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Sharjah gold partner @ GULF TRAVEL SHOW

The third edition of the Gulf Travel Show, the region's most popular virtual trade, will take place from October 12 to 14, 2021. As the event's Gold sponsor, the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority has pledged its support.



Khalid Jassim Al Midfa
Chairman
Sharjah Commerce and
Tourism Development Authority

“The third GTS is a valuable platform for targeting the tourism market. We intend to highlight Sharjah and the UAE's implementation of strict health and safety protocols, such as the Sharjah Safe for Travel Stamp. We will promote our new and enhanced projects, Khorfakkan and Kalba. SCTDA are looking forward to enhancing Sharjah's reputation as a year-round, family-friendly, cultural, and leisure destination, with the emirate's rich historical and natural heritage in the spotlight.”



Mohamad Haj Hassan
General Manager
Pullman Sharjah

“Over the years, the Gulf Travel Show has established itself as a strategic meeting point for hospitality sector players, offering a valuable platform to discuss the latest developments in the industry, and explore emerging trends. At Pullman Sharjah, we look forward to participating in GTS 2021 to reinforce our position as one of the leading hotels in Sharjah. This mega event will provide us an excellent opportunity to connect with our partners and strengthen our business relationships further.”

Contd. on page 4 ▶

Malaysia's platinum endorsement @ GULF TRAVEL SHOW

Tourism Malaysia has committed itself as a platinum sponsor for the third edition of Gulf Travel Show.



Mirza Ghalib
Deputy Director
Tourism Malaysia - Dubai

“Malaysia is gearing up for the reopening of the tourism industry and one of the key destinations is Langkawi. We partnered with Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) and 10 Langkawi-based travel trade players in reaching the ME travel fraternity to revitalise tourism in Malaysia. This will be another great opportunity to interact and spread tourism awareness in planning for the reopening of our borders soon. Our campaign tagline #WeMissYou and 'Naturally Langkawi' by LADA are the essences in continuing our presence.”

Contd. on page 6 ▶

Recognising industry heroes

Get ready for the third ATA on November 21 as they prepare to recognise the heroes of the industry.

Shehara Rizly

The most coveted awards in the region, Arabian Travel Awards (ATA), will once again host the industry at a brand new venue. After the pandemic and its challenging phase in the industry, the third edition will take place at the Le Meridien Hotel and conference centre in Garhoud.



SanJeet, Director, Arabian Travel Awards shares, “Our awards this year is very special as it not only recognises the untiring efforts of the industry experts, but also celebrates the heroes of the industry after all the

Contd. on page 4 ▶

Expo opens to the world

Doors open in grandeur as Expo 2020 Dubai welcomes the world over the next six months to experience the future and connect with 190 plus countries making it the mega event in post COVID times.

“We are honoured to be hosting a historic first World Expo in the Arab world, the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa region, and to be welcoming millions of visitors to Expo 2020 Dubai over the course of six months, beginning October 1, 2021. Expo 2020 visitors will have a memorable experience as the world comes together in one location, bringing with them the best of their culture, heritage, architecture, innovation, and technology.”



Sumathi Ramanathan
VP-Market Strategy and Sales
Expo 2020

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

“As Expo 2020's premier partner and official airline, Emirates will play a key role in bringing visitors from around the world. We are also helping in attracting visitors, not only to the event but also to explore Dubai as a dynamic destination. We launched an exclusive offer for customers to experience of the World Expo. The customers of Emirates visiting or travelling through Dubai during the much-anticipated event will be eligible for a complimentary Emirates Expo Day Pass for every flight ticket booked with Emirates.”



Adnan Kazim
Chief Commercial Officer
Emirates Airline

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Forging a strategic partnership

Swan Hellenic has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Al Tayer Travel to provide direct representation through its Al Tayer Holidays brand, a division of Al Tayer Travel. Al Tayer Holidays will represent Swan Hellenic in UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain.

 TT Bureau

Al Tayer Holidays offers the highest standard of service and efficiency with over 40 years' experience across the travel sector, representing many of the world's leading brands in the Middle East through its office in the United Arab

market worldwide in order to provide close personal service to which it is committed has resulted in this strategic cooperation.

Manu Mehrotra, General Manager, Al Tayer Travel, remarked, "We are truly honoured to represent Swan Hellenic Cruises, a pioneering cultural expe-



Al Tayer's depth of experience, dedicated to the highest service standards, make them a perfect match for Swan Hellenic in the ME markets


Emirates. Swan Hellenic's long-term vision of building a direct presence in every

dition cruise leader that provides extraordinary experiences in relaxed

and elegant comfort. The growing aspirations of adventurous Middle East travelers to visit amazing and relatively unexplored territories can now become a reality."


Alfredo Spadon, Senior Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing, Swan Hellenic, commented, "Al Tayer's length and depth of experience, dedicated to the highest

service standards, make them a perfect match for Swan Hellenic in the Middle East markets they know so well. We look forward to an exciting new chapter in the his-


tory of cultural expedition cruising as we offer enriching exploration experiences directly to the curious and adventure-minded in this part of the world." 

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- Inmarsat launches OneFi: game changing platform
- Etihad and Sabre announce long-term partnership with key technology renewals
- Accor expands luxury footprint in Sub-Saharan Africa with Fairmont in Djibouti

A regional recipe for glamping

The Middle East has more opportunities for sophisticated luxury camping destinations than you might expect. **Ivo van der Vlis**, CEO, YALA luxury canvas lodges, explains why the region offers the ideal backdrop for modern glamping.

Destinations across the Middle East, from Dubai and Abu Dhabi to Muscat and Jeddah, are renowned for housing some of the world's most luxurious hotels. Brands such as Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons, Six Senses, St. Regis and One&Only have flags in the region and for many, Jumeirah's Burj Al Arab is the benchmark for Middle East hospitality. Holidays to the Middle East are synonymous with luxury, indulgence and pleasure.

Domestic travellers know a different story, however. The region's residents have long been familiar with the wonder of the Arabian Desert. Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon have been well-marketed for their history and natural beauty, but the GCC states have lagged behind – until now.

With the luxury hotel market now maturing, tourism boards, resort developers and hotel operators are coming together to launch alternative travel experiences that capitalise on the desert, beach and mountain adventures possible in their 'back yard'.

“It offers lots of opportunities to provide memorable experiences, from adventurous treks to peaceful meditation, but also combining nature with luxury”

Using luxury safari tents, stylish canvas lodges and ultra-modern trailers, these trendsetters are breaking the bounds of traditional tourist accommodation to create glamping destinations that – as you would expect – rival some of the best in the world.

Inspired local travel

Earlier this year, one of the consumer magazines in the Middle East identified 26 cool glamping spots in the UAE alone, signalling that not only is there plenty of choice, but that glamping is becoming in-

creasingly popular. Most recently, Hatta has made eco-friendly headlines with its range of glamping experiences, from the new Hatta Dome Park to Hatta Sadr Trailers, with more than half a million visitors since the latter opened in 2018.

These destinations are now more relevant than ever, tapping into the current craving from families, couples and individuals for short breaks and quality time together, without having to worry about ever-changing travel restrictions. Guests typically want to escape from their hectic lives in the city and discover a unique location that offers privacy, peace and quiet to unwind, and the freedom to do as much or as little as they wish.

rooms, toilets and kitchens, in designs tailored to the environment. They can even have wireless internet, their own private pool and access to a variety of custom-designed common areas, from lobbies and restaurants to yoga studios and event spaces.

Indeed, glamping destinations offer all the qualities of a hotel, but with more space, light and privacy.



Ivo van der Vlis
CEO
YALA luxury canvas lodges

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

Malaysia set to reopen its doors to tourists

► Contd. from page 1



Andy Yow Eng Lai
Director-Sales & Marketing
Vivanta Langkawi
Rebak Island

“We will be showcasing our unique features at the third edition of the Gulf Travel Show to our partners in the Middle East. The Middle East market supports 40 per cent of our business attracting travellers with our property positioned as welcoming them to their very own private island. We look forward to networking with existing and new partners to promote our destination. Langkawi reopened to domestic Malaysian guests from September 16, 2021 and we anticipate international inbound from November 2021.**”**

“We are looking forward to promote Langkawi, Malaysia as an outstanding tourist destination to boost our hotel's profile and brand recognition. Our participation in the show will help us in the Middle Eastern market. This is a great opportunity for us to gain an edge over our competitors with our upscale products and services. This initiative will help us put Langkawi back on the map as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.**”**



Pugenewary Mudukasan
Cluster Director of Marketing & Communication
The St Regis Langkawi and
The Westin Langkawi Resort & Spa

Making a difference in the travel industry

► Contd. from page 1

challenges and obstacles that engulfed the whole industry. Applications are still open to vote for those in the industry and the ones in the forefront promoting and proactively working during the pandemic and beyond, as of today.

Borders slowly open in certain parts of the world and the pandemic is now something we will have to live with for the next few years or so, yet the resilience over the period and the way in which the industry fought back and still keep at it shows the passion and commitment to move forward. As partners



SanJeet
Director
Arabian Travel Awards

of the industry, we feel, it is now the right time to reward those who have been through it all and continue to do so.”

If you are yet to vote for your team, this is the right time to do so. Check the website www.arabiantravelawards.ae and vote for your hero of the year. 🏆

Increasing inbound traffic with Expo 2020

► Contd. from page 1

“Expo 2020 aims to increase awareness about the challenges faced by humanity on a global scale. It is the world's largest meeting place and offers many opportunities, such as networking and promoting international relationships. Dubai is set to welcome 190 participating countries with an estimated 25 million visitors from across the globe, which will increase the inbound traffic. Expo 2020 Dubai will allow visitors to experience Emirati hospitality as well as the UAE's values of inclusion, tolerance, and cooperation.**”**



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director-Middle East
Singapore Tourism Board

“The Singapore Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai will showcase various unique and immersive experiences, which exemplify Singapore's vision of becoming a 'City in Nature'. Visitors will see an amalgamation of design, technology and culture coming to life through various design strategies and digital elements. At the pavilion, visitors will see Singaporean brands.**”**



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Naboodah Travel

ME key source market for Azerbaijan

Over the past few months, Azerbaijan has welcomed travellers from the GCC which gave them an opportunity to showcase their novel infrastructure and leisure, retail and entertainment across the destination. **Florian Sengstschmid**, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board shares with **TRAVTALK**.

 **Shehara Rizly**

What are the new protocols and policies when it comes to visitors from GCC?

As the pandemic situation continues, solid measures have been put in place in Azerbaijan. All visitors over the age of 18 travelling to Azerbaijan must be fully vaccinated and present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before their flight, while visitors under 18 only need to submit the latter. Only vaccinated people are allowed to enter all the large shopping malls, hotels and restaurants in the country as of September 1. It is an official protocol implemented by the Azerbaijani government to ensure the health and safety of residents and visitors alike. Our common goal is to provide a safe environment.

What are the new attractions for the visitors from GCC?

We keep seeing novelties regarding infrastructure upgrades in Azerbaijan. The largest shopping centre in the Caucasus region – the lotus-shaped Deniz Mall – opened last year. This centre is a full-fledged entertainment, retail, leisure and dining destination.

Also, this year two brand-new hotels were also introduced. The second largest hotel in Azerbaijan with a vast 365 guest rooms, Courtyard by Marriott Baku is located within walking distance of the Old City. Another international hotel brand recently opened is InterContinental Baku, situated in the very centre of the city, boasting stunning views of the Caspian Sea

and architectural landmarks like the Flame Towers.

Some regions are well-known for grape harvesting between August and October, especially Shamakhi. While in this region, visitors can enjoy delicious grape juice and combine it with the newly opened Alpaca Farm.

As winter approaches, I would like to mention

Azerbaijan's mountain resorts as well. Shahdag in Gusar, Tufandag in Gabala, as well as Agbulag in Nakhchivan are promising facilities. From skiing and paragliding to snowmobiling and quad tours, travellers can get a great taste of winter. Also, the Shahdag Mountain Coaster is being constructed at the moment, which will provide an exciting entertainment opportunity



Florian Sengstschmid
CEO
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

with majestic views of the Caucasus mountains.

Are there any specialised programmes for agents to sell Azerbaijan?

In 2020, we launched an e-learning platform, Azerbaijan 101, for travel agents and representatives to provide in-depth

knowledge about Azerbaijan's offerings. Those interested can register for the available courses at elearning.tourismboard.az. Upon the course completion participants are awarded the digital certificate 'Travel Specialist of Azerbaijan' by the Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

This platform has proved to be a valuable asset in reaching a large number of tourism specialists around the world and keeping them updated about the Azerbaijan tourism industry. Even though we are gradually resuming our physical participation at international events and exhibitions, we still make sure to keep our

online presence through digital initiatives. We are also planning to arrange a 'Week of Azerbaijan' within the Expo 2020 Dubai. This is going to be a series of events dedicated to four different routes in Azerbaijan.

What are the initiatives taken to attract visitors from the GCC?

We have recently launched large-scale campaigns on international travel platforms, which include digital placements on major international travel platforms. We are planning digital cooperation with the Dubai National Air Travel Agency (dnata) too. We have started working with travel trade media platforms as well, including TravelTrendz International, TTN Middle East and TravTalk, and we are already seeing positive results.

We also anticipate finalising all the documentation work and reopening our representation offices in key source markets by October. Until then, we are continuing virtual and physical meetings with our counterparts. Another major activity we have been planning is our participation at the Expo 2020 Dubai. Having a pavilion dedicated to Azerbaijan, organising some media events as well as a panel discussion will be an interesting chance to connect with relevant tourism industry stakeholders.

We will also host concerts, culinary masterclasses, the famous tea ceremonies of Azerbaijan and other activities. Lastly, we are preparing for the Qatar Travel Mart in November. 

“ We are preparing for the Qatar Travel Mart in November so that we can deliver what the new normal looks like in Azerbaijan and how travellers from the GCC can enjoy a perfect holiday here, before the year ends ”



Afurla waterfall, Guba



Baku, Old city and Flame Towers

Azerbaijan cuisine

Explained: Emirati travel sentiments

The specialised brand for Emirati travelers, REHLATY by dnata Travel, shared current insights and travel trends. **Rehab Mansoor**, General Manager, REHLATY by dnata Travel, spoke with **TRAVTALK** about the most popular destinations and sentiments of the Emirati travellers.

Shehara Rizly

Where do UAE nationals (Emiratis) want to travel?

There are typically two traveller demographics: one of which includes travellers open to travel to any destination, which

are more remote and offer the comfort.

In REHLATY's 2020 'out-bound travel' survey, 48 per cent of travellers indicated a 'want to stay away from crowds in their travel' experiences in the

the most popular travel trends from the UAE, in addition to destinations that have imposed enhanced health and safety measures. The mountains of Switzerland, Bosnia and other parts of Europe, and wildlife and beach experiences in the Indian Ocean islands are offering travellers what they are looking for at this time, and the popularity of these destinations, which are becoming more and more familiar to travellers, will continue.

We have seen an increase in enquiries for future travel including for this winter and on to 2022, where we have received particular interest in travel

“Once-in-a-lifetime activities and ‘Instagrammable’ locations which provide unique experiences are particularly popular with the Emirati traveller community, who also seek out famous restaurants and trending cafes along the way”

is open and accessible to them, and the other being those who are willing to travel to places, which

near future. Getaways in the mountains, countryside or secluded beach resorts will be amongst



Rehab Mansoor
General Manager
REHLATY by dnata Travel

updates for Bali, the parts of Thailand yet to open, and Mauritius.

How do the Emirati tourists travel now?

We have witnessed a steady mix of traveller types booking with us. We have also seen a rise in late. This has included uber-luxurious stays in

private island resorts, with added extras, from dining on private sandbanks to over-water villa stays with retractable roofs in locations including the Maldives and Seychelles.

What activities interest them in the post-COVID era?

Private tours across European hotspots are on the rise. We ensure to assign the best quality tour guides and experiences on the ground. Once-in-a-lifetime activities and 'Instagrammable' locations are particularly popular with the Emirati traveller community.

Earlier they preferred long-haul and longer holidays; what do they

look for now? How many days do they spend?

When we ran our travel intent survey – almost 40 per cent customers want to travel anywhere around the world as soon as possible. Only 17 per cent would rather travel to places that are closer to home. This indicates a pent-up demand for international travel, short or long-haul. We have also noticed for our travellers making international holiday bookings, the length of stay has been considerably longer.

At dnata Travel on the whole, we are witnessing high demand for destinations as they open up for tourism, regardless of the flight time. 🌍

Strengthening ties at GTS

► Contd. from page 1



Vikram Jamwal
General Manager
DoubleTree by Hilton
Sharjah Waterfront Hotel & Residences

“I am delighted to present the newest hotel of Sharjah at this year's Gulf Travel Show. The DoubleTree by Hilton Sharjah Waterfront Hotel & Residences offers a mix of contemporary rooms and lifestyle 1-2-3 bedroom apartments. We invite you and your guests to explore Majdolin Restaurant. We want to strengthen the ties within GCC hospitality key players. We are excited to take part at this year's Gulf Travel Show, and we are looking forward to welcoming you and your guest at the DoubleTree by Hilton Sharjah Waterfront Hotel & Residences soon.**”**

“We would like to showcase the beautiful Sharjah Collection by Mysk retreats to the world. The Gulf Trade Show is a powerful marketing tool that provides a unique opportunity to bring thousands of buyers and sellers together in one location in a short period of time. Sharjah Collection by Mysk retreats are fresh, capable and very determined to grow. Participating in a trade show like GTS would surely help us learn, improve, and know better about the market, the innovations and the latest trends.**”**



Shafik Alaeddine
General Manager
Mysk Hotel



Seema Pande
Director and Co-Founder
Elev8 Representation & Consulting

“We are showcasing our hotel in Seychelles, Le Duc de Praslin. The Gulf market has always been an important feeder market for the Seychelles, and it has grown even more so in the current situation. Given that the tourism industry is based on constant interaction between hotels, travel partners, and DMCs, and given the significant disconnect that occurred in that communication due to COVID between partners and destinations, we believe that GTS will facilitate in starting the conversation with both current and potential markets. GTS has a track record of attracting the proper mix of regional travel partners and key clients. We are excited to introduce our regional partners to Le Duc de Praslin, Hotels & Villas, Seychelles.**”**

Qatar Airways, Sabre join hands

Sabre Corporation and Qatar Airways are now finalising a new distribution deal that will provide long-term access to the airline's content through the Sabre travel marketplace.

TT Bureau

Qatar Airways intends to strengthen its partnership with Sabre to take advantage of its global reach and leading position in corporate travel for the distribution of Qatar Airways' products to travellers worldwide. Implementation work is starting to enable unique NDC offers created by Qatar Airways to be distributed through Sabre's new distribution capability (NDC), which provides a consistent end-to-end workflow that integrates within well-established agency operations.

"A new approach to retailing is required in order to respond to the personalised service and enhanced flex-



Roshan Mendis
Chief Commercial Officer
Sabre Travel Solutions

ibility that travelers expect," said **Roshan Mendis**, Chief Commercial Officer, Sabre Travel Solutions. "Sabre is committed to supporting Qatar Airways in enhancing its retailing capabilities by enabling the airline to distribute personalised offers through our marketplace to corporations and travel agencies around the world.

Collaboration will be crucial in travel's recovery, so I'm proud that we are now finalising a long-term, sustainable agreement with Qatar Airways that is beneficial for all parties in the travel ecosystem." Sabre's technology enables Qatar Airways to effectively market and sell its expansive roster of fares globally through the Sabre marketplace.

Thierry Antinori, Chief Commercial Officer, Qatar Airways, said, "We are focussed on providing a consistent shopping experience through all channels, to meet the expectations of our travellers and promote the success of our agency partners. With Sabre, we see great potential to shape the future of modern airline retailing." 🌍



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Coral Beach hits 98% occupancy

Beach properties enjoyed an exceptional summer this year due to its location. Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is one of those properties, which managed to enjoy a great summer with a high level of occupancy, **Ifthikhar Hamdani**, Area General Manager, Bahi Ajman Palace and Coral Beach Resort Sharjah, shares with **TRAVTALK**.



TT Bureau

What are the initiatives which are being taken to provide safety and hygiene to ensure guest confidence at Coral Beach?

In order to provide safety and hygiene to ensure guest's confidence at Coral Beach Resort Sharjah, we are continuing certifications on safety and hygiene, i.e., ISO 22000:2018. It is the latest version of ISO 22000 certification, providing a complete Food Safety Management System, which can be applied to organisations in a global food supply chain. ISO 22000 inte-

grates the principles of the HACCP system and application steps developed by the Codex Alimentarius

fies the implementation of cleanliness and hygiene standards designed to minimise the spread of

awarded with Go Safe Certificate, which creates confidence in the tourists for a safe stay.

How was the overall impact of staycations and overseas tourists?

Staycation was our base occupancy throughout the summer period. Most of the destinations were closed due to COVID travel restrictions and it was a good opportunity for us and mostly northern emirates beach hotels to reap benefits. The beauty of this staycation was that it not only increased our room revenue, it also boosted our food & beverage revenue.

What are the new features expected for this his property in the near future?

We are going on the right path of sustainability for Coral Beach Resort Sharjah. With several environmental activities that we had done, we are eager to move further on this part. The biggest project we are trying to work on is to minimise or even eliminate single use of plastics, on which will save cost at the same time.

“Our successful operation in summer with 98 per cent occupancy throughout was not possible without our guests from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany and Uzbekistan”

Commission of the World Health Organization. Coral Beach Resort Sharjah has been recently certified September 7, 2021.

Another certifications acquired is the Go Safe. The Go Safe Certification is a programme, which testi-

ties the implementation of the COVID-19 virus. The certification process is verified through thorough site-inspection conducted by the dedicated auditor from TUV Southwest to ensure the compliance to the highest standard for cleanliness. Hotels meeting the requirements are

Coral Beach Resort Sharjah initiated the certification in 2020 and we are glad to announce that we are certified again for this year. We will continue our commitment to a safe hotel operation against COVID-19.

What are the new source markets received during summer?

Our successful operation in summer with 98 per cent occupancy throughout was not possible without our guests from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany and Uzbekistan.

FACTFILE

■ Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is known for its beautiful serene landscape, which gives the appearance of a real resort with 125 palm trees, play areas and a large garden. It is a perfect family vacation destination. Another beauty of the property is a huge white sandy beach, a space for outdoor events where large events can be organized for upto 2,500 pax. Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is known for its quality food & beverage, such as seafood and Italian cuisine.




Ifthikhar Hamdani
Area General Manager
Bahi Ajman Palace and
Coral Beach Resort Sharjah



Experiential learning by HTMi

Hotel and Tourism Management Institute, HTMi Switzerland Dubai, the leading Swiss hospitality school in Dubai, is set to relocate to a new purpose-built hotel where students will be able to engage in real-life experiences that will better equip them to achieve their management career goals.

 TT Bureau

This new realistic hotel learning environment will be the region's first and only hospitality campus, offering exemplary practical classes in a prime hospitality location in Al Jaddaf, Dubai. Through the introduction of new classes, activities, and workshops that are distinctively rooted in Switzerland, this multicultural student environment will enable students to be fully equipped in becoming future leaders in the hospitality industry. As they live in the campus boutique hotel, they will be provided with the necessary skills and competences in several areas such as F&B

service, culinary arts, front office, and housekeeping through an engaging experience and a student-centered approach.

"The UAE has been the top destination across the globe, and this is ap-

our students receive the best education and are bounded by a solid expertise in this sector that reflects HTMi's mission of preparing them to be future hospitality leaders", says Judit Toth, Business Director, HTMi Switzerland.

Our continual collaboration with our Swiss office enables us to be the region's centre of excellence for the hospitality and tourism industry

parent with the upcoming World Expo that will be held in Dubai and will surely create an upswing in the tourism sector. With the growing opportunities for the hospitality industry, we ensure that

land Dubai. "Every level of teaching and support is provided with the help of our growing network of hospitality partners over the past two years. Our constant team-up with our Swiss office allows



us to strategically employ our objectives and be the center of excellence for the hospitality and tourism industry in the region," she continues.

HTMi's students are currently attending their internships at prestigious hotels in the region like W Dubai The Palm, Bulgari

Hotel, Emaar Hospitality, Crowne Plaza Dubai Marina, Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah and Fairmont Fujairah, to name a few. This will ensure that professional development through training will be achieved and integrate the rich culture of the UAE as the students become active learners,

envisioning excellence. The September intake for HTMi Switzerland Dubai is now open for Hotel Management and Culinary Arts programmes. Visit their website at <https://htmidubai.com/#> to know more about these programmes as there are limited seats available. 🇦🇪



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Hong Kong

Discovering the Great Outdoors



Hong Kong is actually greener than it is grey and we want to encourage our GCC visitors to rediscover Hong Kong through its thriving wellness scene, number of hiking trails, outlying islands, nature-based sightseeing locations, shares **Puneet Kumar**, Director, South Asia & Middle East, Hong Kong Tourism Board.

 Shehara Rizly

What are some great outdoors of Hong Kong which will attract the GCC travellers?

Hong Kong, despite its reputation as an urban fast-paced business hub with an internationally acclaimed art scene and incredible dining, offers a diverse range of landscapes and scenic vistas rarely found in such a compact city, ranging from sandy beaches and rocky foreshores to open grasslands and mountain ranges.

Hong Kong is actually greener than it is grey and we want to encour-

age our GCC visitors to rediscover through its thriving wellness, number of hiking trails, outlying islands, nature-based sightseeing locations and soft adventure outdoor sports available in summer and winter seasons.

How do you plan to showcase the great outdoors?

Recently, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) won the PATA Gold award 2021 for its '360 Hong Kong Moments - Great Outdoors', 360-degree video campaign. It is our global initiative to remind the world of Hong Kong as a world-class travel destination while also opening the city to the rest of the world. A series of VR videos showcasing Hong Kong's authentic neighbourhoods, city versus nature, iconic Victoria Harbour, tram ride, culinary delights, and thrilling nights allows our

overseas visitors to relive the Hong Kong moments from their previous trips as well as inspire others to add to their bucket list of things to do in Hong Kong.

HKTb has launched five uniquely-themed Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR)

itineraries, and water sports activities.

Are you considering a programme that will better prepare agents to understand the destination's outdoors?

HKTb recently organised an experiential virtual tour of Peng Chau Island. The interactive

they could experience a sense of place through sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. Each year, the HKTb publishes a Great Outdoors Hong Kong guide book to provide information and suggestions to visitors and trade.

Which areas and offerings will you concentrate on?

Green countryside that is widely accessible from metropolitan areas makes up roughly 70 per cent of the overall terrain. A tranquil hiking trail is within a short distance from commercial district, and breathtaking harbour views may be experienced from a ferry to an outlying island. Few cities in the world can boast a stunning harbour, a UNESCO-listed Global Geopark, and nature treks so near to bustling cities. Hong Kong has 24 country parks and 22 special areas,

“To build curiosity among our partners, we shared a fun pack, including VR glasses and a video playlist of '360 Hong Kong Moments'”

movies, which offer 30-second glimpses of dreamlike environmental acoustics heard in far-flung regions of the city. The movies are meant to stimulate the senses and increase sensitivity to the harmonious countryside symphonies. The ASMR videos will also feature 13 seasonal routes, including hiking and sightseeing destinations, island-hopping

virtual tour drew rave reviews and a lot of curiosity, reinforcing our belief that Hong Kong is Asia's premier urban wellness and outdoor destination.

To further build awareness and curiosity among our partners, we also shared a fun pack with them which included VR glasses and a video playlist of our '360 Hong Kong Moments' so

Puneet Kumar
Director, South Asia & Middle East
Hong Kong Tourism Board

which include scenic mountains, forests, grasslands, marshes, reservoirs, cycling paths, serene beaches, rustic villages, and quaint islands, all of which are popular with locals and adventure enthusiasts from around the world for conservation, education, and recreation.

It is a city with hidden gems, waiting to be ex-



plored. Visitors will be astonished at how easy it is to explore Hong Kong on their own.

Island-hopping

Hong Kong is home to more than 263 islands, allowing visitors to see something new every time they visit. Peng Chau, Po Toi, and Tung Ping Chau are just a few of the city's beautiful sandy beaches and picturesque islands.

• **Peng Chau island:** The island, often known as 'flat island', provides a relaxing retreat with easy trails and is only a short ferry trip away from the city's central business sector. Despite its small size, the island is dotted with photographic opportunities, including the ruins of an old factory, beaches, and temples, as well as street arts that add vibrancy.

Conquer the hiking trails

Hong Kong is a hiking paradise, with hundreds of hiking trails ranging from easy family walks to more challenging routes, as well as a variety of running and mountain biking trails letting you enjoy the thrills amidst Shing Mun Reservoir, Ng Tung Chai, and Bird's Pool Nature Trail.

• **Shing Mun Reservoir:** Nestled between Tai Mo Shan and Kam Shan Country Parks, this popular trekking location offers a rich habitat for a variety of wildlife including butterflies, monkeys,

cattle, and even wild boars. To immerse oneself in this exquisite location surrounded by nature, one can walk along the reservoir roads and paths and stop by the paperbark trees.

Sports activities

Escape the air-conditioned building and go coasteering, kayaking, or snorkelling to discover Hong Kong's adventurous side.

• **Coasteering:** If you have already trekked the top Hong Kong hiking routes and are looking for something more challenging and distinctive, coasteering is a sport that requires climbing, cliff, and swimming over steep coastal slopes, providing a unique way to experience Hong Kong's magnificent shoreline. The Sai Kung Geopark coasteering route, which features majestic rolling hills, hexagonal rock columns, gigantic coastal cliffs, and various exciting jumping sites, is one of the most popular spots for this water activity.

Will you introduce new specialty packages that focus on health and wellness as part of the travel itinerary?

The pandemic has affected everyone hard, leading to hunkered-down living, virtual life, and social isolation. Hong Kong provides numerous opportunities for visitors to unwind and relax. The booming wellness industry will entice visitors to par-



take in relaxing and rejuvenating experiences:

• **Tai Chi:** Meditation, body awareness, flexibility, and breathing are all incorporated into this peaceful martial art. The slow, synchronised technique known as 'meditation in motion' is claimed to have a variety of mental and physical health benefits, including better balance and stability, reduced blood

• **Traditional Chinese Medicine:** Acupuncture and cupping are two medical therapies offered by holistic clinics in Hong Kong. The vacuum-like sensation is intended to help with circulation, detoxification, and stress relief.

• **Tea meditation and appreciation:** Tea ceremonies were once reserved for ceremonial events like wed-



aromatic Chinese teas, Hong Kong boasts a plethora of modern outlets that host tea ceremonies, enabling guests clear their minds and feel refreshed.

• **Forest bathing to connect with nature:** Forest Therapy guided walks take participants on a calm journey through nature, where one can cultivate a sense of belonging, and practise self-care. Throughout the walk, the leader will issue a series of invitations to connect with your senses, yourself, and others. You develop a greater awareness of the numerous living and non-living by travelling slowly through the paths.

• **Alternative healing therapies:** Hong Kong also offers healing treatments like sound baths. A practitioner uses ceramic, crystal, and bronze Tibetan singing bowls, or a big, circular bronze gong, to create calming sound

waves and vibrations throughout this meditation session.

What initiatives will be taken to ensure that Hong Kong is on their list of places to visit for health and wellness?

With the 'Great Outdoors Hong Kong' campaign, the Hong Kong Tourism Board is stepping up its promotion of responsible green tourism, encouraging locals and visitors to explore Hong Kong's green countryside.

In collaboration with the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA), the Hong Kong Tourism Board has created the 'Anti-epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme' to provide visitors even more confidence in travelling here safely. Over 2,900 companies in the tourism industry and related sectors will adhere to a standardised hygiene procedure as part of this programme, ensuring that visitors have a safe and healthy stay.

Hong Kong is home to more than 263 islands, allowing visitors to see something new every time they visit

pressure, pain relief, and relaxation. To get a taste of this unique experience, you can attend a free informal lesson in one of Hong Kong's public parks.

dings, but they have since been ingrained in everyday life as a profound way to press pause and be fully present. With wooden interiors, classic ceramic tea ware, and



FACTFILE

360 Hong Kong Moments - Great Outdoors' is a virtual reality (VR) 360-degree video campaign. It is our global initiative to remind the world of Hong Kong's vibrancy as a world-class travel destination and virtually opening the city to the world.

Q&A with...



HYBRID

London: 1 - 3 Nov 2021
Virtual: 8 - 9 Nov 2021



WTM London Exhibition Director, Simon Press

What is the theme for WTM London 2021?

WTM London is the leading global event for the travel industry.

WTM London was the last travel trade show to take place before the pandemic, and will be the first one to take place after COVID. These will be the first contracts signed after almost 2 years.

It aims to support the industry in recovering, rebuilding and reconnecting as quickly, efficiently and sustainably as possible after COVID-19.

With over 40 years of experience, we are considered a solid knowledge centre for the tourism economy and a reliable source of data and ideas for our exhibitors, buyers, visitors and media.

WTM London is the brand that unites the industry and facilitates businesses to build their businesses across physical and online platforms.

In essence, WTM London is a strategic partner supporting all members of the global travel industry to promote their assets and attract targeted travellers.

What is new for WTM London 2021?

So much is new for WTM London 2021. This year WTM London will be held for the first time in an innovative **hybrid format**.

The physical event will occur at ExCeL London on Monday, November 1-Wednesday, November 3, 2021, and will be followed by WTM Virtual – November 8-9, 2021.

I have already highlighted the recovering, rebuilding and reconnecting concept – essential for this year's show to help exhibitors get back on track re connecting with the right buyers, suppliers, visitors and media.

Responsible Tourism is one of our core pillars. We'll run content sessions around the topic and host the Responsible Tourism Awards during WTM London on November 2. The awards recognise and reward businesses and destinations contributing to a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

Travel Forward, the travel technology event co-located with WTM London at ExCeL, will also take place physically from 1-3 November and virtually from 8-9 November. The show inspires the travel and hospitality industry with the next generation of technology.

Across the WTM Portfolio, **WTM Buyers' Club** has over 10,000 qualified international buyers, and as before, we will be focusing on quality over quantity. Representatives from more than 80 countries have signed up to WTM London's Buyers' Club.

Buyers from Jet2holidays, easyJet Holidays, Saga Holidays and British Airways Holidays are among the companies confirmed at WTM London's Buyers' Club

We are pleased to announce that we will be running our very successful buyers speed networking again – in person. This is where buyers and exhibitors have short meetings then hold longer meetings during the show open hours.

We understand the need for the industry to reconnect. We are anticipating a huge demand to gain access to speed networking from both exhibitors & buyers. The new formats deliver better connections and more meetings, all in a safe environment.

Connect Me is our networking and meeting tool that will help you find buyers that match your business needs so you can arrange meetings in advance of WTM London and WTM Virtual.

London Travel Week will be a seven-day travel celebration over the week of WTM London – taking place from 30th October - 5 November. It will allow the travel industry to come together and collectively shape the next 12 months of travel and tourism.

WTM London will have two seminar theatres and will live stream all content sessions during the physical event.

What is WTM London doing to ensure the health and safety of its attendees during the show?

WTM London and Travel Forward are working closely with local authorities, ExCeL London, Public Health England, and Transport for London to ensure attendees' highest possible levels of health and safety.

Attendees will need to demonstrate their COVID-19 status by one of the following:

- Proof of vaccination
- Proof of negative test
- Proof of natural immunity

Visitors must not travel to ExCeL, if they feel unwell.

Admission will only be for those who register in advance and visitors are encouraged to use WTM & TF's planning tools before they arrive.

Delegates can show their badge for contactless scanning, either on a smartphone or printout – and there will be no badge holders or lanyards.

WTM London will be a 'mask-friendly' event as delegates are strongly recommended to wear face masks, especially in enclosed or crowded spaces. Those using public transport will be required to wear a face mask on the Transport for London network.

Back in May this year, we organised a very successful Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai – the largest face-to-face travel and tourism event in the world since the pandemic. ATM also hosted a virtual show the following week.

What will the conference programme include?

At this year's WTM London physical show will bring two seminar theatres – WTM Global Stage and Travel Forward. We'll be live streaming all content sessions during the physical event, and those will be available during WTM & TF Virtual event.

WTM London 2021 will host a series of high-profile industry conferences that will formulate the future of global travel and help guide the industry after COVID-19.

Informative and fascinating conferences will take place, allowing delegates to get insights from industry-leading professionals.

Conference-goers will have the chance to hear from global ministers during our traditional **UNWTO, WTTC & WTM Ministers' Summit** on Tuesday, November 2; an extensive **Responsible Tourism** programme throughout WTM London also includes the **WTM Responsible Tourism Awards**.

The **International Tourism & Investment Conference Summit (ITIC)** is also taking place during the 3-day show. Investment in tourism will create new jobs and economic growth, and the ITIC event will facilitate vital financial and business partnerships that will pave the way for innovation and recovery.

At **Travel Forward**, we'll bring the Start-Up competition, Digital Marketing Sessions - in partnership with The Five Percent, content Payment Solution and many other topics.

WTM London and WTM Virtual – Don't miss out on:

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in business deals

50,000
senior travel professionals
(physical and virtual)

10,000
buyers

5,000
exhibitors

3,000
media

180+
countries and regions

Show Dates and Location

WTM London & Travel Forward – Physical Events

- Monday, 1 November – 10:00-18:00 (invite only)
- Tuesday, 2 November – 10:00-18:00
- Wednesday, 3 November – 10:00-17:00

Location: ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL

WTM & TF Virtual – Online Events

- Monday 8 November 07:00-22:00
- Tuesday 9 November 07:00-22:00

Registration is now open for the event.

Visit: www.wtm.com/london/en-gb.html

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HYBRID

London: 1 - 3 Nov 2021

Virtual: 8 - 9 Nov 2021

Travel industry witnesses recovery

The travel industry, which is one of the leading employers in the MENA region, is witnessing a major re-skilling drive in the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, says a top executive of Education for Employment. As the worst effects of COVID-19 ebb, things have started looking up. Most indicators point to travel coming back with a vengeance.

Rapidly changing government policies to curb the impact of different variants of the coronavirus and shifts in people's travel behaviour during the pandemic have led to the restructuring of the hospitality sector," said **Jasmine Nahhas di Florio**, Senior Vice President Strategy, Partnerships, Communications, Education for Employment. "A temporary demand drops in the travel segment, which is recovering fast, has provided an opportunity for re-skilling and up-skilling in order to meet the new sets of requirements in the industry," said Jasmine.

Some of the wealthy MENA countries, like UAE, Bahrain

and Qatar, have achieved high vaccination rates and are slowly allowing travellers from less-affected coun-

nated against COVID-19. "Such moves are bound to create more employment in the travel sector," Jasmine

Organisation (UNWTO), around 87 million tourists visited MENA countries and generated US\$ 72 billion from the tourism sector.

The report further reveals that Saudi Arabia is the largest MENA destination (21 million visitors) due to religious travelers visiting Mecca and Medina. Dubai continues to enjoy the highest tourism growth in 2018 where US\$ 21 billion were spent by international tourists in Dubai. Travel and tourism accounted for 10 per cent of global GDP and 320 million jobs, worldwide.

"As the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ebb, things have started looking

up. Most indicators point to travel coming back with a vengeance," said Jasmine of EFE, a non-profit organisation working to connect MENA's youth to the world of work.

A recent survey of 4,700 respondents from 11 countries around the world, conducted by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), revealed that 57 per cent of them expected to be travelling within two months of the pandemic's containment, and 72 per cent will do so as soon as they can meet friends and family.

"The travel industry needs to provide customers with

tailor-made services that could ensure their health and value for money. Digital literacy and emotional intelligence skills will help travel industry workers stay relevant in this more dynamic and digitised market," said Jasmine Nahhas di Florio.



Jasmine Nahhas di Florio
Senior Vice President Strategy,
Partnerships & Communications
Education for Employment

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

According to a 2018 UNWTO report, around 87 million tourists visited MENA countries and generated US\$ 72 billion from the tourism sector

tries, she said. In a latest move, the UAE has opened tourist visas for all nationalities and countries.

She also highlighted that many countries in the region are looking to allow quarantine-free travel for those who are fully vacci-

said. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Europe and the Middle East accounted for more than a third of global air passenger traffic and almost half of the total earnings from inbound international tourism. According to the report in 2018 by United Nations World Tourism

Radisson's expansion in North Africa

Radisson Hotel Group has set a record in its North African expansion, with the signing of nine hotels, to date this year. In response to the need for independent hotel owners to gain further brand exposure and consumer confidence, the group launched a new brand, Radisson Individuals.

TT Bureau

This has boosted the Group's North Africa portfolio, comprising of the Maghreb countries along with Libya and Egypt, to over 30 hotels in operation and under development, placing them firmly on track to reach over 50 hotels by 2025.

Alban Mabile de Poncheville, Director, Development, North Africa, Radisson Hotel Group says, "We are delighted to be leading the market in North African hotel expansion, setting a record for ourselves and the industry. Our flagship brand, Radisson Blu, has been one of the leading



brands in the region and as we continue to grow and diversify across North Africa, we look forward to capitalising on our brand name and introducing new brands in the area such as Radisson, in the upscale segment and Radisson Collection, our entry level luxury brand.

The market has shown a great potential in various segments but also in different product types, from resorts to city hotels but also serviced apartments and boutique hotel offerings. We aim to further accelerate our presence across all North African countries and key

cities, and also expand in new touristic areas."

Mabile de Poncheville adds, "This initiative further demonstrates the ability for our group to provide solutions that not only supports our partners but also reflects our focus on conver-

sions with a tailored offering which provides all the benefits of our network and scale with limited pre-requisites."

The results of the pandemic have shown two major trends: the resilience

and cements their future. "Conversions have and will continue to remain a priority in our expansion strategy, especially post-pandemic, as there is less liquidity for newer developments. We, therefore, seek to form wider

This initiative further demonstrates our ability to provide solutions that supports our partners and reflects our focus on conversions with a tailored offering

of serviced apartments across the industry and the rapid growth of leisure and domestic demand. The Group's recent signings respond to those trends

partnerships and strategic ventures with local or regional chains and forge ahead with our city scale and critical mass strategy," says Mabile de Poncheville.

DTCM lauds hospitality partners' support

As Dubai further consolidates its strategic partnerships in the domestic and international markets in the post-pandemic period, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) has highlighted the pivotal role played by global hospitality partners in accelerating the city's tourism recovery.

TT Bureau

At a meeting with the General Managers of Marriott International hotels in Dubai, **Issam Kazim**, CEO, Dubai Tourism referred to the critical support provided by Marriott in showcasing the city as a safe must-visit destination. During the meeting, Kazim recapped the efforts made by stakeholders and partners to help bring about industry stabilisation, and also shared a positive industry overview.

Kazim also emphasised the importance of leveraging all efforts to attract more international visitors, especially benefiting from



We are proud of the enormous contribution hotels have made with their own strategies and initiatives in the true spirit of collaboration during these extraordinary circumstances

the Expo 2020 Dubai and the UAE Golden Jubilee celebrations. With the hospitality sector employing a local and expatriate workforce, Dubai Tourism

also stressed the need for hotels to use the Dubai Way online platform created by the Dubai College of Tourism, which is aimed at ensuring that



hotel staff impart standardised information and instructions and provide exceptional guest relations.

Kazim commented, "The growing industry momentum is the result of a robust strategy that was developed to manage the pandemic under the visionary leadership and guidance of **His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**,

Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. We are also heartened by the commitment of our stakeholders and partners to stay the course and convey to the world that Dubai remains open and safe for global travellers.

We are proud of the enormous contribution hotels have made with their own strategies and initiatives in

the true spirit of collaboration during these extraordinary circumstances, and we are also grateful to their support in ensuring that the industry enjoys continued success."

Participants at the meeting were also provided a brief overview of the marketing initiatives launched by Dubai Tourism in international markets including the latest global campaign, Dubai Presents featuring Hollywood stars Jessica Alba and Zac Efron, which was screened at the meeting. Following the launch of the first two cinematic trailers, Spy Action and RomCom, the campaign generated over 200 million views.



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Hospitality investors gather in Dubai

After almost 18 months key leaders in the hospitality industry gathered for three days of networking and valuable panel sessions at the Arab and African hotel investors conference. Some of the key industry players captured by **TRAVTALK**.



81% search for international travel

With ease of travel restrictions, the overall demand for travel increased considerably over the past few weeks. Traveller confidence has risen, particularly in areas that have clear regulations, no rules for quarantine upon arrival, and direct airline options. **Emily Jenkins**, Head of Leisure UAE, dnata Travel, shares with **TRAVTALK** some of the travel trends and traveller sentiments.

 Shehara Rizly

What are the current travel trends for UAE residents?

Whilst the UAE remains the number one travel destination of choice for UAE residents, there is clear demand for international travel driving bookings for this summer and beyond, with 81 per cent of overall search traffic for dnata Travel for international destinations.

Traveller confidence and interest in travel to Europe is at an all-time high. With the UAE's impressive vaccination drive, our travellers

have witnessed a surge of popular city, beach and countryside hotspots across Europe

ish coast is also seeing rise in traffic. Switzerland opened in July to all vaccinated travellers, and

international travel destinations for summer 2021 from the UAE are the Maldives, Turkey, Switzerland, Georgia, and the Seychelles, respectively.

What is their preference in terms of flight duration? How many days do they spend?


We are seeing a steady growth in trending travel searches and bookings across the globe, with stable gains each month, including for both short- and long-haul destinations. Short- and medium-haul destinations are certainly attractive to travellers due to their quick, easy flight time from the UAE, and the



Emily Jenkins
Head-Leisure UAE
dnata Travel

ing from an average of three nights in previous years to five nights, and with more customers booking seven nights plus.

Were some travellers interested in experiencing domestic travel instead of travelling abroad?

The UAE currently is, and always has been the number one travel destination of choice for its residents. In the past year, domestic travellers have been exploring more of the UAE than ever before, and they are appreciating the incredible landscapes, attractions and luxurious resorts on our doorstep. 

Length of stay is up 30% overall for UAE travellers booking with dnata Travel, increasing from an average of three nights in previous years to five nights, and with more customers booking seven nights plus

open to them for travel. Most popular for travel from the UAE includes Turkey. City and countryside retreats in Italy and Georgia have also been gaining traction, alongside beach breaks in Greece. The Span-

has become one of our fastest-growing destinations of choice.

What are the top five destinations for this summer?

From June 2021 to date, the top five most booked

opportunity to travel for a long weekend.

UAE travellers are staying on holiday for longer in 2021. Length of stay is up 30 per cent overall for UAE travellers booking with dnata Travel, increas-



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Q&A with...



Travel Forward Exhibition Director, Simon Press

What is Travel Forward?

Travel Forward is the leading travel technology event co-located with WTM London and where the tomorrow's travel tech community meets.

The show is renowned for showcasing the next-generation technologies for the travel, tourism and hospitality industry and creates a unique platform for organisations to raise their profiles and share solutions, providing direct reach to a new audience of technology professionals.

Thousands of travel technology providers and buyers will attend the 3-day show of cutting-edge insights, open debate and unrivalled networking opportunities.

This year, Travel Forward will be held for the first time in an innovative hybrid format. The physical event will take place at ExCeL London on Monday, November 1-Wednesday, November 3, 2021, and will be followed by TF Virtual on November 8-9, 2021.

What is new for Travel Forward 2021?

As the world slowly returns to normal and consumers book holidays to exciting destinations, the travel industry needs the technologies to enable their business to survive and move forward.

To help the travel technology industry **reconnect, reignite and innovate**, we have added many features at this year's show.

New for 2021, is our **Buyers Club Programme** for key buyers of tech products and services with direct purchasing and contracting authority, specifically targeting Senior travel industry professionals, Senior IT professionals and Travel Tech professionals.

The interactive **exhibition area** will feature the most innovative technology and solution providers working in the world of travel today.

For the first time, Travel Forward will enable businesses creating a more positive, green and responsible future, to learn from and collaborate with other responsible technology companies in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector.

The **conference programme** will take place across all three days of the physical show. Travel Forward's exclusive conference brings together a cutting-edge, inspiring line up of industry experts, providers and influencers to deliver a rich programme of experience.

Finally, **Travel Forward, WTM London and World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL)** have launched a start-up competition and summit for technology start-ups offering sustainable and innovative solutions to the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

Front Runners Travel Tech Competition will shortlist 30 start-ups across three categories to be promoted among WTM's and TF's exhibitors and attendees as top innovators to partner with to thrive in an era where tackling sustainability are becoming imperative.

The summit will take place on **2 November 2021** during WTM London and Travel Forward physical shows at ExCeL London, when nine finalists (top three per category) will be invited to pitch to an international judging panel and exclusive audience of investors, industry leaders and innovators.

What is Travel Forward doing to ensure the health and safety of its attendees during the show?

Travel Forward is working closely with local authorities, ExCeL London, Public Health England, and Transport for London to ensure attendees' highest possible levels of health and safety.

Attendees will need to demonstrate their COVID-19 status by one of the following:

- Proof of vaccination
- Proof of negative test
- Proof of natural immunity

Visitors must not travel to ExCeL, if they feel unwell.

Visitors will need to present a text, email or pass to verify their COVID status upon arrival and will be asked to check in each day via the venue's NHS Test & Trace QR code.

Delegates can show their badge for contactless scanning, either on a smartphone or printout – and there will be no badge holders or lanyards.

Travel Forward will be a 'mask-friendly' event as delegates are encouraged to wear face coverings, especially in enclosed or crowded spaces. Those using public transport will be required to wear a face covering on the Transport for London network.

Hand sanitiser will be available throughout the venue and elbow bumps are suggested as an alternative. The venue will see the highest standards of cleaning before, during and after the event, including frequent cleaning of all regularly touched surfaces.

Back in May this year, we organised a very safe and successful Arabian Travel Market (ATM) incorporating Travel Forward, in Dubai – the largest face-to-face travel and tourism event in the world since the pandemic. ATM also hosted a virtual show the following week.

What will the conference programme include?

This year, WTM London and Travel Forward physical shows will bring two seminar theatres – WTM Global Stage and Travel Forward. We'll be live streaming all content sessions during the physical event, and those will be available during WTM & TF Virtual shows.

Travel Forward's exclusive conference brings together a cutting-edge, inspiring line up of industry experts, providers and influencers to deliver a rich programme of experience.

The 2021 programme will see a mix of panel sessions, 1-2-1 interviews and keynotes, each with the shared goal of both inspiring and educating the audience with actionable takeaways.

Running alongside presentations from hotel chains and airlines, OTAs and infrastructure partners, technology providers will have the opportunity to demonstrate field-tested solutions and share learnings from successful deployments.

Travel Forward's case study-based sessions are all about the 'how', giving attendees hands-on insights about how technology can make a real difference to their organisations' bottom lines.

Panellists and speakers across our 2020 virtual event included representatives from travel luminaries such as ETOA, TravelZoo, Skyscanner, Babble Cloud, Holiday Pirates, Kognitiv Spark, Booking.com, Travolution and PayTabs.

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- Streamline your business with the latest tech
- Make profitable business deals
- Connect with travel tech product specialists
- Hear from a new generation of influencers and leading industry experts

Travel Forward – Physical Event

- Monday, 1 November – 10:00-18:00
- Tuesday, 2 November – 10:00-18:00
- Wednesday, 3 November – 10:00-17:00

Location: ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL

TF Virtual – Online Event

- Monday 8 November 07:00-22:00
- Tuesday 9 November 07:00-22:00

Registration is open for Travel Forward.

Visit: www.wtm.com/travel-forward/en-gb/visit/visitor-registration.html

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51% UAE locals would fly to space

Billionaires like Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos have marked a major milestone in space tourism, with their recent space tours and plans of flying passengers to space in suborbital flights by early next year. But it is not an excursion that appeals to everyone. Interest in being a space tourist is higher among younger adults, whereas older adults are less likely to be interested.

YouGov's latest study among 1028 respondents in the UAE reveals half (51 per cent) of the respondents are likely to hop on a suborbital flight if price was not a constraint, the rest remain indecisive (25 per cent) or are unlikely to buy a ticket even if they could afford it (24 per cent).

UAE residents' interest to travel to space

Considering the costs not being a barrier to fly on a suborbital space flight, how likely are you to book yourself a ticket?....? of respondents who said this.

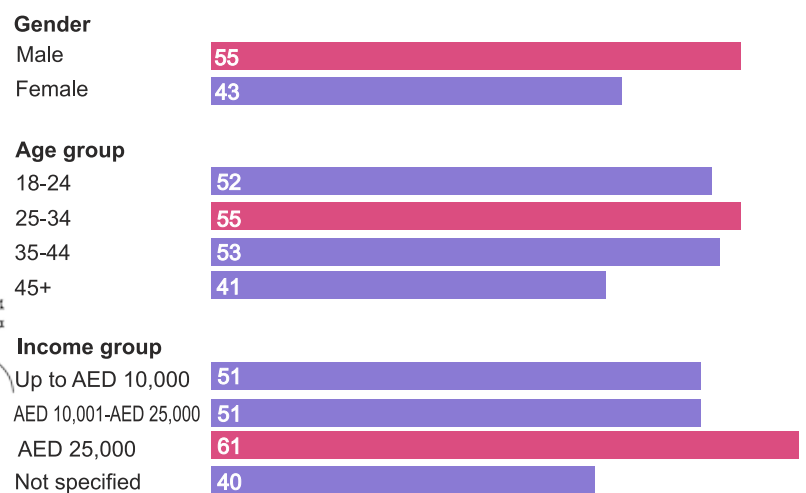


- Once regarded as a topic reserved for science fiction, space tourism may very well soon be offered by private companies, such as SpaceX, Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic. Interest in being a space tourist is higher (54 per cent) among younger adults (18-44 years), whereas older adults (45 years & above) are comparatively less likely to be interested (41 per cent).
- Similarly, men when compared to women are more likely to get themselves a ticket for a suborbital flight, provided money wasn't a concern (55 per cent vs 43 per cent).
- The survey also shows that residents from high-income groups (earning AED 25,000+) are more inclined towards space travel compared to the other income groups.



Interest in being a space tourist

Considering the costs not being a barrier to fly on a suborbital space flight, how likely are you to book yourself a ticket?....? of respondents who said this (numbers include very likely or likely).



- Among those interested in travelling into space, the most common reason given to do so was to experience something unique (53 per cent). Many claimed their reason to go to space would be to see the view of earth from space, view other planets or to experience weightlessness in zero gravity conditions (43 per cent each). For some it seems to be a lifetime dream or goal (34 per cent).
- Out of those who were undecided or unlikely to board a space flight even if money was not a constraint, their main reason to say so was because they think they could utilise the money in something else (33 per cent) or because they believe the flight would not be an easy one (32 per cent).



Reasons deterring UAE residents to experience space tourism

Keeping costs of the flight aside, what could be the possible reasons deterring you to experience a travel on suborbital space flight?....(% of respondents who said they are unlikely or undecided about travelling to space)

- Some fear the experience will be unsafe (28 per cent) while others are not interested in going to space at all (19 per cent).
- With the current advancements in space travel, there is every reason to believe that commercial space tourism will have a significant impact on the economy, ultimately benefitting the society at large. When asked about the advantages of involvement of space tourism, about half of the respondents in UAE feel it would lead to overall technological development and innovation and serve as a source of inspiration or education for younger generation (50 per cent and 47 per cent respectively). Many (37 per cent) think it will yield economic benefits like creation of new spaceports, greater job opportunities for people.
- In addition to this, a little over a third (36 per cent) see it as an opportunity for transformational changes for mankind- like the creation of hypersonic flights which would make travel between two ends of the world a matter of just few hours (London to Sydney in less than 4 hours).
- While space tourism remains largely an accessible domain for the super-rich, a majority (60 per cent) of surveyed respondents think that in next 10 years or so, people will routinely travel in space as tourists. Only a small number thinks it won't happen (12 per cent), while almost three in 10 (28 per cent) remain undecided.



Data was collected online among 1028 respondents in the UAE by YouGov's Omnibus between August 11-18, using YouGov's panel of over 15 million people worldwide.

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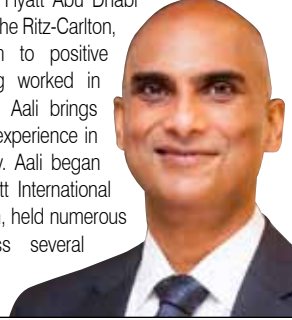
Mohamed Khedr has officially taken charge of a new position in AKHOM Consulting as Managing Partner, with an objective of expanding Akhom Consulting's international portfolio in hospitality. His career started with the Oberoi Group in Egypt and kept growing with IHG Group, Emaar Hospitality Group, Jumeirah Group and Accor Hotels in the MENA region. He will focus on Akhom's vision for business growth, maximising revenue, client relationships, and brand expansion.



PARK HYATT

Abu Dhabi

Aali Ghufraan has been appointed as Director of Sales and Marketing at the Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas. Aali Ghufraan, a British national, joins Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi after successfully managing The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun's commercial team to positive record performance. Having worked in Asia, Europe, and America, Aali brings over two decades of global experience in the luxury hospitality industry. Aali began his career in 2001 at Marriott International in the US and has, since then, held numerous leadership positions across several luxury brands.



AIR FRANCE-KLM

Dubai

Sylvain Mathias has been named the new Regional Commercial Director-Middle East at Air France-regional KLM's headquarters in Dubai Airport Free Zone, UAE. He has taken over this role from Wilson Tauro who moved to South Africa as the company's Country Manager. Mathias is in charge of the ME regional team, which includes pricing, marketing, and business intelligence for the company's seven online markets: Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. He reports directly to the Air France-KLM General Manager Middle East.



JA RESORTS & HOTELS

Dubai

Robert El Khoury has been appointed to the role of Vice President of Sales and Marketing at JA Resorts & Hotels. He will be responsible for overseeing the commercial function of JA Resorts & Hotels 10-property portfolio across the UAE, Seychelles, and Maldives. He takes on the charge for driving the commercial engine of JA Resorts & Hotels, overseeing the sales, revenue, marketing, and distribution. He will also focus on driving global expansion, maintaining the brand promise and attracting and developing talent.



NOVOTEL, IBIS & ADAGIO DUBAI AL

BARSHA

Dubai

Souffian Zaeraoui, Cluster General Manager for Novotel, Ibis, and Adagio Dubai Al Barsha, has returned as the Cluster General Manager for the Accor properties. He has spent 14 years with the company. He will be an instrumental part of the upcoming transformation of the newly designed Ibis guest rooms for Ibis Al Barsha. His success as GM of the Novotel & Adagio Abu Dhabi Al Bustan helped establish him as an invaluable part of Accor.



AIN DUBAI

Dubai

Ronald Drake is the new General Manager for Ain Dubai. He is in charge of growing and nurturing Ain Dubai, establishing it as one of Dubai's iconic landmarks on the global stage, as well as defining and delivering the strategic vision through its launch and operations. Drake joined the Ain Dubai team as General Manager in early 2020 and will now lead the global launch of Ain Dubai in 2021. He brings over 35 years of experience in developing global tourist attractions, retail and live entertainment projects in various leadership roles.



New Hotels in the region

Many new partnerships for the construction of new hotel projects have been forged. Despite the pandemic, some of the projects have been completed, while others are still in the early stages. We present an update on some of the most key hotels across the region.

Mantis Bahrain
Hawar Island

Location – Bahrain
Number of Rooms – 72



The Mantis project is headquartered on Hawar Island, a 45-minute boat ride from Bahrain's mainland and a UNESCO site for its natural history. Situated on the west coast of the Hawar Island, the property is surrounded by a wildlife sanctuary, making it one of the first such environmentally-focussed projects. Once open, the hotel and resort will feature 72 keys, along with five dining concepts, and extensive sports and leisure facilities.

The House Hotel
Jeddah CityYard

Location – Jeddah KSA
Number of Rooms – 114

The House Hotel Jeddah CityYard, part of Jeddah's first lifestyle destination City Yard, is set to open soon in Al-Rawdah. The House Hotel is a Kerten Hospitality luxury boutique hotel brand. The hotel will be the focal point of the City Yard complex. It will make its mark as a luxury design-led hotel connecting guests and residents, giving luxury and soft-touch hospitality.

Hyatt Regency
Cairo West

Location – Egypt
Number of Rooms – 250



The hotel marks Hyatt's return to Cairo and strengthens the brand's North African footprint. The hotel, part of the Hyatt Regency brand, is meant to deliver seamless experiences and an energising centre for both business and leisure tourists. Within the well-established Pyramid Heights Business Park, the Hyatt Regency Cairo West is conveniently placed.



Rove City Walk

Location – Dubai
Number of Rooms – 566

Rove City Walk is the brand's latest property, located in Dubai's trendiest creative lifestyle community. The hotel provides guests with the ideal excuse to immerse themselves in City Walk's iconic urban lifestyle, which is directly across from Coca-Cola Arena Dubai. This makes it an ideal location for those attending or organising events. The artsy modern design of Rove City Walk is inspired by music.

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