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Spike in travel demand from UK

As soon as the announcement came in that the UK has moved the UAE to the amber list, there was a spike in bookings for travel to the UAE from UK. It sends in a positive vibe for the tourism industry, some professionals shared their insights with **TRAVTALK**.



Sofia Santos
Country Manager - GCC,
Visit Britain

“The UAE is a very important in-bound visitor market for us and we know there is pent-up demand for travel. We are working closely with our partners in the UAE to promote the very best of destination Britain to drive future trips being able to welcome more international visitors back by safely reducing barriers to travel is a crucial step on tourism's road to rebuilding.”



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Naboodah Travel

“The UK is one of the top travel destinations in the list for both in-bound and outbound travel from/to UAE. We are delighted that the UAE is now moved to UK's amber list, this announcement will provide a major boost to tourism and family travel. Each step that leads to restore normality is appreciated. The safety of the visitors had always been the main priority of the region.”



Manu Mehrotra
General Manager
Al Tayer Travel

“The UK is an important market, both for leisure and business travel. I am sure the placing of UAE in the amber list of countries will have a positive impact. Emirates has already announced the addition of more flights to UK as well as increasing frequency, so I am sure the other airlines too are planning expansion of services to cater to the pent-up demand.”

Contd. on page 3 ►

Dubai to drive recovery of aviation

The past one-and-a-half years have shown the commitment from Dubai to ensure recovery of aviation.

TT Bureau

Commenting on the progress that Dubai's aviation sector has made following the pandemic, His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, said, “We have crossed many significant milestones this year despite the difficult



His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum
President of Civil Aviation Authority,
Chairman of Dubai Airports and
Chairman and Chief Executive of
Emirates Airline and Group

period. Dubai has been a symbol of resilience and

Contd. on page 4 ►

30 day countdown begins for Expo'20

Expo 2020 is now just thirty days away as it opens doors on October 1 for guests both onsite and online.

Shehara Rizly

Diving into the expo zone, it is a city beyond comparison, as always Dubai has successfully brought out a magnificent city which will be sustainable even beyond the expo. The biggest event of the year expects none less than an influx of guests from across the globe and the recent announcement by Emirates with a special expo pass for any-



Sumathi Ramanathan
Vice President Market Strategy and Sales
Expo 2020

one travelling during the period is another booster to encourage visitors to spend their time in the

Contd. on page 4 ►

Reconnect virtually at GTS

Back on popular demand, the countdown for the third edition of the Gulf Travel Show (GTS) begins.

Shehara Rizly

The Gulf Travel Show, a digital initiative which emerged during the latter part of last year with a new way to connect with the trade, is back with its third edition in less than a year. As borders open and close, staying connected continues to be important and the show does that by bringing together buyers and suppliers from travel, tourism and hospitality to

safely meet and discuss the way forward. An important feature of the GTS is the prescheduled meetings, this time, they have gone a



step further and introduced features dedicated to accommodate requests by the travel fraternity. Hence,

Contd. on page 4 ►



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Al Rostamani Travels goes digital

With the pandemic looming over last year, some took to initiating and transforming their services to suit to the need of the hour. Al Rostamani Travels was one of the companies that took to digital transformation during this time to ensure seamless services to their customers.

 Shehara Rizly

One of the leading travel companies in the UAE since 1979, Al Rostamani Travels provides services including corporate & MICE travel, outbound leisure packages and UAE inbound packages. They are the appointed 'Preferred Sales Agents' for globally renowned leisure brands such as Globus, Cosmos, Monograms & Avalon River Cruises, Rail Europe, Interhome, Norwegian Cruise Line, Thomas Cook India and are also the Authorised Ticket Reseller of Dubai Expo.

Al Rostamani Travels recently announced their digital transformation with



Bimal Jain
General Manager
Al Rostamani Travels

the launch of their new e-commerce portal (alrostanitravel.ae). **Bimal Jain**, General Manager stated, "Al Rostamani Travels has predominantly been known as a Corporate TMC, even though we have a strong presence in retail, leisure and UAE inbound verticals. We identified areas we could grow

and diversify in and one segment that we realised needed a lot of focus, was our technology offering. Therefore, we decided to invest heavily in developing an end-to-end web-based booking system in a fully integrated single-

the latest promotions and most relevant information directly from us."

Our decision to embark on an exciting journey to restructure and transform our business through heavy investment in digitalisation

“We decided to invest heavily in developing an end-to-end web-based booking system not only for our B2C customers but also for our B2B market segment”

platform ecosystem, not only for our B2C customers but also for our B2B market segment. We have also revamped our social media channels to ensure our customers can get

was a strategic one. We are happy to announce that we have released our e-commerce capable website and are in the final stages of development of our B2B trade & corporate modules.”

275% increase week on week

► Contd. from page 1



Mamoun Hmedan
Managing Director, MEANA
and India, Wego

“The United Kingdom’s decision to move UAE from the red list to amber list is a great step towards reviving the tourism between the two countries, especially since the UK is one of the most preferred destinations for UAE travellers and vice versa. Following the announcement, we saw an increase of 110% in the searches from the UAE to the UK and the biggest spike was on the date of the announcement between August 4-5. We also saw a remarkable growth in the family trip searches with around 255% followed by couples with 95% increase and solos with 91%.”

“After the announcement in the UK, we saw a huge increase (275% increase week on week) in travellers looking to travel into the UAE from the UK, mostly to Dubai. The positive trend is probably because of the convenience that travellers have to take a PCR test at the airport and subsequently enjoy their holidays. Although it is summer it is still good to see the pent-up demand for travel into the UAE. Looking at travellers from the UAE to the UK there was a 47% increase, possibly because there are still quarantine restrictions in place.”



Stewart Smith
Managing Director - MEA,
Sojern

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

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For a thriving aviation industry

► Contd. from page 1

agility in responding to the challenges that the pandemic brought, and we are confident that the col-

Minister of Defence and Executive Director for Military Committee for Dubai Airshow, said, "For many

“Dubai Airshow 2021 will serve as the ultimate testament to the industry's steady recovery and growth and firmly establish Dubai as the leading global aerospace hub”

— HH Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum

laborative work done by the sector's key players to restore consumer confidence and boost travel operations will pave the way for a thriving aviation industry. Dubai Airshow 2021 will serve as the ultimate testament to the industry's steady recovery and growth and firmly establish Dubai as the leading global aerospace hub.”

Major Gen. Staff Pilot Ishaq Saleh Al Baloushi, Military Advisor to State

years we have been collaborating and working closely with different defence delegations from across the world for the Dubai Airshow to be held from November 14-18, 2021. The Airshow will provide the ideal event for strategic development and the creation of new partnerships. Taking centre stage will be the different technologies that enhance safety and accelerate efficiency.”

Redesigning the visitor experience

► Contd. from page 1

world's most magnificent city of Dubai.

Sumathi Ramanathan, Vice President Market Strategy and Sales – Expo 2020, shared, "Dubai is one of the first cities to open up to international tourism. The safety

tal and pivotal in everything that the Dubai and the UAE government does. One of the key measures that we are taking is to redesign the visitor experience to ensure that we are providing the right kind of regulations, health, and safety sanitisation

“One of the key measures that we are taking is to redesign the visitor experience to ensure that we are providing the right kind of regulations, health, and safety sanitisation”

— Sumathi Ramanathan

and security measures that have been put together by the UAE government and Dubai as a city has enabled us to be one of the first leaders in terms of opening up to international tourism. Some of you may be aware that Emirates airlines has been voted as the safest airline in the world. The DNA and ethos of safety is fundamen-

tion. Expos are all about showcasing the latest technology. We have partnered with a number of technology partners, including SAP and Siemens and Cisco, Terminus, which is, artificial intelligence from China, who is providing robotics. We are in a very good place with all of the technology partners to be able to support us.”

Growing connections at Gulf Travel Show 3.0

► Contd. from page 1

the third edition has come up with a dedicated day for the VIPs and focused on buyers from the KSA.

Sanjeet, Director, Gulf Travel Show, shared, "The third edition brings with it a variety of new features as we have specialised days for VIPs and networking dedicated to the KSA. As the Kingdom looks at tourism promotions with recent opening of its borders, KSA continues to show prowess towards



Sanjeet
Director
Gulf Travel Show

tinations, hotels and travel professionals, who are committed to their role in taking the next steps to promote travel. We hope that

“Our main purpose is to ensure collaboration between destinations, hotels & travel professionals, who are committed to their role in taking the next steps to promote travel”

achieving their 2030 vision to ensure that it establishes itself as one of the most visited travel destinations. Our main purpose is to ensure collaboration between des-

this edition will bring in all the necessary networking between industry partners and look forward to conducting a bigger and better digital event.”

Indonesia's 76th year of independence

Consulate of Indonesia in Dubai celebrated its 76th year of independence at a small ceremony graced by the staff members at the embassy with all necessary protocols. **HE Kartika Candra Negara** Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia for Dubai and Northern Emirates shared that the key message by the President is the safety of tourists and local population in the country.



Embracing AI & data mobile apps

Middle Eastern tourism is still recovering from the global pandemic. While the pandemic itself was a negative for the hospitality industry, many within it are looking to make things positive by rethinking the way they approach KPIs and customer retention, says **Chloe Kirby**, a digital marketing professional.

While it's true that performance indicators are still lower than before 2020 changed things, there's a major shift occurring in upper management. The huge change is com-

ring in the Middle Eastern tourism market.

Customer Service Meets Big Data

The hospitality industry in the Middle East is becoming increasingly interested

in mobile apps as a nice feature to get ahead of the competition. Now, we see these digital tools as a must-have in an increasingly competitive market. There are a number of ways to spot new trends in mobile apps for the hospitality industry that take advantage of AI. For example, chatbots that assist in the booking process are now among some of the most high-performing features on mobile apps in the industry.

Operational Analytics and the Power of Big Data

When it comes to managing hotel and hospitality operations, the numbers don't lie. You can tell immediately if things are going well or you're in a down-turn. Luckily, numbers do more than tell us the truth: they also show us patterns and hints to new trends. From the

smallest changes in customer behaviours to emerging needs that help keep people coming back, the Middle Eastern hospitality scene is slowly embracing Big Data and automated analytical algorithms as a way to know what changes need to take place to improve performance before they become issues.

Performance Analysis Shifts with AI and Big Data Mobile Apps

Thanks to mobile apps that can be used behind the scenes, the ability to manage new AI and Big Data tools are becoming easier to use and more efficient. When it comes to spending resources, both time-based and financial, Middle Eastern hospitality businesses can't waste in any one area. The pandemic is hav-

ing a lasting effect on business, and it's important to maximise all efforts into positive growth and not continued stagnation.

Big Data and AI are the key to transforming a rough time period to a great opportunity for businesses in the Middle East. One should take full advantage of this potential boom to business by exploring options in this sector today.



Chloe Kirby
A digital marketing professional

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

The Middle Eastern hospitality scene is slowly embracing Big Data and automated analytical algorithms as a way to know what changes need to take place to improve performance before they become issues

ing from AI and Big Data mobile apps that are reshaping how we view everything from customer service to sales approaches in the hospitality industry. Here are some of the biggest changes occur-

in the power of digital innovation when it comes to customer service. No example stands taller than the new approach hotels and other tourism-related businesses are taking to mobile apps. Before, we thought of mo-

Breaking News

■ A Emirates ties up with Cemair for seamless connections throughout South Africa

■ DCT Abu Dhabi to expand its travel industry e-learning programme

■ Six new tourism projects approved by HH Mohammed bin Rashid in Hatta

■ Travel Counsellors Launches New Community Platform "TC World"

■ Travel to Expo from all Emirates: Al Tayer Chairman RTA

■ Norwegian Cruise line partners with Al Tayer Travel

■ Elaa appointed as exclusive General Sales Agent for Philippine Airlines in Saudi Arabia

■ Trip.com Group commits as official travel service provider for ITB China 2021

■ Marjan welcomes AED 450 million new hotel project: the world's largest Hampton by Hilton hotel in Al Marjan Island

Emirates boosts connectivity

In line with the easing of restrictions, the airline will be restoring capacity across 29 cities on its network on over 270 flights as well as fine-tuning its schedules to boost frequencies and capacity as demand proliferates for international leisure and business travel.

TT Bureau

With the recent announcements of the UAE easing entry protocols for 12 countries*, and the UK adding the UAE on its 'amber list', Emirates is actively responding to the spike in travel demand

across its network to make it easier for customers to connect to Dubai and beyond through the scaling up of its operations.

Expansion of services to/from the UK

By October, the airline will increase its services

As international borders reopen and travel restrictions ease, Emirates continues to expand its network safely and sustainably.

to 73 weekly flights to the UK, including a six times a day London Heathrow operation; double daily

A380 flights to Manchester, ten weekly services to Birmingham and daily services to Glasgow.

Boosting US operations and restoration of services across Africa

Emirates currently flies to 12 cities in the United States on over 70 weekly flights, and will be adding additional frequencies to

Houston, Boston and San Francisco over the course of August to accommodate for the seasonal influx of travellers. The airline will also be boosting capacity on its four weekly services to New York JFK to its flagship A380 from 13 August, improving travel options for customers connecting to/from the major US city from across the airline's network. Emirates will continue to make schedule and capacity adjustments to match its services with customer travel trends. Emirates has increased flights to Johannesburg from daily to 11 weekly flights, with the ad-

dition of four linked flights with Durban, and the airline also flies to and from Cape Town with three weekly services. Customers flying in and out of Emirates' three South African gateways can safely connect to an array of onwards connections to Europe, Middle East, West Asia and the United States.

Flights to/from South Africa have also been scheduled to allow for convenient connections and additional access to Emirates' four gateways in the UK, as well as Emirates' extensive US network. 🇦🇪



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Digital first for hospitality recovery

As hospitality's doors finally reopen, the sector is quickly getting a sense of the evolved 'digital-first' world in which it's now operating. Now, the whole sector must quickly accelerate its digital transformation to fuel long-term recovery, or risk customer abandonment and falling further behind.

TT Bureau

The past year has seen a significant change in the adoption of technology and digital services, but while some hospitality businesses were able to welcome online models, huge swathes of the industry were forced to remain dormant, leaving many digital advancements relatively untested or stagnating.

According to research by Aruba, a HPE company, as of last year the hospitality sector was in a healthy – but not leading – place in its adoption of advanced technologies and moving computing to the Edge. Over half of hospitality IT leaders had

started to implement trials or applications in areas such as artificial intelligence (55%), Internet of Things (70%) and machine learning (57%). However, that compares to figures of up to 75% for AI in the financial services industry, or 77% for IoT in retail, distribution, and transport.

But it was also already struggling significantly with the data these new technologies produce. A quarter (25%) of IT leaders in hospitality said there was too much data for their systems to handle, and that they could not process the data they col-

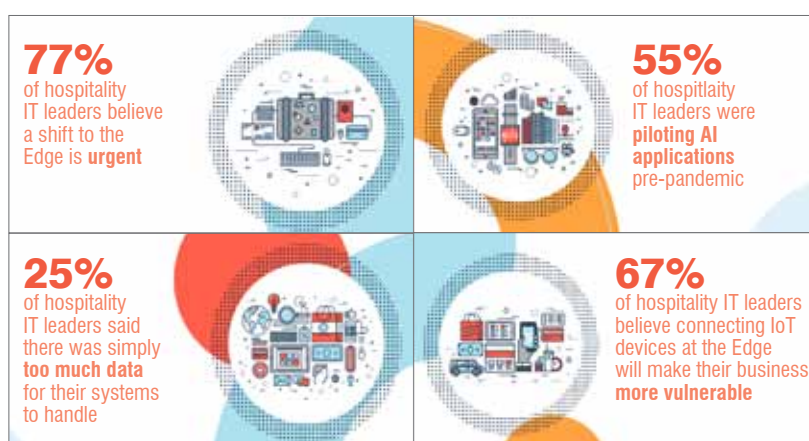
lected quickly enough to act (25%). With data levels increasing exponentially over the past year, thanks to the COVID-induced rise of smart technologies, IoT sensors, and connected devices, the depth of data sprawl will only be greater. To get a handle on all this



Morten Illum
VP EMEA
Aruba

Morten Illum, VP EMEA of Aruba, concludes, "The pandemic presented endless challenges to the hospitality sector and while there have been pockets of digital innovation and success, many businesses have been unable to test and trial digital advancements, putting them at a disadvantage. Now, they find themselves playing catch up in a new digital-first world. Consumer behaviours, expectations and demands have shifted exponentially, and hospitality organisations must demonstrate that they can respond quickly to these new requirements to tempt them back through their doors. 🚪"

data and deliver the type of differentiated customer experiences to guarantee hospitality's recovery, a new eBook by Aruba, 'Serving Hospitality at the Edge', lays out three key areas of focus for organisations in the sector – providing a clear roadmap to setting up the right network for future success.



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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. 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 reconnecting 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. Entries can be submitted until August 31 by clicking [here](#).

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. 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.

The **Digital Influencers' Speed Networking** will also be back at this year's show taking place during WTM Virtual. We aim to target 120 travel digital influencers who will have pre-scheduled business meetings with exhibitors.

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.

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.

We've been following the UK Gov's guidelines and will deliver an event whose main priority is the health and safety of all those attending.

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 shows.

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 & 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 a 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:

£3.71 billion
in business deals

50,000
senior travel professionals
(physical and virtual)

10,000
buyers

5,000
exhibitors

3,000
media

180+
countries and regions

WTM London & Travel Forward – Physical Events

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

WTM & TF Virtual – Online Events

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

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HYBRID

London: 1 - 3 Nov 2021

Virtual: 8 - 9 Nov 2021

LANGKAWI

A perfect place to unwind



SkyBridge - Panorama Langkawi

Langkawi is not being called The Jewel of Kedah for nothing. Turquoise water surrounds the glimmering powdery sands making this spectacular island as one of Malaysia's top holiday destinations.

Langkawi also has a duty-free status which means you can shop your heart out here! Not only it is a paradise for shoppers, but this island also has numerous kinds of other attractions that you can swing by. There is no shortage of activities if you are here in Langkawi.

Panorama Langkawi

Panorama Langkawi is a 'must-try' if you visit Langkawi. There are many attractions here, but the ones that you should try are the SkyBridge and SkyCab. Go and ride a cable car using SkyCab to experience the panoramic view of the greeneries while being 650 metres away from the land. Dangling amidst the lush

green forests, with only the open blue sky right in front of you is something you should do at least once in a lifetime.

One of the main attractions here is a walk on the

ing. Some even cry in awe of the beautiful sight, but most usually cry because of fear. The sky filled with silver clouds is just before your eyes with the breezy wind touching your skin. The sound of the wind

A tour at Kilim Geoforest Park will offer you some healing experiences. This park is full of a spectacular collection of geo-sites. Take a trip on a boat to appreciate the beauty of flora and fauna in the mangrove forests.

SkyBridge. Yes! It is what it is, so brace yourself and walk through a 125-metre-long suspended bridge. The bridge is 100 metres above the ground, and the scenery is breathtak-

intwines with the echo of singing birds from the woods – this memory right here will last a lifetime.

The Top Station is located at the summit of Mount

FACTFILE

■ Langkawi is paradise for shoppers. The island also has a duty-free status which means you can shop your heart out here.

■ A walk on the SkyBridge is one of the main attractions. So brace yourself and walk through a 125-metre-long suspended bridge.





Eagle Square

Mat Cincang. Just a short walk up the stairs from the Top Station, at an elevation of 708 metres above sea level, will take you to two viewing platforms, offering a spectacular 360-degree view of Langkawi.

The Top Station also provides access to the Sky-Bridge, which is the longest free span and curved bridge in the world, spanning about 125 metres in length and held by an

82-metre single pylon. The bridge gives every visitor a unique spatial experience of spectacular views along the curve.

Kilim Karst Geoforest Park

Nature has its magic where it can heal the exhausted souls. A tour at Kilim Geoforest Park will offer you some healing experiences. This park is full of a spectacular collection of geo-sites. Take a trip on a boat to appre-

ciate the beauty of flora and fauna in the mangrove forests. On some lucky days, you can spot an otter or a dolphin in this emerald river!

Pulau Payar Marine Park

Do yourself a favour and visit Pulau Payar Marine Park. Explore the underwater life and enjoy looking at fishes swimming gracefully around the beautiful island. The marine park comprises



Payar Island

Ride a cable car using SkyCab to experience the panoramic view of the greeneries while being 650 metres away from the land. Dangling amidst the lush green forests, with only the open blue sky right in front of you is something you should do at least once in a lifetime.

of four uninhabited islands – Payar, Segantang, Kaca, and Lembu. The largest island is Payar, where the Marine Park Centre is found. You can go snorkeling, swimming, and diving

at the marine park. Swim your way through all the shipwrecks, concrete blocks, old tyres that are home of many kinds of marine life. Dive in the deep royal blue water and feel the

motions of marine creatures, welcoming you to their abode. Some even swim close to you while lightly brushing your skin, making you feel like you're one of them.



Kilim Karst Geoforest Park

Grand Mercure exhibits Emirati art

A display of locally curated artwork spread in a span of more than 50 metres and over 50 paintings on display that will take you to rediscover the local culture and historical roots of the city in partnership with Funun Arts at the Grand Mercure Hotel and Residences Dubai Airport.



S19 hotel opens in Al Jaddaf

The latest property in Al Jaddaf opened recently with 94 rooms overlooking Dubai Creek, a walking distance from the Al Jaddaf metro station. Pictures captured at the opening ceremony below.



S19: First in midscale segment

The fourth property under the SGroup S19 hotel opened with 94 rooms in Al Jaddaf just 200 metres from the metro station overlooking the Dubai Creek, Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall for both leisure and corporate guests. They combine traditional hospitality with contemporary amenities to ensure that all guests will have a memorable experience during their stay.

 Shehara Rizly

The group started off in 2018 with their first property in Dubai Science Park titles S Hotel which was their first

market segments for different customer profiles, so we dedicated luxury brands, upscale and midscale brands and hotel apartments and budget hotels. So we opened the midscale brand

“When we launched our first property in 2018, we decided to tackle different market segments for different customer profiles, so we dedicated luxury brands, upscale and midscale brands and hotel apartments and budget hotels”

midscale brand. General Manager, Sameh El Amri at S Hotel Group, shared, “When we launched our first property in 2018, we decided to tackle different

in Al Barsha in Science Park, S Holiday Homes which are luxury apartment and villas and today we celebrate the opening of S19 the first in the midscale segment.”



Sameh El Amri
General Manager
S Hotel Group

They are unique as they combine traditional hospitality with contemporary amenities to ensure that all guests will have a memorable experience during their stay. At a time when details and experience are pivotal to all guests, the hotel focuses on ensuring that all boxes are ticked when it comes to

providing the best in service standard to all the guests both corporate and leisure.

As borders open they are hopeful of source markets coming in to Dubai and their unique location to both business and leisure precincts is another reason

to drive in the traffic. Some of the rooms face the creek which is an excellent view.

The fusion restaurant is an all-day dining area that could also be accessed by the pool and the terrace. All other regular amenities such as pool,

gym, prayer rooms etc. are available to all guests. During winter, it will be really a great experience to host a barbecue for your family and friends. The group looks at expanding their presence further in the region and also in Europe. 🇦🇪



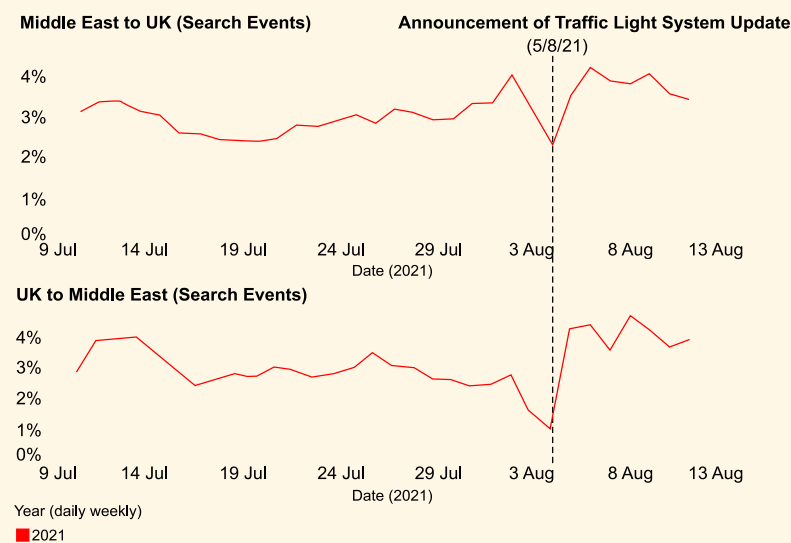
Positive travel revival: SOJERN

Sojern reveals that strong 2021 booking trends between Israel & the UAE are likely driven by successful vaccine rollouts & improved bilateral relationship; 2021 outbound domestic flight bookings are approaching 2019 levels in KSA and strong early recovery from CIS countries to Middle East started in August 2020 and persists today.

The United Kingdom incorporates a 'traffic light' system for international travel, under which there are separate coronavirus disease (COVID-19)-related rules and protocols for each of the coloured lists, classifying zones according to the risk they pose. Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and India have been moved from the red list to the amber list in the latest review of the UK government's traffic light system for international travel. Countries on UK's 'amber list' are categorised as medium-risk zones and passengers can find it relatively easier, as far as travel guidelines are concerned. Although entering England from the amber-listed countries still require a passenger to take three COVID-19 tests in total, the hotel quarantine rule is not mandatory.

UK Update to Traffic Light System

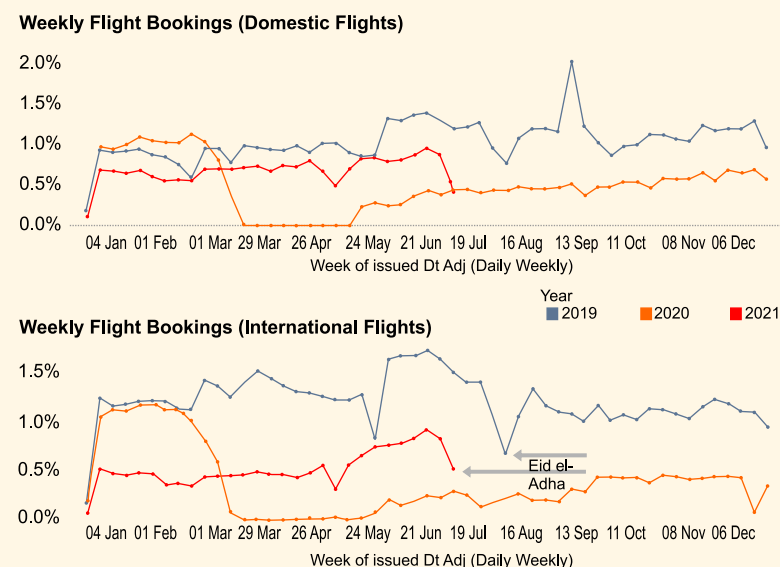
Bahrain, Qatar and United Arab Emirates upgraded to Amber List Countries



- Jump in flight Search events following announcement by British Government on Traffic Light System Update (5/8/21)
- Most of Middle East Countries now either Green or Amber (exceptions include Afghanistan, Turkey & Oman)

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Travel Insights

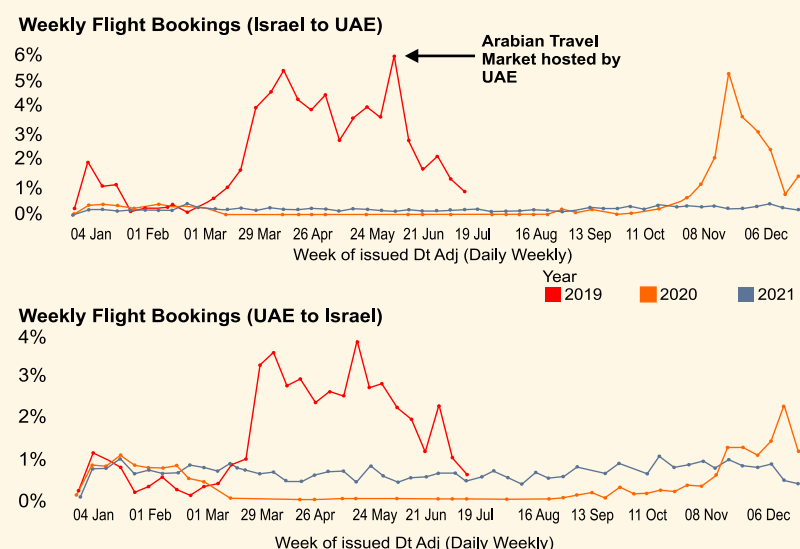
KSA Flight Bookings



- 2021 outbound domestic flight bookings approaching 2019 levels.
- 2021 outbound international flight bookings still greatly below 2019 levels, because of international restrictions.
- While overall trends are still lower, seasonal trends have normalized.

Israel - United Arab Emirates (UAE) Travel Insights

Flight Bookings Between Israel and United Arab Emirates (UAE)



- Flight booking levels for 2021 between both nations exceed 2019 and 2020 levels.
- Strong 2021 booking trends likely driven by: -
 - Successful vaccine rollouts by both nations
 - Improved bilateral relationship between Israel and UAE
- The percentage increases for Israel to UAE are as follows: -
 - 1. March to 29 March 2021 = 1,097.5%
 - 2. Nov/Dec 2020 = 743.6%
- And for UAE to Israel, the values are as follows: -
 - 1 March to 29 March 2021 = 905.6%
 - Nov/Dec 2020 = 251%

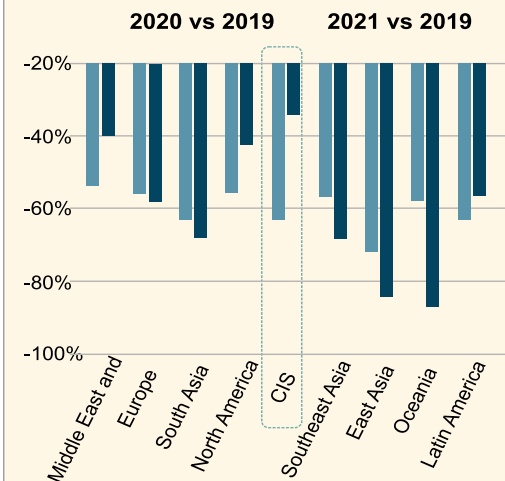
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Travel Insights

Destination	Percentage of Bookings (%)	Destination	Percentage of Bookings (%)
Saudi Arabia	50.9%	Saudi Arabia	64.3%
Egypt	9.1%	Egypt	8.1%
India	7.8%	Pakistan	4.5%
United Arab Emirates	4.9%	Bangladesh	3.6%
Pakistan	4.0%	India	2.5%
Turkey	2.8%	Sudan	2.2%
Philippines	2.4%	United Arab Emirates	2.2%
Bangladesh	2.4%	Philippines	2.1%
Lebanon	1.4%	Jordan	1.5%
Sudan	1.3%	Ethiopia	1.2%

International travel recovery to Middle East powered by CIS

Booking Events by CIS Countries (Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia and Tajikistan) to Middle East

Percent change in flight bookings since 2019



International travel recovery to Middle East powered by CIS

Top 10 Middle East Destinations for CIS countries (by year)

2019		2020		2021	
Destination	Percentage of Bookings (%)	Destination	Percentage of Bookings (%)	Destination	Percentage of Bookings (%)
Turkey	67.4%	Turkey	65.7%	Turkey	75.4%
United Arab Emirates	14.8%	United Arab Emirates	17.8%	United Arab Emirates	18.7%
Israel	11%	Israel	9.5%	Israel	2.2%
Iran	1.3%	Saudi Arabia (+1)	1.6%	Saudi Arabia	1.1%
Saudi Arabia	1.2%	Qatar (+2)	1.4%	Lebanon (+2)	0.5%
Iraq	1.0%	Iran (-2)	1.0%	Qatar (-1)	0.5%
Qatar	0.9%	Lebanon (+1)	0.7%	Iran (-1)	0.4%
Lebanon	0.9%	Iraq (-2)	0.7%	Jordan (+1)	0.4%
Jordan	0.5%	Jordan	0.5%	Iraq (-1)	0.3%
Bahrain	0.3%	Oman (+1)	0.4%	Afghanistan (+3)	0.1%

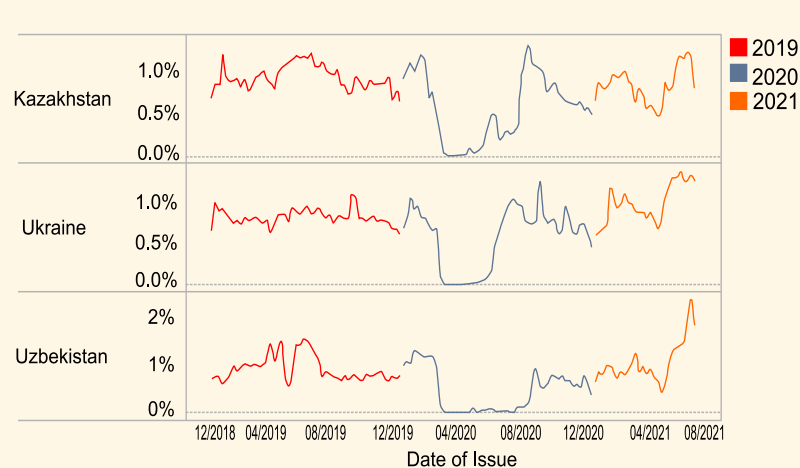
International travel recovery to Middle East powered by CIS

Booking Events by CIS Countries to Middle East

Origin Country	Position in Top Origin Ranking Table			% Change in Booking Events 2021 vs 2019
	2019	2020	2021	
Russia	11	12 ↓	10 ↑	-45.0%
Ukraine	37	28 ↑	13 ↑	+20.9%
Azerbaijan	27	33 ↓	48 ↓	-78.7%
Kazakhstan	44	44 -	27 ↑	-14.0%
Kyrgyzstan	68	68 -	42 ↑	+40.8%
Uzbekistan	70	69 ↓	53 ↑	+1.2%
Belarus	94	89 ↑	91 ↓	-33.5%
Moldova	98	93 ↑	81 ↑	+24.9%
Armenia	107	109 ↓	111 ↓	-43.2%
Tajikistan	119	116 ↑	108 ↑	-0.4%

Strong early recovery from CIS countries to Middle East

Recovery started in August of 2020 and persists today



TIME Hotels' innovative CSR 2021 plan

UAE-headquartered hospitality company TIME Hotels, has delivered on its commitment to staff welfare and the environment, steadfastly supporting local community initiatives, after a half-year review of the group's 2021 CSR strategic plan. The annual campaign, which is based on TIME Hotels' four CSR pillars of workplace, marketplace community and



environment, has been the backbone of TIME Hotels' commitment to improving social awareness amongst its stakeholders and its peers in the rest of the corporate world. "In economic terms, although the hospitality and travel sector has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, charities and those less well off in society have suffered as well. It is our duty as good corporate citizens to help whenever we can," said Eddie Ignatius, Corporate Director of Quality & Business Excellence, TIME Hotels.

Hong Kong launches new campaigns

Ensuring the destination is proactive in their approach, Hong Kong Tourism Board launched some new campaigns to keep its momentum as one of the hidden gems in Asia with unique experiences all year around catering especially to the Middle East market. **Puneet Kumar**, Director, South Asia & Middle East shares with **TRAVELTALK**.

 Shehara Rizly

What are the initiatives taken by Hong Kong to welcome post COVID-19 tourists?

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) has laid a robust yet agile three stage engagement strategy for local and overseas markets.

- **Stage 1**, launched "Holiday At Home" campaign promoting year-round offers to drive local tourism and to encourage HK people to rediscover their city's hidden gems and unique experiences.
- **Stage 2**, ready to launch "Open House Hong Kong" hospitality campaign with excit-

ing travel offers and in-town experiences once essential inbound travel resumes.

- **Stage 3**, launch of brand new campaign to retell HK stories once travel continues to fully resume.

As a precursor to welcome the overseas visitors into Hong Kong, the HKTb launched 'Anti-epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme' in partnership with the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA). Under this scheme, the tourism industry and related sectors will follow a standardised hygiene protocol to assure visitors of a safe and healthy stay, helping us establish a healthy and safe tourism image of Hong Kong and bolster visitors' confidence in travelling here.

More than 2,500 organisations participated to strengthen public and visitor confidence in out-of-home consumption and travel.

How important is the GCC traveller to Hong Kong and what all are you doing to regain this market share?

GCC region is part of our emerging source market portfolio and pre-pandemic visitor arrivals were modest in numbers but we are committed to cultivate the market potential for Hong Kong. Currently, the HKTb has a representative office in Dubai to strengthen tourism collaboration.

To cultivate Arabic-speaking markets, the HKTb has strengthened its digital marketing efforts on social media, including a dedicated Arabic Facebook page, and an Arabic and English bilingual Muslim section on its discoverhongkong.com website, providing more information on Muslim-friendly offerings including itinerary, halal cuisine, prayer facilities, etc.

While the travel has taken a long pause between GCC and Hong Kong due to COVID-19

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

outbreak, we filled this time to keep our prospects, friends in media, corporate clients and trade partners updated and engaged with Hong Kong. The HKTb launched 360 Hong Kong Moments, a bouquet of virtual reality (VR) enabled video stories to showcase the myriad experiences of Hong Kong. We also took creative initiatives to introduce unique traditions of Chinese New Year celebration and recently organised an exclusive Wellness tour of Peng Chau Island to give an entertaining experience. We also updated and

“Muslim travel segment from GCC region is very important for Hong Kong due to its potential of high-yield overnight visitors opting for longer stays, which create a multiplier effect on Hong Kong's tourism economy”



refreshed destination knowledge for our travel trade partners through multiple webinars that reached over 300 travel professionals in year 2020-21.

How is Hong Kong relevant to the GCC visitors?

We are promoting Wellness and Great Outdoors of Hong Kong to satiate their growing love for nature and doing nature based activities, Arts in Hong Kong and unique D-I-Y itineraries to help them self-explore to find themselves with a whole new perspective and of course later this year we will present West Kowloon Neighbourhood and its authentic local living culture to satisfy their strong curiosity to discover the culture and history of the place.

For now we are using "360 Hong Kong Moments" our global initiative to virtually opening the city to the world. A series of VR videos showcasing the authentic neighbourhoods, city vs. nature, iconic Victoria Harbour, tram ride, culinary delights and thrilling nights in Hong Kong, allows our overseas visitors to relive their Hong Kong moments that they are missing most from their previous trips and also inspire others to expand their bucket list of things to do in Hong Kong when they visit next.

Is Hong Kong looking to promote itself as a MICE destination for the GCC market once travel resumes?

We are very keen to cultivate GCC as an emerging visitor source market and attract MICE business events and incentive group travel to Hong Kong once the travel fully resumes between Hong Kong and GCC region. We are confident that Hong Kong is well-positioned and has the right to win this segment over with its seamless air connectivity and visa free travel for upto 30 days for GCC nationals. Hong Kong offers world-class infrastructure & venues, high profile exhibitions for business networking, classic luxury & international hospitality services, customisable yet premium group incentive travel experiences and Muslim-friendly offerings to provide the extra comfort and ease to our GCC MICE event organisers and delegates.

In our efforts for business recovery and market readiness our MICE team has curated new incentive ideas/programmes such as:

• New themed itineraries for incentives:

To anticipate the resumption of travel, the team is developing new themed itineraries that answer the emerging trend of experiential, wellness and interest-based travel, such as CSR and

wellness. Many new inspirational ideas and refreshed experiences are curated to enrich corporate Meetings and Incentive (M&I) groups' itineraries, and to encourage them rediscover Hong Kong with new lens.

• Tactical campaign for M&I:

Along with our Hong Kong industry partners, we will be curating exclusive offers and incentives under the MeetON@HongKong campaign to make it a rewarding ex-

“Along with our Hong Kong industry partners, we will be curating exclusive offers and incentives under the MeetON@Hong Kong campaign to make it a rewarding experience for the visiting corporate delegates”

perience for the visiting corporate delegates. The programme will further be enhanced with additional offers from hotels, free ticket from airline, attractions and more.

You earlier mentioned about the stepped-up efforts regarding Muslim-friendly options. Could you share more on the availability of halal and Muslim-friendly options in Hong Kong?

Muslim travel segment from GCC region is very important for Hong Kong due to its potential of high-yield overnight



tre is the biggest, with a capacity of 3,500, and the Jamia Mosque is the oldest.

From our Muslim-friendly world-class attractions to halal dim sum and egg tarts, Hong Kong is continually enhancing its hospitality to welcome our Muslim travellers to immerse in its culture and discover Hong Kong like a local among the 220,000 strong Muslim community living in the city. Hong Kong has five world-class attractions with halal certified restaurants and over 30 luxury & international hotel chains that offer

Muslim-friendly services and some of them have hotel kitchens with halal certification to provide comfortable stay for their Muslim guests.

Post COVID how different will the offerings be for the guests from the GCC region?

We are keen to pleasantly surprise our overseas visitors with a whole suite of rejuvenated tourism offerings such as iconic Victoria Harbour front, internationalised dining and shopping, wellness and green great outdoors, uniquely intangible city culture and exciting art scene, Hong Kong has it all!

FACTFILE

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**THE HABTOOR GRAND RESORT,
AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION****Dubai**

Albert Meow has joined as the new Commercial Director at The Habtoor Grand Resort, Autograph Collection. Meow started his career with the Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts in Penang, Malaysia and in Dubai and later moved on to become a Director of Sales at Banyan Tree Group in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE in 2007. Meow's last role was as a Hotel Manager at The Chedi Al Bait, Sharjah.

**SOFITEL DUBAI THE PALM****Dubai**

Yeliz Hisman has been appointed as Director of Sales and Marketing at Sofitel Dubai The Palm. Hisman is an industry veteran, with a rich career spanning across 17 years, channeling the sales and marketing departments of renowned hospitality brands across the Middle East and Europe. In her new role, Hisman will be responsible for managing the overall marketing and sales programmes, comprising annual budgets, revenue and distribution management for the five-star luxury property. She is highly experienced in managing business relationships.

**SOL PROPERTIES****Dubai**

Iman Syami has been appointed as Marketing Manager of SOL Properties to take charge of marketing the four-decade old real estate development company in the United Arab Emirates. With six solid years of hospitality experience and a self-learned marketer with multiple skill sets, Syami will also be managing the marketing activities of SOL Living – a short-lets or holiday home concept sub-product of SOL Properties, making it the first venture into the hospitality sector.

**Dubai**

Karolina Paliszewska has been appointed as the acting General Manager at The Habtoor Grand Resort, Autograph Collection, the beachfront resort in Jumeirah Beach. She stepped into the ME in 2010 with the Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach as a Director of F&B. In her new role, Paliszewska will oversee the day-to-day operations of the resort including planning, maintaining budgets and owner's expectations and managing 446 guest rooms & suites, a full-service spa, and 14 F&B outlets.

**PARK HYATT****Dubai**

Luis Cobo is the new Hotel Manager at Park Hyatt Dubai. A veteran of the hospitality world, Cobo will oversee the functions of all operational and commercial departments of the 223-room Park Hyatt Dubai. He will be spearheading the upcoming hotel lobby renovation, refurbishment of the hotel's rooms and suites, development of a new culinary venue and international hair salon, retail shop enhancement and the preparation of the upcoming Asia Pacific Amateur Championship that will be hosted at the Dubai Creek Golf Club.

**Dubai**

Genalyn Gabinay has been appointed as the new Revenue Manager at SOL Properties. With eight years of significant experience as a hospitality professional, revenue management and with a proven track record of exceeding sales and revenue objectives, Gabinay will be overseeing the Revenue Department for both SOL Properties and its sub-product vacation home rental concept SOL Living.

**New Hotels in the region**

Leading hotel brands in the world continue to strengthen their presence in the ME region with various new launches over the next few years. We take a look at some of the new hotels slated to open & those which already opened in the region.

**DoubleTree by
Hilton Al Sayh Residences**

Location – Bahrain

Year of opening – 2022

Number of Rooms – 113 serviced apartments, 61 one-bedroom and 52 two-bedroom apartments



DoubleTree by Hilton Al Sayh Residences will be located just a short drive from Bahrain International Airport. Situated close to Bahrain Bay, a waterfront business district and mixed-use community with unique offerings of dining, and nearby several other attractions including The Avenues Bahrain Mall which holds 120 stores and F&B outlets at its seafront location.

**Avani Bilal Al Jazayer
Bahrain Resort and
Tivoli Bilal Al Jazayer
Bahrain Resort**

Location – Bahrain

Year of opening – 2024

Number of Rooms –
Each with 110 keys

It will be part of Bilal Al Jazayer, a new waterfront leisure mixed-use masterplan owned by Edamah, the real estate arm of Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund, Mumtalakat. The new development will offer resorts, residential villas and apartments, food and beverage outlets, retail, offices and entertainment. The new Avani and Tivoli hotels, each with 110 keys, will be located along the main boulevard of Bilal Al Jazayer.

**Staybridge Suites Dubai
Internet City**

Location – Dubai

Year of opening – 2021

Number of Rooms – 225 Suites



Located on Dubai's iconic Sheikh Zayed Road at the heart of the city's technology, media, and creative free zone, this iconic 46 storey tower's is surrounded by business towers and hubs which are home to top-tier regional and international Fortune 500 companies. Guests will have a choice between studios, one- and two-bedroom suites. All 225 suites feature comfortable living, working, and dining spaces.

**The First Collection
Jumeirah Village**

Location – Dubai

Year of opening – 2021

Number of Rooms – 491 Rooms

The stunning 40-storey high-rise tower will house an array of sophisticated guest, dining and leisure facilities that will establish the hotel as a unique lifestyle destination located in the heart of New Dubai. The First Collection Jumeirah Village Circle, which has been designed by acclaimed architectural firm NORR, will boast 491 guestrooms and suites, as well as a range of ultra-modern guest amenities.

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GRAND MERCURE

HOTEL AND RESIDENCES
DUBAI AIRPORT

#EXPERIENCELOCAL

Feel, taste, smell and experience unparalleled Arabian hospitality with an upscale international hotel tailored by locals reflecting Dubai with an authentic design ideal for discerning travelers.

The Grand Mercure Hotel and Residences Dubai Airport Hotel is the first of its kind in Dubai offering a sense of an upscale and premium stay. The property is ideal for travelers seeking stays that combine indulgence and convenience at its finest. Boasting 257 discerning hotel rooms and 104 spacious serviced residences ranging from one, two, and three bedrooms.

257

Premium Guest
Rooms

5

Locally Crafted
Dining Outlets



104

Exquisite
Residences

2

Dedicated
Outdoor Pool
one with glass bottom

UPSCALE FACILITIES FOR A PREMIUM STAY

Grand Mercure Hotel & Residences Dubai Airport is equipped with facilities that complements an upscale premium feel whether traveling for leisure or business.

- Glass-bottom rooftop pool
- Rooftop terrace with 360 view of Dubai
- Mezzanine pool terrace

- Kids play area with fountain
- Mezzanine kids pool
- Misk spa with hammam

- Executive lounge
- Business centre
- Fitness centre

