalibrated the world in which we live and by implication the world in which we travel”

— Anita Mendiratta

protocols, people will adjust. Once the vaccines get rolled out, that will take us to the next normal. Our world needs to travel. Aviation will be the ultimate mobiliser.

Gerald Lawless & Ross Veitch

Q Ross could you tell us about the trends, how do you see things moving, and what's going to happen in this particular area?

In March, basically over a period of two weeks, our revenue fell to about a minus 98% of what it was a year-over-year. The airlines in the Mid-

dle East park, the jets on the runway and the airport shut down as people stopped traveling. It was like that all through Q2 and Q3, we've seen some business begin to come back. Bookings out of the Middle East for us are at about 30% of where they were in 2019.

I think for leisure as soon as we are past COVID, that is we're either vaccinated or we figured out how to deal with the new normal, people are going to go back to their old travel trends.

Also, sometime towards the end of 2021, business travel will be somewhere back to where it was. I think the catalyst will be the rapid antigen testing before you step foot in an airport or before you check-in, that's going to be the new normal probably before the end of this year. 🌅

“In March, basically over a period of two weeks, our revenue fell to about a minus 98% of what it was a year-over-year. The airlines in the Middle East park, the jets on the runway and the airport shut down as people stopped traveling”

— Ross Veitch

Focusing on GCC markets

Germany and Scandinavian markets have focused on GCC over the past few years, hence a new company, Step to Markets, was established in Berlin after many years of experience in the GCC. **Maher Azizia**, Chief Executive Officer, Step to Markets speaks with TravTalk about the venture.

Shehara Rizly

Please share a brief about the company.

Step to Markets (STM Marketing UG) is a tourism marketing organisation offering marketing services in Germany for hotels and tourism destinations based in the Middle East and GCC countries. The company was established last year in Berlin to help our clients in the Middle East and GCC

markets to build strong relationships with outbound tour operators in Germany and to come up with marketing strategies that ensure business results in a short span of time in our region.

As of now, what are the key markets?

The focus in the last six months as well as this year has been mainly on the GCC markets, which have overcome the situation and



Maher Azizia
Chief Executive Officer
Step to Markets

opened tourist facilities as quickly as possible while fully preserving the safety rules for tourists.

Could you share the initiatives taken to keep a positive mindset during the pandemic?

We at STM Marketing are

trying to communicate the correct information to our business partners – the travel and tourism business has not stopped for hundreds of years, it's true that we are going through special circumstances that require strict measures, but the pandemic is on its way to disappearing and we must be ready for the new normal.

What defines your company and what would you say is unique?

What defines us is the specialization in tourism marketing, our team experience in tourism field for many years makes us experts to help our clients to reach out to the maximum range of German markets. Each hotel or tourism destination

has different needs and wants a different approach. We try to be as flexible as possible to put our client's product in the right way.

Embarking on 2021, what are your plans for German and Scandinavian markets?

The German and Scandinavian outbound markets are recovering quickly, we expect a big travel movement in the second half of this year, that's why we have put in place appropriate plans to suit our clients campaigns. At the same time we are expanding our services in Sweden and Denmark to add representative offices for STM Marketing there to support our main office in Berlin. 🌟

Tourism Breaking News

- Anantara's Sir Bani Yas Island reopens from Feb 1
- Turkish Airlines launches 'TK Extra Care'
- Air Arabia resumes daily flights to Doha
- First Grand Hyatt branded hotel opens in the KSA
- Emirates suspends flights to Melbourne, Sydney & Brisbane
- Singapore Airlines resumes flights from Dubai
- Revier hospitality to debut in Dubai
- Amilla partners with Mohamed Al Geziry to boost visits from GCC
- Ascott to open its second property in Qatar
- Etihad Airways launches children fly free campaign
- DTCM and GDRFA signs partnership agreement

“Step to Markets was established last year in Berlin to help our clients in the Middle East and GCC markets to build strong relationships with outbound tour operators in Germany”

HOW WOULD YOU REIMAGINE TRAVEL?

VisitSingapore.com

SINGAPOREIMAGINE

SG SINGAPORE
Passion Made Possible

APPLE MARINA BAY SANDS
SINGAPORE

GCC key source market for Germany

GCC has been an important source market for Germany. At a recent interview **Petra Hedorfer**, Chief Executive Officer of the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) shared an assessment of the current situation in inbound tourism and insights on the new trends in travel. One of the major trends is that COVID-19 has led to greater interest in sustainable holidays.

 Shehara Rizly

The travel industry has been under extreme pressure since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. What do you think the future holds for inbound tourism to Germany?

The figures for global tourism are indeed worrying. The United Nations World Tourism Organization expects international arrivals to have dropped by between 60 and 80 per cent this year. Around

the world, Germany is perceived to have managed the crisis comparatively well. However, inbound tourism depends not just on the situation in our own country but also on what is happening in our source markets. The recovery phase will last at least until the end of 2023, according to the latest findings of analysts at Tourism Economics. Travel to Germany from Europe will recover more quickly than from our overseas markets, with lei-

sure travel recovering more quickly than business travel.

What can you as a National Tourist Board do to boost tourism while the coronavirus pandemic is still with us?

We have identified various areas of action to focus on. First of all, we are analysing markets and market segments very carefully for their potential for recovery. It is here that we will concentrate our marketing activities. This leads me directly to our second area of action, customer centricity – anticipating what tomorrow's customers will expect. We are not only seeing that travellers are becoming more safety-conscious, but also that they




Petra Hedorfer
Chief Executive Officer
German National Tourist Board (GNTB)

are showing greater interest in sustainable tourism. And we are using this shift in attitudes to refocus our brand. The third area of action is digital empowerment – gaining a competitive edge through innovative marketing. As destinations begin

to compete again in the new normal, digitalisation will play a crucial role. We and our partners are putting our faith in digital solutions, including chatbots that rely on artificial intelligence to answer questions, the use of digital voice assistants, and a major open-data solution for the German inbound tourism industry.

Will the coronavirus pandemic lead to new trends among travellers that might affect Germany as a travel destination?

Customer behaviour is constantly changing, irrespective of coronavirus, but the pandemic is accelerating many changes. COVID-19 has led to greater interest in

sustainability, for example. Almost 80 percent of foreign travellers from our most important source markets think the coronavirus pandemic could lead to more sustainability in tourism. In the latest COVID-19 study conducted by IPK International, 55 per cent of respondents stated they would generally consider nature-oriented holidays as an option, while a further 21 per cent stated that they were even more likely to consider them during the pandemic. The GNTB website www.germany.travel/feelgood lists more than 1,000 certified accommodation options for particularly sustainable holidays, from eco-campsites to luxury hotels. 

“The recovery phase will last at least until the end of 2023, according to Tourism Economics. Travel to Germany from Europe will recover more quickly than from our overseas markets”

King Fahad Causeway to reopen

► Contd. from page 1

longstanding tourism and trade ties, with trade between our two countries growing 43% during the third quarter of 2020. The number of visitors from Saudi Arabia is set to gradually go back to normal levels following this announcement and expected to add around US \$2.9 billion to Bahrain's economy this year based on average tourist spending in 2019.” Prior to the pandemic, Bahrain welcomed around 11 million tourists with over 88% coming through the Causeway.

FactFile

■ The number of visitors from Saudi Arabia is set to gradually go back to normal levels following this announcement and expected to add around US \$2.9 billion to Bahrain's economy this year based on average tourist spending in 2019

Reopening borders

► Contd. from page 1



Saleem Shariff
Deputy Managing Director,
ATS Travel

“Travel and tourism between Qatar and the UAE was very robust before it was stopped and once we heard that things were opening up we were very happy and we are hopeful that the bilateral traffic will increase. There are so many projects that are happening on both sides of the border and these projects could kick off and we already got a lot of inquiries from our customers asking us when the flights are going to start, so the interest is already there.”



Tarique Khatri
Executive Vice President –
Centre of Excellence, Seera

“If you look at the GCC in the region, the impact of GCC traffic is vital and it reflects the common values and relationship which all the countries have. The opening of the Qatar border means that it will be like before time of closure in 2017, when traffic between all the countries was pretty much a big chunk of business. For all the travel agencies, hotels, airlines, it will be a very good, positive uptake in terms of passenger traffic as well as occupancy in hotels.”



Muhammad Nasar
Head of Travel and
Holidays, Travco

“I'm sure it will generate a lot of business as people are waiting to come to Dubai and go back and forth, families are waiting to travel again, and I believe it is a decision made at the right time.”



Marc Descrozaile
COO, Accor India, Middle
East and Africa

“The lifting of restrictions with Qatar will ease travel within the region, resulting in pick up for some of our key destinations, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Demand for city hotels will pick up in the UAE.”



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
TIME Hotels

“The Qatari market was previously a key consumer of hospitality services in the UAE, and we anticipate, the number of business and leisure travellers returning to the levels witnessed in 2017.”


Health-centric services on offer

► Contd. from page 1

entities, that are exempted from the curfew, to automate all transactions between relevant parties in order to mitigate the health, economic and social impacts that may result from the implementation of policies taken to eliminate the spread of COVID-19. Although cautiously people return to normal life, Tawakkalna is helping in this phase by new services such as showing users' health condition and other services. And as a part of promoting social responsibility, Tawakkalna has provided many services regarding raising concern if there are violations, as well as providing the ability to notify the Ministry of Health in the event of a suspected case.

The Minister of Health, Dr. Tawfiq Bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, and the Chairman of Saudi Authority for Data

and Artificial Intelligence (SDAIA), Dr. Abdullah bin Sharaf bin Jamaan Al-Ghamdi, have launched the 'Medical Passport' service via Tawakkalna application; this service aims to confirm that the person has completed all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and become 'immune' against the virus. The Minister of Health received recently at the COVID-19 Vaccine Center in Riyadh the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine, as part of the vaccination plan being implemented by the Ministry of Health.

The Minister expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Crown Prince for their care and continuous interest to preserve the health and safety of citizens and residents. 

Singapore Airlines

launches KrisConnect Programme for Trade Partners in the UAE

Singapore Airlines (SIA) Dubai offers increased functionality to its UAE trade partners via the KrisConnect Programme, as part of the airline's initiative to improve overall customer experience. **Ryan Yeoh**, General Manager, Gulf & Middle East, Singapore Airlines shares with **TRAVTALK**.



Shehara Rizly

What is the KrisConnect Programme and why is Singapore Airlines launching it?

KrisConnect enhances the capability of communications between SIA and its trade partners, offering travel agents new functions which previously could only be performed by the airline directly, as well as additional utilities and products to improve

the overall customer experience. This expanded range of functionalities includes the ability to sell SIA ancillary products and value adds, product bundles, and customised offers, as well as access to rich content, loyalty privileges, and more. KrisConnect makes these functions available to external parties via IATA's NDC standard, as well as SIA's and other proprietary Application Programme Interfaces (APIs).

Personalised service and being customer-focused have long been the hallmarks of Singapore Airlines. We are launching the KrisConnect programme to extend these values beyond our traditional touch points, and to develop a deeper relationship with our partners to improve the overall SIA customer experience on their platforms.

What are the benefits to agencies who get onboard with KrisConnect?

The KrisConnect Programme enables the transmission of richer and more personalised content, thereby enhancing the selling proposition of agents to customers,



Ryan Yeoh
General Manager, Gulf & Middle East
Singapore Airlines

which results in a better booking experience.

The KrisConnect value proposition is encapsulated in three main pillars. The first pillar is price – agents will have access to KrisConnect preferential market and promotional fares, which will be made exclusively available through KrisConnect channels. The second is fare bundles, which are not available in the traditional GDS channels currently. In KrisConnect, agents can offer customised fare bundles to better address the needs of our joint customers, such as no-bag fares for corporate travellers. Third is ancillaries – agents will be able to

offer value adds to customers to enhance and personalise their journey, such as seat selection, excess baggage, insurance, etc.

How can agents connect and get access to the KrisConnect programme?

There are four ways to connect to SIA's NDC (KrisConnect) content.

❖ The first avenue is to connect directly to SIA, without any intermediary.

❖ Another way is through AGENT360, which is SIA's NDC-enabled Travel Agency Portal. With AGENT360, no system integration is required from the agency and it does not involve usage costs. AGENT360 will launch in February 2021.

❖ A third way for agents to connect is through their GDS service providers, such as Amadeus, Sabre, and Travelport.

❖ Lastly, agents can also connect through NDC Technology Partners (aggregators), such as TPConnects, Travelfusion, Verteil Technologies, TravelNDC, Aaron Group, PKfare, and many others.


How long does it take to complete the agency onboarding process?

The process varies by the chosen mode of connection. With SIA's AGENT360 portal, because no system integration effort is required from the agency, agents can access SIA NDC content once their registration to Agent 360 is approved, which normally only takes three to five days.

For connections through a technology provider, the onboarding process usually takes between one to three months, depending on the technology partner.

For direct connections, which involve integration work, timelines could range between three to six months depending on how fast the agent integrates.

Where do we learn more about the KrisConnect Programme?

For more information about KrisConnect and how to register, agents may contact their respective SIA Account Managers. 

“ The KrisConnect Programme enables the transmission of richer and more personalised content, thereby enhancing the selling proposition of agents to customers, which results in a better booking experience ”



SIA hosts get together with agents

Singapore Airlines hosted the very first networking event with leading agents from UAE at the newest property in Business Bay, Hotel Indigo. First on the agenda was the introduction of the new General Manager for Gulf and Middle East Ryan Yeoh. Addressing the gathering, Yeoh introduced the newest aircraft A350-900 on Dubai route as well as the implementation of the Krisconnect programme.



Premier Resort in Penang



A 45-minute drive from Penang International Airport, Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa is an iconic resort in Penang, nestled between centuries old rain trees and Batu Feringgi (Foreigner's Rock) beach.



A 5-star premier resort with a beautiful 30-acre landscaped garden, this tropical paradise is easily distinguished by its Malaysia inspired architecture.

The resort has two separate wings spanning 304 guestrooms including 16 suites. Rooms come with a view of the Andaman Sea or the finely crafted garden. The most popular are the

Rasa Junior Suites at the Rasa Wing with their own private soaking tub on the balcony. Facilities include a Health Club with male and female bathing sections, a mini par-3 pitch and putt

golf course, three tennis courts equipped with flood lights, swimming pools and five restaurants and bars offering an array of international, seasonal and local cuisines. Spread

along a secluded corner of the resort is Chi, The Spa which offers a blend of Asian healing rituals and therapists. Its eleven villas, a sanctum and yoga pavilion under soaring rain

trees, exude serenity and solitude. Each spacious villa is equipped with its own rooms for changing and treatment, private garden and semi-outdoor rain shower.



Family destination at its best



The Golden Sands Resort offers a fun-filled, family-oriented holiday with its 387 comfortably furnished guestrooms and suites, beachside setting and exciting recreational facilities.



There is always excitement for everyone with organised daily activities and the Adventure Zone, a comprehensive indoor playground, providing safe and exciting

entertainment for children and adults.

Other facilities include free Wi-Fi Internet access, a ballroom, three adaptable meeting and function rooms and

the Cool Lounge – a transit lounge for early check-in and late check-out which also serves refreshments and provides modern conveniences in a relaxed setting. Food and beverage outlets

include a prime beachfront dining venue – Sigi's Bar and Grill on the Beach, as well as the casual and breezy Garden Cafe and Lobby Lounge which overlooks the garden and pool. 🍹

NEW HOTELS

As we are set to kick-start 2021, we take a peek into the properties scheduled to open and the ones already opened.



★ Conrad Hotels & Resorts

Opening Date: 2022

Place: Bahrain

Rooms/Suites inventory: 98

Conrad Hotels & Resorts, Hilton's contemporary luxury hotel brand, announced plans to bring the global brand to Manama, Bahrain following the signing of an agreement to open Conrad Residences Bahrain Financial Harbour in 2022 at the upcoming state-of-the-art, mixed-use development, First Energy Bank Tower. The highly anticipated property will be the first fully residential luxury development for the Conrad brand in the Middle East. Conrad Residences Bahrain Financial Harbour will provide an exceptional location for people to enjoy spectacular coastal views of the Arabian Gulf while being conveniently located in the heart of the capital city's up-and-coming business and residential district.

★ St.Regis Hotels and Resorts

Opening Date: 2021

Place: Egypt

Rooms/Suites inventory:
286 rooms and suites &
80 luxurious apartments



St. Regis Hotels & Resorts, part of Marriott International, announced the highly-anticipated opening of The St. Regis Cairo. Rising tall on the banks of the River Nile, The St. Regis Cairo is an illustrious icon weaving a powerful story of luxury in the region. Located at the North end of the Corniche, in the heart of Egypt's bustling metropolis, the 39-storey hotel offers easy access to the magnificent monuments of a city steeped in history.



★ Somerset Al Mansoura

Opening Date: Q4 2021

Place: Doha

Rooms/Suites inventory: 159 Keys

Ascott has entered into a franchise agreement with Al Majed Hotel Management WLL, a subsidiary of Al Majed Group Holding, recently announcing the signing of its newest property, Somerset Al Mansoura Doha, set to open in Qatar's capital in Q4 2021. Located in the lavish Al Mansoura district, the property will comprise 158 keys, including 59 spacious two-bedroom units and 99 upscale one-bedroom units.

★ Grand Hyatt Al Khobar Hotel and Residences

Opening Date: 2021

Place: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Rooms/Suites inventory: 368 rooms



Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced the opening of Grand Hyatt Al Khobar Hotel and Residences in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — the first Grand Hyatt hotel in the Kingdom. The 368-room luxury hotel including 54 residential units is situated in the commercial and retail heart of Al Khobar with a connecting bridge to Al Rashid Mall. The hotel will open in phases, highlights of the first phase include the opening of 120 guestrooms and 20 residences, the all-day dining facilities, the lobby lounge, banquet halls, fitness center and Spa.

HOTELS

Anantara Al Akhdar upgrades property

Oman's leading resort, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, welcomed the new year with the launch of an all-new experience, Extreme Jabal Activity Wall.

Shehara Rizly

This comes right in time with the amazing news of the Sultanate reopening its land, air and sea borders after a temporary closure.

Rami Farhat, Acting General Manager at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar, said, "We are glad that we'll be able to welcome guests locally from Oman as well as from all around the world to enjoy our new activities, improved living and fully immerse themselves in true

climbing routes in the Middle East, the favoured Jabal Activity Wall has been upgraded with an all-new extreme phase, offering the most daring travellers an unparalleled experience of Oman's Green Mountain and its expanse of craggy cliffs and limestone rock formations.

The secluded mountain getaway has also revealed its all-new exclusive dining platform, The Royal Edge, which is set to deliver an intimate and bespoke dining experience. Outfitted with a

“The entire team has put in a lot of work into forging an experience that breaches a new level of luxury which the GCC region is yet to see”

— Rami Farhat



Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort - Anantara Cliff Pool Villa



Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort - The Royal Edge 3

Omani hospitality. The entire team has put in a lot of work into forging an experience that breaches a new level of luxury which the GCC region is yet to see."

The Extreme Jabal Activity Wall is the newest addition to the luxury property's range of experiences, designed for the bravest of adventurers. Widely known as one of the highest

glass floor that extends all to the very edge of the canyon, the new platform presents guests with an incomparable canyon stage and is only accessible through Anantara's signature 'Dining by Design' experience.

In addition to the new experiences, the resort has also made strides to upgrade various parts of the property. 🌄

Unique experiences at PARKROYAL Penang Resort

Located along the famed Batu Ferringhi beach in Penang, Malaysia, the five-star **PARKROYAL Penang Resort** offers unparalleled experiences from exquisite gourmet dining, state-of-the-art facilities and a host of family-oriented activities.



Lucked away from the busy city yet only a stone's throw away, immerse yourself in nature's wonders and explore Penang, an island of rich cultural sights and renowned eco-tourism spots such as Tropical Spice Garden, Penang National Park and the ESCAPE Theme Park.

The beach front resort is a collection of 310 contemporary styled guest rooms and suites that emulate earthy hues complementing the island's rich heritage and cultural background. A selection of rooms and suites come with a private terrace overlooking the Straits of

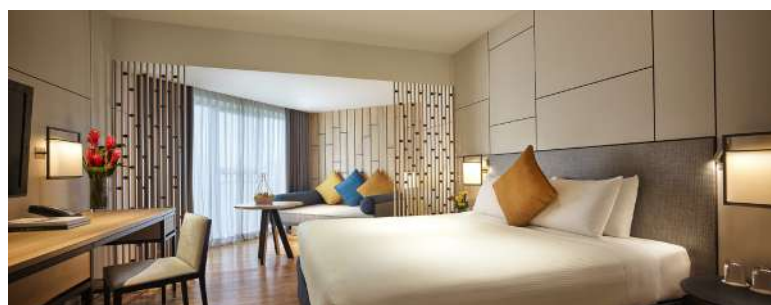
Malacca or verdant lawns, high-speed wireless internet access, exclusive St Gregory Spa amenities, plush bath robes, ensuite bathrooms, Press Reader and commodious day beds in selected room categories. PARKROYAL Penang Resort is the ideal destination for both families and couples. Elegantly designed rooms are fully equipped with exclusive services and amenities required for total comfort and convenience.

Treat yourself to a sumptuous gastronomic experience at the resort's two restaurants, Cinnamon Asian Kitchen – the all-day dining restaurant to

go to for local favourites and gratifying Asian and International cuisines, and Gustoso, offering authentic Italian cuisine is a restaurant where you can enjoy a candlelight dinner by the beach with your loved one. Enjoy a drink or two by the beach as you admire the mesmerising sunset at Sunset Bar. Overlooking the immaculate lawns and stunning tropical garden, the Javana Lounge features bespoke furnishings with spacious terraces and sofa beds – perfect for an afternoon tea indulgence. In the evenings, wind down with its daily happy hour and sway to the live entertain-



PARKROYAL Penang Resort is perfect for unforgettable holiday escapes as well as personalised corporate and social events. Experience the warm Malaysian hospitality and attentive service as you step into the resort, a place you can call 'home away from home'.



ment in a relaxing ambience for a downtime with delicious cocktails.

Enjoy unparalleled leisure facilities, such as fitness and wellness centre, two outdoor freeform swimming pools, a children's pool with two exciting waterslides, Amazonia, movie room, a kids' club, water sports centre and a plethora of on-site activities that aim to please kids of all ages. For an immersive fitness experience, the elevated fitness centre also features a

steam room and jacuzzi allowing guests to be fully energised after workout. To top the whole relaxation experience, rejuvenate in its award-winning St Gregory Spa. Let healing and intuitive hands alleviate stress and balance body, mind and spirit with an extensive range of holistic therapeutic treatments such as Thalga facials, traditional Malay massages, and Balneotherapy hydro baths.

This idyllic beach resort is perfect for unforgettable

holiday escapes as well as personalised corporate and social events. Your dream holiday begins as you step into the resort after a long tiring flight. Experience an exclusive sit-down check-in experience at the open-air Javana Lounge and try out local refreshments as friendly associates prepare your tropical oasis. Experience the warm Malaysian hospitality and attentive service as you step into the resort, a place you can call 'home away from home'. 🌅

MARRIOTT HOTEL DOWNTOWN AND MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS DOWNTOWN

Abu Dhabi



Marriott Hotel Downtown and Marriott Executive Apartments Downtown Abu Dhabi announce the appointment of **Katrin Herz** as the new Multi Property General Manager. With over 20 years of luxury hotel experience, Katrin Herz is all set to spearhead the team at the dynamic business hotel located in the heart of the capital city of Abu Dhabi.

CAESARS BLUEWATERS

Dubai

Caesars Bluewaters Dubai, launched in late 2018, has elevated its luxury offering with the appointment of **Anthony Costa** as Regional President. A luxury hotel professional with over 25 years' experience driving financial performance, brand experience and talent engagement for the world's leading operators including the Jumeirah Group, Wynn, Mandarin Oriental and Four Seasons, Costa combines expertise in hotel operations and a depth of understanding in luxury brand-building with deep commercial literacy and a consummate ability to drive growth.



ENLITE

Dubai

Rajitha Rajapakse has joined Enlite – a B2B wholesaler as their Business Development Manager. Celebrating 20 years in the travel industry this year, Rajapakse is no stranger in the UAE. Starting his career in 2001 in Sri Lanka with Walkers Tours for 11 years, he moved to the UAE in 2011 working for Arabian Adventures. In 2016, he was heading Sales and Marketing for Explore the Wonders until this new stint at Enlite. He is confident that his journey with Enlite will give an opportunity to redefine wholesale travel products to all retail agents in GCC.



WYNDHAM DUBAI DEIRA AND SUPER 8 BY WYNDHAM DEIRA

Dubai

Thierry Perrot has been appointed as Cluster General Manager of Wyndham Dubai Deira and Super 8 by Wyndham Dubai Deira. In his new role, Perrot will oversee the first two properties launching as part of the incredibly ambitious Deira Enrichment project. Thierry brings over 39 years of hospitality experience to the table, with expertise in acquisition and disposal, hotel openings, regional and cluster management, contingency plan management, as well as organization development.



Overseeing Finance for both Wyndham Dubai Deira and Super 8 by Wyndham Dubai Deira, **Krzysztof Grzelak** is the Cluster Director of Finance. Krzysztof is an experienced finance professional who has demonstrated achievements in managing large teams in multinational and multicultural environments in Poland, Tajikistan, and the United Arab Emirates.



Heading up Sales and Marketing for both Wyndham Dubai Deira and Super 8 by Wyndham Dubai Deira, is **Khaled Amer** who holds over 24 years of professional experience in the hospitality industry. As such he oversees the business development, sales function, and all new projects and strategies for the two hotels. Ghaith Adnan, a marketing professional with over seven years of hospitality, F&B marketing experience handles day-to-day marketing activities including marketing, & public relations.



Avani Palm View Dubai opens

Avani Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Avani Palm View Dubai Hotel & Suites, offering an enviable blend of stylish beach city living and contemporary comfort in one of Dubai's most sought-after areas. The 48-storey property boasts an unbeatable location overlooking the iconic Palm Jumeirah.

Shehara Rizly

Positioned between the vibrant communities of Dubai Media City, The Palm Jumeirah and Dubai Marina, the city's world-famous shopping malls, dining, entertainment and beach destinations surround Avani Palm View Dubai Hotel & Suites, offering every kind of activity imaginable for both residents and visitors to enjoy whilst staying in the Middle East's most effervescent, directional and cosmopolitan city.

With distinct interior design, contemporary comfort and

total body fitness a focus, Avani Palm View embodies 21st-century stylish living. The 264-rooms & suites property boasts exceptional dwelling spaces, with floor-to-ceiling windows, fully-equipped kitchens, interactive living spaces and private terraces featuring sweeping views of The Palm Jumeirah, the Arabian Gulf and the dazzling Dubai skyline.

Ranging from 41 sqm studios, up to 165 sqm three bedroom units, with 11 different room types to choose from and a host of amenities, Avani Palm View pairs beautifully-designed



accommodation with excellent in-house services, including complimentary WiFi and free valet parking, culminating in a destination offering an enviable, effortless existence, with

everything the modern city-dweller could wish for.

Designed as a total travel solution for both short and long-stay guests, whether it's the place to enjoy a

long weekend away or somewhere to call home, the property boasts an array of facilities that will appeal to those seeking relaxed, contemporary comforts in one of the city's most impressive locations. Two restaurants and a bar offer a variety of dining options: the bright, all-day dining Seven Seeds; on-the-go café The Pantry; Aqua, an outdoor pool bar, created with Instagrammable moments in mind, as well as In-Room Dining for cozy, culinary enjoyment, with Avani's healthy, honest food concept running throughout the property. Maintaining a healthy

lifestyle continues with the AvaniFit gym, with an inspiring space with top-of-the-range fitness equipment to both tone the body and develop the mind, while the stunning dual-level outdoor pool boasts spectacular views of the city skyline and beyond.

FactFile

■ The 264-rooms & suites property boasts exceptional dwelling spaces, with floor-to-ceiling windows, fully-equipped kitchens, interactive living spaces and private terraces featuring sweeping views of The Palm Jumeirah, the Arabian Gulf and the dazzling Dubai skyline.



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

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

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

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

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

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

The show must go Online



EXHIBITION HALL

SESSION HALL

DDP E-connect
can help your sellers connect with
500 GCC agents on
its virtual platform!



Ask for a
Free Demo

For further details & best rates, please contact:

crisna@ddppl.com, +971 55 4704200



Upcoming 2021

31st March and 1st April, 2021

**Middle East's First and
Only Virtual Travel Show**



**Resume, Restart,
Reconnect, Reimagine,
Rethink, Reengage and
Reignite TRAVEL**

