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<p>■ Visa: Major hurdle to cross for travellers 03</p> <p>■ Hospitality must embrace sustainability 04</p> <p>■ Germany expects more travellers from GCC 05</p>	<p>■ Wego delves into travellers' behaviour 08</p> <p>■ Pre-events' success ready ground for WTM 10</p> <p>■ Europe, a must visit for GCC travellers 11</p>
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Reshaping Travel @ GTS 5.0

Gulf Travel Show is back with its fifth edition on 28-29 September 2022. The show promises to focus on sustainable travel and keep the spotlight on best practices in the industry.



Back by popular demand, Gulf Travel Show (GTS) 5.0 is focussing on connecting industry players virtually while demonstrating its commitment to sustainability.

SanJeet, Mentor, Gulf Travel Show, shared, "The fifth edition brings with it a variety of new features as we have specialised days for VIPs and networking dedicated to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As the Kingdom looks



at tourism promotions with recent opening of its borders, KSA continues to show prowess towards achieving their 2030 vision on sustainability. Our main purpose is to ensure collaboration between destina-


tions, hotels and travel professionals, who are committed to their role in taking the next

steps to promote travel. We hope that this edition will bring in all the necessary networking between industry partners and look forward to conducting a bigger and better digital event."

GTS, a digital initiative that emerged during the pandemic, provides a new way to connect with the trade. In this edition, GTS has decided that its panel discussions would focus on sustainable travel practices and showcase sustainability as its main theme. With an impressive line-up of speakers planned, the knowledge sessions are sure to keep the audience engaged.



SanJeet
Mentor, Gulf Travel Show

An important feature of the GTS this time is the pre-scheduled meetings. The travel show has gone a step further and introduced features dedicated to accommodate requests by the travel fraternity. 

Luxury Holiday homes trending in ME region

Concept of luxury holiday homes has now become a lucrative business in the ME region.

 Shehara Rizly

When you look at the Middle East, most importantly the GCC countries, they are the epitome of luxury. Whether it is Dubai, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain or Oman, every country has its own luxury element or Giga project, and with their higher disposable income they have always been high spenders at every destination to receive the luxury that they need to experience. Prior to the pandemic, travellers from the GCC countries had been




Mohammed Sultan
CEO, *Luxury Explorers' Collection*

seeking bespoke experiences, which included a luxury holiday home against a hotel room. In the Middle East, where family travel includes members of their family and staff, the concept of luxury holiday homes has again

Contd. on page 9 ►

Qataris raring to travel

Opening of borders has given people confidence to travel. **Ayman Al Qudwa**, Manager, Falcon Travel, shares with  outbound trends from Qatar.

 Shehara Rizly

What are the latest summer trends this year?

This summer of 2022, Qatar is going through one of the best season for inbound and outbound travel in all fields, whether it is Business Travel, Education Tours, Visit Friend and Relatives, Honey Moon, Leisure Travel or Adventure. There is a huge increase for outbound



Ayman Al Qudwa
Manager, Falcon Travel

travel through flights and cruises for Europe and Far East. The

demand is for Turkey, England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Austria, Georgia, Thailand, Malaysia, UAE and Egypt. In addition, there are FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 officials, delegations, tour operators, fans and organisers to and from Qatar.

Could you share the popular destinations?

As indicated earlier, the demand is for Turkey, England, France,

Contd. on page 10 ►

KSA invests in big way!

Saudi Arabia has launched a programme to train 100K young Saudis with key hospitality skills necessary to pursue careers in the tourism industry.



The programme was launched by His Excellency **Ahmed Al Khateeb**, Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia, at the 116th session of the World Tourism Organization's Executive Council in Jeddah. 'Tourism Trailblazers' will provide in-depth global experience to the tourism industry's future leaders. This programme aims to train 100,000 Saudis, as the



Ahmed Al Khateeb
Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia

ministry continues efforts after the launch of a new human

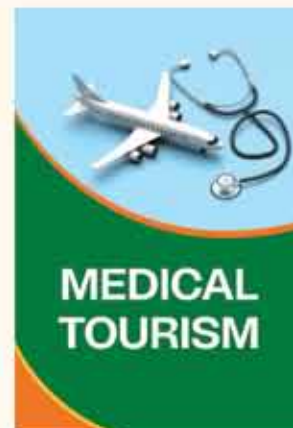
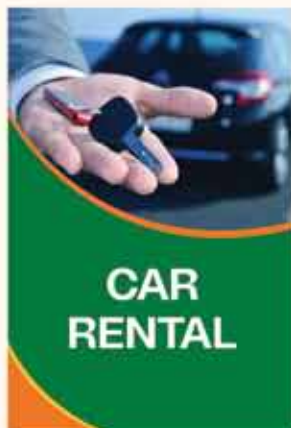
capital development strategy in the Kingdom's burgeoning tourism industry, which aims to attract more Saudi nationals to the sector.

His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia, said: "It is vital that we invest in our youth now. Creating a skilled workforce with the talent and ambition to support and drive the tourism sector

Contd. on page 10 ►


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Visa: Major hurdle to cross for travellers

As travel picks up after the decline in intensity of Covid, the greatest hurdle to cross is the visa process. Summer travel, especially this year, has become a challenge mainly due to visa traffic. **Monaz Billimoria**, Deputy Regional Head - UAE, VFS Global shares with **TRAVTALK** their efforts to make it a better experience.

 TT Bureau

Visa is the most important and first point of contact for a traveller visiting a destination. How has VFS made this experience an easy one for the travellers?

Customer service is the cornerstone of our operations at VFS Global, and we have made every effort to ensure a smooth and seamless customer journey for our applicants. Appointments are available online and free of cost, ensuring that our applicants do not have to wait long for their turn at the Visa Application Centre (VAC). We have dedicated seating areas both outside and within our premises for applicants who need to



Monaz Billimoria
Deputy Regional Head - UAE, VFS Global

wait. Within the centre there are dedicated counters for the countries to apply to, ensuring an efficient application submission process. Additionally, we offer a range of specially designed value-added services for applicants to choose from for further convenience. These include SMS updates for tracking applications, cou-

rier return service to have passports securely delivered to the doorstep, or our Platinum or Premium Lounge service for a personalised visa application experience, among others.

Can travel agents make arrangements for visas on behalf of the traveller without their coming into VFS?

For missions that do not require travellers to submit their applications in person, travel agents can submit the documents on their customer's behalf, with a valid authorisation letter. Applicants who are unable to visit the centre can also opt for the doorstep visa service, if available for the country they are applying to.

What are the new and improved services, especially to beat the demand of the summer traffic?

Applicants are advised to plan their travel and apply well in advance to beat the summer traffic. We work closely with our clients' governments to manage this demand. VACs are open for longer hours, sometimes even on weekends, to best

Doorstep continues to be a preferred service.

In most cases securing an appointment is a task and the portal often fails when an individual traveller is applying for visa, how do you plan to further enhance your digital offerings to smoothen the process?

Appointment slots are released as per availability

appointments during the current peak travel season, there may be times when applicants do not get slots on their preferred date or time and will need to opt for an alternative one. We urge all travellers to plan well in advance and apply for their visas early to avoid any delays before their travels.

How do you work with governments to ease the visa issuance in the GCC?

VFS Global only manages non-judgmental and administrative tasks related to applications for visa, passport and consular services. Processes, decisions and turnaround times on visa applications are the prerogative of the governments. 🇦🇪

Appointments are available online and free of cost, ensuring that our applicants do not have to wait long for their turn at the Visa centre

cater to the demand we see. For group travel, Visa At Your

for each day. Due to high demand for visa application



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Tourism News

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Stella Stays to launch two towers in Istanbul

Oman Air increases summer flights to India

OMRAN, Al Sharqiyah sign agreement for tourism projects

KSA Ministry delegates visit South Korea to boost tourism

Kuwait airways expands network with flights to Vienna

Red Sea signs three global luxury resorts

Saudi Arabia announces evisa for GCC residents

Hospitality must embrace sustainability

In the present day hospitality sector, energy consumption will always be at higher levels. However, technology and simple alternatives could be the solution towards responsible consumption, whilst minimising the negative impact on the environment.

The concept of Sustainability when it was first introduced into the business world was a nice to have - or rather an extra value addition to the brand. The case no longer exists, demanding business to adopt sustainable practices throughout its day-to-day processes, and not as an extra exercise. Benefits of prioritising sustainability includes customer loyalty, cost savings, and especially environmental impact. According to global travel agency Virtuoso, 82 per cent of luxury travellers prefer to travel more sustainably in the future.

Hotel facilities rank among the top five in terms of energy consumption in the tertiary building sector (minor only

to food services and sales, health care and certain types of offices). With continuous 24-hour 365-day operations, hotels establish themselves as one of the highest energy and water consumers per square foot. Approximately

According to global travel agency Virtuoso, 82 per cent of luxury travellers prefer to travel more sustainably in the future

50 per cent of energy use goes towards cooling (27 per cent), followed by lighting (23 per cent). (Energy Star)

Industrialization and the advancements of technology has played no supporting

role in reducing the consumption of energy. Rewind a few years where WiFi, smart TV, contactless check-ins etc. were considered an additional feature to entice a guest whereas presently it has become an expectation.

This transformation no doubt is an addition to capital and maintenance costs, especially in the existing times when the industry is running on slim margins. Solutions exist in understanding the analytics and statistics be-

hind energy consumption, and finding ways through and around while ensuring high guest satisfaction and an exceptional experience.

Smart Solutions

While the expected amenities like a TV or a refrigerator cannot be excluded for the sake of saving energy, Internet of Things (IoT) enables an intelligent analytics platform into the building management system, which provides relevant data to identify and efficiently manage energy usage of the facility, while identifying areas of high waste and suggesting for improvement. Apart from that, renewable energy sources are need of the hour. The best renewable energy source available in the Middle Eastern region is

solar energy. Sustainability is no longer a buzzword. It is a philosophy business should embrace as a core value. Energy consumption will always be at higher levels within the industry. Technology and simple alternatives could be the solution towards responsible consumption.



Swarali Khadtare
Maintenance Manager Engineering
Park Regis Business Bay

(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

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Germany expects more travellers from GCC

Germany is one of the most popular summer getaways for GCC travellers. The recent confirmation that the country no longer requires vaccination or PCR will be an edge, as more travellers will opt for the destination. **Yamina Sofo**, Director, Sales and Marketing, German National Tourist Office (GNTO), shares details with **TRAVELTALK**.

TT Bureau

Could you share with us about the recent ease of restrictions to travel to Germany?

Germany recently announced the encouraging news that until further notice, visitors no longer require a Covid-19 vaccination certificate or negative PCR test. We are looking forward to a rise in arrivals from the GCC and the opportunity to provide them a variety of cultural

experiences and insights into the country's customs.

What is the most important information a traveller needs to know when travelling to Germany?

Travellers should be aware that Germany took stringent measures to protect everyone throughout the pandemic and continues to remain alert should measures need to be revisited. We remain agile with the ever-evolving situation to



Yamina Sofo
Director, Sales and Marketing
German National Tourist Office (GNTO)

ensure visitors can feel safe while here.

How do you work with travel agents from the GCC? Do they have a specialisation programme? Is it updated?

Currently, the GCC is our second best overseas market, following the United States. We understand the importance of the region and work

closely with travel agents on a regular basis. With such a huge cross-section of travellers coming from the region, we manage our work with travel agents individually rather than on a specialised programme. As a base, we use our website Germany.travel, which is informative and regularly updated with everything travellers need to know before arriving.

What are the latest campaigns especially for GCC travellers?

We have two major campaigns running this year: German.Local.Culture and Embrace German Nature. German.Local.Culture sees a focus on all elements of culture, from traditional food and



music, to craftsmanship and historic customs. Embrace German Nature homes focus on outdoor life, from the meandering lakes and mountains, to the country's cycling and hiking opportunities.

Are there new attractions, hotels etc that you will be promoting for summer?

This summer we are encouraging travellers to explore

eco-friendly hotels and attractions. We have more than 3,000 green-certified accommodations and more can be found visiting: <https://www.germany.travel/en/feel-good/accommodation.html>; and <https://www.germany.travel/en/feel-good/tips.html>. We are also encouraging people to go green. For more information, please visit www.germany.travel.

We are looking forward to a rise in arrivals from the GCC and the opportunity to provide them a variety of cultural experiences






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Personality of the Month

Visionary hotelier, leader and mentor

Celebrating over two decades in the hospitality industry **Wael El Behi**, General Manager, The Tower Plaza Hotel Dubai, has been instrumental in leading his team to achieve its goals in terms of securing revenue or building a brand. We take a look at his journey over the years and contribution made to the industry.

 TT Bureau

What inspired you to join the hospitality industry?

Hospitality is an attitude which I am born with. When I was young I always dreamt of being a hotelier. I love our industry since I was young and I always wanted to follow the steps of my father and uncle, both of them hoteliers.

Could you share with us the most interesting highlights in your career?

I started my career in 1993 in a large city business hotel in my home country Tunisia and I was at that time a trainee in the sales, marketing and banqueting depart-



ments, after six months I was confirmed as a sales executive in the same hotel. In 1998, I joined Corinthia

Hotels International in Tunisia as Sales Manager where I did the opening of three beautiful city resorts (Gammarth, Hammamet and Sousse). In 2002, I came to Dubai to open a boutique five-star hotel in Deira as Director of Sales & Marketing, and from there I started my exciting career journey in UAE. In 2007, I was ap-

pointed for the first time as Hotel Manager in Coral Boutique Villas and I wanted to thank my mentor and boss Michel Noblet, who believed in me and gave me that chance, then in 2009 I moved to JBR to open a deluxe Hotel Apartments. I contributed as well in the launch of Auris Hotel Management as Director of Business Development in 2010. In 2011, I was appointed as General Manager of Ramada Downtown Dubai, from there I moved back to JBR with the same owners R Holding to open Hawthorne Suites as the first property of Wyndham in the region. In 2016, I took over the role of General Manager at First Central Hotel TECOM, then moved in 2018 to Ramada Jumeirah where I contributed to make it as the first five-star Ramada Hotel. In December 2021, I joined The Tower Plaza Hotel Dubai.

Share with us a brief about you?

I grew up in Tunisia. I started my professional career in 1993 after I finished my studies. I have over 28 years of

experience in the hospitality and tourism industry and General Manager for the past 15 years.

Having been a GM for so many years, how would you say it has evolved especially after the pandemic?

It is a continuous learning and development journey. Every hotel I worked for I learned and developed new skills, which helped me to

improve profitability, enhance the product and improve the service standards.

Youth need to be mentored in the right direction in hospitality? What initiatives are you taking to pursue it to the next level?

I am a strong believer that we have a duty to develop new leaders. Giving opportunities to young stars to shine is very important and encour-

Giving opportunities to young stars to shine is very important and encourage internship programmes to identify new talents is the way forward

evolve and sustain. A lot of things changed since the pandemic, in terms of management style, decision making process, business goals, priority settings etc.

age internship programmes to identify new talents is the way forward. ➡

What initiatives are you taking to lead the team about the newly renamed property as number one?

Implement our service culture PROUDLY SERVING YOU, build a strong team, find new revenue opportunities to



Wael El Behi
General Manager, Tower Plaza Hotel

Can event-led sales be key to recovery?

Now is the perfect moment to take advantage of the recovery in public concerts and sports events, says **Simon Goddard**, a booking technology specialist from Vibe. But selling travel for concert-goers and sports event attendees should not be like moving a mountain, he suggests.

Should you go to the mountain or should the mountain come to you? We all know what is easier (and the wise proverb that tells this tale). Yet too much effort is wasted in travel trying to persuade people to visit places they do not actually want to go to.

Those travelling to a destination to experience an event such as a concert or sports match fit into this category. There is no need to move the mountain, why not just give them what they want?

Right now there has never been a better moment to do this as minimal Covid-19 restrictions mean pop stars are finally re-starting the

world tour schedule and major sporting events, including the upcoming football World Cup in Qatar, get underway.

What do you need to do to make sure that your online travel business is top of the list for places to book the

seem and that is what puts many off. But the rewards are there and at Vibe we have many years of experience in successfully helping our clients use events to sell travel in a better way.

Therefore, if you want to sell travel for an event such

At the beginning of the ticket booking process keep the concept of what you are offering super simple and concrete

whole travel package when planning to attend an event or experience? Of course, achieving this is more complex than it might at first

as the Champion's League football match, consumer conventions, major concerts, or even festivals, we have following recommendations.

1. Only focus on events you have actual entrance tickets available to sell. This is very important, as the tickets are your 'honey pot'. The minute you send someone away to another site to source the actual tickets, they never come back.

2. Which events should you sell? Smaller and more obscure events are often richer pickings for these types of campaigns. Just type in 'Formula One weekend trip' into Google and you will see. Perhaps consider literary festivals on aristocratic estates, come-back concerts for old rock bands at venues with comfy seating, cookery courses in Tuscany with famous chefs, or

lower league football or motor racing events?

3. At the beginning of the booking flow keep the concept of what you are offering super simple and concrete: Ultimately it is just a package to attend X event. By making it a package to do event X and Y and Z, you could make your offering 'confused' and ultimately put people off.

4. Give the traveller total flexibility on the options they pick, they might not need a flight but value a hotel, or vice-versa.

5. Do not just stop at offering a flight and hotel, consider selling extras like the airport transfer or even insurance.

6. Ensure the traveller has the flexibility to amend the travel dates to either arrive early or stay on. A lot of people want to take advantage of being in a city to explore it. If you can not offer them flexible dates they may want to go elsewhere.



Simon Goddard
Booking Technology
Specialist, Vibe

(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

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Wego delves into travellers' behaviour

Wego and Cleartrip Travel shares an insight report on behaviour of travellers in the MENA region. The survey questioned 4,390 residents from UAE and KSA on travel issues. The report also highlights the impact of Covid-19 on travel, trends currently being witnessed and signs of recovery.

TT Bureau

The near-term outlook for travel looks favourable, and people are looking to spend more and travel longer in 2022.

Travel scenario

After numerous lockdowns, never ending changes in restrictions and the constant updates on flights, airport protocols and hotel capacity changes, a lot of passengers are still eager to travel albeit being a bit more cautious.

Vaccinated travellers

Out of the total survey respondents, 99 per cent said they were vaccinated while only 1 per cent said they were not. The increase in the number of vaccinated people has had a positive impact on travel.

Forward look and planning a trip

As more restrictions are eased worldwide, and vaccinations rates have increased, people are eager to travel more and make up for the lost time.

According to Wego, in 2022, flights and hotel searches increased by 81 per cent in February and 102 per cent in March. This shows that people are looking to travel more.

Lower risk destinations that guarantee an easy re-

turn have been prioritised. The majority of the respondents have opted for destinations which are perceived to be safe and where Covid-19 protocols have been adhered to.

Remote work and rise in hotel bookings

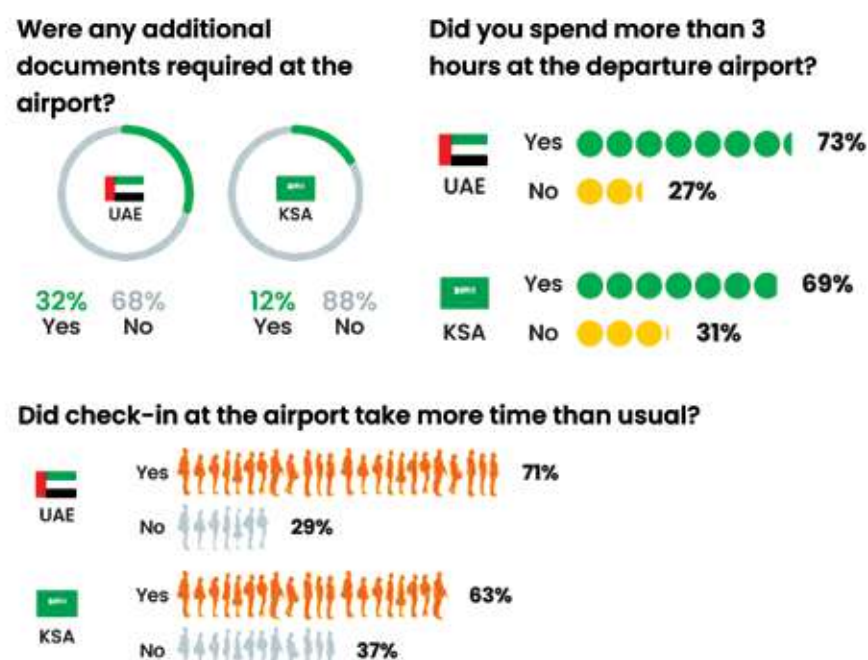
With more people continuing to work remotely in 2022, hotels are seeing a great demand regardless of seasonality. Wego saw a spike in the number of searches on holiday homes 136 per cent, hotel apartments 92 per cent and apartments by 69 per cent. The length of stay has increased by 19 per cent in 2022 in comparison with 2021. People are also opting for 5-star hotels, which follow stricter safety measures. Wego saw an increase of 66 per cent in searches for 5-star hotels.

Trip expenses and likelihood to travel

79 per cent of respondents from Cleartrip's survey witnessed an increase in Covid-19 requirements, surge in ticket prices and unexpected circumstances leading to flight changes, which contributed to a 20 per cent increase in their trip expenses post-Covid-19. 78 per cent of respondents are likely

Airport experience

During these unusual times, airports across the globe have implemented necessary measures to ensure passenger safety. Travel experience has improved, however, it is still not as convenient as it used to be pre-COVID. Cleartrip's survey shows:



to travel and have trips planned, at least once in the next three months. The near-term outlook for travel looks favourable. According to Wego's data, summer 2022 will be all about long holidays and travellers will be spending more on leisure travel to make up for the lost time.

Leisure destinations

As to the most popular destinations respondents plan to visit, the following look to remain tourism powerhouses: UAE, KSA, Maldives, United Kingdom, Georgia, Turkey, Serbia, Seychelles.

Average fares and booking value 2022

- ❖ Wego and Cleartrip see an increase in the average airfares in 2022 vis-a-vis 2019.
- ❖ The average round-trip fares to and from the UAE have increased 23 per cent.
- ❖ Round-trip airfares to MENA region rose by 20 per cent.
- ❖ Round-trip airfares to Europe increased by 39 per cent.
- ❖ Round-trip airfares to South Asia increased by 5 per cent.
- ❖ For India round-trip fares have witnessed a 21 per cent increase as compared to 2019.

Cancellations

In the UAE, the average flight cancellations in 2019 were 6-7 per cent pre-Covid-19. At the onset of the pandemic, the cancellations witnessed a considerable spike and were as high as 519 per

cent. In April 2021, the closure of the Asian corridor once again led to a rise in cancellations. However, in 2022 with travel recovering, the cancellations are slowly moving back to pre-Covid-19 figures at 7-8 per cent. A similar trend was witnessed in the Saudi market.

Most booked places

- ❖ UAE: India, Pakistan, Egypt, Qatar, Nepal, Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Georgia, Turkey.
- ❖ KSA Domestic: Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, Jazan, Madinah and Tabuk.
- ❖ KSA International: Egypt, UAE, Qatar, Philippines, Bangladesh, Bahrain
- ❖ MENA: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, India, UAE, Turkey, Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco

Advance purchase

The rise of the pandemic also showed a sudden spike in share of near-time bookings (0-3 days) and a steep drop in the

average number of days between booking and the actual travel date. This was due to the unpredictable changes that pre-Covid-19 brought.

In 2022, travellers are significantly more comfortable planning travel in advance after more streamlined processes have been put in place.

Journey type and leisure holidays

Stay Duration: The pandemic brought out an increase of unpredictable scenarios and with expats readjusting their work and family plans, the proportion of one-way trips spiked during the early months of the pandemic. Cleartrip also saw a corresponding decline in round trips. Round trips and, more specifically, leisure travel, have rebounded significantly in the recent months.

KSA: The share of KSA domestic travel has been observed to increase during periods of increased travel restrictions. Wego recorded over 65 per cent increase in flight searches for leisure trips between January – April 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. Searches for hotels surged by 29 per cent between January – April 2022 compared to the same period in 2021.

Trip duration: According to Wego, the overall trip duration has increased, and people are looking for longer trips. 4-7-day trips saw an increase of 100 per cent, whereas the demand for 8-11-day trip rose by 75 per cent.



Luxury holiday homes in demand

► Contd. from page 1

escalated, as it has its own element of privacy and space. Today, it has become one of the most lucrative businesses in the region.

Luxurious Dubai

Luxury Explorers' Collection, headed by its CEO **Mohammed Sultan**, is a leader in the region's luxury holiday home market. Sultan has been developing the concept a few years prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic when it was time for people to travel, his business model thrived as GCC travellers needed privacy, safety and space. The private jet business too thrived during the pandemic, earning almost 300 per cent profit at the time.

During the pandemic, Sultan ventured into expanding the rental portfolio from the Dubai Marina to Emirates Hills and Palm Jumeirah. The company, which has a total of 20 listings currently in operation, recently made headlines when one of its prized Palm Jumeirah villas fetched a record-breaking rental deal at AED 3.88 million.

Luxury Explorers' Collection opened an ultra-luxe penthouse in the heart of Dubai Marina. Spread across the entire top floor of the iconic Cayan Tower, the penthouse offers a breathtaking 360-degree panoramic view and a stunningly chic interior to complement the first-rate amenities and the brand's renowned full-service VIP concierge. In a recent interview, Sultan said, "Luxury Explorers' Collection is strongly positioned and through increased investment, we are taking prompt action to ensure we play a leadership role, and



that we capture the opportunities in the new travel landscape, while building our resilience into the future."

Sultan highlighted that the company is constantly coming up with innovations to enable them to provide guests with a tailored concierge service for a truly memorable vacation experience. "We are always on the lookout for new offerings that can help upgrade the amenities we can offer to our guests. Our mission is to provide our clients more than a five-star hotel experience – from personal chefs to private butler

services are key amid the positive projections for the sector. "We have witnessed an inspiring commitment and strength, especially from the UAE government, to help businesses recover and flourish in the current economic climate. It is just fitting therefore that companies do as much as we can to ultimately transform the sector, proactively taking actions to ensure sustained growth in travel and tourism," Sultan stated.

Expansion to Mecca

Adding to their latest portfolio is the launching five new premium rentals in Mecca, just in time for

for transformative development, particularly in the GCC, has been tourism," he said. "Taking our brand to Saudi Arabia is not only an important part of our strategic vision, but it is a testament as well to our commitment to support tourism and hospitality's path to recovery, and ultimately, long-term growth," he added.

Sultan revealed that introducing Luxury Explorers' Collection to Mecca market will give them the right exposure in Saudi Arabia. "Our Mecca properties will have spacious apartments and penthouses accessible to Haram and with an uninterrupted Kaaba view. We will also offer full concierge services, including in-house chef, delivery attendants, butlers, and housekeeping staff," he said.

"On top of this, we are already developing a more forward-looking strategy for future investments in the Kingdom, in which we plan to expand in Riyadh to serve the corporate markets and families for holidays and weekends in the capital. This is also in the hope of supporting the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which has set an ambitious target of 100 million tourists by 2030," he added.

Luxury Explorers' Collection thrived despite the pandemic. "We always have this vision to re-imagine and re-invent the way people enjoy their holiday break, and Covid-19 opened up a unique opportunity for us to realise this vision. We were quick to recognise the need for exclusive properties without compromising the luxury lifestyle," he said, adding that a new property in Abu Dhabi is also in the pipeline to add to its rental listings in Dubai and Mecca. ▶

We always have this vision to re-imagine and re-invent the way people enjoy holidays, and Covid-19 opened up a unique opportunity

and staff to the ultimate amenities to the most stringent health and safety protocols – basically all the exclusive perks you could have hoped for, things which are not readily available in hotels," he added.

The capability of industry players to adapt and re-invent them-

the season. Sultan mentioned that these rental luxury homes will in fact be the best seats for those who yearn to visit Mecca.

"Governments in the region have put a lot of efforts in diversifying the economy away from oil and a vital sector that has consistently been mapped in strategies



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Pre-events' success ready ground for

Organisers of World Travel Market London have hailed the performances of springboard events at WTM Latin America, WTM Africa and ATM in Middle East organised during the month of April and May, saying that their achievements have laid the groundwork for a successful trade show in London.

 TT Bureau

WTM Latin America 2022 – held in Brazil from 5-7 April – was the biggest edition of the event ever held, swiftly followed by WTM Africa 2022, held from 11-13 April in South Africa, which hosted more pre-scheduled appointments than in 2019. The month of May saw Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai, during which visitor numbers reached 23,000 – more than double the last edition.

With the strapline 'Reshaping Travel Together', World Travel Market London will be a fully live event, taking place at ExCeL London from 7-9 November; showcasing how the sector has evolved



and how to embrace the opportunities of a post-pandemic world.

Vasyl Zhygalo, Portfolio Director, WTM and IBTM, said: "The great successes seen at WTM Latin America, WTM Africa and ATM show there is enormous demand from travel trade professionals around the world to meet

face to face – to do business, network and learn about opportunities, as the sector recovers and, in many cases, surges past 2019 levels. Those outstanding events are a superb springboard for us to make WTM London 2022 better than ever."

Juliette Losardo, Exhibition Director, WTM London,

said: "The feedback we have received from exhibitors and visitors regarding our spring events demonstrate the desire to re-engage face to face, as the travel industry builds back better.

"We can see how some of our latest technological developments helped delegates make the most of their time and enabled them to network effectively, delivering meaningful return on time investment.

"World Travel Market London in 2021 generated such positive reactions from the travel community and we are looking forward to building on that in November this year. We are now focused on working with industry partners around the

The month of May saw Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai, during which visitor numbers reached 23,000 – more than double the last edition

globe to deliver an event that leads the way in reshaping travel, and supports the sector in creating a sustainable and robust future."

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME for ATM, said innovation, sustainability, technology and nurturing talent were key themes during the four-day event in Dubai this May.

"In addition to doubling our visitor numbers year on year, ATM 2022 hosted 1,500 ex-

hibitors and attendees from 150 countries," she said. "These figures are especially impressive given lockdowns still taking place in China and other destinations," she added.

WTM Latin America 2022, held in São Paulo, attracted 20,000 travel professionals over the three-day show. Excluding professionals from the 565 exhibiting companies, there were 15,204 visitors – up by 10 per cent on numbers seen in 2019. ▶

'Best summer' for Qatar travel

▶ Contd. from page 1

Switzerland, Spain, Austria, Georgia, Thailand, Malaysia, UAE and Egypt.

How is summer this year different?

In Qatar, it will be different, because it is short season due to FIFA World Cup 2022 commitments. Qatar since 2010 became as a workshop to host the

the peak for outbound travel is during last week of June and first week of July. In addition, for inbound travel date it will be in the first and second week of August. Duration of travel is from three to four weeks.

Are the travellers looking at luxury or semi-luxury?

Qatar, a unique market, is considered to be one of the best outbound market for luxury

a majority of Qatari tourists and travellers are looking for luxury travel experience.

How has the role changed as a travel consultant, especially after the pandemic?

I would like to thank you for this very good question. Let us agree that the world after Covid-19 is not the same. Before Covid-19 travel debate was about seat on flight or room in a hotel. Whereas today, it is about information, safety and procedures! In travel sector, we act as an advisor to make travel happen with a peace of mind!

Visa on arrival or evisa has become one of the most important to travel, how do you see this and what are the key benefits for travellers?

Still we need more effort and more solutions, it is the big challenge for any transaction, why Turkey is the first option for all passengers irrespective of the nationality is the flexibility on the option of visa on arrival or e-visa! ▶

Before Covid-19 travel debate was about seat on flight or room in a hotel. Whereas today, it is about information, safety and procedures!

best edition of World Cup. Therefore, all travellers and tourists need to travel and come back before August 14, 2022.

When are the travellers looking at travelling and what is the duration?

It has started already. However,

travel in the GCC and Middle East region. Despite challenges during the pandemic, Qatar remains one of the most competitive and powerful economies in the region and has maintained its position at the top of the international table for GDP per capita. Therefore,

KSA invests in tourism

▶ Contd. from page 1

regionally and globally is key to realising Vision 2030. This program demonstrates our commitment to empowering young people by providing them with right skills, support and opportunities to shape the future of the tourism industry."

According to His Excellency, the programme has three main objectives that aim to nurture, develop and support talent in the industry. It seeks to spread a culture of professionalism, help nascent professionals gain the knowledge and qualifications needed to break into the industry, and support their success through refinement of their skills. The programme will help trainees to secure jobs within the sector, including seasonal, part-time, or full-time opportunities.

His Excellency further stressed that this and other initiatives are geared towards delivering on

Investment of this size shows our determination to equip our youth. Tourism attractiveness ratio has gone up 75 per cent among Saudi youth

the National Tourism Strategy and Saudi Vision 2030 targets, including the creation of one million new jobs in tourism by 2030. His Excellency added that the highly specialised programmes will empower scholarship trainees by equipping them with the skills and qualifications required to enter the labour market.

Mohammed Bushnag, Deputy Minister, Human Capital, said: "A financial investment of this size shows our determination to equip our youth with the tools they need to succeed. Tourism attractiveness ratio has increased 75 per cent among Saudi young male and female. Supporting the dreams of our Tourism Trailblazers and ena-

bling their continued education at the best global schools, is vital as we continue to emerge as a global player in the sector."

Participants in the programme are set to benefit from training scholarships at leading global institutions in France, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Australia and Italy. Applications will be accepted not only from fresh graduates, but also from Saudis who already work within the industry and those who aspire to start a career in the tourism, hospitality, culinary, service, and sales fields. Training 100K Saudi youth is one of the biggest investments announced amid the pandemic, which will benefit the industry as it prepares for vision 2030. ▶

Europe, a must visit for GCC travellers

Travellers from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries are now able to visit their favoured destinations this summer. **Sapna Aidasani**, Director, Marketing, Pluto Travels Dubai, shares with **TRAVTALK** the most popular destinations their customers would like to choose after more than two years of hiatus.

TT Bureau

What are the most favoured summer destinations by UAE/GCC?

European destinations. People are looking to travel to cooler destinations, as for the last two years European destinations were closed for tourists, and because of that we are getting bulk requirements for Schengen Visa. Most travelled destinations for summer 2022 are Turkey, Switzerland, Paris and Amsterdam. People are also looking to travel to Paris, Bali and Thailand. They are looking to travel during Eid, which is second week of July and during summer, which is July and August.



Sapna Aidasani
Director Marketing
Pluto Travels Dubai

How important is indulging in local culture to travellers?

Travellers generally want to

experience the authentic local culture and heritage, so they prefer to buy semi-luxury, which provides an overall experience and true taste of the country.

Is it important to have insurance especially post pandemic?

As a travel consultant, our role is not just to part with knowledge, but to provide an end-to-end service to our customers. Hence, we provide our clients insurance



with a Covid cover and keep the customers informed of any Covid cancellation.

Do travellers plan their holidays based on the visa process?

The advantage of being a resident in the UAE is that there

is evisa or visa on arrival offered. This makes the process smooth as travellers can plan their holidays a week before the departure and they save on hefty visa cost.

In your opinion, has there been a demand in travel after

the Covid intensity come under control?

I would say travel, especially holiday travel, has increased manifold since the year 2019 because people could not travel for the last two years and they realised the value of travelling. 📈

Travellers want to experience the authentic local culture and heritage, so they prefer to buy semi-luxury, which provides an overall experience

SUBLIMOTION
by G. P. R. R. R. R. R.

Sublimotion returns to Hard Rock Hotel Ibiza

The first Hard Rock Hotel in Europe has become a meeting point for international personalities and lovers of new trends, combining the Hard Rock philosophy with the purest Mediterranean atmosphere. An event that combines the style and energy of the legendary brand with the vibrant, island atmosphere of Ibiza.

There is no such thing as a good holiday without good food and that is why, you will find in **Hard Rock Hotel Ibiza** a complete selection of gastronomic experiences for all tastes.

The world's first gastronomic performance, **Sublimotion**, will return after the hugely successful first winter season in **Dubai** with a completely renewed multisensory experience.

The Spanish-born concept, which is pioneering in gastro-sensory culture and the avant-garde, is coming with technological advances that the guests will be able to enjoy.

The best haute cuisine in the **Metaversel**.

Hard Rock
HOTEL
IBIZA

McARTHURGLEN™ meets trade in Riyadh

Buzz Marketing Middle East, which represents McArthurGlen in the region, and the team from McArthurGlen head office, organised a special meeting with the travel trade partners in Riyadh recently. There was a special presentation, followed by individual meetings to connect with the trade partners in a better way.





GULF **TRAVEL** SHOW **5.0**

MAKE A SUSTAINABLE CHOICE

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The theme of GTS 5.0 is
sustainability in tourism

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DESARU COAST

One of the world's 100 greatest places in '21!

Desaru Coast, Johor Bahru in Malaysia has been chosen by TIME Magazine as one of the World's 100 Greatest Places to visit in 2021. Spanning more than 3,900 acres along a pristine 17-km stretch of beachfront real estate, it boasts of a curated and refined mix of attractions, including world-class and ultra-luxury hotels.

Nestled against 17km of pristine beachfront and home to world-class and ultra-luxury hotels, Desaru Coast also boasts a curated and refined mix of attractions.

One&Only Desaru Coast

As the website coins Asia's very first One&Only Resort, "discover your personal oasis" at One&Only Desaru Coast through its luxurious suites, delicacies and wellness facilities, while being surrounded by the unspoilt nature and warm tropical waters. This award-winning tropical retreat is ready to provide you with your own sanctuary complete with a private sparkling pool, exquisite dining range from European,





Mediterranean, Japanese and local cuisines, personalised wellness programmes to rejuvenate your mind, body and soul, as well as outdoor activities that will bring you closer to Mother Nature.

Anantara Desaru Coast Resort & Villas

Similarly, Anantara Desaru Coast Resort & Villas is the perfect place for that much-needed luxurious retreat you have been dreaming of. Comprising various accommodations to suit your wants and needs, from premier rooms to standalone villas and beach houses overlooking the South China Sea, Anantara Desaru Coast is also equipped with its own wellness and outdoor programmes, such as morning yoga sessions, movie nights under the stars and mangrove forest tours (just to name a few!).

Adventure Waterpark Desaru Coast

For the little ones (and the kid in you!), Adven-

ture Waterpark Desaru Coast awaits with more than 10 “chill” or “thrill” rides and attractions. Experience all the fun water slides or get your adrenaline pumping at Kraken’s Revenge roller coaster and the classic Swinging Ship!

The Els Club Desaru Coast

Divided into two courses, avid golfers get to choose between The Ocean Course & Clubhouse or The Valley Course & Clubhouse. Designed by four-time Major Champion Ernie Els, a renowned South African-born golfer, Els Club guarantees a breath-taking and an unforgettable experience for anyone who steps into the vicinity.

To quote TIME Magazine

“The saying “If you build it, they will come” is very

true of Desaru Coast, an ambitious new resort area in the state of Johor. Spanning more than 3,900 acres along a pristine 17-km stretch of beachfront

first property in Asia, debuted as a spectacular tropical sanctuary with a spa and golf course. Also newly opened is the Anantara Desaru Coast

For the little ones (and the kid in you!), Adventure Waterpark Desaru Coast awaits with more than 10 ‘chill’ or ‘thrill’ rides and attractions

real estate, the area offers some of Malaysia’s most coveted luxury bolt-holes. In 2020, the One&Only Desaru Coast, the brand’s

Resort and Villas, with lush gardens and lagoon swimming pools. Other draws include championship golf courses and

cruises through the Sedili Wetlands, a freshwater swamp home to the endangered water trumpet. The imminent opening of the Desaru Coast Ferry Terminal will offer increased transit options for Singapore and Indonesia. —Duncan Forgan.”

A well-deserving recognition and achievement that calls for a celebration!

When the time permits, let us visit the greatest place in the world, with only a drive (or a flight) to Johor Bahru! 📍



Adventure Waterpark Desaru Coast



The Els Club Desaru Coast

Credits to Desaru Coast, Johor Bahru

MCARTHURGLEN™ calls on UAE trade

Buzz Marketing Middle East and McArthurGlen jointly organised a special meeting with the travel trade partners from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Dubai recently. The meeting witnessed a special presentation, followed by individual meetings to connect with the trade partners.



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RAFFLES AND FAIRMONT HOTELS

Doha

CHRISTIAN HIRT, a hospitality industry expert with more than 25 years of experience, has been appointed by Accor as Managing Director of the soon-to-open Raffles and Fairmont hotels in Doha. Hirt, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel and Restaurant Administration and a Master's in Business Administration, brings to the leadership role almost three decades of hospitality and F&B expertise, honed in award-winning properties across Europe, Australia and the United States. He will head an experienced, multi-national executive team with many members having been involved in the launch and relaunch of national landmark hotels and resorts.



FAIRMONT HOTEL

Doha

French/Lebanese hotelier **HANI AKKARI** will serve as the General Manager of the 362 rooms and suites at the Fairmont Hotel Doha. Akkari, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and a Master's in Hospitality Management, brings extensive experience, including more than a decade working across Europe, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and, since 2017, Qatar. The Fairmont and Raffles tower are an architectural interpretation of Qatar's national emblem of intertwined traditional scimitar swords. They mark the entry of both the Fairmont and Raffles brands into Qatar, following an agreement between Katara Hospitality and Accor.



KERTEN HOSPITALITY

UAE

Kerten Hospitality has appointed **TARA MARLOW** as Group General Counsel based in the Group's UAE office, from where Tara will be supporting and strengthening the footprint expansion in existing and new markets, at the same time supporting the multiple ongoing openings in KSA, Kuwait, Georgia, Italy, UAE and Egypt, which are set to open in the next 12 months. Marlow, a British national living in the UAE since 2004, is a highly experienced lawyer in real estate development and the hotels and leisure industry, with over 20 years of experience. She has been consistently ranked by international legal directories Chambers Global and Legal 500 as a leading individual in the hotels and leisure market.



GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Zanzibar

ZUBIN KARKARIA, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of VFS Global, was appointed the Goodwill Ambassador for tourism for Zanzibar by the Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports. Karkaria was among four leaders from distinguished fields chosen to help promote tourism-driven investments in the picturesque destination through new avenues for sports, entertainment and culture. Zanzibar has attracted tourists from across the world for more than two decades. Its top attractions include Stone Town, its ancient city that became a designated a UNESCO Heritage Site in 2000, its vibrant beach life, surfing and water activities, and its indigenous cuisine, among others.



ROTANA

MEA and Turkey

Rotana announced the appointment of **FRÉDÉRIC SAVOYE** as Vice President of Brand Performance. As the group pursues its aggressive expansion plans, overseeing commercial performance and growing its franchise operations, both remain critical for Rotana's development strategies and a key focus area for the upcoming years. Bringing with him a wealth of knowledge and extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Savoye will oversee the brands' sales processes in addition to managing and executing commercial plans across new and existing markets. Savoye is handed over the responsibility from Victor de Vries, who takes on the role of Vice President of Franchise Strategy.



HYATT

EAME

Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced a leadership change positioning Hyatt for continued strategic growth in the Europe, Africa & Middle East (EAME) region. **JAVIER AGUILA** has been appointed incoming group president EAME, following the planned retirement of Peter Fulton, who looks back on an impressive 39-year career at Hyatt. Águila and Fulton will work together through a smooth and thoughtful transition and Águila will officially assume the role in the next several months. Águila is an internal successor, hailing from Apple Leisure Group (ALG), which Hyatt acquired in 2021. He most recently served as ALG's group president, AMResorts Europe and Global Strategy.



New hotels in the region

Radisson Blu Hotel, Amman Galleria Mall

Location – Jordan | Number of Rooms/Suites – 178 Keys

Radisson Hotel Group announced the signing of Radisson Blu Hotel, Amman Galleria Mall, bringing its Middle East portfolio to 74 hotels in operation and under development. With construction already underway, the hotel is scheduled to open by the summer of 2023. The newly built hotel will be located inside the Galleria Mall, which is one of the biggest shopping malls in Jordan.



Le Royal Meridien Doha

Location – Qatar | Number of Rooms/Suites – 377 Rooms

Le Méridien Hotels & Resorts unveils Le Royal Méridien Doha, marking the European-born brand's debut in Qatar. Located in the heart of the country's future city, Lusail, the 377-room hotel encourages guests to savour the good life through the brand's distinctive European-chic lens. The hotel seamlessly connects to Place Vendôme Qatar, an iconic Parisian-inspired luxury complex.



Ritz-Carlton Reserve

Location – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | Number of Rooms/Suites – 63 Villas



Marriott International, Inc. announced it has signed an agreement with The Red Sea Development Company to debut its distinguished Ritz-Carlton Reserve brand off the west coast of Saudi Arabia. Slated to debut in 2023, Nujuma, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, is expected to form part of the Red Sea destination and offer a highly personalised leisure experience that blends intuitive and heartfelt service.

JW Marriott Istanbul Marmara Sea

Location – Turkey | Number of Rooms/Suites – 204 Keys



JW Marriott announced the opening of JW Marriott Hotel Istanbul Marmara Sea. Surrounded by the tranquil Sea of Marmara, the new luxury hotel offers guests a transformative and elevated stay to nourish the mind, body and spirit within Istanbul's serene Atakoy district. Styled by London-based firm KCA International, the hotel's aesthetic draws inspiration from Turkey's vibrant textures.

THE BEST LOCATION IN THE BEST DESTINATION



THE TOWER PLAZA HOTEL

The Tower Plaza Hotel is one of the iconic hotels in Dubai. It is centrally located on Sheikh Zayed Road facing Emirates Towers metro station, is directly connected to Dubai International Airport, and has short driving distance to main landmarks of the city such as Dubai International Financial Centre, Dubai World Trade Convention Centre, Zabeel park, Dubai Frame, Dubai Mall, Burj Khalifa, Dubai Fountain, Souk Al Bahar, The City Walk, and Jumeirah Beach. It is surrounded by restaurants, nightlife, and similar attractions. The hotel matches the glamor of Dubai with its array of five-star amenities. Stay, dine, relax, rejuvenate, and explore Dubai; leave the rest to us.

www.thetowerplazahotel.com

For bookings, please contact us on : +971 4 387 7018 or reservations@thetowerplazahotel.com

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