



# TRAVTALK



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

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## arabian travel market bringing back business

It was four days of pure networking between travel, tourism and hospitality industry partners at the first onsite trade show – Arabian Travel Market. Exhibitors from 62 destinations participated at this year’s edition along with buyers from 39 destinations, taking the total to 11,000 visitors. Industry leaders share their experience.



**His Excellency Helal Saeed Al Marri**  
Director General, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM)

“ Since the beginning, Dubai has shown remarkable resilience in dealing with the pandemic. Using all the data available to us as a smart city to make decisions, and opening the economy sector by sector, with the right precautions being taken at each stage, has enabled the gradual recovery of the travel and tourism industry and allowed the city to open its borders.”



**His Excellency Mohd Tarid Bin Sufian**  
Ambassador of Malaysia to the United Arab Emirates

“ We cannot wait and are ever ready to welcome travellers from the Middle East to the shores of Malaysia once the border opens. To revive and rejuvenate our tourism industry, our National Tourism Policy highlights transformational strategies namely – strengthen governance, create special tourism investment zones, embrace smart tourism, enhance demand sophistication.”



**Danielle Curtis**  
Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market

“ We’ve been working on this event for the last 18 months and ATM is the first global exhibition in over 18 months. It’s been an exciting time opening but it has been a challenge. However, the good news is that we have attendance from 101 destinations and represented on the show-floor we have 62 destinations with regards to our exhibitors.”

Contd. on page 3 ▶

### Leisure travel: key tourism driver

Oxford Economics highlights the outlook of the market and helps understand sectorial growth.

Shehara Rizly

Over the past few months countries are strengthening their vaccination drive to ensure confidence and provide initiatives to restart travel. The outlook depends on factors such as vaccination rates, mutations of the virus, economic growth in key origin markets and innovation by destinations and this could be to deal with and



**Scott Livermore**  
Chief Economist  
Oxford Economics Middle East

open up borders as COVID comes under control, it could be policy coordination between

Contd. on page 13 ▶

### DXB enhances traveller confidence

A seamless travel journey is a key element always highlighted by Dubai Airports.

TT Bureau

Dubai’s Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management has set security and safety requirements that all airports in the UAE and its strategic partners work to ensure the safety of everyone. The requirements include obtaining a negative (PCR) test result before arriving at Dubai Airport (72 hours) issued by one accredited laboratory, commitment to wear-



**Major General Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri**  
Director General, General Directorate of Residency & Foreign Affairs – Dubai

ing masks throughout the stay at airports, and do another test upon arrival

Contd. on page 13 ▶

### Women take lead in events sector

Introducing a new campaign to increase the involvement of women, Sum of us, takes centre stage.

Shehara Rizly

Addressing the gathering at the UFI MEA conference **Trixie LohMirmand**, Executive Vice President at the Dubai World Trade Centre stated, “As mentioned earlier by **HE Helal Al Marri** about the new initiative by Dubai World Trade Center is the founding sponsor of the Sum of us women in events group. It is a trade mark as a women in events group. We wanted to form



**Trixie LohMirmand**  
Executive Vice President  
Dubai World Trade Centre

this group to evolve, amplify and impact the female talent and leadership we have in the region here and

Contd. on page 13 ▶

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# ATM a refreshing change

► Contd. from page 1



**Holger Mahnicke**  
Consul General of Germany in Dubai

“Arabian travel market is very important for the German hospitality industry, we are very hopeful to receive again, the Emirati and other residents from the UAE to our country. In 2019, we had 1.6 million nights by UAE citizens and residents in Germany. So it's a very important market for us also it's vice versa because 567,000 German tourists came to Dubai in 2019.”



**Nia Nischaya**  
Deputy Marketing of Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy from the Republic of Indonesia

“I think this is a good opportunity for Indonesia and the UAE. We have signed the travel corner arrangement, this type of arrangement enables us to move forward to welcoming back tourists. Now Bali will be the first destination and we are planning to open it. In Bali not only the tourism workers but also the people in the surrounding area will get vaccinated.”



**Nasir Jamal Khan**  
CEO  
Al Naboodah Travel

“We are all very excited and happy as it not only brings us the confidence, it makes us feel that it is a new beginning, we are coming back and I believe that we should all congratulate the UAE, especially Dubai for bringing back ATM, which brings back the connections between the travel trade, the connections between the travel agencies, DMCs, airlines and so on.”

“I'm delighted to see this overwhelming ambience and atmosphere, so ATM 2021 is a very successful event. If you see the GCC side of the hall, every GCC country is there and every pavilion is busy with more serious buyers and exhibitors. There are proper introductions and total networking happening, that's what ATM is doing.”



**Jamal Abdulnazar**  
CEO  
Cozmo Travel

“We are really very happy to be here as last year the event didn't take place due to the pandemic. Things are now getting better and Arabian Travel Market is very important to us as it provides an opportunity to meet with our travel partners whom we could not meet for a long period of time.”



**Emre Ismailoglu**  
General Manager  
Turkish Airlines Dubai and Northern Emirates

“I must say it has been an absolutely refreshing change that we had this event and I think that it is very important to set the trend, there are a lot of policies in place in terms of social distancing, wearing masks and you have to get vaccinated. We want to go and meet people and this is a very important platform for people like us to connect with our customers.”



**Arijit Munshi**  
CEO  
EMEIA Tune Protect



**Robert Ardino**  
Vice President  
Blue Ribbon Bags

“It's actually quite refreshing to be at ATM physical as I flew in from New York just to be here for this event. The way it has been managed with social distancing and the way that they tell you to walk, all that has been great. I felt completely comfortable and it has just been great to reconnect with colleagues and friends that I had not been able to see in quite some time.”



**Namratha Rose**  
Manager - Marketing & Trade Relations, Spain  
Tourism - GCC - Tourism Division of Spain in Abu Dhabi - Embassy of Spain

“ATM has always been a special event for the travel trade, and it was very promising to attend a physical event and meet clients and partners after a year. Though the numbers were less for obvious reasons, I felt that there were more productive meetings. Spain did not have a stand this year but we saw that most agents were keen on learning more about when things would be fine.”



**Pichaya Saisaengchan**  
Director  
Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Dubai and Middle East Office

“Thailand has been a frequent exhibitor at the ATM for the past two decades and I'm happy that ATM was a physical event. We in Thailand are so lucky to be the most popular destination for tourists from the ME and thanks to the ATM for providing us a great opportunity to meet our old friends in the tourism industry and make new friends from the industry.”

Contd. on page 7 ►

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# Ireland to open for travel

Ireland has announced the adoption of the EU's new Digital COVID Certificate. This will enable more seamless travel for tourists and will be extended to vaccinated visitors from outside of the EU, including the GCC countries, and will allow certain travellers to visit the island.

 Shehara Rizly

Ireland will begin the scheme on 19 July, meaning that travellers with the approved vaccinations will then be able to visit Ireland without the need for a test or quarantining.

Tourism Ireland and the tourism industry have been actively planning for the restart of international travel. The organisation is now ready to roll out a significant promotional kick-start campaign to entice and welcome back international visitors.

The tourism industry has been preparing to ensure visitors will have a great holiday on the island of



**Niall Gibbons**  
Chief Executive of  
Tourism Ireland

Ireland in 2021. The health and safety of all visitors will be a priority, but the island is sure to still bring a very warm Irish welcome and a great holiday experience.

Approved vaccinations which will be accepted for travel to Ireland includes;

- **2 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine** (regarded as

fully vaccinated after 7 days since second dose)

- **2 doses of Moderna Vaccine** (regarded as fully vaccinated after 14 days since second dose)

- **2 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine** (regarded as fully vaccinated after 15 days since second dose)

- **1 dose of Johnson & Johnson/Janssen Vaccine** (regarded as fully vaccinated after 14 days since second dose)

Travellers from the GCC will be able to travel to Ireland provided they have received the full course of any one of these approved vaccinations. These rules apply to Ireland only and excludes Northern Ireland which will be



subject to the UK government requirements.

**Niall Gibbons**, Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, said, "The announcement is an extremely welcome and important step on the road to recovery for our industry and for those looking

forward to visiting Ireland this year. For the first time in many months, we can look to the future with optimism. Everyone at Tourism Ireland looks forward to getting back in full swing, to promote the island of Ireland as a safe, welcoming and 'must-see' destination

across the world. Over the coming months, we will be working flat out, with all of our partners, to restore as much business as possible. Our message is that we can't wait to roll out the green carpet and welcome back our overseas visitors." 

# Spain opens from June 7, 2021

Spain will open its doors to all fully vaccinated travellers authorised by the EMA or the WHO regardless of their destination of origin from June 7, 2021. The improvement of the epidemiological situation in Spain and the developing progress in the vaccination roll-out, make it possible to ease the measures for entry into Spain for tourist purposes.

 TT Bureau

The new regulations, described in this document, will come into force on 7 June. If you are travelling to Spain for tourism purposes from a country that does not belong to the European Union or the European Economic Area, there are certain entry requirements.



If you are travelling from a country or territory included in the list of countries with low incidence, excluded from the risk zone, you will be able to travel without the need for a diagnostic test or a certificate of vaccination or immunity. At the moment the countries included in this list are: Australia, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United King-

dom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and China and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao (subject to reciprocity). If you are travelling from a country or territory that is not included in the list of exempted countries, from 7 June tourists will be allowed to enter if they have a certificate of vaccination issued by the competent authorities of the country of origin from 14 days after the date of administration of the last dose of the complete vaccination schedule. The vaccines accepted shall be those authorised by the European Medicines Agency or those that have completed the WHO's emergency use process. 

## General FAQs

### What documentation/form does one have to fill in?

Regardless of your country of origin, all passengers arriving in Spain by air or sea, including those in transit and children under 6 years of age, must complete a health control form before their departure using the website [www.spth.gob.es](http://www.spth.gob.es) or the Spain Travel Health app. By filling in the form, a QR code is generated, which the traveller must show to the transport company before boarding, as well as at the health control checks at the point of entry into Spain.

### What are the health checks on arrival?

They will include at least temperature taking by non-contact thermometers or thermographic cameras; documentation check and a visual check on the passenger's condition. Passengers with an EU COVID Digital Certificate and those coming from countries not considered at risk will obtain a FAST CONTROL QR code that gives access to faster health checks, as they will not have to show the certificate either at boarding or at the health check on arrival. Upon confirmation or suspicion that a passenger may

be suffering from COVID-19, the existing communication protocols with the health services of the Autonomous Regions will be activated for referral and follow-up.

### What if one enters Spain as a passenger on an international cruise?

Passengers on international cruise ships sailing in territorial waters will not have to use the Spain Travel Health application, but their information will be collected through the EU Digital Passenger Locator Form application, available through the following link <https://www.healthygateways.eu/>.

# Switzerland on your bucket list

The pent-up demand for travel especially in the GCC has been growing for the past few months, the moment borders open, they are the first to travel. Switzerland Tourism Board is on a drive to welcome travellers and **Martin Nydegger**, CEO, Switzerland Tourism, shares more details with us.

 Shehara Rizly

## How important is the GCC market for Switzerland Tourism?

The GCC market is quite important to us and during the pre-pandemic year we had roughly almost a million overnights in the market and that's significant for us but it is not only the numbers but the fact that we can have people from other cultures, different backgrounds, that we can receive people in different areas of Switzer-



**Martin Nydegger**  
CEO  
Switzerland Tourism

land and also in particular in different seasons of Switzerland, so it's just like a whole

package that we are really happy about.

## Which time of the year do you recommend the GCC travellers to visit the destination?

We are all aware that school holidays are the predominant factor but besides that I would recommend two very diverse seasons; one is the winter season just because it is spectacularly white and Switzerland is actually the original winter destination of the world, this is where winter sports started. Also, something else that can be very interesting is spring with flowers in bloom. It's so diverse with all the colours and the smells as that is when Switzerland wakes up for the summer season.

## What is the update about the border opening?

I think it's now just a matter of few weeks before we can actually open, I'm sure you have read about it, I can confirm to you that we are working on opening borders and to cut down on traveller restrictions, we are working very closely with EU for the EU COVID Digital Passport which would allow people to travel once they are either vaccinated or tested, so we are actually looking at opening in the summer season. We have heard that the EU is looking at opening either in mid-June or end of June and there might be some adjustments so we are thinking that by July or August it will be open to GCC travellers.

## Could you share about the new campaign launched worldwide by Switzerland Tourism?

We have a spectacular campaign coming up with our main ambassador Roger Federer. We have just released a beautiful clip with Roger Federer and Robert De Niro called 'No drama', the title of the clip in Switzerland because after all this hectic time what we now want is a time without drama and that's what you find in Switzerland. People are talking about it and it is now available over YouTube (YouTube.com/myswitzerland). It is the most successful clip that we have ever had in the history of Switzerland Tourism and as of today it has almost 40 million viewers, we never

had a clip that had so many viewers. It is basically a conversation between Roger Federer and Robert De Niro, Roger Federer asks Robert De Niro whether he wants to come to Switzerland and make a beautiful movie because everything is so beautiful and spectacular, so carefree. Robert De Niro is a bit grumpy and he is for action and drama, and he says no, Switzerland is too perfect, I cannot come, everything works, you guys are too nice, I'm sorry I have to say no.

“The EU is looking at opening either in mid-June or end of June and there might be some adjustments so we are thinking that by July or August the border will be open to GCC travellers”

### FactFile

■ The EU COVID Digital Passport would allow people to travel once they are either vaccinated or tested.

# GCC a key market for Azerbaijan

Travellers from the GCC yearn for excitement and exploration as it's in their DNA to find new places of adventure, discover new cultures, follow historically famous areas or visit adrenaline pumping events in beautiful surroundings of nature – Azerbaijan offers all this and more. **Florian Sengstschmid**, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board shares with **TRAVTALK** plans for the year.

 Shehara Rizly

## What does it feel like to return to ATM onsite?

We are super excited to be back at the ATM, it is the first physical live event we are attending after almost 18 months and we brought nine partners from Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan airlines as well. We are operating flights between Dubai and Baku at this moment together with flydubai and Qatar airways. The GCC market is the first one which is already picking up although the borders in Azerbaijan are still closed. However, business travel is allowed and local and

international events are taking place.

## Could you share about the initiatives taken to ensure travellers confidence?

An important element is standards, hygiene and safety. In April 2020, we launched a comprehensive safety and hygiene programme for everyone in the industry, from travel agents, transporters, tour guides to hotels, basically partners in the industry. We are monitoring on a daily basis accommodation units in order to see that the standards will improve over the past year. There is a big return on authenticity of what is



**Florian Sengstschmid**  
CEO  
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

the natural essence of the destination and what Azerbaijan has to offer and this is what we have been reinforcing over the past 18 months might it be hiking, our food production chain, what makes Azerbaijan culture and nature special. All this is in big demand

when borders open with authentic experiences.

## How important is the Indian market?

India is one of our very important source markets although they are going through a difficult time right

the situation really improves on both sides so that we can restart our activities. We would love to go back and tell about what Azerbaijan has been doing during the last 18 months by improving links to fundamental experience centres, there is a lot

positive that India would be soon back to Azerbaijan.

## Do share about the new e-learning platform

We have been creating Azerbaijan 101, an e-learning platform. We run Indian special courses on special interest teams, for example in activities planned for Indians we have focal teams on weddings and wedding planners and event management and what you can do in Azerbaijan, how you can organise a perfect wedding, so we have also continued to work with online platforms to place Azerbaijan as a wedding destination post-COVID. 🇦🇿

“The GCC market is the first one which is already picking up although the borders in Azerbaijan are still closed. However, business travel is allowed and local and international events are taking place”

now. Our thoughts are with our Indian friends and we are supporting travel industry partners and media but we have to wait a bit until

one can expect once the borders are open. Unfortunately, we have to keep our relations with industry partners online, but we are

# Caution travel with shorter lead time

Going by the current trends it appears that travellers are being cautious given the fluidity of the situation surrounding the pandemic (with restricted movement, PCR testing and quarantine requirements). Also, looking at the lead times to departure, we also see this echoed in traveller sentiments of looking to travel at shorter notice.

## Resumption of flights in the ME Border opening/resumption of flights trends

**Flight and Hotel Searches Year Over Year (YoY)**  
As borders begin to reopen, we can see the % of total flight searches from all origins to the Middle East average at -63% while the % of total hotel searches from all origins to the Middle East average at -68% when indexed to January 2020. A slight decline in travel to the region over the past few weeks may be a result of ongoing border closures across Europe.

### Future departure dates

It appears that travellers are also being cautious given the fluidity of the situation surrounding the pandemic (with restricted movement, PCR testing and quarantine requirements), as we observe the hotel search volume by future travel date over the last two weeks (4/6/2021 - 4/20/2021) peak in April / May 2021 with 81% of the

To Middle East: All Hotel SEARCH  
% change since 1/5/2020



events combined taking place for the Middle East with a drop off over the summer months. We would expect to see an increase in search events as travellers near their departure date.

A similar trend can also be seen for the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with approximately 80% of events taking place for April / May departure dates, when we look at Hotel Search volumes from all origins to the UAE from the last two weeks (4/6/2021 - 4/20/2021)

### Lead times:

Looking at the lead times to departure, we also see this echoed in traveller sentiments of looking to travel at shorter notice. From w/c 18th April 2021, 35% of total events were for lead times of 2-4 weeks.

To Middle East: All Flight SEARCH  
% change since 1/5/2020



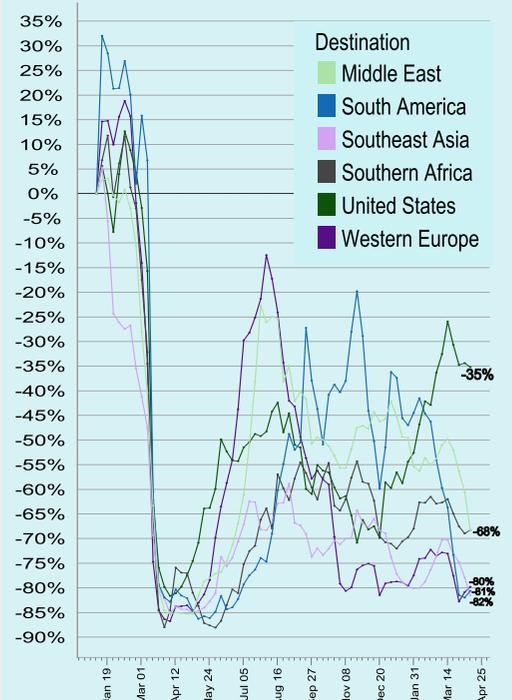
## Travel trends of preferred destinations

### Hotel search by Destination Region

When looking at all origins hotel search by destination % change since January 2020, the United States (US) and Middle East see a positive uplift in travel intent (-35% and -68% respectively), while travel continues to remain depressed for the most part across the world.

For the UAE specifically, the volume of hotel search events is currently at -50% when indexed to January 2020. A downward trend has been observed over the past four weeks, which may be reflective of the seasonality in the region as the weather begins to get hotter and it is a quieter period, as a result of Ramadan.

Hotel SEARCH by Destination Region  
% Change (since 1/5/2020)



## Top origins to the UAE

Looking at the hotel search events of the past 60 days, top origins appear to be from the US and Europe suggesting whilst there are ongoing border closures, there's still an appetite from international travellers to travel further, as and when movement restrictions lift in the respective countries and travellers are permitted to travel again safely.

Instructions / Tips for using this report:

- Select one destinations.
  - Distance Range = The distance between the selected destination metros and the origin. That is why it is important to select destination metros that are in close geographic proximity to each other, so that the Distance Range is easy to interpret.
- Tip: The Distance Range

Destination Country	Origin Country	%age of Events	Destination Country	Origin Country	%age of Events	Destination Country	Origin Country	%age of Events			
1	United Arab Emirates	United Arab Emirates	29.36%	10	United Arab Emirates	China	1.15%	19	United Arab Emirates	Spain	0.59%
2	United Arab Emirates	United States	21.8%	11	United Arab Emirates	Italy	0.97%	20	United Arab Emirates	Kazakhstan	0.54%
3	United Arab Emirates	United Kingdom	8.03%	12	United Arab Emirates	Israel	0.88%	21	United Arab Emirates	Ukraine	0.53%
4	United Arab Emirates	France	5.86%	13	United Arab Emirates	Canada	0.83%	22	United Arab Emirates	Brazil	0.41%
5	United Arab Emirates	Germany	4.99%	14	United Arab Emirates	Belgium	0.76%	23	United Arab Emirates	Portugal	0.4%
6	United Arab Emirates	Russia	3.49%	15	United Arab Emirates	Austria	0.68%	24	United Arab Emirates	Egypt	0.38%
7	United Arab Emirates	India	3.43%	16	United Arab Emirates	Poland	0.66%	25	United Arab Emirates	Pakistan	0.38%
8	United Arab Emirates	Switzerland	2.73%	17	United Arab Emirates	Saudi Arabia	0.65%				
9	United Arab Emirates	Netherlands	1.43%	18	United Arab Emirates	Turkey	0.59%				

## Lead Time, Duration, Number of Travellers

The majority of travellers are also travelling with more spontaneity, with 26% of flight search to travel lead time events taking place in a 2-7 days window for all origins searching to the Middle East and Africa, when taking data from the last 60 days.

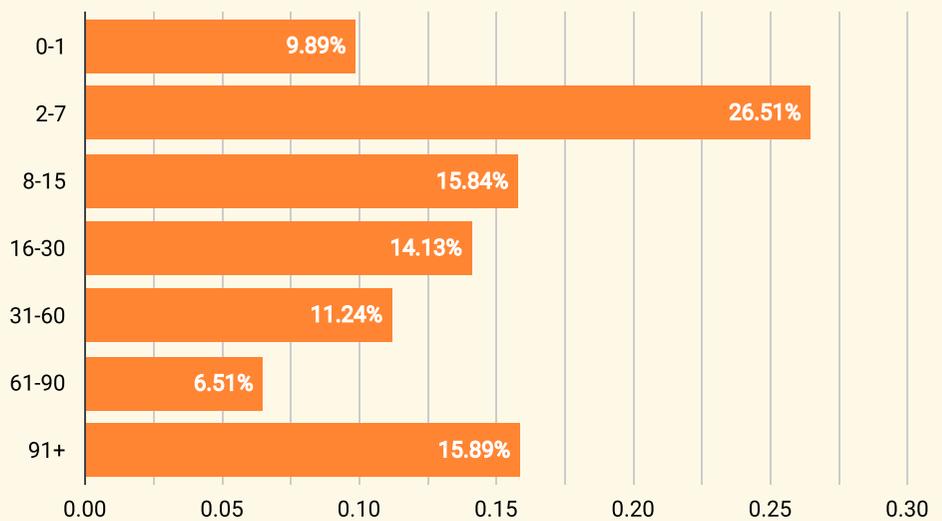
Trip durations are also longer, with approximately 36% of travellers trip duration lasting more than 15+ days and approximately 71% of travellers travelling solo.

Much of travel also remains regional with 49% of events recorded for origin distances at 501 miles – 1,500 miles from the destination.

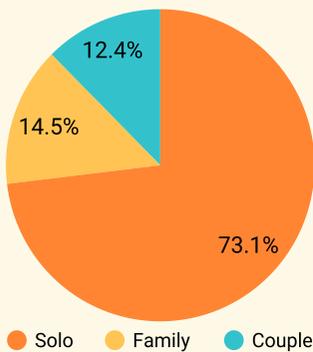
The search to travel lead time window is even shorter, when we observe the hotel events, with 23% of events taking place in a 0-1 day window over the past 60 days, suggesting a strong appetite for domestic travel.

There is also a higher % of couples travelling, with 29% of events recorded for this group of travellers and 36% of search to travel events for hotels recorded for origin distances at 0 - 100 miles from the destination.

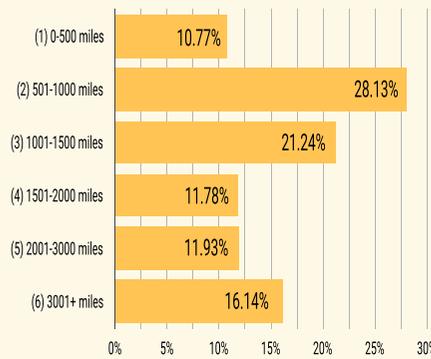
### Search/Book to Travel Lead Time (in Days)



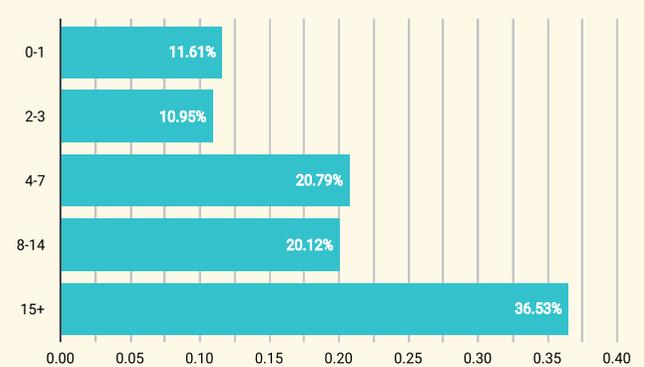
### Number of Travelers



### Distance



### Trip Duration (Days)



#### Instructions / Tips for using this report:

1. Select flight or hotel, current year or prior year, and a type of event.
2. Select origins. The granularity level of origins is country level (state level for US and Canada).
3. Select destinations. The granularity level of destinations is metro level. State level is available only for US, Canada, Australia, and Mexico.
4. Distance Range = The distance between the selected destination metros and the origin.

Tip: The Distance Range filter makes it easy to limit to drive markets or flight markets.

5. Travel Dates: The Travel Dates can filter the report based on when travelers are looking to depart. Note that if specific travel dates are selected, the Event to Travel Lead Time chart will only show the corresponding categories.

Courtesy: Sojern

# ATM sets the tone for positivity

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**Sapna Aidasani**  
Director Marketing  
Pluto Travels

“We have almost 80 countries participating and the kind of response I have seen here, I could never believe it would be this good. I got the opportunity to network with representatives from 45 countries across different continents like Africa, Asia, Middle East. The best thing is that we were actually getting first-hand information from the tourism boards of different countries, so we were able to understand when they were going to open, how many had already opened up, what were the requirements to travel there, was PCR important, etc. ATM has really allowed us to connect back, and it's such a feel-good factor.”



**Alaa Mahmood**  
Camp General Manager  
Bab Al Nojoom

“It was actually a long-awaited event, we have been eagerly looking forward to be here, it's a huge success, we are expecting this year to be the rise of the new dawn as they call it. We had lots of interactions, many meetings with future partners and we are really optimistic about the future. We have a unique property and it was not presented so far, so that is what we are promoting. It is a different camping base in different categories and it offers cost-effective options where the guests can stay in our tents but they are allowed to bring their own gear, sleeping bags, own food etc. Our other offerings include camping on wheels on the beach, luxury categories of duplex chalets with balcony, and many sports activities.”

“GCC countries are the third most important overseas market for Germany so they're extremely important for our tourism industry profits. In 2019, we had 1.6 million guests overnight, guests from the GCC countries. We're very hopeful that by the end of 2022 we will reach pre-COVID figures as GCC travellers love to travel, especially to Europe – Germany is one of their favourite destinations and hopefully we will welcome them back very soon.”



**Yamina Sofo**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
German National Tourism  
Office in Dubai for GCC countries

“I must say it has been very uplifting to come back to a face-to-face interaction. This must have been my 20<sup>th</sup> ATM. But the fact that we are having a travel trade show after 12 months has been, I think, a tremendous positive sign as we look forward to the recovery from this pandemic, great engagement with people from the industry, hotels and the tourism board, and overseas visitors coming from different sorts of markets. And, you know, this is just setting the right tone for the return to normalcy and the positivity that we all need.”



**Samir Mehta**  
Advisor, Go Zahid  
Destination Management  
(part of Zahid Travel Group)

“ATM is the most important exhibition in the Middle East and as a company based in Dubai it is very vital for TIME Hotels to be here and support the UAE in their efforts amid the pandemic. This year I think that summer will be eventful because many countries have eased travel restrictions. I am optimistic about the future of hospitality industry, but we need to be cautious because the pandemic is not over yet.”



**Mohamad Awadalla**  
CEO  
TIME Hotels

# The world meets at ATM

Arabian Travel Market, the leading global event for the Middle East inbound and outbound travel industry, brought together the travel, tourism and hospitality fraternity with great caution. The event provided a good platform to reconnect with industry partners and meet with new and potential partners over four days of positivity.





# Building business relationships

► Contd. from page 9





# KSA pledges US\$ 100m for tourism

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has become the first country to pledge financial support to the Tourism Community Initiative, welcomed in the 2020 G20 Riyadh Leaders' Declaration and the Diriyah Communiqué for the Tourism Working Group, and aligned with the AIUa Framework.

TT Bureau

The Saudi Ministry of Tourism, the World Bank, and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) signed a MoU outlining their commitment to collaborate on the activation of the Tourism Community Initiative. This collaboration is aimed at building an inclusive and resilient tourism ecosystem that leads to job

creation, the development of the private sector, and economic growth through a range of demand-driven investments in line with the country's needs, development strategies, and global sustainable development objectives. The signing of the MoU took place in Riyadh during the official opening of the first UNWTO regional office outside of the Madrid HQ.



His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Saudi Minister for Tourism

“Our collaboration with the World Bank and UNWTO and the envisioned global fund mark the first steps on a robust roadmap for recovery that will provide opportunities for empowerment, education and entrepreneurship”

The collaboration aims to include a global Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) to be established by the World Bank, proposed to support the growth of tourism as a key driver of economic development. It would be the first global World Bank fund

devoted exclusively to the tourism sector. The fund is intended to benefit developing countries around the world by building an inclusive, resilient tourism ecosystem and support people who depend on the sector for their livelihoods. The

fund aims to raise a total of USD 500 million in its five-year first phase. Saudi Arabia has committed the first USD 100 million and joined the World Bank in inviting other countries to contribute to the global fund.

His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Saudi Minister for Tourism said, “At last year's G20 meeting we pressed for a global commitment to support communities with high tourism potential in taking advantage of the opportunities that sustainable and inclusive tourism can offer.” “Tourism has vast potential and can be instrumental in addressing many of the challenges faced by host communities, especially when

those communities are small and remote.” “Our collaboration with the World Bank and UNWTO and the envisioned global fund mark the first steps on a robust roadmap for recovery that will provide opportunities for empowerment, education and entrepreneurship to people from all walks of life and ensure that tourism remains a sector of hope.”

## FactFile

■ The collaboration aims to include a global Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) to be established by the World Bank, proposed to support the growth of tourism as a key driver of economic development.

# Domestic travellers buoy Dubai

An overwhelming majority (87%) of consumers in the UAE are satisfied with their stay in Dubai hotels since the beginning of the pandemic, and eight in 10 consumers are confident hotels apply the required level of sanitisation, according to KPMG's report on Dubai's hospitality industry.

Despite strong outbound travel restrictions among many of the UAE's main source markets, Suite success: Dubai hospitality survey 2021 fuels hopes of

popularity as a staycation destination has been key in supporting the emirate's hospitality sector. Though short- to medium-term challenges remain, Dubai's successful management

“Dubai's popularity as a staycation destination has been key in supporting the emirate's hospitality sector”



Sidharth Mehta  
Partner, Head of Real Estate  
KPMG Lower Gulf

recovery for the emirate's hospitality sector. More than half (55%) of consumers surveyed were willing to stay at a hotel in Dubai, notwithstanding COVID-19, with 85% willing to return.

Sidharth Mehta, Partner, Head of Real Estate, KPMG Lower Gulf said, “Dubai's

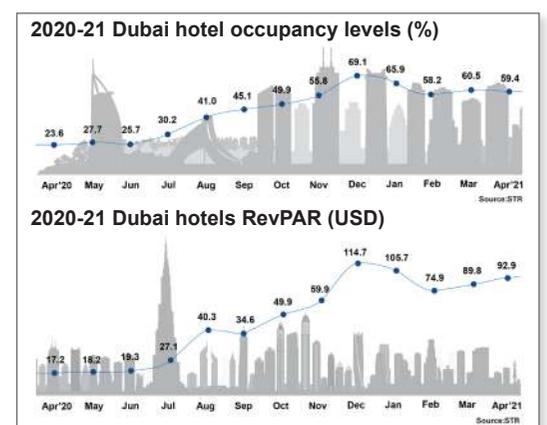
of the pandemic and the efforts put in by individual players have helped recovery. New developments, such as Ain Dubai and the Museum of the Future, successful mass immunisation, and safety protocols followed by properties will increase Dubai's appeal as a safe destination.”

Despite the odds, the UAE recorded the second-highest occupancy rates globally (54%), behind China, in 2020. Dubai's occupancy rates steadily improved since April 2020, touching a 12-month high of 69% last December, dipping to 59.4% this April. While international arrivals plum-

meted, the number of room nights sold to domestic tourists increased by 107%, surging from 2.74 million in 2019 to 5.68 million in 2020.

Revenue per available room (RevPAR) in Dubai grew by more than 550% during 2020. After hitting a low of USD 17.2 (AED 63.18) at the start of the pandemic, RevPAR reached a peak of USD 114.7 (AED 421.32) in December 2020, coinciding with the holiday period. As of April 2021, RevPAR stood at USD 92.9 (AED 341.22).

The Dubai Assured stamp launched in June 2020, with the goal of assuring visitors that hotels, restaurants, retail outlets and attractions



are in line with international health and safety standards and protocols, also served to build guest confidence. More than three-quarters (77%) of those planning to stay in a Dubai hotel would consider whether a property received a Dubai Assured stamp, certifying its sanitisation protocols.

According to the KPMG report, 75% of owner/operators surveyed anticipate the vaccine to be highly effective in boosting occupancy rates. In fact, half of those surveyed expect occupancy rates above 60% in FY 2021 and 75% expect occupancy to return to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2023.

# 150 global participants at UFI MEA

After almost 15 months of digital meetings, the first onsite in-person event in the business events sector was hosted by Dubai World Trade Centre on May 26. UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry Middle East and Africa Conference 2021 successfully concluded with over 150 participants from across the globe and 30 expert speakers.

The UFI MEA Conference brought together leading players from the region and beyond to network, exchange ideas and forge new partnerships, with participants travelling from as far as the United States. His Excellency Helal Saeed Al-Marri, Director General of Dubai Tourism and Dubai

World Trade Centre Authority, and Kai Hattendorf, Managing Director and CEO of UFI, delivered welcome ad-

resses. Leaders from the regional and international exhibition sector gathered in Dubai – thanks to the city's

well-established measures to safeguard the well-being of all visitors and lead the way in restarting business events.



**Issam Kazim**  
CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing

“Driven by the city’s strong, decisive leadership and prudent handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dubai has led the way internationally in safely restarting exhibitions, trade shows and other business events, which play a vital role in economic and knowledge development locally. Just as we’ve worked with local and international stakeholders to ensure the city has been well-placed to resume events, we are committed to working with the wider industry to share knowledge. Hosting the UFI Middle East and Africa Conference has enabled us to engage with key leaders from the global business events community and provide a platform for its continued rebound.”



**Kai Hattendorf**  
CEO and Managing Director, UFI

“We are very happy to offer our members and the industry the opportunity to re-connect in person, on site, face-to-face, this week. You could literally sense the excitement in the conference hall, as colleagues from across the region met each other again, took stock of where we are as markets re-open and discovered future opportunities in the Middle East and beyond. UFI is ready to support the industry across the region in this recovery.”

“The Dubai World Trade Centre is delighted to finally welcome so many UFI delegates to connect again face-to-face, celebrate the industry’s achievements and jointly accelerate the global momentum of events re-opening. I’m also proud to share the launch of the Sum+ Of Us Women in Events Network, which has received a pledge of support from UFI, whose own Special Interest Group for Female Leadership strives to raise the profile and visibility of female leaders and talents in the exhibition industry. The network will be the region’s first women leadership development initiative, and has been established to support talented, dedicated women to evolve, grow and create greater impact in the exhibitions and wider events industry.”



**Trixie LohMirmand**  
Executive Vice President at the Dubai World Trade Centre

“This conference is a clear manifestation of the industry’s resilience and determination to thrive, despite the current circumstances. The success of the event wouldn’t have been possible without the support of our host, Dubai World Trade Centre, and our destination partner, Dubai Tourism. I’d like to offer a special thanks to all of our sponsors, speakers and delegates for their contribution and participation.” The event is the latest in a series of important shows and conferences taking place in Dubai over recent months, following on from Gitex Technology Week, Gulfood and Arabian Travel Market.”



**Naji El Haddad**  
Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa, UFI

## Longer haul travel will recover slowly

► Contd. from page 1

governments, marketing strategies taking advantage of social media and other digital means, events such as Expo or the FIFA World Cup or ATM and important policy stimulation by the governments in the region such as visa reform or supporting destinations. Overall, this should generate a significant uptake in tourism

The longer haul travel faces more headwinds and takes longer to recover, and travel will ultimately be driven by leisure travel. Drivers will include economic growth in origin markets, the significant extra saving in key origin markets there could be a constraining which will benefit travel and tourism in the region, we do expect business travel

“The longer haul travel faces more headwinds and takes longer to recover, and travel will ultimately be driven by leisure travel”

— Scott Livermore

looking forward, this would be led by domestic tourism which could be back to pre-crisis levels by the turn of the year and surely followed by local tourism.

to return to pre-crisis levels over the next few years because some networking interactions business cannot be done via technology. 🌅

## Safety a prime concern

► Contd. from page 1

at the airport. Major General Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri, Director General, General Directorate of Residency & Foreign Affairs – Dubai (GDRFA-D) said that since the start of the pandemic, GDRFA Dubai has

“The new biometric systems deployed at 122 smart gates at arrival and departure terminals in Dubai airports enable passengers to complete passport control procedures between 5-9 seconds”

— Major General Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri

been keen to secure all its air, sea and land ports to limit the spread of the virus and has joined forces with the UAE’s efforts to take all precautionary measures. In his welcome address at the Airport Security Forum at the Dubai Airport Show 2021, Major General Al Marri said, “Recently, we launched

a new fast-track passport control service that uses face and iris-recognition technologies. The new biometric systems deployed at 122 smart gates at arrival and departure terminals in Dubai airports enable passengers

to complete passport control procedures between five and nine seconds depending on the movement and steps of the passenger. This system contributed to enhancing travellers’ confidence in the emirate, as such precautionary measures in light of the pandemic formed a safety umbrella for them.” 🌅

## Mentoring young women

► Contd. from page 1

how we contribute to the growth and development of the industry and more importantly this is not a homogeneous group it is for male, female, black, white, yellow we want everybody to be in so that we can augment and continuously develop and work as a group to highlight, develop, mentor and to exchange, share and cultivate the talent of the new emerging group

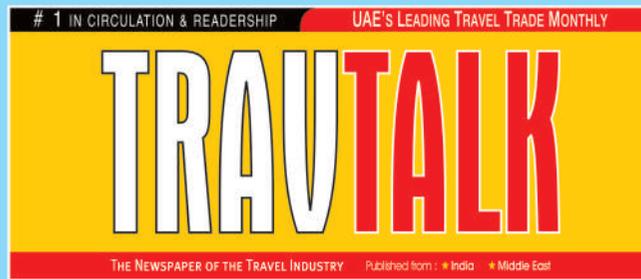
to HE Al Marri about it and he was very supportive and I wanted to get some ladies to come on the founding board and there were some names of ladies that came up but you never heard of them, well you have heard of them but never seen them on social media. So it is almost like the first criteria as they are very minimally on social media. Ladies spend a lot of

“We can augment and continuously develop and work as a group to highlight, develop, mentor and to exchange, share and cultivate the talent of the new emerging group of young ladies in the industry”

— Trixie LohMirmand

of young ladies in the industry. For me it is very humbling when I wanted to start this group and spoke

time just getting the work done and I think after work there are many other commitments too.” 🌅



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# Marhaba Europe convenes agents

Tourism boards of Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria came together bringing nearly 60 partners from the four European destinations to meet with almost 80 travel agents and tour operators from the Middle East. The two day event consisted of workshops, business, meetings and ended with a gala dinner.



# Marhaba Europe attracts GCC

It was a refreshing change as the rules and regulations eased out for the travel and tourism sector in Dubai to host events under strict compliance, hence the Marhaba Europe brought together four of the tourism boards with 60+ partners and 80+ travel professionals from the region for two days of learning, networking and talking about new business opportunities.



**Yamina Sofu**  
Director of Sales and Marketing  
German National Tourism  
Office in Dubai for GCC countries

“Marhaba Europe is a joint venture of the national tourism offices of Switzerland, France, Germany and Austria. We are very proud that in the present circumstances we were able to put this workshop together, where we bring together the trade from the GCC countries and our partners from four countries.”



**Matthias Albrecht**  
Director  
GCC Countries,  
Switzerland Tourism

“The purpose was to meet each other again and to restart business. We feel it when we talk to the people here and we really feel that people want to travel again, people want to sell trips again to Europe and that’s why we partnered up with our colleagues from France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland together to build up this event.”



**Karim Mekachera**  
Director  
Middle East and Turkey  
Region, Atout France

“In 2019, we merged with our colleagues from Switzerland, Germany and Austria at the event but business meetings were separate for each destination but now this year we merged altogether to one day as we wanted the travel operators to reach all four European countries in one platform. We have 64 exhibitors with 22 from different regions in France.”

“This event brought in such an optimistic vibe because we are seeing people after so long in person and it gives us hope that travel is going to bounce back. As of now our clients are looking for more spaced out areas to relax, although they miss the hustle and bustle they want to be safe.”



**Rashida Harianawala**  
Assistant Manager  
Safar Travel Abu Dhabi

“Kuwait market is waiting to travel, they keep asking Atout France when they will open for them to travel to France; for example Paris, Kuchavel, Germany they ask about all these destinations. This event provided us an opportunity to learn about the new policies and regulations in Europe when it does open to travel.”



**Mohammad Awadh**  
General Manager  
Golden Seashell  
Travel & Tourism Kuwait

“Travellers from GCC countries have been one of our key source markets as we have some of the most exclusive facilities with our five-star hotel range in Courchevel. It was a great opportunity to meet with some of the partners we have been working with from 2010, and also to make new connections and meet new partners from GCC countries.”



**Thomas Wardeh**  
Marketing Manager  
Maison Tournier



**Sophie Vaissellet**  
Tourism Manager  
The Village

“We are really happy to be here at Marhaba Europe, we are presenting our shopping destination which is a very good experience for the discerning clientele from the GCC as we provide one of the most unique experiences with VIP facilities and areas dedicated which house over 150 brands.”



**Frederic Gouguides**  
International Sales Director  
Park Asterix

“The GCC market is one of the most important markets for us over the past many years. We are here at Marhaba Europe to present our 47 attractions with three hotels; two three stars and one four-star hotel with a total of 450 rooms. We are provided the opportunity to meet with our partners from the GCC and also meet some new agents.”



**Nati Madi**  
Travel Agent and Tour  
Manager  
Neto Travel and  
Vacation Israel

“I am very happy to introduce my company; in Israel it is called Neto Tours. I have five branches across Israel and I also represent Switzerland Tourism in the Arab sector in Israel. My clients are really interested in new destinations especially after the peace in October last year and we had almost four flights daily.”

“We are very happy to be here after such a long time and cannot wait to welcome our visitors from the GCC again. The Outlet City Metzingen is not only the largest outlet in Europe but also it is the hometown of Hugo Boss with over 130 premium and luxury brands, so it’s a unique shopping destination for everybody. The main interest by the buyers over the past two days at Marhaba Europe is when they can travel, so everything is now in place and even we can’t wait until the borders open, I think that it will happen very soon.”



**Angela Rieger**  
Sales and Tourism  
Manager  
Outlet City Metzingen

“Marhaba Europe over the past two days has helped us a lot as they provided us an update about the new rules and regulations so that we can impart that knowledge to our customers. It was good to meet people and we had fruitful meetings and re-connected again with some partners. Everyone wants to travel now after been at home for so long. Safety has now become a mandatory requirement for every individual as they have become more responsible.”



**Khaled Farhan**  
CEO  
KMF Group Dubai  
Inputs by Shehara Rizly

# Travel demand to grow by Q4 2021

The President of Emirates Sir Tim Clark recently shared that the demand for air travel could come back at a ‘staggering rate’ by Q4 2021, if the vaccine programme beats the virus. He further reiterated that the low cost carriers would benefit especially from intra-European travel and domestic travel at present.



**Sir Tim Clark**  
President  
Emirates

## TT Bureau

The ideal situation is that the vaccine programme beats the virus by autumn of this year and we get some relief, then demand will come back at a staggering rate. Low cost (airlines) will benefit from intra-European travel, the US domestic

market, China’s domestic market and international travel will (also) return in large numbers, according to Sir Tim Clark.

“But the problem (with this scenario) will be two-fold. The ability of airlines to meet the demand when it comes and two, the conditionality of country access require-

ments,” he added. On the latter point, Sir Tim explained that even though there is massive pent-up demand,

“Although airlines and airports had really worked hard to ‘sanitise’ how they managed passenger welfare, mitigating risk through their protocols, that alone would not be enough”

there may well be inhibitors too. Some passengers might be nervous and worried about variant strains of

the coronavirus, the situation in India he said is creating a ripple effect across the global economy. Although airlines and airports had really worked hard to ‘sanitise’ how they managed passenger welfare, mitigating risk through their protocols, that alone would not be enough. “It’s a question of how we navigate the next

six months and if we do it right with equitable vaccine distribution, testing regimes simplified and made cheaper, all of this lends to the theory that by the end of the year, we’ll be back in business in some scale,” he said.

# Yas Island focuses on travel trade

Over the past few months, Yas Island has been busy with various new initiatives to ensure customer confidence to its wide array of experiences for family tourism from touchless journeys to an unforgettable experience. **Marijana Mihajlovic**, Director of Business Development, Experience Hub shares with **TRAVTALK** plans for the year.

**Shehara Rizly**

## What are your new key source markets for 2021?

Throughout the pandemic period, Experience Hub has been virtually engaging with travel trade in key source markets including UK, Germany, Russia, China, India and GCC, training them online to ensure continuous product knowledge in preparation for gradual market

re-openings. This year, we will be focusing our efforts on the Qatar and Kazakhstan markets as our new key source markets.

## Tell us more about the Yas Experts program?

'Yas Expert' is a destination training and certification program for travel professionals and agents, and Experience Hub has enrolled more than 7,000 travel agents into its distinguished program –



**Marijana Mihajlovic**  
Director of Business Development,  
Experience Hub

which 500 agents from the GCC enrolled in the program. More than 5,000 travel agents have already received certification, joining an elite team of specialists with enhanced knowledge of the destination. We are looking to launch various activations and competitions in 2021, to further promote the program.

## How is the destination prepared to welcome guests?

Since the start of the pandemic, Yas Island has welcomed back the domestic market and successfully reassured UAE residents of their safety and well-being during their time on the island. The destination has introduced numerous initiatives such as the widely-commended 'Yas Wellness Program', granting guests direct access to a dedicated team of Yas Wellness Ambassadors who are able to answer queries on the health and safety measures in place. This has been coupled with the '#TogetherAtYas' digital platform – a one-stop shop for all the responsible and fun experiences that can be had.

Earlier in 2021, all Yas Theme Parks – Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, and CLYMB Abu Dhabi – were the first theme parks in the region to adopt cutting-edge contactless technology, being able to enter all theme parks using facial recognition.

## What are the summer promotions provided to travel agents? Are there any incentives/benefits?

Yas Island unveiled its Kids Go Free product offering for travel trade at this year's Arabian Travel Market. Until September 30, 2021, children below the age of 12 will be able to stay and play for free – one child for every one

paying adult, which includes complimentary admission to the island's world-class theme parks, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, and Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, as well as opportunities to stay and eat for free at the island's diverse portfolio of hotels. We've provided special B2B rates for our trade partners – a one-night stay at any Yas Island Hotel with access to all three Yas Island theme parks over two consecutive days starts at a B2B rate of AED 427.50 per adult. A two-night stay starts at AED 560.00 per adult, and a three-night stay starts at AED 692.50 per adult, with access to all three parks over three and four consecutive days respectively. 🌅

**“We've provided special B2B rates for our trade partners – a one-night stay at any Yas Island Hotel with access to all three Yas Island theme parks over two consecutive days starts at a B2B rate of AED 427.50 per adult”**

# Pent-up demand for travel

The pent-up demand for travel reveals that travellers who were frequent flyers before COVID-19 expect to take almost six flights in the next 12 months, underlining their desire to travel as soon as possible. 78% attribute being vaccinated against COVID-19 as key to their confidence in the safety of air travel as per research released by Collinson's Priority Pass.

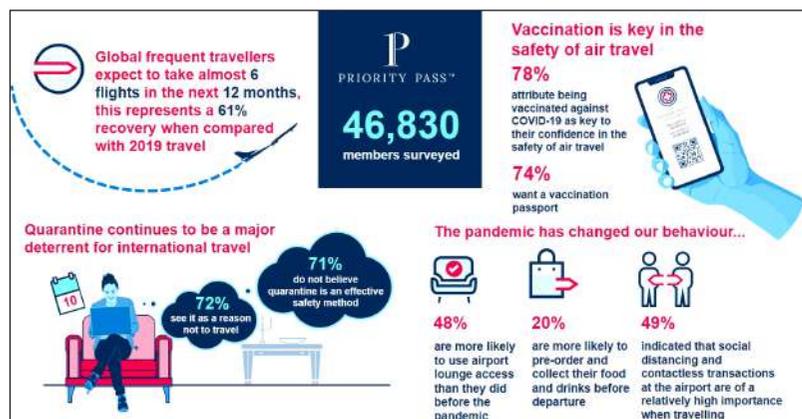
**TT Bureau**

New research released by Collinson's Priority Pass has revealed that pre-pandemic frequent flyers are ready to get back on a plane, claiming they expect to fly nearly six times in the next 12 months. Compared with pre-COVID averages of almost 10 flights per year, this represents a 61% recovery compared with 2019 travel. The global survey analyses the opinions of over 46,000 members of the company's Priority Pass™ programme, and reveals that leisure travel will make up more than half of trips (55%)

taken in the next year. While business travel will recover more slowly, there is demand from frequent flyers for it to return, with the expectation that business travel will account for 45% of flights taken in the next year globally.

## Confident and excited – the world's travellers are ready for a reboot

Over a year has passed since the advent of COVID-19, and people's lives and travel plans continue to be impacted by the pandemic. In recent months, however, the on-going global vaccination roll-out has brought a glimmer of hope to those



anxious for travel to return. When questioned on the possibility of travelling by air in the next 12 months, 78% of members expressed feelings of excitement and 61% felt confident; findings which will likely be reassuring to the travel industry.

Looking ahead, international travel will accelerate faster year-on-year versus domestic travel. However, domestic travel (at 64%) is still set to make a greater recovery than international travel (at 59%), when compared with 2019 travel levels.

## Travel experience expectations for the immediate future have changed dramatically

Understandably, the desire to keep health risks to a minimum has resulted in key changes to the way people experience airport

travel, with the aim of keeping external contact to a minimum:

- 22% are more likely to fly short haul
- 24% are more likely to use unmanned facilities, such as biometric passport kiosks
- 48% are more likely to use airport lounge access than they did before the pandemic
- 20% are more likely to pre-order and collect their food and drinks before departure
- 49% indicated that social distancing and contactless transactions at the airport are of a relatively high importance when travelling. 🌅

## ONEWORLD GLOBAL AIRLINE ALLIANCE Qatar

The Governing Board of the oneworld global airline alliance has appointed Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, **His Excellency Akbar Al Baker** to serve as its Chairman. As Chairman of the oneworld Governing Board, Al Baker will oversee the alliance's governance, chair oneworld's Governing Board meetings and work closely with oneworld CEO Rob Gurney and the alliance's management team.



## AIR FRANCE KLM Saudi Arabia and Bahrain

Air France KLM Group (Middle East) has announced the appointment of a new Country Sales Manager for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. **Raza Syed**, who is currently Country Sales Manager in Bahrain, will take on the new role, following the retirement of Hamid Sait, on June 1, 2021. Syed joined Air France KLM Group in 1999 and has held a range of managerial positions within the Group in the Middle East, from Regional Pricing Manager to Sales Manager in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Country Manager of Bahrain.



## FOUR SEASONS HOTELS AND RESORTS New York

International luxury hospitality leader Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts announced the addition of **Marc Speichert** to its executive leadership team in the role of Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, effective May 3, 2021. He will oversee the development and execution of the company's integrated commercial strategy with a mandate that includes the identification of new products and markets; revenue growth across the company; brand marketing.



## MANDARIN ORIENTAL Dubai

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group has announced the appointment of **Joanna Flint** as Chief Commercial Officer. The newly created role will oversee the development and execution of the Group's commercial strategy while also taking executive responsibility for all aspects of Mandarin Oriental's customer experience. Flint will take over the responsibilities of Chief Marketing Officer, Jill Kluge, who retires from Mandarin Oriental in Sept 2021. Prior to joining Mandarin Oriental, Flint spent 12 years at Google in general management and sales leadership roles.



## TAJ JUMEIRAH LAKES TOWERS Dubai

Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers has appointed **Mohit Gurnani** as General Manager. In his new role, Gurnani will be responsible for overseeing the full management and operations of the hotel in Dubai as it continues to deliver exceptional guest experiences. A seasoned hotelier, Gurnani has been with The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) for over 15 years, having led a distinguished professional path with several senior management roles in India and the Middle East. Prior to his recent appointment, Gurnani held the position of General Manager at Taj Chandigarh.



## MILLENNIUM PLACE MIRDIF Dubai

Millennium Place Mirdif, the new four-star hotel property development in Mirdif Hills community by Dubai Real Estate, has announced the appointment of **Bassam Bou Sleiman** as General Manager. In his new role, Bou Sleiman will oversee and organise the new property pre-opening developments which gears up for Q4, 2021 opening. Born and raised in Lebanon, Bou Sleiman brings 17 years of hospitality experience working in the GCC region. Previous roles have taken him to Riviera Hotel & Resort Beirut, Mist Hotel & Resort Ehden by Warwick International Hotels, The Palms Hotel & Resort in Kuwait, Le Meridien & Crowne Plaza.



# Towards sustainable tourism

Saudi Arabia hosted global travel industry leaders across public and private sectors at the Tourism Recovery Summit in Riyadh recently. The summit convened to discuss common solutions and tangible actions as the sector enters a new era. Participants exchanged experiences, ideas and opportunities to ensure the future of tourism is more sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

### TT Bureau

The Tourism Recovery Summit gathered more than 60 speakers at the Ritz Carlton in Riyadh and attracted a global virtual audience of thousands. The speaker line-up included 16 tourism ministers from around the globe as well as private sector leaders from the aviation, hospitality and cruise sectors as well as indus-

try bodies. Through panel discussions and bilateral meetings, participants exchanged experiences, ideas and opportunities to ensure the future of tourism is more sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

Participants at the summit included The Hon. Edmund Bartlett CD, MP, Minister of Tourism of Jamaica; H.E. Harry Theoharis, Minister of Tourism of Greece; Sir



**Her Highness Princess Haifa Mohamed Bint Al Saud**  
Assistant Minister of Tourism

Martin Sorrell, Founder and Executive Chairman of S4 Capital and Founder, WPP; Dr. Jill Tiefenthaler, CEO, National Geographic Society; Geoffrey Kent, Founder, Co-Chairman and CEO, Abercrombie and

Kent; Willie Walsh, Director General, International Air Transport Association (IATA); Sébastien Bazin, Group CEO and Chairman of the Board, Accor; Ernesto Ottone Ramírez, Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO; Amr AIMadani, CEO, Royal Commission for AIUla; Nadiyah Al-Nasr, CEO, NEOM; John Pagano, CEO, Red Sea Development Project & Amaala; and Jerry Inzerillo, CEO, Diriyah Gate Development Authority.

In his opening address to the summit, **His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb**, Minister of Tourism for the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, called for greater collaboration between the private and public sectors as tourism enters a new era. He said recovery would be based on three main principles: sustainability, inclusivity and collaboration.

In his comments to attendees, United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Secretary General **Zurab Pololikashvili** announced the launch of the organisation's Best Tourism Villages initiative, which will identify villages taking innovative and transformative approaches to tourism in rural

areas. He also inaugurated the UNWTO's first Regional Office, in Riyadh, which will harness collaboration to grow and strengthen the region's tourism industry.

**Her Highness Princess Haifa Mohamed Bint Al Saud**, Assistant Minister of Tourism, expressed optimism for the future of the industry, emphasising the need to satisfy people's desire to travel while building an ecosystem that attracts investment and enables a greater diversity of people and geographic areas to benefit in the prosperity tourism brings. 🌟

**“We need to satisfy people's desire to travel while building an ecosystem that attracts investments and enables people to benefit in the prosperity tourism brings”**



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HONOURING  
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Recognizing the **Unsung Heroes**  
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