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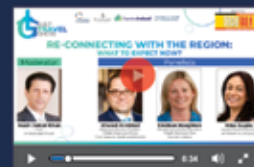
Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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2-minute news capsule



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GTS 5.0 focuses on sustainable tourism

Gulf Travel Show is back on 28-29 Sept 2022 under the sustainable tourism theme with Tourism Malaysia and German National Tourist Office GCC as Platinum and Silver partners, respectively.

TT Bureau

Gulf Travel Show (GTS) has been started with a purpose. Beginning in the midst of the pandemic when most borders were still closed, it gave the travel, tourism and hospitality fraternity an opportunity to ensure that confidence is restored in the minds of the people passionate about the industry. It is also a tool that connected online GCC buyers with exhibitors from across the globe. The fifth edition or GTS 5.0 brings all players to



the table and gives them opportunities to study the stakes and make the right moves after

almost two and a half years of hiatus. Here is what industry people think about the GTS.



Mirza Ghalib
Deputy Director, Tourism Malaysia - Dubai

“Malaysia is thrilled to welcome back Middle East tourists to visit and experience our country again. It is a timely opportunity for us to network with travel agents and tour operator partners from the Gulf region. As the Platinum Partner of GTS 5.0, Tourism Malaysia is having its own virtual pavilion with 15 booths of Malaysian delegates consisting of tour operator partners, hotels, and product owners. Malaysia is keen to re-grow and sustain the economic tourism, such in prompting sustainable destination and products that are available to this day. Everyone wants to return to discover more about Malaysia.”

Contd. on page 6 ▶

SCTDA launches 'holiday homes'

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has launched a regulatory framework – Sharjah Tourism's Holiday Homes Project – to diversify the sources of growth for tourism.

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The aim of the project, launched in cooperation with government, private agencies and institutions in Sharjah, is to offer an official framework of facilitation and control to the emirate's residents who wish to rent out places they own as holiday homes to tourists and visitors. According to the terms and standards



His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, SCTDA

stipulated in the Holiday Homes Project, the residential units can

be rented out on a rotational basis, regularly. The project is successfully developing an official framework in line with international practices for the operation of holiday homes, and to register them under a unified umbrella and database. The project will also empower prospective users with a new source of income recognised by the Government of Sharjah,

Contd. on page 9 ▶

Visa at centre of discussion

Visitors from the GCC region planning to tour Europe and other parts of the world faced challenges in procuring visa this summer.

TRAVTALK approached experts for their views on the issue.



Tricia Warwick
VisitBritain Director for Asia Pacific,
Middle East, Africa (APMEA) and North Asia

“Following the announcement on June 1 that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain will join the other GCC countries with UK electronic visa waiver status, national tourism agency VisitBritain's latest data via ForwardKeys in the latest week (w/c 25 July) shows that inbound arrivals to the UK were at 92 per cent of pre-COVID levels. The easy to complete E-visa can be submitted anywhere between 3 months and 48 hours in advance of travel, requires a current passport, an address of residence whilst in the UK, along with arrival and departure dates and a payment of £30. The UK Government has announced that all GCC states will move to ETA scheme from 2023.”

Contd. on page 8 ▶



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Dubai on course to achieve tourism goals

Dubai attracted 7.12 million international overnight visitors between January and June 2022 compared to the 2.52 million visitors during the same period in 2021, according to recent data from Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). The trend places the city firmly on track to achieve its tourism goals for 2022, and reinforces its position as an international destination of choice.

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His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai, said: "The vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to make Dubai the city of the future and the world's best place to live, work and invest in has resulted in a resurgence of Dubai's tourism sector. The growth in tourists reflects the resilience and dynamism of the emirate's economy. His Highness's vision has helped Dubai create a strong and stable economic foundation and a dynamic business

ecosystem, enabling it to become a leading global hub for diverse sectors. The rapid rise in international tourist arrivals puts Dubai on track to achieve its ambitious target of becoming the world's most visited destination. In the years ahead, Dubai will continue to develop itself further as a destination that offers compelling value to international travellers."

The number of tourists recorded in H1 2022 was close to the numbers achieved in the first six months of 2019, which saw 8.36 million tourists arriving in Dubai. The emirate's ability to quickly return to near pre-pandemic tourism levels is even more remarkable given the impact of unprecedented challenges and other macro-



His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai

economic factors on the global economy and tourism sector.

From a regional perspective, Western Europe accounted for a significant share of tourist arrivals, comprising 22 per cent of total international visitors in the first six months of 2022. MENA and GCC continued to make an impact, col-

lectively contributing 34 per cent of total international visitors and highlighting Dubai's strong appeal to visitors from surrounding markets as a trusted and preferred destination. These regions were followed closely by South Asia with a share of 16 per cent and Russia, CIS and Eastern Europe together accounting for 11 per cent of total visitors in H1 2022. The wide geographic spread reflects Dubai's diversified strategy aimed at driving traffic from a broad spectrum of countries and visitor segments.

Highest hotel occupancy

The wide range of hotel establishments in Dubai presented yet another stellar performance across all

hospitality metrics during H1 2022. Average occupancy for the hotel sector between January and June 2022 stood at 74 per cent, one of the world's highest, compared to 62 per cent in H1 2021. Dubai's hotel in-

Enduring global appeal

The latest data demonstrate Dubai's enduring appeal as a must-visit destination, further validating Dubai's ranking as the No.1 global destination in Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards

The number of tourists in H1 2022 was close to the numbers achieved in the first six months of 2019, which saw 8.36 million tourists arriving in Dubai

ventory by the end of June 2022 comprised 140,778 rooms open at 773 hotel establishments, compared to 118,345 rooms available at the end of June 2019 across 714 establishments.

2022. It also remains one of the most sought-after cities for international travel, business and events at a time when the majority of global destinations have reopened for tourism. 📌



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Tourism News

Four Seasons to open three new luxury hotels in Egypt

Etihad increases flights to New York for winters

Accessibility for tourists a priority for Germany

Accor expands with Rixos Marina Abu Dhabi

Emirates to spend US\$2 billion to improve new cabin experiences

Wyndham opens 278-key beach property in Doha

10 new Balis project to increase tourism to Indonesia

Gulf Air to commence flights to Ras Al Khaimah from 3 Oct

Travel agents: strength of the traveller

As governments start to ease out the travel protocols, people from all walks of life are excited to explore and see different places. They have several options to plan and book their trips amid this high technology era, but find that travel agents are much more helpful and reliable.

Different companies have started filling up the positions that were vacated during the heights of financial difficulties of the establishments due to then, inevitable downsizing of manpower to keep their business going.

Tourism has been an integral part of our society, there is a growing demand for expats in UAE as the country has opened its doors to the world. That is why the means to expand the tourism business has earned its space on virtual availability that is accessible by anybody having internet access. People have options to physically visit their agents the traditional way or opt to go to an online travel agency or download an app

on their smartphones where they can plan and book their tickets, hotels, transfers, and other services.

Amid the high technology of our era today, travel agents still play a big part on the travel plans of passengers.

the pandemic wherein airlines are beyond reach, the travel agents endeavoured to help in monitoring flights, assisting in rebooking, application and follow-ups of refund. They have been ready 24X7 to guide with the sudden change of travel protocols. Even after

Different borders have opened, and people are excited to travel; and at the same time travellers look out on spending wisely with their travel spree. This is where their agents use their ingenious ways to tailor the package that suits everyone's needs and budget.

True enough as we draw closer to the last quarter of the year, agents are busy and alert to grab seats for the upcoming peak season of all. Travel agents hold true value on every passenger's travel; thus, their worth shouldn't be taken for granted.

Whilst a travel agent's core key to excel in the field should be PRIME:

❖ Passion on what you do

and keep it burning.

- ❖ Resourcefulness amid stiff competition.
- ❖ Integrity of the information you provide.
- ❖ Motivation to excel and self-determination.
- ❖ Eagerness to help and go the extra mile.

It's still undeniably much reassuring to have someone to walk you through your options should there be an inevitable change on bookings

It's still undeniably much reassuring to have someone to walk you through your options should there be an inevitable change on bookings. With the unprecedented cancellations of flights during

pandemic and despite the availability of online booking tools at the fingertips of the public, a lot of people still rely on a travel agent to help and reassure that their journey will be hassle-free.



Geoffrey Salatan
Manager - Sales and Client Relations
- Airlink International

(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

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Emirates obtains 90% of pre-COVID traffic

With the passenger demand increasing this year, Emirates, flying to 130 destinations in the world, has achieved 90 per cent traffic of the pre-pandemic levels. Looking into the demand, the airlines has brought back its flagship A380 planes, presently flying to 30 destinations, shares Adil Al Ghaith, Senior Vice President Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East & Central Asia, Emirates.

What are the plans in terms of expanding the network further for rest of the year?

We remain focused on re-building our network and fleet, and today we are operating over 90 per cent of our pre-pandemic network, flying to 130 passenger destinations. We are experiencing robust demand across our network, and where operationally possible, we are boosting frequencies and adding capacity by reintroducing our flagship A380. Today, our A380 is flying to 30 destinations, and we just announced a host of destinations, including Perth, Bengaluru, and list will continue to grow in the coming months. We also launched Tel Aviv this summer, and a



Adil Al Ghaith
Senior Vice President Commercial Operations,
Gulf, Middle East & Central Asia, Emirates

month into our operation, we announced the doubling of our flights to serve high passenger and cargo demand in and out of the market.

Will there be more code shares or partnerships?

Supporting aviation, travel and tourism sector specific challenges has never been so important, especially during

this critical time as the industry charts its recovery. We have taken great strides in the last year to forge strong partnerships across the travel eco-system. This includes partnering with six airlines this year alone through forging or enhancing existing codeshare and interline partnerships to offer more choice for travellers. These airlines include Maldivian airlines, AEGEAN, Airlink, Royal Air Maroc, Garuda Indonesia, and Air Canada. Through our codeshare agreements with more than 26 carriers, two rail partners as well as 110 interline partners worldwide, Emirates offers its customers truly global connectivity with 5,000 cities across six continents.

Do you agree that working with a travel curator or travel agent has its benefits?

Of course, and they are an essential part of the travel eco-system. Travel agents and curators add value when promoting Emirates directly

relationships that we have built with our trade partners.

Last year, we introduced Emirates Gateway, our own portal that offers exclusive content and services for travel agent partners on our NDC-enabled

How will you incentivize travel agents, as the costs have risen in COVID times?

Emirates believes that travel agents are important partners and allies to us, and we value their business and ongoing support. Global travel costs have risen across the industry and are affecting every part of our ecosystem, whether its inflationary pressures, fuel costs, among other factors. Emirates has a longstanding commitment to our trade partners and our commission rates remain competitive. Along with supporting their business goals, we continue to help our trade partners to differentiate their proposition with exciting new products like Premium Economy, as well as regular promotions. ▶

Travel agents and curators add value when promoting Emirates directly to a motivated audience of travellers looking to book their next journey

to a motivated audience of travellers looking to book their next journey, and they help to personalise their trips with us through our rich products and services on offer. We continue to work hard and nurture the

direct connect platform, with the goal to empower our trade partners through a consolidated experience that delivers even better customer experiences, and provides them with exclusive content.



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Tourism zooms on path of normalcy @



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

“As Silver Partners at the 5th edition of the Gulf Travel Show, we are looking forward to connecting with a diverse number of potential partners from across the GCC, one of our primary source markets. We are pleased that this year's theme is sustainability as this aligns with our overall vision, which is to continually develop our eco-friendly and barrier-free travel.”



Tatiana Khoreshok
Country Manager
VisitBritain GCC

“We are very excited to be part of the fifth edition of the Gulf Travel Show as it aligns perfectly with our objectives this year by providing a platform for us to maintain our connections with the travel trade and create new partners to encourage travel to Britain, while growing our brand further in the region.”



Eve Kerk
Sales Manager - Tour & Travel
LEGOLAND Malaysia Resort

“GTS is a well established interactive platform for us to connect with tourism partners in the Middle East. We aim to rebuild our network after the pandemic and re-engage with key tourism partners. Our key objective is to introduce Johor as an upcoming international tourist destination in Malaysia as well as promote LEGOLAND Malaysia Resort.”

“We look forward to creating awareness in the Middle East market for The Taaras Beach & Spa Resort, being the only luxury resort on Redang Island, as well as Berjaya Tioman Resort in Pahang. In addition, Malaysia is a Muslim-friendly halal paradise, making it extremely convenient for Arab tourists to find halal food or buy halal products. In terms of expenditure, tourists from Middle East are among the highest spenders in Malaysia.



Sam Poh Choo
Director, Business Development & Marketing
The Taaras Beach Resort & Spa and Berjaya Tioman Resort

They prefer long stay and like to shop here. We are expecting to meet the top market players to further promote and update about our resorts.”

“This is going to be the 5th participation in GTS since 2020, and it is a potent and important channel and platform to promote Sunway as a preferred and highly sought holiday destination in Malaysia. SUNWAY CITY KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA; In a bold drive to seal its position as Asia's leading fully-integrated premier hospitality and entertainment destination, Sunway Resort unveils phase one of its once-in-a-generation transformation. Sunway City Kuala Lumpur's transformation of its flagship property, Sunway Resort, began early 2020. The next phases of Sunway Resort's dramatic transformation will be progressively revealed in 2022.”



Ahmad Faizal Iskandar
Director of Sales - Sunway City Kuala Lumpur Hotel

“Keeping our vision 'Value for money & customer satisfaction' Pearl Island Holiday has positioned itself today as one of the leading Main Travel Agency among Middle East Market which has specialised in the Malaysian Islands. Being in the last eight years of ATM brought us an idea to always be connected and updated to our main market buyers, who are from the Middle East. Further, COVID taught us the new way of business platforms, which is virtual connection with customers. We will update our new packages and luxury services for Islands in Malaysia rather than focusing on cities only.”



Dr Adel Tajasom
Chief Executive Officer
Pearl Island Holiday Travel Agency

KSA eases visa for WC fans

Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduces a new multi-entry visa to visitors holding the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Hayya Card, required for all World Cup attendees.

 TT Bureau

It was shared by the Saudi Tourism Authority that it welcomes the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduction of a new multi-entry visa to Saudi, available to visitors

and provides entry into Qatar and the stadiums. Saudi is a gateway to the World Cup and home to destinations waiting to be explored. Holders of the Hayya Card will be able to apply for the new visa online and book a trip to the authentic

element. The announcement encourages first time and returning visitors alike to explore destinations in close proximity to the World Cup.

Saudi is a short hop away making it a practical and convenient destination for World Cup attendees to visit or make a home base during the games. Saudi is expecting to welcome football fans from around the world. Beyond proximity, travelers are looking to visit Saudi for authentic Arabian culture, adventure and to round out their experience while in the region. Saudi will be hosting a dynamic programme of entertainment events including MDLBeast, Red Sea Film Festival, Riyadh Season and Winter at Tantoura in AIUla, all of which take place during the World Cup. 



holding the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Hayya Card.

The Hayya Card is required for all World Cup attendees

home of Arabia with confidence, before, during and after the World Cup. Visas will allow a 60-day stay in Saudi beginning 10 days before the tour-

GV Season opens on 25th Oct

Visitors can look forward to a wide range of enhancements, additions, and upgrades at Global Village when Season 27 opens on October 25, 2022.


 TT Bureau

This season is no exception at Global Village as guests can look forward to a wide range of enhancements, additions, and upgrades across the destination when Season 27 opens on October 25, 2022.

Improving guest experience is a fundamental part of every season's planning and preparation for the region's leading multicultural family destination for culture, shopping, and entertainment. The introduction of a



third entrance, Happiness Gate, will give guests an alternative to enter the venue helping traffic flow and ensuring shorter distances from car parks. Guests

will also welcome the return of valet parking, which will be situated at the new gate. The highly popular Premium self-parking option will still be available at Gate of the World. Aligned to Happiness Gate, the ever-popular Happiness Street is getting a facelift and has been both extended and enlarged. The new layout has been designed to give guests room to discover the vast street food. 

At Global Village (GV), improving experience for the visitors is a fundamental part of every season's planning and preparation

RAK receives half million visitors in 6 months

Bolstered by the opening of several new hotels and resorts, Ras Al Khaimah welcomed more than half a million international and domestics visitors between January and June 2022. It was a 21 per cent increase over the same period in 2021 and a return to the pre-pandemic figures of 2019, announces Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA).

TT Bureau

The first half of 2022 saw Ras Al Khaimah welcome over 521,085 international and domestics visitors between January and June 2022, a 21 per cent increase versus the same period in 2021 and a return to the pre-pandemic figures of 2019. The

Emirate's strong performance in 2022 was bolstered by the opening of several new hotels and resorts, including Radisson Resort Ras Al Khaimah on Marjan Island, the InterContinental Mina Al Arab, the first InterContinental Hotels Group property in the Emirate, and most recently, the debut of Mövenpick at Al Marjan Is-

land, located on a 300-metre stretch of golden shoreline and home to the largest floating water park in Ras Al Khaimah. The Emirate now boasts over 8,000 keys, with 4,617 new keys in the pipeline over the next few years.

Celebrated for its outstanding nature, adventurous leisure,



Raki Phillips
CEO, RAKTDA

to draw visitors both locally and internationally. A key new attraction to open was the Jais Sledder, the region's longest toboggan ride, spanning over 1,840 exhilarating metres of

TDA, said: "Ras Al Khaimah is one of the first destinations in the region to recover to pre-COVID levels thanks to the agility of our tourism community during the pandemic.

Celebrated for its nature, adventurous leisure, and authentic offerings, RAK has become one of the most sought-after sustainable destinations in the ME

and authentic offerings, Ras Al Khaimah has quickly become one of the most sought-after sustainable destinations in the Middle East, most recently being included in Time magazine's World's Greatest Places of 2022. In recognition of the Emirate's incredible natural surroundings, the Authority has continued its development of sustainable new attractions

hairpin curves and reaching speeds of up to 40 kilometres per hour. Jais Sledder has welcomed over 54,000 visitors since opening in February.

Commenting on the fast rebound of tourism in the Emirate, Raki Phillips, CEO, RAK-

This is all the more remarkable given the current economic and geo-political landscape in which we operate. We are on track to reach more than 1.11 million arrivals by the end of the year and to fully return to pre-pandemic levels in just two years." ➔



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Easing visa process to increase footfall



Aisling McDermott
Manager Middle East & Asia - Tourism Ireland

“The great news is UAE nationals do not need a visa to travel to Ireland. This historic step for Ireland-Emirati relations has seen a significant boost in tourism from the UAE to the island of Ireland since its introduction. Arabs from other GCC countries can travel to Ireland on the Irish short-stay visa waiver. This allows GCC travellers in possession of a valid UK ‘C’ general visa

to enter Ireland without the need for an Irish visa, if their trip takes place within 6 months of their entry to the UK. This visa waiver is very important for increasing visitor numbers due to the high volume of GCC nationals with a UK visa and our close proximity to the UK. We are continuously working to improve our visa requirements and increasing tourism from the Middle East to Ireland.”



Matthias Albrecht
Director, Switzerland Tourism

“The long waitlists for visa appointments result from the fact that during the past COVID years, visas have not been renewed as travelling was not possible. Hence, now almost everyone except the Emiratis, who don't need a visa to travel to Switzerland, needs a new visa. Now, during the past months Switzerland's visa staff was working day and night and all weekends to manage the

tremendous visa demand. Furthermore, additional staff has been confirmed at the Embassy to shorten the waiting time and increase the amount of allotments at VFS. Meanwhile, we would like to advise everyone to plan ahead and book their visa appointment early to avoid frustration. We are looking forward to welcoming all our travel guests to Switzerland and hope that long waiting times can be reduced very soon.”



Kathryn Wallington
Head of Middle East and Africa - Travelport

“We are happy to see that countries like the UAE are continually evolving visa policies to become increasingly tourist friendly. As a GDS, Travelport plays an important role in keeping our agency customers informed of the most recent changes regarding visa requirements – as well as important information about travel restrictions, testing requirements and other forms of

required documentation to enter one destination from another. We do this by ensuring we have the most updated and accurate information that we extract through TIMATIC and provide to our end users, so they can quickly and easily help travellers make informed decisions on planning their travel.”



Tarique Khatri
Executive Vice President -
Centre of Excellence, Seera Group

“Saudi Arabia opened its doors to the world in 2019 with the introduction of the e-visa and the Kingdom has since become an incredibly accessible destination to visit. With 49 nationalities eligible to apply for an e-visa and visa-on-arrival available to Schengen visa holders, it has never been easier to visit the Kingdom.”

“In terms of holiday preference for GCC travellers, the consensus is on escaping and breaking free and discovering new experiences, which many have been unable to do in the last two years. Visa free or visa on arrival destinations are very popular among GCC travellers and have soared by approximately 1000 per cent in the recent past. To promote the destinations among GCC travellers visa documentation and process should be smooth and quick, this will support the growth of tourism.”



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO, Al Naboodah Travel

“Tourism today has been gradually emerging as a key sector for the economic vitality in all countries. The culture of outbound travel witnessed a lot of development last decade. Travel today for GCC locals not related to Shopping, Education or Treatment any more like it was in seventies or eighties! Adventure, Experience, and Luxury Travel new concept and new requirements. However, several countries today attract huge mass of tourists every year. Therefore, whoever planning to visit any destination should read ahead and understand the visa rules and regulations if you are a GCC National. The more visa requirements are practical and smooth in regard to On Arrival Visa or E-Visa, the more positive impact in GCC Passengers Decision Making Process. I am over-confident with the latest update of exempting UK and Schengen visa for GCC Tourist starting from 2023 will boost tourism in Europe.”



Ayman Al Qudwa
Manager - Falcon Travel Qatar



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director - ATS Travel

“Tourism boards and embassies, I am sure, are doing their best to reduce the wait period for visas. Looks like the delay is beyond their control. The moment we realised this, we started communicating to our customers about the need to apply for visas well in advance. To a larger extent, this education process has helped our clients to change the way they plan their holidays. And for those who are not able to plan in advance, we offer destinations where visa is available on arrival.”

“Due to the pent-up demand for travel, volumes of visa applications have been high this year during the peak season. VFS Global works in close collaboration with, and in line with the service level agreements of, its client governments. We constantly strive to provide applicants with a smooth and seamless application journey and urge travellers to plan their trips well in advance. Applicants are advised to check our website for the relevant information, document checklists etc. and apply for their visas as early as possible.”



Sherif Shazly
Chief Operating Officer - MENA, VFS Global



HE Kartika Candra Negara
Consul General - Consulate of Indonesia in UAE

“For Emirati, we have the visa on arrival; they are part of 70 plus countries which are issued visa on arrival at the Indonesian airports, for other countries they need to apply for visa online and will be issued a visa prior to visiting the destination.”

“During this summer we saw a surge in visa requests. This goes in line with the huge comeback of tourism. After two years of restrictions, this summer has become very similar to a pre-COVID summer. With the spike in travelling, which some call revenge tourism, we have witnessed how different sectors, from aviation to hospitality or infrastructures, faced difficulties to cope with this sudden surge. Not long ago there was not too many people travelling, and now we have more than before, as people have realised that we only live once and that we need to do the things we like better now than before. Visa issuance is no different, the amount of request is so high that they cannot be processed all in time. Resources are limited and given the importance of controlling the borders of the countries the visa process cannot be speed up. Having said this, visa offices have experienced a high demand but are doing a very good job on processing as much as possible. Spain is one of the



European countries that more visas are issued, and even during the pandemic we never stopped. Also, this year there were more cases of visa shopping and other illicit behaviours, which are not helpful as they are time consuming. Probably after this summer the situation will come back to a more regular flow of requests. Nonetheless the European Union is working on different projects to come up with faster and simpler procedures. So, the EU is working on the electronic visa, which will highly speed up the process, although this is still a project. We also have to point out that visas can be applied well in advance, so once you know your travelling dates you can go well in advance and get the visa. And there are also some works on the improvement of the databases and new IT systems being developed and implemented soon, for a better control of entries, which will help to speed up the whole process.”



Daniel Rosado
Director, Spain Tourism Office
Tourism Counsellor GCC

Automation key to hotel revenue

Automation can make businesses competitive and help meet the changing demands of the highly uncertain times, shares **Moses Sebastian**, Manager-IT and Digital Marketing at Park Regis Business Bay, with **THAT TALK**.

TT Bureau

When used wisely in hotel operations, automation can enhance revenue, improve visitor satisfaction, raise staff productivity and happiness, and generally improve the efficiency and profitability of the business.

How does the role of automation in the hospitality industry contribute to revenue?

Hotel revenue is diversified,

consistently. Most smaller-scale properties to date follow manual methods in terms of managing their revenue channels, including their booking sources and OTAs, which can be both time-consuming and costly in the long term. A well-executed technology-concerned channel manager can handle these challenges without human intervention, improving the hotel's bottom-line performance by significant margins. With the



Moses Sebastian
Manager-IT and Digital Marketing
at Park Regis Business Bay

Does digitalisation contribute to efficiency in the hospitality?

With the digitalisation of guest experiences, hoteliers and guests alike can experience visible benefits from the digitalisation of internal processes, including reservation, distribution, performance, task management, maintenance, and more. It helps transform hotels from high-touch spaces into high-tech self-service accommodations. The impact across customer-facing processes such as the reception,

food outlets, and housekeeping processes will also have clear increases in efficiency, with processes being fed into a centralised system, and managed autonomously.

What measures or initiatives should be taken to further enhance revenue optimisation in hospitality?

Take it to the next level: Technology continues to exist as a catalyst of change, enhancing and adding convenience to every aspect of our lives. The need for the adoption of the latest technologies becomes an imperative, to take on the controller function between guest satisfaction, revenue management, and property management. A well-automated revenue and property management system will ensure that the property ranks at a higher level within the industry. 📌

With the digitalisation of guest experiences, hoteliers and guests alike can experience visible benefits from the digitalisation of internal processes

requiring an effective revenue management strategy to optimise the existing channels to deliver the optimum outputs,

added benefit of AI optimisations, channel prioritisations and resource allocations can be done seamlessly.

Strengthening tourism landscape

► *Contd. from page 1*

offering them official guidance on operating requirements, classification criteria, violations and other mechanisms.

His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, SCTDA, said: "With Sharjah Tourism's Holiday Homes Project, the emirate's aspirations to continue advancing this sector has crossed a meaningful milestone, as the

initiative not only introduces an innovative new service to the tourism landscape, but also puts Sharjah's home owners at the forefront of benefiting from a drive that is poised to drive more visitors from around the world to the emirate. Through the Sharjah Tourism's Holiday Homes Project, we seek to maximise visitor experience by ensuring high-quality classification standards and offering additional staycation

options across the emirate of Sharjah. It will further strengthen cooperation between the Authority and the providers of holiday homes by developing a system of legislation and regulations. This will contribute to diversifying the sources of growth for the hospitality sector."

According to estimates, there are currently over 300 holiday homes in Sharjah. The first

year of the project will see the registration and licensing of 150 holiday homes. About 15 operating companies will be involved in the process, and the holiday homeowners will be given three months to complete the documentation process. The first phase of the project includes organising field visits and inspection campaigns, as well as electronic or digital follow-up of holiday homes, their operators, and owners. The Authority is also working on strengthening co-operation and coordination with several government agencies in Sharjah for developing regulatory procedures for holiday homes. These entities include the Department of Economic Development, Sharjah Municipality, Department of Planning and Survey in Sharjah, General Directorate of Civil Defence in Sharjah, and Sharjah Police. 📌



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FIFA WC promotes GCC as tourism hub

Over the years, GCC has been thriving as a sports tourism destination. FIFA World Cup, scheduled in Qatar in November, gives another exciting opportunity to the region to boost travel and tourism. It is high time travel trade used the hype and hoopla around the international football event to cash in on the opportunity and market their offerings to the travellers around the world.

TT Bureau

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) prides itself as a sports tourism destination for exclusive sports such as horse racing, tennis, golf, formula one, cricket, basketball and Ultimate Fighting Championship. This year, as borders open more travellers from across the globe as far as the eastern pacific to as west as north and south America will add to the list of fans or speculators, and will come together

to witness the greatest sporting tourney of the year for the region. This will be one of the busiest winter seasons to be witnessed by the GCC as every single country prepares itself to welcome the world boosting the tourism sector after the pandemic.

Tarique Khatri, Executive Vice President – Centre of Excellence, Seera Group, said, "FIFA World Cup is an exciting time for the region and we expect a boost in travel and tourism



Tarique Khatri
Executive Vice President – Centre of Excellence,
Seera Group

to the Middle East. This is a great opportunity for travellers to the World Cup to explore the incredible offerings of Saudi Arabia too. With the Kingdom's close proximity to Qatar, we have created special packages to cater specifically to the people who are choosing to base themselves in Saudi Arabia and travel to Qatar for the World Cup, or make a stop in



Chris Gregory-Pasha
Senior Sales Director MEA
Sojern

the Kingdom during their trip to the Middle East."

Chris Gregory-Pasha, Senior Sales Director, MEA, said, "With the World Cup fast approaching, we continue to see a surge in travel intent to Qatar over that period, as well as to surrounding countries. The Middle East, Europe and APAC have the highest level of



Mamoun Hmedan
Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director,
Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and India of Wego

bookings to Qatar with Middle East volumes over 4000 per cent higher compared to January 2022 levels. Moreover, we see that flight bookings to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates are all showing significant year-on-year percentage increases. Travel marketers should be using this type of data to tailor their

advertising to appeal to travellers who are looking to base themselves outside of Qatar during the tournament."

Mamoun Hmedan, Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director, Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and India of Wego, said, "With FIFA World Cup approaching, travellers have started planning their trips and booking their tickets. With that, they are also searching for nearby hotels in the UAE, where they can see the best of both countries. And Dubai hotel searches are on the rise in the period between November and December 2022. The hotel daily rates in November and December 2021 were around \$225 and \$240 simultaneously." ▶

This will be one of the busiest winter seasons to be witnessed by the GCC as every single country prepares itself to welcome the world

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Travel bookings rise for FIFA WC

Top 20 countries with flight tickets issued to Qatar in November-December 2022

22-January		22-April		22-July	
US	19%	US	14%	UAE	18%
UK	16%	UAE	12.3%	India	10.5%
Spain	13%	UK	12%	US	9.5%
Mexico	10%	Spain	8%	UK	8.3%
UAE	6.3%	Turkey	4.8%	Spain	5.1%
Egypt	5%	Egypt	4.5%	Australia	3.5%
Germany	3.4%	India	3.8%	Saudia Arabia	2.9%
France	3%	France	3.4%	France	2.7%
Argentina	3.5%	Germnay	3.1%	Japan	2.6%
Brazil	2.5%	Canada	2.4%	Germany	2.5%
Turkey	1.8%	Japan	2.0%	Egypt	2.1%
Canada	1.7%	Brazil	1.7%	Kuwait	1.8%
Netherlands	1.6%	Lebanon	1.6%	Turkey	1.7%
Australia	1.4%	Australia	1.5%	Brazil	1.5%
Lebanon	1%	Netherlands	1.5%	Canada	1.5%
Ireland	0.9%	South Korea	1.4%	Iran	1.5%
India	0.86%	Argentina	1.2%	Lebanon	1.4%
Italy	0.74%	Switzerland	1.2%	Malaysia	1.3%
Jordan	0.74%	Israel	1.1%	Netherlands	1.3%
Switzerland	0.7%	Mexico	1.1%	Italy	1.3%

- ❖ Australia jumps 8 spots in ranking (from 14th to 6th place) as it correlates to when Australia has opened its borders recently without COVID restrictions.
- ❖ India jumps 5 spots from April 22 vs July 22.
- ❖ US has held the #1 spot earlier in the year but has dropped down to third place.

Red Sea Phase-1 to see 3,000 keys by 2024

Abdullah Al-Zahrani, Brand and Marketing Executive Director, The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC), in an interview with **TRAVELTALK** reveals that 2023 will witness a soft opening of the destination, and by early 2024 it will complete its first phase with a total of 3,000 keys in terms of hotels within the project.

Shehara Rizly

Could you share the total number of hotels, attractions and entertainment venues slated to open by end of 2023?

Next year, The Red Sea will soft launch its first phase, and by early 2024 it will include 3,000 rooms, an 18-hole championship golf course, luxury marina, and retail and entertainment facilities on a fully operational hub island. By then, The Red Sea International Airport (RSI) will also be operational. First hotels to open at The Red Sea in 2023 will include St. Regis Red Sea Resort with 90 keys, Nujuma, A Ritz Carlton Reserve with 82 keys, and Six Senses Southern Dunes, Red Sea with 76 keys.

Upon completion in 2030, The Red Sea is expected to host up to one million visitors each year with 8,000 rooms across 50 hotels, and more than 1,000 residential properties across 22 islands and six inland sites. The RSI will also be fully operational, providing a luxury seamless experience where sustainability is embedded in every aspect.

How important are the travel agents and tour operators? How will you incentivize them?

We at The Red Sea pay close attention to the needs of our partners in the travel trade and engage with them through sales missions, roadshows, travel exhibitions and FAM trips. We also hired a sales and marketing representation



Abdullah Al-Zahrani
Brand and Marketing Executive Director
The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC)

company in each of our target markets to keep the conversation going with the travel sector in those countries. Partnering with prestigious travel networks, particularly within the luxury and experiential segment, is on top of our list where we help expose the destination to our niche target within these networks. We work closely together so that

our partners understand the uniqueness of our destination that includes more than 90 untouched island, dormant volcanos, sweeping desert dunes, mountain canyons and historical and cultural sites.

Will you sponsor any international travel trade events such as WTM and ATM?

Taking part at major travel trade events, exhibitions and roadshows plays an important role in connecting with the travel sector and spreading awareness about the destination. We often look at the most impactful travel events on the calendar and the likes of ILTM, ITB, WTM and ATM are always right up there. Earlier this year we created a 'tunnel of immersion' at ATM to show visitors what

they can expect to find at The Red Sea, alongside other Saudi destinations to help cement the Kingdom as a leader in luxury and sustainable tourism. This

Would it be true to say that the The Red Sea Project is focused on developing the MICE and Events sector in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

We at The Red Sea pay close attention to the needs of our partners in the travel trade and engage with them through sales missions, roadshows etc

August, we also exhibited at the Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas, an annual event organised by the best luxury network in the world for travel advisors, hotels, cruise companies, DMCs and destinations around the world. Later this year we will be at TFest, WTM and ILTM Cannes.

The Red Sea is a pioneering luxury tourism destination that aims to offer indulgent experiences, seamlessly customised to the unique needs of each visitor. The destination will include 4,482 square meters events facilities located at Grand Hyatt The Red Sea in Shura Island. **D**

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Thirsty Thursday with hospitality leaders

Leading hospitality sales and marketing leaders in the UAE were hosted by the HSMAI Middle East recently at their monthly Thirsty Thursday event in order to connect and engage with like-minded industry experts. The social event used to be a highlight before the pandemic and now it is once again a monthly gathering of leaders across the UAE.



Expo City Dubai to inspire future generations

Expo City Dubai is gearing up to open on 1 October 2022, building on Expo 2020 Dubai's pledge to inspire generations of the future. Ahead of its official opening, visitors are invited to experience two of its most popular pavilions – 'Alif – The Mobility Pavilion' and 'Terra – The Sustainability Pavilion' – which will reopen from 1 September, marking the first chapter of Expo City Dubai's journey.

TT Bureau

Tickets, which cost AED 50 per person per pavilion, are available at www.expocitydubai.com, and can be purchased at four box offices at Expo City Dubai from 1 September. Garden in the Sky, with its breathtaking 360 degree views, will also open on 1 September, with tickets priced at AED 30 each. Attractions are free for children aged 12 and under and People of Determination.

Terra – a world-class example of sustainable best practice in architecture and design – will encourage visitors to re-evaluate their relationship with the environment through an immersive journey through ocean and forest, while Alif will transport



explorers through time and across new horizons to discover how mobility has driven human progress throughout history. Alif and Terra will be open daily 1000-1800, while Garden in the

Sky will open from 1500-1800, extending to 1000-1800 from 16 September onwards.

Other Expo 2020 Dubai favourites – including Al Wasl

Plaza, the Surreal water feature, the Women's Pavilion and the Vision Pavilion, as well as children's playgrounds and the carousel – will open in October. Later this year, the Opportunity

Pavilion will become the Expo 2020 Dubai Museum – a new addition highlighting the history and impact of World Expos and celebrating the success of Expo 2020 Dubai. Expo City Dubai is also looking forward to the return of UAE students, with the Expo School Programme (www.schools.expocitydubai.com) preparing an awe-inspiring and evolving array of immersive educational experiences, exhibits and interactive work-

shops, reflecting the themes of the pavilions. Much of Expo City Dubai's public realm will be open and is free to visit. Visitors can choose to walk, while buggies, the Expo Explorer, eScooters and eBikes are also available, which are all paid services. Expo City Dubai is easily accessed by metro, car and taxi. Parking, including dedicated parking for People of Determination, is available at Al Forsan, Jubilee, Mobility and Sustainability.

Features of Alif and Terra pavilions

- ❖ Alif will transport explorers through time and across new horizons to discover how mobility has driven human progress throughout history
- ❖ Terra will encourage visitors to re-evaluate their relationship with the environment through an immersive journey through ocean and forest

BLESS Hotel Madrid, a 360° wellness experience on the Golden Mile.

The new **BLESS Wellbeing Terrace Villa** constitutes a true haven of peace and relaxation in the heart of the city. **BLESS Hotel Madrid** is the only hotel in the capital that has the innovative HOGO rest system.

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Azerbaijan

Ideal destination for GCC travellers

With multiple direct flights and convenient process to obtain visa, Azerbaijan is easily accessible for the GCC travellers. It is also a country boasting of a modern capital city beaming with history and culture, breathtaking landscapes, lush forests and mountains, quaint villages as well as mouth-watering cuisine.

 TT Bureau

Therefore, it is not surprising that Azerbaijan continues to receive more and more travellers from the GCC countries, who are keen to explore endless immersive experiences available in the country. Among the 832,000 travellers having arrived in Azerbaijan in the first half of 2022, those from Saudi Arabia were placed in the second place, while UAE, Oman and Kuwait were among the top 10 source countries.

Starting from Baku - a city enchanted with the vibes of the

ancient times and magic of modern atmosphere, there is more than one way to spend your vacation here. You can enjoy the atmosphere of the UNESCO-protected Old City, take a stroll along the Seaside Boulevard or a gondola ride in Little Venice and taste the best dishes from local cuisine. You can also indulge in shopping at the largest mall of the Caucasus region - Deniz Mall or recently-opened Sharg Bazaar, which is a magnificent manifestation of the Silk Road.

It would be best to take your travel up a notch extending your trip to the epic landscapes

in other parts of the country. For full relaxation, you can choose to get the best out of mountain resorts to enjoy family-friendly activities. Mountain swing at Tufandag in Gabala right after off-road tours or admiring cute alpacas in their farm in Shamakhi are just a few to name.

On the other hand, among the novelties are the introduction of the renovated Basgal village, which is an arts and crafts settlement located on the crossroads of the Silk Road in the north-west. Surrounded by beautiful nature, this village is filled with restored hammams



and mosques as well as craftsmen of kelaghayi - a traditional headscarf for women. Another spot where you can see infrastructure updates is the Diri Baba Tomb in Gobustan on the way to Shamakhi, which is a natural haven itself in Azerbaijan.

To bolster the attraction of these experiences, there are a few plans in the pipeline to work closely with travel agents and tour operators in the region. Additionally, Azerbaijan Tourism Board will cooperate with major OTAs once again, while making sure consider-

Currently, citizens and permanent residents of 101 countries can travel to Azerbaijan by air, including the GCC countries

able reach among travellers directly through media platforms and influencers, organising multiple familiarization trips.

Currently, citizens and permanent residents of 101 countries can travel to Azerbaijan by air, including the GCC countries. With increased number of direct flights by

multiple airlines, including Azerbaijan Airlines, Qatar Airways, Flydubai, Flynas and Air Arabia, passengers can fly to Azerbaijan, provided that those over 18 years of age submit a COVID passport (an official document issued by the relevant country on complete vaccination or recovery from COVID-19). 



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Switzerland: a promising summer escape

As the borders opened in Switzerland, a good number of travellers from the GCC region got the opportunity to spend their summer in the famous Swiss Alps last year. The momentum continued throughout this summer too, as many local Emiratis and expatriates in the United Arab Emirates made it their summer escape.

 Shehara Rizly

With picturesque views of the mountains and lakes, guests from the GCC have embraced Switzerland as their much-loved holiday destination, especially after the pandemic as the wide-open spaces, with absolute serenity provided the visitors a piece of mind when they need it most. Switzerland with all its beautiful landscapes offer a perfect summer escape for the GCC to relax and bask in the natural fresh air, escape the heat, and experience winter during summer in places such as Engelberg, which is one of the best experiences never to be missed out. The Swiss Travel system further spoils you with choice as you can venture out to an altitude of 2,000 metres (6,650 feet) in their famous route from Eiger to Mont-Blanc and to Lake Geneva, known to be the place visited by Santa Claus. Not forgetting the mascots of the Alps, the marmots.

Famous artistes' destination

From Lord Byron, Charlie Chaplin, to Freddie Mercury to name a few have joined in the rich books of the land. In the castle of Chillon, the



inscriptions of Lord Byron's presence, statue in Vevey of Charlie Chaplin and statue and studio of legendary singer Freddie Mercury the band Queen in Montreux are some of the many famous and must experience sites.

The specialized studio has the original recording apparatus in its special record room.

Castle of Chillon

This is a must visit castle which has one of the best views on the way and throughout the

Castle of Chillon is a beautiful 13th century fortress with some of the best preserved medieval European castles on the Lake Geneva

Studio of legendary Queen

Memorabilia of a legend who revolutionized the world of music and stage performances has most of his stage clothes and accessories in the studio.

castle as well. It is a 13th century fortress with some of the best preserved medieval European castles on the Lake Geneva, which needs no words to describe its beauty. The castle

had served as a place of inspiration to many writers and poets of yesteryear. There is also rich history behind the place and its very interesting to also learn how the royalty slept, ate, bathed and performed their tasks during the time. It is one of the most breath taking sceneries never to be missed and if you spend a day visiting the castle and also hiking or biking in the surroundings, this will be an additional experience.

View on a cog railway

Les Roches de Naye is one of the climbs that one must experience, as it takes you on a cog railway to an altitude of over 2000 meters, the amazing scenery coupled with a spectacular view of Lake Geneva is a ride of your life which will never be forgotten. **Michaela Geiger**, Manager, Media Marketing, Swiss Travel System, shared, "Swiss Travel system provides visitors to experience rides in busses, trains and boats throughout their journey." While journeying to the top of the climb, she shared, "this is a unique panoramic view over the Swiss and French Alps: from Eiger to Mont-Blanc and onto Lake Geneva. The cog railway takes guests to an altitude of 2,000 metres (6,650 feet) and thereby to numerous possibilities or adventure and discovery."

Swiss Travel System

The beauty of the destination never ceases to amaze you

the Swiss travel system and Switzerland. You don't need to spend hours in front of the computer at once but you can learn a little at a time. Good thing is that you can learn more about Switzerland and the Swiss travel system and also receive a certificate in the end and to top it off you can win attractive prizes."

Kempinski Palace Engelberg

Located just a few hundred yards from the railway station, Kempinski Palace Engelberg opened in 2021 summer, has witnessed a strong demand from the GCC market. It has the most scenic view of the snow-capped mountains from morning towards the latter part of the day, in summer the sunlight lingers until quite late providing the guests more time to experience nature. The



The specialized app keeps you updated with the latest information necessary. Aimed at getting more travel agents to specialize in the Swiss Travel system, the new programme implemented last year is taking flight further now. **Andreas Nef**, Market Manager GCC, Swiss Travel System, reiterated "Last year we started our e-learning programme called the Swiss travel system excellence programme which is really a fun way to learn about

hotel's spa and wellness treatments with an indoor swimming pool provides the opportunity to relax and unwind after a day of adventure in the quaint little town. **Andreas Magnus**, General Manager, Kempinski Palace Engelberg, said, "We have been opened since last year and one of the key foreign markets that came right away as we opened last summer was the GCC market with almost 25 per cent of our guests from the GCC. 🇦🇪"



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ISHRAQ HOSPITALITY Dubai

Ishraq Hospitality has appointed **SYLVIA MATEI** as Cluster Hotel Manager for the Holiday Inn and Staybridge Suites Dubai Al-Maktoum. This move aligns with Ishraq Hospitality's strategic expansion plans, which outline further development of the group's presence in the UAE, whilst expanding into new markets, including Egypt and Oman. Matei's main mission will be to oversee the hotels' operational goals and profitability objectives, which include guest and colleague satisfaction, human resources, financial performance, sales, and revenue generation. In her new role, she will be responsible for delivering a strong return on investment for Ishraq Hospitality. She has vast experience in European and Middle East markets.



AL RAHA BEACH HOTEL Abu Dhabi

Al Raha Beach Hotel has appointed **SIDI FIKRI** as the new Executive Assistant Manager. Being a Moroccan/ American with a colourful background, both professionally and culturally, Fikri is a goal-oriented individual and an exceptional leader with a wealth of experience. He graduated from Queens College with a Degree in Computer Science/ Information Systems Management and Cornell University with a Master's Degree in Hospitality Administration/ Management. Chasing the "American Dream", Fikri's hospitality career began over 20 years ago in New York City. He will be offering extensive knowledge with a creative touch and practical understanding of the hospitality and service field.



MELIA HOTELS INTERNATIONAL Dubai

MAHMOUD ABDELNABY has been named as the new Head of Business Development APAC, Middle East & Africa, for Melia Hotels International, based in Dubai. The former Director of Sales & Marketing at Melia Desert Palm, Member of Meliá Collection, brings his extensive experience in the market to the new role, after four years at the property. Abdelnaby will now be responsible for Middle East Africa and APAC and managing the Global sales offices in Korea, Vietnam, China, India, Japan, and Australia. He is a graduate from Ain Sham University in Egypt and has more than 15 years of experience. He will ensure that revenues continue to grow, and the business evolves with new travel trends.



PREMIER INN MENA Dubai

Premier Inn MENA has appointed **EDUARD JIMENEZ** as Commercial Director to drive revenue growth at the company's expanding portfolio of hotels in the region. In the newly-created role, Jimenez is responsible for the commercial performance of Premier Inn's 11 existing hotels in the UAE and Qatar, and the revenue strategy for new properties in the pipeline. Born and educated in Barcelona, he has more than 15 years of local and international experience in the hospitality sector. He began his career at a boutique Spanish hotel in London. He has worked at various locations in the UK, Asia and UAE, where his previous roles include Cluster Commercial Director for four Hilton hotels in Ras Al Khaimah.



RADISSON HOTEL GROUP Dubai

Radisson Hotel Group appoints **OUSSAMA EL KADIRI** as Director Development to reinforce the Group's development and growth strategy in the Middle East and the ambition to double its portfolio by 2026. El Kadiri will be a part of leading the expansion of the company's presence throughout the Middle East region, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia, where he will identify and evaluate business growth opportunities and build on the success of the Group's five-year expansion and transformation plan. El Kadiri has over a decade of experience in consulting with exposure to a variety of real estate markets, including the Middle East, Africa, and Western Europe. Before joining Radisson Hotel Group, Oussama spent five years with JLL MENA hotels, hospitality, and valuation departments.



FARAH EXPERIENCES Abu Dhabi

With 10 years of tourism, retail, sports and entertainment experience in the Middle East and UK, **RAFAE ALI** has recently been appointed Brand Marketing Manager at Farah Experiences LLC to manage Warner Bros. WorldTM Abu Dhabi, the world's first-ever Warner Bros. branded indoor theme park as well as Yas Waterworld, one of the world's leading water parks. Skilled in brand marketing, digital strategy, partnerships, events, and account management, Rafae has worked on both agency and client side partnering with many brands such as VisitBritain, Yas Marina Circuit, Manchester United F.C., Sun & Sand Sports and Nike to name a few. Rafae graduated with a Degree in Mass Communication at the American University of Sharjah in 2013 and has won many marketing accolades at the Digital MENA and Sports Industry Awards.



Long-haul destinations make a comeback

Expedia Group recently released its Q2 2022 Traveller Insights Report. The quarterly report combines Expedia Group's first-party data and custom research with actionable insights and industry examples to help marketers effectively reach and engage potential travellers and capture sustained travel demand and continue their journey towards rebuilding.

TT Bureau

Despite a variety of industry and economic headwinds during Q2, people still found a way to travel, and in many cases, went further afield, said **Jennifer Andre**, Global Vice President, Media Solutions. "The return of long-haul and international family travel, higher hotel average daily rates (ADR) and higher average ticket prices in Q2, are just a few positive indicators for what we hope will be a strong second half of 2022. Our latest report provides valuable data and insights to help marketers effectively reach and engage potential travellers



and capture sustained travel demand," she said.

Some findings of the report:
Travel searches hold steady
Following a 25 per cent quarter-over-quarter surge in searches globally between Q4 2021 and Q1 2022

across the Expedia Group branded sites, search volumes held steady in Q2, indicating sustained interest and enthusiasm to travel. Asia Pacific (APAC) saw strong double-digit growth between Q1 and Q2 (30 per cent), followed by Europe, the Middle

East, and Africa (EMEA) at 10 per cent.

Search windows still shorter
Seasonal holidays and a palpable desire to travel in the near term contributed to growth in shorter search windows during Q1. Global share of searches

in the 0 to 90-day window increased more than 5 per cent quarter-over-quarter, with the 61 to 90-day window seeing the largest quarter-over-quarter lift at 15 per cent.

Long-haul destinations return
As with prior quarters,

travellers in Q2, but London and Paris had particularly strong showings.

Demand strong despite costs
A prior-year comparison shows total gross bookings in Q2 were up by double digits, as travel demand further

Q2 also saw a significant increase in demand for long-haul flights – flights with a duration of 4-plus hours – as travellers looked to go further afield.

major cities and beach destinations around the world remained popular with trav-

ellers. Lodging demand also increased in Q2 with APAC seeing the strongest growth. ▶

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