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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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wtm returns onsite

After two years, World Travel Market will return to Excel London this year from November 1-3, 2021. As global borders open gradually, the tourism industry will again be free to network and build business.

Shehara Rizly

SCTDA are pleased to return to WTM for 2021 as the event is an invaluable platform for raising Sharjah's profile globally, drawing more than 50,000 senior travel professionals, government ministers, and thought leaders, as well as tourists. We will



HE Khalid Jassim Al Midfa
Chairman
Sharjah Commerce and Tourism
Development Authority

“WTM is an ideal platform for us to remind the world that Sharjah remains a favourite family destination and is the go-to emirate for an authentic glimpse into the UAE's traditions and lifestyle”

highlight Sharjah and the UAE's highly successful COVID-19 stratagems, the adoption of strict health

and safety protocols to restore traveller confidence, and measures

Contd. on page 4 ►



to applaud industry heroes

Arabian travel awards will honor industry heroes on November 21, 2021.

Shehara Rizly

The fourth edition of the Arabian Travel Awards will recognise all industry heroes at the brand new Le Meridien Hotel and Conference Centre in Garhoud. The Middle East is at the forefront of the industry's recovery, as seen by the pent-up demand and shifting traveller sentiments over the past two years. This year's awards are noteworthy because it has been a rollercoaster ride that has included some of the most daring and high-risk situations.



Contd. on page 24 ►

GTS 3.0 concludes with great success

The 3rd edition of the GTS concluded with 2500 one-on-one business meetings connecting trade with ME travel fraternity.

HE Khalid Jassim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority shared, "GTS continues to be a valuable platform for the Gulf travel industry, providing opportunities to engage and reconnect with key industry players from all over the region. The engaging panel discussions and sharing of knowledge made GTS 2021 an informative and fruitful experience. We, at SCTDA, were very pleased to participate at this event, taking the chance to showcase Sharjah's natural and cultural attractions alongside the Emirates' newest hospitality and infrastructural developments and ongoing safety measures as we move forward into a new and successful tourism chapter."



Contd. on page 11 ►

Expo 2020: UAE story

It was a glittering line up of stars who helped welcome the world to Expo 2020 Dubai with a memorable opening ceremony watched by millions across the globe. The magnificent Al Wasl Plaza seated 3000 dignitaries across the globe.

TT Bureau

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence and Commissioner General of Expo 2020 Dubai delivered the opening remarks about the story of Dubai to the world at Expo 2020. "I am honoured to be with you here today, as we start a new chapter of a story that began almost 50

years ago. A story whose heroes are the leaders and children of this nation. A story

themselves and others. Allow me to take you back in time to the year 1970 in the

“We start a new chapter of a story that began almost 50 years ago. A story whose heroes are the leaders and children of this nation”

of values that have shaped their spirits, ambitions and confidence in their ability to achieve what is best for

city of Osaka, Japan. There our people introduced themselves and our culture for the very first time at a World



His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan
Mubarak Al Nahayan
UAE Minister of Tolerance and
Coexistence and Commissioner General
of Expo 2020 Dubai

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Langkawi to open in November: TM

At the third edition of the Gulf Travel Show, Tourism Malaysia held a virtual press conference, announcing the most exciting news that Langkawi hopes to open for international travellers by mid-November this year. Their strong vaccination drive enabled them to steadily move ahead.



Shehara Rizly

Langkawi is set to be the first destination to open to international, with six more to follow. Noor Azman Samsudin, Deputy Director International Promotion Division (Asia &

region have been two of Malaysia's most important markets. "Summer has always been a key driver for tourists from the Middle East, however due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, numbers deterred in 2020. Since the government announced its



Noor Azman Samsudin
Deputy Director International Promotion Division (Asia & Africa), Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board



Nasaruddin Bin Abdul Muttalib
Chief Executive Officer, Langkawi Development Authority (LADA)

reiterated, "Langkawi is currently available for domestic tourism since September 16, 2021." We have got around 82,000 visitors in the first 26 days since opening for the domestic market, which is an indicator of success. There has been no infection during this time, and we believe we are ready to open for international passengers because 92 per cent of the population has been vaccinated; nevertheless, we are still waiting for the government's official statement. Malaysians will be able to travel overseas from October 10, 2021. In mid-November, we will open our borders to all countries. We have be-

come a tourism pioneer because we have an international airport and the only way to enter is via air or sea, allowing the government to keep the situation under control and monitored. We demand a 72-hour PCR test before travel to our destination, and guests may check into their accommodations immediately upon arrival, however a PCR test will be completed within 8 hours.

We do not want to overcrowd the airports, so we have decided to conduct the exam once the traveller has checked into their hotel. We are also encouraging and incentivising MICE travel to the destination."

Langkawi is currently open for domestic tourism. 26 days after opening for the domestic market we have received around 82,000 visitors so far which is an indicator of success

Africa), Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, stated in his opening remarks that West Asia and the Gulf

four-phase national recovery plan, which included a national vaccination programme and keeping track

of the daily rate of infected persons, the country is now preparing to welcome international travellers again, kick-starting from the island of Langkawi. We had 31 flights every week from all Middle Eastern nations before the pandemic, including the

UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Iran, so we believe we will get there cautiously."

Speaking about the exciting news announcement, Nasaruddin Bin Abdul Muttalib, Chief Executive Officer, Langkawi Development Authority (LADA),

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Tourism Breaking News

- Spain updates entry requirements for GCC travelers
- Flydubai adds Sohar as third destination in Oman
- Swiss-belinn Sharq Kuwait opens for guests
- VFS becomes accredited center for IATA travel pass
- Radisson offers carbon negative meetings
- Dubai investments inks deal with Al Marjan for a new beach resort
- Circuit X Abu Dhabi's newest adventure hub opens
- Wego and TAT launch new campaign
- Emirates offer business rewards during Expo 2020
- RJ showcases new tourism strategy
- MadamTussauds Dubai officially opens
- Mysk Moon Sharjah welcomes guests
- Global Village step up guest experiences

Building post-COVID economies

According to UNWTO, international arrivals dropped by 74%. Moreover, destinations worldwide welcomed one billion fewer international arrivals in 2020 than in the previous year the restrictions levied by countries, notes Sean Lochrie, Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt University Dubai.

Before the pandemic, travel and tourism (including its direct and indirect impacts) accounted for one in four of all new jobs created globally, 10.6 per cent of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4 per cent of global GDP (US\$ 9.2 trillion). Meanwhile, international visitor spending amounted to US\$ 1.7 tril-

lion in 2019. Additionally, 62 million jobs were lost in 2020, indicating a drop of 18.5 per cent, leaving around 272 million people employed across the sector worldwide, compared to 334 million in 2019.

The industry no doubt has a profound impact on global economies and will continue to be key in contributing

the travel and tourism industry cannot be viewed in isolation. It stands to gain a lot from its unique diversity and the involvement of multiple stakeholders who contribute to its success. The industry has a positive impact on transport income; in the case of foreign travel, airlines observe a significant increase in growth as a result of a healthy tourism production.

The benefits of the tourism industries permeate beyond front-line tourism providers. Transport companies leasing their fleet, enterprises supplying perishable and non-perishable products to the hospitality sector, the retail sector, and financial services are among the industries that benefit from tourism. Traditional services have also become key pull factors for tourists. Medical tourism, for example, is

now widely regarded as a major boost to global economies, with patients travelling to different countries for treatment.

Similarly, tourism can serve as a catalyst for a country's overall progress while also yielding societal advantages. To maintain tourism growth, governments must improve a variety of components in order to appeal to both returning and new visitors. While infrastructure development should be related to a country's overall well-being, many countries focus on enhancing infrastructure, boosting transportation, and improving sanitation in order to attract more tourists.

The economic impact of the travel and tourism industry is difficult to ignore on a worldwide scale, but the tourism industry has also proven to

be a major contributor to economic divergence in the UAE. According to Statista's latest report, the sector will contribute around AED 280.6 billion to the country's GDP by 2028. Although most countries would take a while to recover from the pandemic, the revival of sectors such as travel and tourism will have a substantial impact on the global economy.



Sean Lochrie
Assistant Professor
The School of Social Sciences
Heriot-Watt University Dubai

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

World Travel Market an ideal platform

► Contd. from page 1

such as the Sharjah Safe for Travel Stamp, among other developments. We additionally intend to highlight, in front of the international market, the projects that the emirate has progressed with despite the challenges of the previous year, such as the many new attractions along Sharjah's east coast, as well as our eco-tourism, cultural, and heritage offerings.

WTM is an ideal platform for us to remind the world that Sharjah remains a favourite family destination and is the go-to emirate for an authentic glimpse into the UAE's traditions and lifestyle. 🇦🇪

Connecting minds, creating the future

► Contd. from page 1

Expo, in a pavilion inspired by Al Ain's Al Jahili Fort. That happened a year and a half before the establishment of the United Arab Emirates. What began with utmost faith and cooperation between our founding leaders – Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum (may they rest in peace) became the vision that now holds the flag of our nation up high.

Seven emirates came together to form one union, joined by an unshakable truth known by heart we are stronger together. We are now Emiratis who belong to one country. We have always strived to create a better life with our leader's vision in mind. We

have focused on investing in human development, expanding our infrastructure, diversifying our economy and creating opportunities for everyone to prosper and



grow. Today, in the year of our Golden Jubilee, we share with the world the lessons we have learnt, most importantly that by connecting minds we are

able to achieve milestones others thought were impossible. It was this same vision that motivated us back in 2011 to bid to host the World Expo and to choose "Con-

necting minds, creating the future as its theme." Today, 192 nations come together, each represented by its own pavilion; a first in the 170 year

history of World Expos. Our mere presence here, amid all the challenges the world is facing is proof of our keen commitment and desire to make the world a better place

for all. By hosting Expo 2020 Dubai, we aim to convey a message of tolerance and that we are willing to collaborate with all of the world.

By connecting minds, we hope to sow the seeds of progress for the next 50 or even 100 years. This is the vision we must keep in our minds, for every reality throughout history started with a vision. Today, we say to the world welcome to the United Arab Emirates and welcome to Expo 2020 Dubai, which will provide a significant platform for all people to connect, discuss and work together. Welcome to Expo 2020 Dubai! Together, we will convey from the UAE to the world, on our 50th anniversary, a message of tolerance, coexistence and peace; a message of progress, prosperity and growth; a message of brotherhood, happiness and an unwavering will to create a brighter future for everyone. 🇦🇪

Malta increases collaboration with GCC

Malta opened its borders amidst summer to welcome the GCC, the continued relationship between the government of the UAE and Malta was sealed when a fully fledged embassy was opened recently in Abu Dhabi. **Claude Zammit Trevisan**, Senior Manager – Destination Marketing - Russia & CIS, Japan & S. Korea, India, MENA shares its new tourism strategy with **TRAVELTALK**.

 Shehara Rizly

Exotic island for tourists in GCC

Malta is a Mediterranean destination, an island paradise, so the idea of traveling to an island archipelago, the island hopping, the small private coves is exotic. The destination with a 7000-year history and culture, all of this combined with the mild Mediterranean climate makes travel all year round," shared Claude Zammit Trevisan – Senior Manager – Destination Marketing – Russia & CIS, Japan & S. Korea, India, Middle East, and North America.



Malta's tourism industry is substantial, accounting for 15% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Malta is a popular tourist destination, with three UNESCO World

Heritage Sites: the al Saflieni Hypogeum, Valletta, and seven megalithic temples, which are among the world's oldest free-standing structures. These attractions incor-

porate elements of the island's rich history and culture, as well as Mediterranean Sea-related aquatic activities.

Land of rich history and culture

Malta's long and rich history is reflected in the island's cultural attractions, modern museums and art galleries. At some point throughout history, the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, and Byzantines all occupied Malta, leaving a mix of architectural styles and antiquities to discover. The knights' Hospitaller ruled Malta from 1530 to 1798 leaving a legacy of exquisite art and architecture.

On Malta, Gozo, and Comino, there are a variety of aquatic activities to enjoy. Northern Malta is home to the country's beach resorts and holiday destinations, with Mellieha Bay, Ghajn Tuffieha, and Golden Bay being the most popular. The island's quietest beaches are found in Malta's northwest, and



Claude Zammit Trevisan
Senior Manager
Destination Marketing for MENA
Russia & CIS, Japan & S. Korea & India
Malta Tourism Authority

it is here that the main island's two neighboring islands may be found. Gozo and Comino are other popular beach destinations, but they are much calmer, rockier, and better for snorkeling. The surrounding Mediterranean Sea is popular for diving; while shallow dips may be attractive to beginning divers, more experienced divers may dive deeper to find historical artifacts from World War II or earlier.

Middle East a key source market

Trevisan said, "The ME is an important market because it allows us to ca-

ter for long-haul visitors. "The diversity of the GCC makes it very challenging. We need to come out strong on the market so that we generate brand awareness, and


Emirates flights between the UAE and Malta in July of this year is extremely important since it connects Malta to the rest of the world. There are a variety of international hotel

“The Maltese government has established a fullfledged embassy in Abu Dhabi, which is a significant political signal that Malta wishes to expand connections across the board with the UAE and the GCC”

we're working hand in hand with the main travel partners, particularly tour operators, travel agencies, and the travel fraternity to make sure that there is a right call to action, the right packages, the right ingredients for the market.

The Maltese government has established a full-fledged embassy in Abu Dhabi, which is a significant political signal that Malta wishes to expand connections across the board with the UAE and the GCC. The opening of

chains that Middle Eastern guests will be familiar with, as well as halal cuisine alternatives. The cuisine is Mediterranean in style."

The Al Hosn app, which originated in the UAE, is now accepted in Malta, which makes it easier for UAE visitors to visit the island. The app has all of the visitor's information, including immunization records and the results of all PCR or Rapid tests completed, making entrance faster and more convenient. 



Re-discover shopping in Germany

Mark your calendars on 23rd November 2021 at 12noon UAE time to revisit destination Germany with a special focus as a much loved shopping destination. In this webinar the focus will be about one of the most exclusive department stores in Germany, Breuninger.



B breuninger

 Shehara Rizly

Germany has been one of the most sought after destinations by the travelers from the GCC. As the recent announcement came in that the restrictions have been lifted for GCC travelers it is once again time to find out some of the new and revamped experiences in the destination. German National Tourist Organisation will conduct a special webinar to once again draw attention to the many diverse offerings but with a special focus on Germany as a shopping destination.

Yamina Sofo Director Sales and Marketing German National Tourist Office Gulf Countries shared, "I'm looking forward on refresh-



Yamina Sofo
Director Sales and Marketing
German National Tourist Office Gulf Countries

ing our industry partners on destination Germany and informing them of the latest travel guidelines to Germany and at the same time re-introduce one of the most prestigious department stores Breuninger. We would like to invite you to register for the event in advance and have all your questions ready at hand about what is different in this new normal era."



Lena Schulz
Manager Tourism Marketing -
Breuninger Kurzbeschreibung

Shopping Destination

The pandemic did put a restriction for a period of time on everything but now it is once again time to revisit and rediscover the many shopping destinations in different parts in Germany. Travellers or shoppers are able to find anything and everything they desire from bargains to haute couture, from second hand knick knacks to futuristic finds from international to typically German. Always efficient, easily accessible and, every now and again, at unbelievably great prices.

This webinar will highlight the unique points of one such shopping destination Breuninger to the GCC market. It will be an opportunity for the travel trade

fraternity to rediscover the destination post covid era.

Lena Schulz - Manager Tourism Marketing - Breuninger Kurzbeschreibung shared, "For 140 years, the fashion and lifestyle company Breuninger has been setting high standards in the areas of fashion, beauty and lifestyle. Breuninger is highlighting the pleasure of exclusive shopping made in Germany since 1881. Its corporate culture has always been inspired by a spirit of breaking new ground and thereby honouring the traditional values of a family busi-

For 140 years, the fashion and leisure firm Breuninger has been setting high standards in the areas of fashion, beauty, and lifestyle

ness. With an exclusive selection of international designer brands, coveted newcomer brands and outstanding services."

Schulz reiterated, "Breuninger is one of the leading department stores in Europe in this day. In addition



sively reserved changing room. With over 190 exquisite brands including Lancôme, Estée Lauder, La Prairie, Tom Ford and La Mer, Breuninger has also created a stunning world of beauty. The Breuninger beauty rooms will surprise you with well-deserved rest and relaxation combined with a high-quality expertise on beauty products. Furthermore, Breuninger not only offers exceptional fashion but also culinary specials and satisfies with a variety of cafés, an in-house confectionary and restaurants." 🍷

to free Wi-Fi, tax-free shopping and the Mercedes Benz & Porsche shopping shuttle, the Special Service Team is offering a unique and discreet atmosphere accompanied by comfort and tranquillity. It will make you discover and outstanding shopping experience in an exclu-





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Media Rotana geared up for Expo

Media Rotana has an advantage as one of the key five star hotels that offers a totally new experience for their visitors, as it is only 20 minutes from the Expo 2020 site. It is one of the most sought-after hotels in Barsha Heights due to its proximity to the Expo site, business district and leisure areas. **Sherif Madkour**, General Manager, Media Rotana, shares their plans with **TRAVTALK**.

 Shehara Rizly

What are you offering to welcome guests at Expo 2020?

Situated in Barsha Heights, a few minutes from Expo 2020 action gives us an edge over others. At Media Rotana, the comfort and safety of our guests remains an unwavering priority for us, hence, we adhere to strict health and cleanliness measures in all rooms, public areas and all facilities in the hotel. Another initiative in this direction is our contactless check-in and check-out experience.

Our hotel's spacious accommodations, as well as five speciality restaurants that offer a diverse range of



Sherif Madkour
General Manager
Media Rotana

Could you share about the property's renovation?

We recently completed a refurbishment of its lobby lounge, Connexions. The eatery now presents a stunning new look in addition to state-of-the-art coffee and tea brewing equipment as well as a signature coffee experience. The outlet showcases blackboard-style décor featuring trivia,

Prego's and Nelson's, as well as an Asian Street Food Market on its rooftop terrace, in conjunction with the opening of the terraces and the arrival of cooler weather.

Are there new source markets this summer?

Due to market closures and fluctuating travel restrictions as a result of the pandemic, most of our business has been



“Whenever a new market has opened, we have taken advantage of the opportunity by activating our marketing campaigns and being among the first hotels to promote our offerings”



gastronomic delights, will be appreciated by guests. A temperature-controlled swimming pool, sauna, and steam room are available for leisure and relaxation. For those who need a boost of adrenaline, our fully equipped gym is here to help you.

coffee jargon and brewing techniques. To go along with the refurbishment, the outlet has also unveiled a new Afternoon Tea experience. The hotel will soon launch new promotions in line with the upcoming season of autumn. This month, the hotel will debut a new brunch as well as an outdoor BBQ at

domestic; however, whenever a new market has opened, we have taken advantage of the opportunity by activating our marketing campaigns and being among the first hotels to promote our offerings. We are now seeing a significant growth in GCC business market share from nations, such as KSA, Oman, and Bahrain, as well as increased leisure demand from the UK, France, Germany, Latin American countries, and Russia in the fourth quarter of the year.

What are the new market strategies?

We are pushing our direct sales and marketing strategy while keeping in mind the destination marketing sales strategy, so we are

targeting each new market opens through all channels, whether it is social media or any other marketing medium to have the exposure that we believe business and MICE are still to take off. Will it be different this time? If that is the case, how will things change?

MICE is often thought of as a single convenient entity, but the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibits industry is vast and generates economic benefits far beyond conference halls and meeting rooms. We know that during the pandemic, everyone started with online meetings, but that will only last a short time because people want to meet and interact, and Expo 2020 is a great example of that. Media Rotana's


16 contemporary and flexible meeting rooms make it a hugely popular destination for business seminars and corporate events.

How will the hotel benefit by Saudi market opening?

Saudi Arabia is a large market that is growing rapidly, so there are many prospects for both countries, particularly now that Riyadh has mandated two doses

of the COVID-19 vaccination. The rule went into force today and covers cultural, scientific, social, and recreational events as well. So far, more than 41 million doses of COVID-19 vaccination have been provided in Saudi Arabia.

How do you collaborate with agents?

All of our partners are frequently updated on our offers and invited to visit the property to observe the safety standards we have in place to ensure that business may restart as quickly as possible. We also make effective use of our Rotana Rewards Classic membership scheme, which is applicable to all room, meeting, and conference bookings made at the hotel. 

FACTFILE

■ Media Rotana is a 5-star property within walking distance to the metro station and key leisure attractions, shopping malls and business districts. We have some exciting packages for visitors who book with us during Expo 2020.

The aspiring Tawfeeq travel group

The scope of the company's activities is considerable and strategic plans are underway to build and enhance its extensive network of partnerships and continue to bring to Qatar best in travel technology and Leisure products from around the world.

Tawfeeq Travel Group has witnessed significant growth to emerge as a leading travel management company in Qatar with a focus on offering unparalleled service to its customers. The Group is a wholly Qatari-owned

Al Mustafawi Al Hashemi, Chairman. As a part of Al Hashemi Group, Tawfeeq Travel Group advocates and upholds values and culture associated with the name.

The holistic approach enables us to be a launch-

solutions, leisure travel, cruise ground handling to airline representation and logistics. To oversee all aspects of travel management, exclusive divisions are created. Integrating dedicated teams and state-of-the-art technology, customer interaction turns into an unforgettable experience. Expert guidance and cutting-edge tools are means of simplifying our lives.

The Group has set up key business segments to present specialised solutions in all realms of



experience across all the customer touch points," says **Rehan Ali Syed**, CEO.

Some recent achievements are: Tawfeeq Travel earned the representation of American Express Global Business Travel in Qatar; the Group's GSA wing added full service carriers like Air Canada and Nordwind Airlines to their portfolio, and successful handling of the cruise season where Tawfeeq Travel Group was appointed as the official ground handler for AIDA, COSTA and Queen Mary 2.

Our spirit is fueled by the diversity on workplace, with staff hailing from different parts of the globe

enterprise. It is constantly advancing and thriving under the aegis of Abdulla

pad for versatile services and products that range from corporate travel

travel management. Each vertical manages an exclusive business line with specialist crew to handle consulting, products and services. These segments are equipped with cutting-edge facilities and technology to manage every need of customers like corporate travel management, leisure travel

and inbound tourism, airline pax and cargo representations, etc.

"Tawfeeq Travel Group takes immense pride in the way we set customer service standards through a process of continuous training of our staff, it is our mission to offer superior customer



Impeccably Plush



BAHI
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Bahi Ajman Palace is set on its own private beach with inspiring views over the Arabian Gulf. Experience a beach hotel where unsurpassed luxury meets with contemporary facilities to ensure an unforgettable stay. Boasting 254 luxury rooms, suites, and residences, Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel is a stunning example of traditional architecture blended with contemporary design.

Our luxury hotel rooms & suites combine the convenience of modern designs and the rich feel of the Arabian architecture.

BTB celebrated its 5th anniversary

One of the leading travel facilitators in the region BTB Tours celebrated their 5th anniversary recently. Specialising in individual tours and tailor-made group tours, the company has been facilitating tours in UAE, Czech Republic, Turkey, Egypt and Azerbaijan welcoming over 300,000 guests from 23 countries.



A valuable platform:



► Contd. from page 1



Manoharan Periasamy
Senior Director - International
Promotion Division
Asia & Africa
Tourism Malaysia

“GTS 2021 is a platform that allows industry players to share the development and implementation of safety for domestic and international travellers in preparation for reopening the borders, especially for the Middle East market. Malaysia has successfully completed the vaccination of more than 90 per cent of its adult population against COVID-19, and as a result, domestic tourism has fully reopened effective October 11, 2021. Meanwhile, Tourism Malaysia is preparing to welcome more tourists and is continuing to promote the #WeMissYou campaign in anticipation of the reopening of our international borders, which is expected once we have achieved 90 per cent nationwide inoculation.”



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Naboodah Travel

“The Gulf Travel Show is a valuable platform for participants, stakeholders, and travel trade to virtually connect with each other and exchange information about technologies, trends, transformation, challenges, innovation and achievements that are re-energising the industry. I was honoured to host a discussion along with our trade colleague. It was one of the most well planned and extremely organised virtual events I have taken part recently. The online platform was impressive. Just a wee note to say many thanks to the TravTalk team for a fantastic event.”



Seema Pande
Co-Founder
Elev8

“The Gulf Travel Show did not disappoint, as it always does. Everything from the set-up to the demo calls to having a personal contact during the show contributes to its success. Exhibitors are always provided pre-arranged appointments, you may miss a few, your personal contact will ensure they find their way back to the booth. It was an excellent opportunity to reconnect with old acquaintances and meet new ones. We attended the event with two of our partner hotels, Seychelles' Le Duc de Praslin and Mauritius' JW Marriott Mauritius Resort, and based on our experience, I would strongly suggest GTS to my industry colleagues.”

“The show was a great success since I was able to meet active travel agencies that are eager to begin doing business with us. The majority of the time, travel agents ask for the rates and offers to be provided. It has been a great experience promoting three Millennium hotel locations on one platform; we have shared data sheets and hotel presentations and hope to be of assistance for future business prospects! The overall experience has been excellent, with buyers responding positively.”



Mohamed Idress
Sales Manager - Grand
Millennium Tabuk

“It was an honour to represent my company, Orbit Travel and Tours, at such a grand event. Such events will help in the rebuilding of the industry during this time of recovery. The meetings were well-organised, looked promising, and did not feel like they were taking place virtually. It was incredibly user-friendly and interactive, offering thorough information on well-known houses and vacation spots. Thank you to the organisers and exhibitors/suppliers for the user-friendly website, as well as Crisna for her assistance.”



Dhiraj Joshi
Supervisor-Leisure Travel
Orbit Travel and Tours

“GTS has been a great platform to interact with the travel trade from the region. During this time when travelling is restricted and face to face interaction is still a challenge, GTS has assisted us to keep in touch with the travel trade and update them on Malaysia's latest products & travel information. We are happy to have partnered for the third consecutive time to engage with the trade.”



Amir Muhammad Hanif
Marketing Manager -
Tourism Malaysia, Dubai
Office

Contd. on page 18 ►

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Bringing one million tourists for Expo

At a recent interview with **JVR Fernando**, Chief Commercial Officer, Satguru Travel, one of the largest travel management companies covering over 80 locations in every continent, revealed its plans to ensure the maximum number of travellers are brought in during the six months of Expo 2020.

Shehara Rizly

What have you been working on over the past few months?

We have been concentrating on Expo, and we, as a group, are planning to bring in one million travellers in the next six months. We have over 80 countries in our network, and we have set goals for everyone. We have blocked hotel rooms, attractions, desert camps,

and a huge fleet (we have our own fleet of buses) for city tours, dhow cruises, and other activities. We are gearing up to see how we can promote Expo. From our headquarters in Dubai, we intend to help this country by bringing in as many guests as possible, potentially one million in the following six months.

How do you plan to achieve this target?



JVR Fernando
Chief Commercial Officer
Satguru Travel

fer everyone something special. For instance, in the field of medicine, there are currently a slew of medical-related promotions taking place in Dubai. If you go to a company that sells medical equipment, supplies, or services, you will need to offer them a special presentation to entice them to visit Dubai and visit Expo.

areas where you might target your efforts. We have currently trained all of our employees in all

lives. They get a vast array of knowledge about the destination and beyond in just four days.

“Our goal is to deliver a value addition that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. They get a vast array of knowledge about the destination and beyond”

We are not just promoting Expo as a holiday destination, so we have segmented it into different categories. Corporates, common travellers, B2B travel agencies, government institutions, schools and colleges are among the segments we have identified. We want to of-

If you are visiting the Ministry of Health, we will provide a different presentation, even though the core concept is the same, therefore we will create custom solutions to get their attention. If you apply the same principles to schools and universities, there are numerous

branches to be able to advertise products based on customer needs, or tailor-made solutions, in order to reach this goal.

What is the importance of the focus on students?

We are aiming to attract a large number of school students so that we can

What is your promotion strategy aimed at regular travelers, visiting Dubai during October-December?

These passengers will be visiting Dubai frequently, and we will recommend that they spend some time at Expo. Satguru, as the mother company, will introduce the product and oversee all of these concepts, but Satguru DMC Dubai will carry them out. They will handle all of the merchandise, excursions, drivers, hotels, etc. It originates with Satguru for corporate sales, then travels to top travel destinations with B2B agents and travel wings for online customers. We follow the same formula all around the world.

What is the current scenario of medical tourism?

People are flocking to the UAE for medical tourism, and now that restrictions in India have been eased, people are turning to India as well. Many people seeking medical care travelled to the UAE because India was closed to the UAE and all other countries.

Are people willing to travel outside the UAE?

We are now focussing on outbound tourism in



Dubai. People are now eager to travel outside of the UAE; previously, going outside the UAE was not a possibility, but now they are now confident. We anticipate a lot of leisure travel in the coming year, so we are actively promoting it through our DMCs in all of the countries where we are present. We encourage UAE visitors to visit countries where we already operate, such as Singapore, Bangkok, Indonesia, Cambodia, Morocco, Tunis, Tanzania, Kenya, Paris, the United Kingdom, Seychelles, and South Africa. These are some of the outbound locations we are promoting in the UAE.

Has corporate travel increased?

As corporate travel resumed in 2021, I can say that about 80 per cent of business has returned. However, this percentage could be due to a variety



of factors, including restructuring or staff movement from one location to another; in some cases, staff may have been in one area for a long time and will need to migrate; and other factors.

What is your new growth plan for post-COVID?

Our registration is complete, and we will begin operations in Israel within the next few days. After that, we will begin operations in Jordan and Syria. We have just been

“ Travellers were price conscious prior to the pandemic, but now they are willing to pay a premium for the safety of the destination and the property they will be staying in ”

operational in Qatar and Muscat for three months, and we are considering Kuwait as another Gulf location.

Have you begun any promotional activities in for FIFA 2022?

Yes, we have already be-

gun to focus on FIFA. A large number of people will be travelling from Africa. We have partnered with a number of charter companies because most people do not want to stay in Qatar; instead, they would rather travel to Dubai and charter a

flight to Qatar to watch the matches, then return to Dubai and fly home, resulting in a surge in visitors to Dubai during this time. Another promotion we are looking at is the T20 World Cup, and more details will be available soon.

What is the current travellers trend?

Because both the UAE and Israel are nascent markets, we expect a lot of leisure travel between the two countries. UAE

citizens have never visited Israel, and Israelis have never visited the UAE, so this will be a significant market. Another location where there will be a lot of leisure travel is between Morocco and Israel and vice versa. Travellers were price conscious prior to the pandemic, but now they are willing to pay a premium for the safety of the destination and the property they will be staying in, and they will conduct thorough research before deciding on the destination and other factors based on safety. In 2022, we believe we will have a significantly better year.

FACTFILE

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YAS ISLAND welcomes back international visitors

It is time to return to Yas Island, the most exciting and entertaining destination in the UAE. The first Warner Bros. hotel is set to open on the island very soon, giving visitors another reason to return. **Liam Findlay**, General Manager, Experience Hub, speaks with **TRAVELTALK** about the many new strategies and initiatives designed to attract tourists to return to the destination.

 Shehara Rizly

What are the new strategies to welcome guests back?

Our strategy for Q4 of 2021 and 2022 is to welcome new and returning tourists to Yas Island. Borders have reopened, and Abu Dhabi declared in September 2021 that tourists will no longer be required to quarantine, allowing them to experience all that Yas Island has to offer from the minute they arrive. Our focus remains

firmly on exhibiting everything that Yas Island has to offer, and we cannot wait to welcome back visitors from all over the world, particularly from our major markets of the GCC,

India, Russia, the U.K., and Germany.

In the recent year, Yas Island has welcomed a slew of new attractions and hotels, including Hilton Yas

Bay, which opened in February 2021 as the island's first 5-star beach resort with theme park access. The Waterfront, where Hilton Abu Dhabi Yas Island is located, The Residences, and Yas Creative Hub are all part of Miral's AED 4 billion investment in the overall AED 12 billion masterplan of Yas Bay, which will feature three distinct areas spanning 14 million sq. ft. – The Waterfront, where Hilton Abu Dhabi Yas Island is located, and The Residences.

Aldar Investment recently announced a redevelopment plan for Yas Mall worth AED 500 million (US\$ 136 million) to strengthen its position as the focal point of Yas Island, Abu Dhabi's residential and leisure destination, and to future-proof this key asset at the heart of Yas Island and its many world-class attractions, attracting more local and international visitors. The redevelopment will increase the mall's F&B offerings by 40 per cent, adding new brands, a new food hall, and outdoor terraces, while the revamped Town Square will provide an alfresco dining experience. Following a US\$ 112 million investment, Yas Island will also be home to WB Hotel in November 2021, making it the world's first Warner Bros. hotel. Throughout the year and into 2022, a number of live events will take place.



Liam Findlay
General Manager
Experience Hub

“Our strategy for Q4 2021 & 2022 is to welcome new and returning tourists as the borders reopen, and Abu Dhabi declared in September 2021 that they will no longer be required to quarantine”

ensuring tourists and residents of their safety and well-being during their stay since the onset of the global pandemic. Yas Island has introduced a number of initiatives, including the well-received 'Yas Wellness Programme,' which provides guests with direct access to a team of Yas Wellness Ambassadors who can answer questions on the island's health and safety measures. This has been paired with the #TogetherAtYas digital portal, which serves as a one-stop shop for all of the responsible and entertaining activities available. Moreover, in support of Abu Dhabi's

What are the safety protocols?

Yas Island has been





vaccination campaign, more than 95 per cent of eligible team members across the destination have been vaccinated, including attractions, experiences, hotels, restaurants, and retailers.

addition, Qatari visitors can now return to the UAE, including Yas Island. We are looking forward to welcoming travellers from all over the world, particularly from our key markets of the GCC, India, Russia,

attractions, leisure experiences, and itinerary planning, is still going strong. We have already registered over 9,000 travel agents with each of them taking part in the destination's specific training and

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi also awarded the 'Go Safe' certification to Yas Island's theme parks and attractions, including Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, Warner Bros. WorldTM Abu Dhabi, CLYMBTM Abu Dhabi earlier this year, Yas Marina Circuit, Yas Mall, W Abu Dhabi – Yas Island – the first hotel in the UAE to receive the accreditation – and all Yas Plaza hotels. The certification is one of 25 health and safety accreditations the destination has obtained, including the World Travel & Tourism Council's coveted WTTC 'Safe Travels' stamp in August 2020, making it the first destination in Abu Dhabi to receive the international honour.

Has there been new source markets to Yas Island over the past year?

We have hosted tourists from all over the world in the last 12 months, including parts of GCC and Europe. During the previous year, we also welcomed Israeli tourists to Yas Island for the first time. In

“ We have been virtually engaging with the travel trade in key source markets and training them online to ensure continuous product knowledge in preparation for gradual market re-openings ”

the U.K., and Germany, as well as new and returning holidaymakers from all four corners of the globe.

Is the Yas Expert programme still active?

Yas Expert has been running for more than two years, and we are delighted to announce that the programme, which includes courses on Yas Island's award-winning

certification programme for travel professionals and agents. More than 5,500 travel agencies have already achieved certification and recognition as a Yas Expert, joining an elite group of experts with enhanced knowledge of the destination and everything it has to offer.

Throughout the pandemic, Experience Hub has been

virtually engaging with the travel trade in key source and training them online to ensure continuous product knowledge in preparation for gradual market re-openings. Yas Expert collaborates with companies like Seera, Jumbo Travels, Fursan Travel, and others in the GCC to develop Yas Island Brand Ambassadors, a network of people who can drive visitors to the island from all over the world.

How do you plan to attract the GCC and Europe this year?

Borders have now reopened, and Abu Dhabi

announced in September 2021 that visitors will no longer be required to quarantine, allowing GCC visitors to experience everything that Yas Island has to offer from the minute they arrive. Yas Island is a one-of-a-kind destination in the GCC, offering a varied range of award-winning leisure and entertainment experiences.

The GCC continues to be an important source market for Yas Island, and we will continue to provide a variety of packages and unique offers. For example, we just developed a special package for visitors from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Yas Island.

Qatar is a key market for Yas Island, and we are excited to welcome back Qatari families, who will be treated to a variety of new experiences, hotels, and activities since their last visit. Indeed, we cannot wait to welcome back visitors from throughout the GCC – we have always set

the objective of surprising and delighting our visitors – after all, we are a destination unlike any other, and we are convinced that visitors will have a great time on Yas Island.

From December 10-12, the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix 2021 will take place. Thousands of international visitors are expected to flock to Yas Island to see Formula 1's only twilight race, which is one of the year's highlights. We expect an influx of travellers over the holiday season, which is often one of the busiest times of the year, as the global tourism industry recovers and additional travel restrictions are eased.

FACTFILE

■ Yas Island offers holidaymakers a diverse mix of award-winning leisure and entertainment experiences.

■ The destination is home to award-winning theme parks.



Uganda showcases its offerings to UAE

The UAE travel fraternity was very excited to meet with the Uganda Tourism Board and their partners recently organised by Aviareps in Dubai as they conducted the first roadshow after the pandemic. Seventy agents in the UAE attended the event and conducted meetings with the tourism board and the partners who attended.



Personality of the Month

Young achiever in hospitality sales

Stepping into hospitality at a young age and being one of the top 10 revenue achievers in the Asia Pacific region today, **Varun Saluja**, Cluster Director of Sales, Grand Mercure Hotel and Residences Dubai Airport, is in charge of managing the commercial team collaborating efforts across sales, marketing and revenue. We take a look at his journey over the years.



 Shehara Rizly

Please share a brief background about yourself.

A proud alumnus of the IHM Aurangabad, I started my journey in hospitality sales and marketing with Marriott International as a 'Voyager'. Having spent almost seven years with Marriott in India, I was a part of the Market Sales team, managing strategic sales across pan-India Marriott hotels. I moved to The Ritz-Carlton in Doha where I spent two years to get a pulse of the luxury segment and a foray into the GCC region. Finally, my transfer to Dubai took place, and I was given the opportunity to join the unique Al Habtoor City Complex in my first sales leadership post as Director of Sales, overseeing their three Hilton brands for



Varun Saluja
Cluster Director of Sales
Grand Mercure Hotel and Residences
Dubai Airport

another two years. I was offered the opportunity to join Accor earlier this year to manage the brand new cluster at Dubai Airport.

How is marketing in hospitality distinctive?

Hospitality sales and marketing is different from any other industry, because marketers are responsible to sell tangible as well as intangible products/services. The ideal success rides

on creating the right 'feeling' or 'perception' with the right customer through the right medium. Our industry is composed of experiential services, hence maintaining a consistent dynamic brand identity is critical to ensure brand recognition and retain repeat customers.

What are your key achievements?

One of the highlights of my career was being selected for the 2014 President's Circle Award, where I was one of the top 10 revenue achievers in APAC. I was identified as one of the youngest sales leaders in the region to be enrolled in the Marriott Ex-Comm Fast-Track Programme, as well as a Regional Mentor for the Voyage management training programme,

as I progressed towards a leadership role at The Ritz-Carlton Doha.

What initiatives are needed to be taken post-COVID to thrive?

Keeping a close watch on consumer behaviour and prioritising digitalisation are two critical initiatives to stay in the

What are the key marketing strategies for hospitality?

As the world grapples with COVID-19, there is a sea-change to how we approach marketing strategies today as against a couple of years back. My handpicked initiatives would include: communicating hotel's hygiene and

views; and investing in direct channel marketing by creating micro-sites and updating meaningful content on online interfaces.

What initiatives are you taking to mentor youth for hospitality?

Our industry has always faced an unprecedented challenge to attract, employ and retain the best talents, which is why incorporating youth development in business models is all the more imperative in today's age. Mentoring for youth, should be done through pre-employment and on-the-job initiatives.

We continuously invest time and resources in participating in webinars/platforms that provide knowledge to the youth about the job market, different roles, remunerations, scope of work, etc. We have also created on-property job-shadowing programmes and internship roles. While for on-the job opportunities, we have created flexible options for cross-training, apprenticeship and mentoring options. We ensure that our training modules are delivered in appreciation for differences in their language, cultures, ethnicity and socio-economic status. 🇮🇳

“We make bold decisions to navigate the volatility of markets, guest behaviour, and new trends where mistakes are bound to happen”

game and, more importantly, to lead it rather than follow it. We make bold decisions to navigate the volatility of markets, guest behaviour, and new trends where mistakes are bound to happen, and we also need to 'accept being proven wrong'.

safety efforts through marketing videos and imagery; neighbourhood marketing to appeal to your local audiences; virtual tours of properties, local attractions or live-streams; successfully managing online reputation scores and customer re-



GTS efficient and engaging

► Contd. from page 11



Sandeep Sahni
Managing Director
Stayever Luxe

“It was an honour to be a part of the exhibition for the first time this year; we had a lot of traffic and several productive meetings. The majority of buyers were interested in learning more about the Expo 2020 event, which is currently taking place in Dubai till next year and is attracting a large number of visitors from all over the world. At the event,

we showcased our apartments and villas, as well as how our personalised services set us apart from other vacation rentals.”

“Vacation Krafters has been a part of this virtual event since its inception, and GTS has been a terrific venture. While we are considering putting internet on the back burner, participating in GTS disregards this concern. I can confidently say that GTS has been a flawless, efficient platform, and most importantly, they have maintained it engaged. The exhibitor profile has also been exciting and something to anticipate. This, in my opinion, is a fantastic method to stay connected through a single platform. I'm looking forward to the GTS team's fresh ideas and inventions.”



Rahul Pradhan
CEO
Vacation Krafters

BTB Tour's 5 year milestone

BTB Tours celebrated their fifth anniversary by organising a special function for all its clients. Since its inauguration in Dubai by **Salih Gozcu**, Chairman BTB Tours the company has welcomed around 300,000 guests coming from 23 countries to the UAE.

TT Bureau

BTB partners with 500 hotels and resorts in the UAE alone and over 2,000 hotels across the all other

two new markets - Hungary and Israel. In just five years, BTB Tours has bagged the prestigious Arabian Travel Awards as Best Innovative DMC and The Face of the Future

“As part of the celebrations, BTB Tours has launched new offerings to accommodate the continuous increase of the travel demand to the UAE”



Salih Gozcu
Chairman
BTB Tours

increase of the travel demand to the UAE”

In the last year during the pandemic, BTB Tours growth rate was by 300% and to expand their team to 150 employees across all their 5 offices worldwide. To add to the celebrations, BTB Tours has announced the launch of “BTB Luxury” to cater to high-end guests to Dubai and the UAE.

welcome to the UAE from around the globe. That's why we want to ensure that we celebrate our 5th anniversary with the best travel packages that we will offer our guests. As part of the celebrations, BTB Tours has launched new offerings to accommodate the continuous

destinations. Even during the challenging times of the pandemic, BTB Tours welcomed 150,000 guests that position themselves as the no. 1 inbound producer to the UAE. Next year they are planning to bring 200,000 guests, as BTB Tours is entering

award for their chairman, Salih Gozcu.

Salih Gozcu, Chairman of BTB Tours, said: “Here at BTB Tours, we celebrate diversity and are inspired every traveling season by the seemingly limitless creativity of the people we

FACTFILE

■ Last year, BTB Tours growth rate was by 300% and to expand their team to 150 employees across all their 5 offices worldwide.

Easing Hajj and Umrah bookings globally

Seera Group has further strengthened its religious travel services by integrating Mawasim, its Hajj and Umrah division, with Maqam, the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah's official global distribution system platform to redefine the future of travel for global pilgrims to the Kingdom.

TT Bureau

Mawasim and Maqam, the only Saudi-authorized portal, have joined forces to redefine the future of travel for global pilgrims to the Kingdom. Seera's com-

globally. The innovative service will also enable Saudi Vision 2030 achieve its goal of welcoming 30 million pilgrims by 2030. The expansion of the Umrah plus market and more relaxed access to tourist visas are expected to be

The innovative service will also enable Saudi Vision 2030 achieve its goal of welcoming 30 million pilgrims by 2030

mitment to supporting the Kingdom in meeting its Hajj and Umrah visitation goals highlights Mawasim's role as one of the few initial partners to offer services

key drivers in the Kingdom's international tourism growth. Seera Group's first-of-its-kind integrated DMC in Saudi Arabia, Discover Saudi, is part of a



SAR one billion investment in driving tourist development in the kingdom.

Mawasim's integration with Maqam will now make it easy for nationalities who still require Um-

rah visas to travel to Saudi Arabia. The new integration is expected to have a long-term positive influence on inbound arrivals from Indonesia, Pakistan, and Egypt. Over 450 travel agents across 27 coun-

tries will be able to conveniently secure Umrah bookings and pass on the service to pilgrims once the full integration is complete. The two hotels are strategically located within walking distance of the

Ka'bah and the Haram, enhancing the accommodation options for both domestic and international visitors. Mawasim's global travel agencies now have access to an end-to-end tour operator.

Mawasim aims to be the number one wholesale tour operator for Hajj and Umrah travel in the Kingdom and the rest of the world as a customer-oriented provider of local services for Hajj and Umrah inside Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world. Mawasim brings the knowledge of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage and is committed to offering pilgrims the best possible experience.”

European cities most in demand

Following the resumption of flights, several European countries have gradually opened their borders to leisure travel, and residents of the UAE have been looking for notable European cities to visit. As travel in Europe reopens, Wego delves into its travel search data to identify which European cities residents are looking for.



➔ Zürich

Switzerland's largest and most dynamic city Zurich tops the list of most searched European cities. The city for 5.52 per cent of searches in the Q3 of 2021.

➔ Vienna

Closely following Zurich is Vienna standing at number 2 with over 5.38% of searches on Wego.

➔ London

London accounts for 4.44 per cent of European city searches on Wego. London has always remained a popular travel destination for both leisure tourists and



business travellers from the UAE. Searches for 'UAE-U.K.' and 'Dubai-London' spiked on Wego's metasearch website, and its English and Arabic travel blog upon news of the U.K. reopening for UAE travellers.

➔ Athens

Greece makes up 3.77 per cent of European city searches on Wego. Ath-

ens is the most influential Greek city, widely considered as the birthplace of western civilisation. The cultural importance of the city attracts UAE residents year-round.

➔ Milan

Milan accounted for about 3.64% of searches in the 3rd quarter of 2021. Italy's second largest city Milan is

studded with sky-piercing cathedrals, ornate castles and ancient palaces.

➔ Geneva

Geneva makes up 3.04 per cent of searches on Wego for 'chocolate' and 'cheese'.

➔ Paris

The reopening of borders in France has sparked interest amongst Wego users towards Paris (2.69 per cent of searches).

➔ Salzburg

The Austrian city of Salzburg stands 8th on this list, amassing more than 2.5% of the European city searches on Wego. Known far and

wide as the birthplace of music legend Mozart, Salzburg is a beautiful city with ancient forts and great museums. Austria, like other European countries, is also open for vaccinated travellers.

searches come from within the UAE

➔ Barcelona

Barcelona makes up 1.9 per cent of European city searches. Barcelona, the cosmopolitan capital of

Searches for "UAE-UK" and "Dubai-London" spiked on Wego's metasearch website, and its English and Arabic travel blog

➔ Amsterdam

The Dutch capital is renowned for its vibrant nightlife and friendly locals. Despite not being classified as a safe non-EU country, 2.44 per cent of internet

Spain's Catalonia region, is also open for most travellers from the UAE, especially for vaccinated travellers. The city is known for its eclectic architecture, striking cityscape and wonderful hospitality. 🇳🇱

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Uganda meets UAE travel trade

Since the epidemic, Uganda Tourism and its partners staged a first roadshow in Dubai. Over 70 agents from Dubai attended the event, which included onsite business-to-business meetings. Middle East is considered an emerging market for Uganda hence its importance was stressed at the event.

TT Bureau

“Uganda is known as the pearl of Africa because of the diversity that we have in this one small country in Africa which is well linked with the rest of Africa at the heart of Africa. The diversity of culture represents the whole of Africa which we are showcasing in Dubai, UAE. We are putting all the investment that we can to make sure we position the destination Uganda appropriately in this region. We offer what the market requires and give the market something new that they haven't experienced before. Uganda is a destination that can be visited 365 days a year due to the good weather throughout the year. The attractions ranges from the iconic experiences like tracking the mountain gorillas to climbing the highest mountain, to adventure activities like zip lining, water rafting, hiking, wind surfing, boat cruises, we have all that and besides that we have wild life experiences we also have ten national parks, ten wild life reserves that offer diversity of wild life from the big five we market ourselves as the big five plus two – the big five that everyone knows in addition to that we have the mountain gorillas and the chimpanzees, those are the great apes which are very iconic for every global traveler to tick off their bucket list.”



Lily Ajarova
Chief Executive Officer
Uganda Tourism Board

“We have the great honour to represent the Uganda tourism board in the Middle East. As travel resumed, we are able to promote Uganda with the Middle East tourism industry to revive together and offer some amazing destinations and experiences. This is the first onsite event where Uganda has come over with 15 different co-participants and they were very excited to meet and network with the travel industry experts here. We have been able to have some excellent airline access with Emirates, flydubai, Air Arabia and coming into Dubai now also Uganda Airlines and also from Qatar with Qatar Airways so it is a very well accessible destination from all different areas in the GCC region and a lot of excitement from Uganda coming over here and seeing the Middle East and UAE in particular as a great opportunity to come into recovery with the industry here. We kicked off in Dubai and Abu Dhabi this month and the delegation will return in February and March with another branding relaunch as well, so now it is just the beginning of activities and we are hoping to work with the travel trade here with different fam trips also working with the media, influencers, also have them experience Uganda so that they are able to create demand for this unique destination that hopefully with the travel trade partners will be able to have packages available and get travelers ready to go to Uganda.”



Glenn Johnston
Vice President Middle East & Global Public
Affairs - Aviareps



Eddy Kirya
Board Director
Uganda Tourism Board

“The ME market, specifically the UAE is very important for tourism industry in Uganda because we consider it as one of the emerging markets as it has high spending power which enable us as a country to be able to meet our targets in terms of tourist arrivals to Uganda and we also have an increase in because revenue for tourism is one of the key resource bases that the government of Uganda relies upon so we are here basically to ensure that we have more visitors coming from the UAE. We have entire travel trade team today from Uganda 13 DMCs and 70 agents networking with B2B meetings with agents and at the end of the day we hope that the cooperation between the UAE travel agents and the Uganda DMCs will attract more visitors with their packages. Uganda is unique to the UAE travelers due to the weather as you don't need airconditioning at all, and in terms of eco tourism Uganda is green.”



“I think it's a very good opportunity for our market as UAE travelers like to explore new places and Uganda is one of the new places that are safe and has a lot of resorts that are more comfortable with the travelers from the UAE.”



Ahmed Essa Al Rais
Manager Government Relations and Luxury
Travel - Al Rais Travel

Unique Points of Uganda

- Known as “The Pearl of Africa”
- Most secure and safe country in the Great Lakes region
- A country with biodiversity
- Pleasant weather around the year: average temperature 24 degrees Celsius
- Uganda is strategically located and linked to the heart of Africa
- Strong commitment by the government to promote tourism sector
- Accessible in all areas in the Middle East
- One of the fastest growing destinations for leisure

Why select Uganda ?

- Uganda has the largest mountain gorilla population in the world
- 54% of the 1100 mountain gorillas are in Uganda
- There are over 5000 chimpanzees
- Primates capital of the world

Birding Paradise

- Has 1069 bird species
- Home to over 50% of the entire bird population in Africa and 10% of the world.
- Uganda hosts Africa Birding Expo every Nov
- Queen Elizabeth National Park has over 605 species, the largest of any protected area in Africa

- Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was voted Africa's number one birding site by the African bird club

Adventure

- White water rafting
- Mountaineering
- Biking
- Sport fishing
- Canoeing
- Water Sports
- Wind surfing
- Ziplining
- Nature walks



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Zakariya

General Manager
Eastern Holidays, UAE

Blesly bin ham

Travel Agent
Bin Ham travel, UAE

Shan Metha

Executive Director
Orient Tours, UAE

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Dhiraj Joshi

Leisure Supervisor
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CEO
Vacation Krafters, UAE

Adeel Khan

Senior Sales Exec
Al Rostamani Travel and Holidays, UAE

Shibu Chellappan

General Manager
Lets Go Tourism, UAE

Jaki Ahmed

Team Leader
Seera, KSA

Ehab Abdelaziz

Office Manager
Alqalaa Travels & Tourism, Kuwait

Yasir Badar

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ATS, UAE

Shaker Issa

Supervisor
Nirvana Travel, UAE

Alan Orong

Senior Travel Manager
South Travel DMCC, UAE

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Platinum Partner



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Increased eagerness to visit UK

New research from VisitBritain highlights British expats' top motivations for travel to the UK. It further provides valuable insights to harness the pent-up demand from British expats to visit the UK and to boost visitor spending. The study suggested that 60% of UAE travellers planned to visit friends and relatives on their next international trip, the highest among all 20 markets surveyed.

TT Bureau

Those surveyed were eager to make this happen as soon as possible with most expats planning to travel international-

spending quality time with family and friends, the research found that expatriate travellers are drawn to the U.K.'s culture and seek for cultural experiences, as well as relaxation and escape. The U.K. was also

“ Britain provides a stunning backdrop to cater for, and create stand-out trips and memories with friends and family ”

ally once fully vaccinated. The findings echo VisitBritain's latest wave of inbound sentiment research, which showed that 60 per cent of the UAE travellers planned to visit friends and relatives on their next international trip, the highest among all 20 markets surveyed. In addition to

hailed for its varied seasons, lush landscapes, and serene coastlines.

Tricia Warwick, Director-Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa, VisitBritain, said, “This timely research on what motivates UAE expats to travel to Britain will support VisitBritain and our travel trade partners with



Tricia Warwick
Director-Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa, VisitBritain

valuable insights to harness the pent-up demand to drive bookings, extend the length and breadth of visits, and boost spending. Britain provides a stunning backdrop to cater for, and create stand-out trips and memories with friends and family. We can tap into these motivators for expat travel and boost tourism to Britain by pro-

moting our world-renowned cultural offer, our wellbeing and relaxation experiences, and our beautiful and varied landscapes from coast to countryside.”

11 nights compared to seven. The research showed that extending trip length for just 1 per cent of the expat population to an extra four nights would equate to an additional



U.K. expats living in the UAE already stay longer and spend more than an average visitor, spending £1,250 per visit on average, twice as much as the global average of £696 in 2019, and staying

£1 million in spend coming into the U.K.

VisitBritain has also welcomed the recent U.K. government's announcement to accept vaccination



certificates issued by the UAE health authorities. Being able to welcome more international visitors back by safely reducing barriers to travel, boosting confidence in visiting Britain, is crucial to driving back demand and visitor spending. Major events, such as the Dubai Expo, and upcoming festivities in the United Kingdom, such as The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Festival UK 2022, present timely and valuable opportunities to promote Britain as a visiting destination around the world. 🇬🇧

VFS accredited as IATA travel pass center

VFS Global and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) have signed an agreement to incorporate accredited and approved COVID-19 testing laboratories into the IATA Travel Pass. Through the agreement, COVID-19 test credentials issued by participating labs will be securely transmitted to the IATA Travel Pass. The addition of VFS Global's network of government-approved labs into the IATA Travel Pass will make travel even more hassle-free for travellers in Canada, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, UAE, and the USA, requiring a mandatory pre-departure COVID-19 swab test.

As governments, airlines and local authorities require support with implementing COVID-19 testing, the addition of VFS Global's network into the IATA Travel Pass offers a seamless service by providing travellers, air-



lines and governments with accurate information on passengers' COVID-19 health status. By leveraging VFS Global's extensive network of strategic medical partners and authorised laboratories accredited by Governments, travellers can book their mandatory pre-departure COVID-19 test.

Recognizing COVID-19 Heroes

► Contd. from page 1

Mentally, to keep individuals motivated to stay in circumstances that may not be ideal due to a variety of factors has given the sec-

carry one home with them, since it represents a culmination of their hardships and challenges, which they overcame to the best of their abilities. Voting is still open for people in the

“ We are all grateful for the Middle East's great resilience, particularly the United Arab Emirates, which opened its doors to everyone and battled hard times with great leadership ”

tor a new face. The entire industry had to relearn, rethink, and re-strategise the way forward after unlearning certain factors.

San Jeet, Mentor, Arabian Travel Awards, shares, “This year's Arabian Travel Awards will have a special place for each individual and company that will

industry who have been at the forefront of promoting and proactively working during and after the pandemic, as well as now. Borders are slowly but steadily opening, and there is a demand from travellers; those who did not travel before COVID are now willing to travel; those who were previously

price conscious are now willing to spend money on a vacation; and safety has become the most foremost ingredient in every way. We are all grateful for the Middle East's great resilience, particularly the United Arab Emirates, which opened its doors to everyone and battled hard times with great leadership, as well as the proactive efforts to protect the communities that live here and to also uphold to protect the travellers and provide them with the best of care, and the vaccination drive that opened to everyone in the UAE. For all of these reasons, we are celebrating the awards this year.”

If you haven't yet voted for your team, now is the time to do so. Vote for your hero of the year on the website



San Jeet
Mentor
Arabian Travel Awards

www.arabiantravelawards.ae. Make a difference in the industry and sustain all of the positive trends that have been witnessed. The world is experiencing a surge in travel demand, and now, more than ever, it is essential to support industries that contribute to each country's future and economy. Tourism, travel, and hospitality contribute not just to the nation's economy, but also to economic growth and a higher standard of living, especially in the region. 🇦🇪



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SOFITEL DUBAI THE PALM

Dubai

Yeliz Hisman has joined as the new Director of Sales and Marketing at Sofitel Dubai The Palm. With over 17-years of experience, she has directed the sales and marketing divisions of renowned brands throughout the ME and Europe. She will be responsible for complete marketing and sales programmes at Sofitel, including annual budgets, revenue, and distribution management. She has garnered many awards, including the title of 'Number One Kempinski K-Star Sales & Cross Selling Performer in the Region.'



SHERATON MALL OF THE EMIRATES

Dubai

Gurnoor Bindra has been appointed as GM of the Sheraton Mall of the Emirates by Marriott International. In her new role, she will be responsible for driving the strategic priorities of Sheraton MoE. She has held numerous leadership positions and worked with Starwood, where she was in charge of operations and new hotel openings in South Asia. She also is the key chair for serve 360 Pillar in Marriott Business Council for UAE, spearheading multiple initiatives across Marriott hotels around sustainability and charity for important causes.



VOCO DUBAI PALM JUMEIRAH

Dubai

Charles Godot has been named General Manager of voco Dubai The Palm Jumeirah, IHG Hotels & Resorts' first property on the famed Palm Jumeirah. He is in charge of leading the staff ahead of the hotel's debut and driving the hotel's performance. He began his career with IHG Hotels & Resorts in 2003, working in various departments at the InterContinental Paris Le Grand Hôtel. He then embarked on an international career in Qatar, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, and finally UAE working across several departments.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON SHARJAH WATERFRONT HOTEL & RESIDENCES

Sharjah

Vikram Jamwal is the GM of the DoubleTree by Hilton Sharjah Waterfront Hotel & Residences having most recently worked at Hilton Durban in South Africa and prior to that as Hilton's Regional Director of Revenue for Africa and the Indian Ocean. Vikram, a German national of Indian descent, has worked in the hotel industry for over 22 years. He has extensive hotel expertise throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, and the ME, as well as new hotel openings in Europe and the Middle East.



Nadia Kaser is Commercial Manager at the newly launched DoubleTree by Hilton Sharjah Waterfront Hotel & Residences. Having successfully managed hotels across three continents for two major hotel chains over the last decade, she is currently working alongside the GM to plan and execute the hotel's commercial strategy. She has worked in Germany, Ethiopia, Morocco, Azerbaijan, Seychelles and Dubai, before joining.



DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

Ras Al Khaimah

Eva Muscheid has been appointed as Hotel Manager at the DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah. She has 16 years of experience in the industry. She began her career in Germany at Hilton Mainz. Muscheid has worked for Hilton in a variety of markets, including Germany and the UAE. Her new role at DoubleTree by Hilton Ras Al Khaimah represents her sixth year in the emirate, having previously held the position of Cluster Director of Business Development for a selection of Hilton properties from 2016 to 2021.



New hotels in the region

The next few months will witness a host of brand new properties to open in the region. Some of the projects are now completed amidst the pandemic whilst others are just in the early stages of construction. We present an update on some of the key hotels across the region.



Warner Bros. Hotel

Location – Yas Island Abu Dhabi
Number of Rooms/Apartments – 257

Guests at the world's first Warner Bros., hotel will be treated to a journey of discovery through film and television, enjoying rich history and library of timeless productions of Warner Bros., at every touchpoint from arrival to check-out. Kids and families can order room service delicacy from Bugs Bunny, the Wascally Wabbit, by dialling one of their favourite Looney Tunes characters.



Raffles the Palm

Location – Dubai
Number of Rooms/Apartments – 389

The Palm Jumeirah is the world's largest man-made island and archipelago, spanning 100,000 sq. m. of the West Crescent offers panoramic sea views and vistas of Dubai's iconic skyline. The resort will have 389 luxurious bedrooms, suites, and villas with balconies and sea-view terraces, as well as eight different bar and restaurant concepts.

Centara Mirage Beach Resort

Location – Dubai
Number of Rooms/Suites – 607



Centara's Mirage is Centara's themed family resort on the Deiralslands, overlooking the Arabian Gulf and just minutes from the newly opened Souk Al Marfaseafront souk and marketplace. 607 rooms and suites, ranging from Superior, Family, and Mirage rooms to Junior and two-bedroom suites with 32 to 95 sq. m., of bright, contemporary space and panoramic city or sea views, just 30 minutes from Dubai International Airport.

MySk Moon

Location – Sharjah
Number of Rooms/Domes/tents – 16



The MySk Moon Retreat in Sharjah has opened its doors to guests and bookings for the emirate's first-of-its-kind luxury glamping destination. Ten single-bed domes, four family tents with private pools, and two one-bed tents make up the family-friendly retreat. Al Jabal Resort in Khorfakkan will feature the UAE first waterpark in the east coast; and Al Bridi Resort at the Sharjah Safari project in the city of Al Dhaid.

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257

Premium Guest
Rooms

5

Locally Crafted
Dining Outlets



104

Exquisite
Residences

2

Dedicated
Outdoor Pool
one with glass bottom

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- Fitness centre





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