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The year of reckoning

Year 2023 has been quite a whirlwind with the re-emergence of business as usual in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. After setback from the pandemic, these sectors in the Middle East have exceeded the 2019 levels, making it the most resilient region, according to researches by leading aggregators. **TRAVTALK** talks to experts from the region to know more.



Sandeep Walia
Chief Operating Officer
Middle East, Marriott International

“One of the key achievements for this year has been the continued focus on sustainability across our operations. It's an area we have always prioritised, but we have taken some great initiatives across our operations this year on top of our ongoing contributions to community and government initiatives in the region. Our growth trajectory continues to remain solid in the region. The major highlight would be the ongoing demand for hospitality accommodation in Saudi Arabia. We have announced more than 15 deals in Saudi Arabia alone this year and expect additional deals.”



HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum
Chairman and Chief Executive
Emirates Airline & Group

“We are seeing the fruition of our plans to return stronger and better from the dark days of the pandemic. The group has surpassed previous records to report our best-ever half-year performance. Our profit for the first six months of 2023-24 has nearly matched our record full year profit in 2022-23. This is a tremendous achievement that speaks to the talent and commitment within the organisation, the strength of our business model, and power of Dubai's vision and policies that has enabled the creation of a strong, resilient, and progressive aviation sector.”

Contd. on page 6 ▶

GCC unified visa gets approval

There will be a unified visa for six member countries of the GCC akin to the Schengen visa. It was first shared at the Arabian Travel Market and now the formal approval is here.

TT Bureau

His Excellency Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary General, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), addressing the 40th session of Their Highnesses and Excellencies the Interior Ministers of the GCC countries, announced that the member countries have unanimously approved a Schengen style GCC tourism visa. The meeting was organised in Muscat, Oman, under the chairmanship of **His Excellency Sayyed**



Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior of Oman and President of the current ses-

sion. Beginning the speech, the Secretary General expressed

Contd. on page 15 ▶

Abu Dhabi airport's T-A goes hi-tech

A total of 28 international airlines are now operational from Terminal A at Abu Dhabi International Airport. All airlines operating from AUH have now fully transitioned to Terminal A.

TT Bureau

Terminal A is now the primary terminal serving Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH), with flights arriving to and departing from the emirate set to use the cutting-edge facilities available. The successful transition to Terminal A will facilitate a major increase in aviation capacity in Abu Dhabi, with the terminal able to process up to 45 million travellers annually and handle 79 planes at once. Terminal A will



enhance the passenger experience, providing seamless connectivity. The leading facilities available at Terminal A include biometric technology to streamline the screening and boarding

process, and 35,000 sq.mt. of retail and F&B space. In November, 7,669 flights operated from Terminal A with already 1,557 flights operating in the first two

Contd. on page 15 ▶





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Sharjah flight marks Air Cairo's anniv

With its 20-year legacy, Air Cairo marks a significant milestone with the inauguration of its new route connecting Cairo and Sharjah. The inaugural flight, coinciding with the airline's 20th Anniversary, signifies a notable expansion in Air Cairo's network. **Hussein Sherif**, Chairman and CEO, Air Cairo, expresses his honour in confirming the initiation of a new developmental phase for the airline.

TT Bureau

His Excellency Ali Salim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah International Airport Authority, along with department managers and officials from Sharjah Airport, joined Air Cairo in commemorating the achievement. The ceremony acknowledged the collaborative efforts that brought the new route to fruition. **Hussein Sherif**, Chairman and CEO, Air Cairo, expressed his honour in confirming the initiation of a new developmental phase for the airline. This initiative aims to enhance operational efficiency,



Hussein Sherif
Chairman and CEO
Air Cairo

accommodate passenger movement, and open new horizons for Air Cairo.

This initiative aims to enhance operational efficiency, accommodate passenger movement, and open new horizons for Air Cairo

Sherif said, "I would like to begin my speech by extending my warmest greetings and welcoming the distinguished guests, His Excellency Ali Salim Al Midfa, Chairman of Sharjah International Airport Authority, the department managers and officials of Sharjah Airport, and Air Cairo team, for their outstanding efforts in launching a new route between Cairo and Sharjah as an additional destination to our network, coinciding with the celebration of Air Cairo's 20th Anniversary."

Sherif further added, "As the Chairman and CEO of Air Cairo, I am honoured to confirm that a new phase of the company's development has begun to enhance an advanced model to increase work efficiency, accommodate passenger movement and open new horizons. Despite the challenges facing the Arab region, we are confident and optimistic that joint efforts and

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continuous support will lead to achieving our goals, including expanding our network, opening new markets, maintaining customer satisfaction, and increas-

ing tourism traffic to and from the Arab Republic of Egypt." Air Cairo has the youngest fleet in Africa and the Middle East,

with an average age of five years for its aircraft, which operate from seven Egyptian airports, including Sohag, Asyut, Hurghada, and Borg El Arab. 🇪🇬

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Tourism aligns with COP28 goals

Hosted by the UAE, COP28 brings together over 80,000 delegates, including 140 heads of state and government, setting priorities for tackling important environmental issues. Within this conversation, tourism plays an important role. The tourism industry is one of the key global economic contributors, generating immense revenue and providing employment opportunities across the world.

This year, the industry is set to contribute 180.6 billion AED to the UAE's economy. According to the most recent Economic Impact Report from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), it is anticipated that the tourism industry will generate approximately 126 million new job opportunities over the next decade. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) also reported that by 2023 international tourist arrivals will reach 1.8 billion. However, this growth also has the potential to contribute to the ever-present environmental and social challenges associated with the industry. This includes the strain on existing infrastructure, overcrowding, the exploitation of natural resources, and pollution resulting in an increased carbon footprint. For example, tourism accounts for an estimated 11 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions – a figure which is expected to double by 2050.



To address these challenges and to balance the industry's growth with environmental and social responsibility, embracing sustainable practices is vital. Given the size of the industry, tourism is well placed to lead in the promotion and championing of sustainability, with international organisations such as the WTTC and UNWTO already playing a central role. Achieving this paradigm shift necessitates not only raising aware-

ness about the significance of sustainable tourism but also the effective implementation of legislation and policies by the public sector. These regulations can include limiting tourist numbers in fragile ecosystems, zoning laws to protect cultural heritage sites, inspiring innovation to address environmental challenges, and setting standards for eco-friendly infrastructure. For instance, Abu Dhabi has recently announced the

protection of 64 sites which are of cultural importance. The law provides immediate and unconditional protection of these sites.

By executing sustainable tourism strategies, the industry can propel the transformation of destinations into environmentally conscious and sustainable systems, ensuring that future generations can enjoy the beauty and cultural richness they offer. Equally important

focusing on reducing fossil fuels in commercial aviation and developing more sustainable energy technologies. Such initiatives must also be embraced beyond large-scale brands, to small and medium enterprises. For instance, Dubai-based eatery The Lime Tree café embraces a range of sustainability initiatives in its operations. This includes reducing energy consumption and food waste, using recycled and biodegrad-

ing them to embrace environmentally conscious measures and decrease their carbon emissions.

Given the importance of COP28 in tackling climate change and environmental challenges, the discussions and collaboration at this event provide momentum prompting destinations and tourism industry stakeholders to rethink and transform their operations.

It has been anticipated that the tourism industry will generate approximately 126 million new job opportunities over the next decade



Dr. Sean Lochrie
Associate Professor at Edinburgh Business School at Heriot-Watt University Dubai
(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

is the role of industry stakeholders, who should prioritize sustainable practices. For example, this year, Emirates dedicated \$200 million to partnership projects

able materials, and highly controlling their logistics operations to reduce their carbon footprint. Governments must also extend their backing to businesses, urg-

Cultural exploration priority in 2024

In its latest research report, Skyscanner reveals some of the trends that are to be expected in 2024 in the travel and tourism sectors, and one which stands out more than others is that travellers are looking at cultural exploration. **Hugh Aikens**, Vice President, Strategic Relations and Development at Skyscanner, in an interview with **TRAVELTALK** shares important points.

TT Bureau

Hugh Aikens, Vice President, Strategic Relations and Development at Skyscanner, says, "We are seeing a broad spectrum of cultural curiosity in travel, from jetting off to see their favourite artists, to travellers seeking the very best food experience (at the very best price!), Gig Trippers and more."

- ❖ 42 per cent of UAE travellers rate the overall 'vibe' of a destination as important when choosing where to go in 2024.
- ❖ 90 per cent of UAE travellers plan to take the same number, if

not more, trips abroad in 2024 compared to 2023.

- ❖ 32 per cent of the United Arab Emirates travellers say the cost of flights mostly determines their choice of destination.
- ❖ 7/10 trending destinations for UAE travellers in 2024 are for European hotspots.

When it comes to most popular activities to do on holiday, culture is high on the agenda for UAE travellers, with historical tours (44 per cent), hitting the beach (40 per cent) and sampling local food (36 per cent) coming out on top.



Hugh Aikens
Vice President, Strategic Relations and Development at Skyscanner

- ❖ Value for money remains a key factor for UAE travellers, with the cost of the flight (32 per cent) and hotel (16 per cent) being the biggest factors determining the destination.
- ❖ However, over half (56 per cent) of UAE travellers have budgeted to spend more on travel in 2024 compared to 2023, while 31 per cent will spend the same. Only 10 per cent



have said they'll spend less; 56 per cent of UAE travellers have budgeted to spend more in 2024 compared to 2023.

- ❖ Another way to find a great value flight is by using Skyscanner's 'Everywhere' search feature. It helps travellers search by price rather than destination – a very handy tool if you're also not sure

where and when you want to go; 28 per cent of UAE travellers use film and TV as a source of travel inspiration – Set Jetting.


- ❖ Food and travel. Both have always been intrinsically linked. In fact, just under half (46 per cent) of UAE travellers have booked a destination purely on a specific restaurant they want to visit.


While a further 46 per cent say it's something they'd like to do.

- ❖ In an age of always-on and constant hype, Gen Z are craving old-school analogue adventures that ditch the digital device in favour of how it used to be done. 26 per cent of UAE 18-to-24-year-olds now bring a Polaroid camera with them on holiday. ➡

We are seeing a broad spectrum of cultural curiosity, from jetting off to see their favourite artists, to travellers seeking the very best food experience

Virgin Atlantic returns to Dubai

Virgin Atlantic, one of the most convenient airlines to fly to London, returns to Dubai after more than four years of waiting. The flight, operating seasonally from October to March, four times a week, aims to capture pent up demand for premium travel and grow the route network. In an interview with , **Liezl Gericke**, Head of International, Virgin Atlantic, shares the details.

 TT Bureau

What is the plan from London to Dubai as you return?

The return of London Heathrow to Dubai flight, operating seasonally from October through to March, four times a week, aims to capture pent up demand for premium travel and grow the route network. The four times a week service will operate seasonally from October through to March, capitalising on sunny winter breaks for sunshine hungry Brits. We expect this to be a hit with leisure customers and aim to capture the increased demand for premium winter sun getaways. The year-round warm weather with just a three-hour time difference is set to appeal to couples and families alike. We will offer 20 tonnes of cargo capacity on each flight. This fast cargo service will offer new op-



Liezl Gericke
Head of International
Virgin Atlantic

portunities for companies looking to export and import goods such as fresh produce and high-tech products between the Middle East and prime markets in the UK and US.

Share details on the new routes planned by Virgin Atlantic?
In June 2023, we announced four new routes: a new daily service from London Heathrow


to São Paulo, Brazil from May 2024. São Paulo is a key hub in Brazil for Virgin Atlantic's codeshare partner, LATAM. The partnership provides customers with onward connections to 12 domestic airports in the country, including Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Florianopolis. A new daily service to Bengaluru, India from March 2024: our third destination and fourth daily service to

India. Since 2019, we have increased capacity to India by 250 per cent, our largest area of growth outside the United States: Launching in Summer 2024, the addition of this new route means we will offer 500,000 seats each year between the UK and India, while our codeshare with IndiGo flies to 34 destinations across the country. Offers seamless connectivity and a premium long-

We (at Virgin Atlantic) expect this (flight) to be a hit with leisure customers and aim to capture the demand for premium winter sun getaways

haul experience for customers connecting via London Heathrow to destinations throughout North America.

What is the collaboration about with dnata?
dnata is our VAA-appointed GSA, GHA and Cargo handling partner. They were also our partners before the previous route closure. dnata, also our UAE sponsor, have been critical in supporting the re-launch within extremely tight timelines.

How will you work with the agents from GCC?
Agents are the most important partners for us; hence we organised a special meeting to see them again and announce their importance and the fact that we are ready to work once again. 





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Middle East biz exceeds 2019 levels

► Contd. from page 1

“Despite the challenges in the travel industry we have made some remarkable achievements this year. Some of the key achievements include expanding our reach in Canada and the UK, and also enhanced our presence in KSA, development of new



Nishan Silva
Regional General Manager
Dubai & Emirates North, Accor

“Our key achievements this year has been our diverse campaigns that resulted in the influx of GCC travellers to Germany, standing at third position from the Asian market. The campaigns have been quite successful and were well received



Daniel Rosado
Director GCC
Spain Tourism

“We are proud to have accomplished significant milestones this year, including our successful Taste of SLS event, re-opening Carna, and a new dining concept that opens in Q4. We have witnessed significant growth in our group and long-term



Issam Slaimi
General Manager
Golden Tulip Media Hotel



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Naboodah Travel

products and services to cater to the changing preferences of travellers, and the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism.”

“MAF-Accor Properties celebrated a year of achievements: the nine-month campaign marking 25 years at Pullman Dubai Creek City Centre offered diverse guest experiences, from food and beverage to stay offers. Highlight activations included the 25 years of hospitality Gala Dinner, the Step Back Suite – a room designed to take guest on a nostalgic journey, and the upcoming ‘Chronicles of Ceylon’.”



Yamina Soto
Director GCC
German National Tourist Office

by the travellers, namely the Simply Feel Good, Embrace German Nature and 52 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Historic. Modern.Germany.”

“During 2023 we saw how tourism was back to the growth path, continuing our ascending curve both in numbers and expenditure in the destination. Spain had its best year ever from the Middle East. We saw great demand specially in leisure. New destinations within Spain are starting to stand out, as part of our plan to discover to the Middle East that “Spain has it all!” We saw a great demand from all GCC regions.”



Spencer Wadama
General Manager
SLS Dubai Hotel & Residences

bookings, which is a testament to the team's hard work and dedication to providing guests with an unmatched experience.”

“Hotels had a very successful year in terms of occupancy and revenue. In occupancy, we grew 11 per cent than last year and overall revenue also had a 14 per cent improvement. We had experienced more demand for hotel rooms this year from all markets. We had guests from 138 countries this year, which was in line with the trend. Our top nationality guests belong to CIS, Latin, GCC, and Europe.”

“The highlight of this year was the opening of our new Switzerland Tourism presence in Saudi Arabia. Overnight figures from the GCC region have increased by 2.8 per cent in the first half of 2023, compared to 2022. This figure seems low,



Geoffrey Salatan
CEO
Geoffrey Travel

“As part of our mission to modernize travel retailing, this year, we launched our latest innovation, Smart-point Cloud. Offered through Travelpart+, Smartpoint Cloud POS provides agents a more intuitive way to sell and service travel, while in-



Sherif Hanna
Cluster Hotel Manager
Signature Hotels

“The hotel achieved significant improvements in our Food & Beverages department, with increased revenue, footfall, and guest numbers. We also enhanced room occupancy and attracted a more diverse range of nationalities. Our strong marketing



Jaal Shah
Managing Director
Rezlive.com



Livio Goetz
Director GCC
Switzerland Tourism

though it is an important step as part of the recovery after COVID. We only do outbound into Switzerland and the GCC countries.”

“This year, the travel industry marked significant milestones, encompassing pandemic recovery, intensified sustainability efforts, and the long-awaited launch of Geoffrey Travel, a dream finally fulfilled. In our business, growth is evident between the UAE and Philippine traffic, with notable upswings in trends among individual travellers, and the retail sector, along with fierce competition within the airlines.”



Kathryn Wallington
Head of MEA, UK&IE
Central & Eastern EU, Travelpart

creasing sales of higher-value services for suppliers. Our goal is to be the best multi-source content aggregator in the industry.”

“In 2023, we embarked on an exciting journey at Signature Hotel Group. With unwavering commitment, we achieved record occupancy rates, surpassing our own expectations. Innovation fuelled our growth, with the launch of sustainability initiatives that resonated with both our team and guests. We received accolades, not as mere trophies, but as tokens of the incredible experiences.”



Haitham Galal
General Manager
The Tower Plaza Hotel

efforts resulted in we winning the Arabian Travel Awards for Best Business and Leisure Hotel for the second consecutive year.”

“2023 has proven to be highly productive. Not only have we saw a post-COVID recovery, with all travel markets and destinations opening up and airline capacity surpassing that of 2022, but also, thanks to ease of visa procedures and introduction of new routes by various airlines, we experienced growth throughout 2023. Long-haul and corporate travel have experienced significant growth.”

Brand Dubai shines around the world



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
TIME Hotels

“As a company, we have received numerous awards, including the DDP Trailblazer award and the Fastest Growing Hotel Brand at the Arabian Travel Awards. In addition, we opened two new hotels in Saudi Arabia and Liberia and achieved an 88 per cent Global Review Index in Customer Satisfaction for 2023 YTD. We also invested in technology.”



Ayman Al Qudwa
General Manager
Falcon Travel Qatar

“Today Qatar ranked at the top of the Inbound World Tourism Report. We are experiencing extraordinary tourism activity. The number of visitors from the GCC, YTD is more than 1.1 million visitors, representing 40 per cent. Therefore, it is important to focus on the GCC market. The GCC market deserves to have representative offices of Qatar Tourism.”



Mohamed Al Rais
Deputy Managing Director
Al Rais Travel

“Dubai’s reputation as a safe and secure destination and trusted brand has resulted in an uptick from key source markets. Brand Dubai is trusted by people around the world. The country has rebounded incredibly well since COVID-19, with the latest figures for the first half of 2023 the best on record. As a travel firm, our figures are very much representative of this.”



Jamal Abdulnazar
CEO
Cozmo Travel

“This year, Cozmo Travel celebrated remarkable achievements, marked by strategic network growth initiatives, solidifying our position as a leader in the travel industry within the MENA and Asia regions. Our business experienced a significant upward trend in various sectors, notably in technology integration and innovative service offerings.”



Paul Stevens
COO, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division for
Middle East, Africa & Türkiye, Accor

“2023 has shown positive signs of recovery in the market for Accor’s Premium, Midscale & Economy brands across the Middle East. Corporate and MICE segments have shown strong signs of recovery accompanied by robust demand in leisure travel, while religious tourism has further experienced an upswing this year, particularly in Makkah and Madinah.”



Florian Sengstschmid
CEO
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

“Saudi and UAE have been the leading markets from the GCC. In numbers, 46 per cent KSA, 21 per cent UAE, 17 per cent Kuwait, 10 per cent Oman, 3 per cent Bahrain, 2 per cent Qatar. KSA and Kuwait are just one and half hour journey by flight, hence the numbers go up. As Azerbaijan Airlines started operations from UAE, numbers have risen.”

Compiled by: Dr. Shehara Rizvi



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Siyam World focuses on the GCC

TRAVEL TALK sat down with Sara Siyam, Creative Director & Ausy Waseem, Resort Manager, Siyam World, to know more about Siyam World, one of the most visited resorts in the Maldives by Middle Eastern travellers, which opened right in the midst of the pandemic in 2021, Celebrating two years since their opening, the duo looks forward to offering more experiences for their clients from the Middle East.

TT Bureau

Could you share brief information about Siyam World, how was it since the opening?

Ausy: Siyam World is one of the biggest properties in the Maldives, with 470 villas, all water villas with pool and slide, all beach categories with private pool. It's a big island with over a dozen restaurants and bars spread across the 54 hectare island. We officially opened on 28 October 2021. It's a resort that's built for everyone, be it family, honeymooners, solo trips or even group trips. The reason is, we are so big and we have many multi bedroom villas over water and on the beach but what we have done is build the multi bedroom villas on one side of the island where the Kidz World (kids club) and family friendly pool bars like Jungali and Shipwrecked are located, so naturally, families hang around this side of the island. On the other side, we have the high category water villas with slide and pool and sunset pool beach villas and



take place here, and there is something different taking place every night. Because of the size of the island, you would never feel like it's overcrowded, everything is spread out well.

Sara: Siyam World is a happening place, in keeping with our slogan "Bye Bye Boredom" we make sure there is not a dull moment here. We have also in-

Maldives, biggest floating water park in the Maldives, first property to have more than 200 water villas with pool and slide, and the world's first underwater jetpack. We have many more experiences in the pipeline and will be launching it soon. We will always have something new coming up every year, this gives us the edge and also gives our guests a reason to come back. After being open for less than two years, we already have many repeaters that come back because they have fallen in love and want to try our many other experiences. We also do a lot of theming and events, references to pop culture when doing our events for Halloween, new year and our Birthday Bash, which we celebrate on 28 October every year.

How important is the Middle Eastern market?

The Middle Eastern market is really important to us. We have

We have had quite a number of guests from the GCC region throughout the year and we do certain offers and events on Eid al Adha and Eid al-Fitr

our adults-only beach bar, Mint, this area of the island is quieter and on the middle of the island we have the "together" bar, that's where the magic happens. All our entertainment and events

roduced many "never seen before" experiences in the Maldives, including our very own 16,000 sq.mt. Horse Ranch, home to Marwari breed horses and ponies, first "seabreacher" in the



had quite a number of guests from the GCC region throughout the year and we do certain offers and events on Eid al Adha and Eid al-Fitr and this is when we see a spike in the visits. We also have residence villas 1-6 bedrooms with ultimate privacy aimed just for ME market.

What is the engagement planned with travel agents and corporate bookers?

We have quite a few group corporate events that we have booked in the span of just 2 years of opening and we have a great relationship with our partners.

Are there special facilities that cater especially to this market?

We do have special facilities for corporate bookers, we have had quite a few events, corporate and other events like weddings as well, this is like up to groups ranging from 300-1000 people! Siyam World broke a record in

Maldives history by hosting the biggest corporate event in the country's history with an island buy out for more than a 1,000 people for five days. We have also hosted smaller events like destination weddings with 300-500 people. With the size of the island and the number of outlets we have, we can transform ar-

reas in event spaces. It's a world of possibilities, a world built for everyone, families, honeymooners, fun loving, adventure seeking solo trips, or even to relax and unwind. And in terms of MICE, yes we do have. In 2022, we made history by hosting the biggest island buy out for a corporate event with over 1,000 people.

There are so many! Hard to select a few

- ❖ We have the Maldives First Horse ranch- guests can go horse riding during sunset or sunrise
- ❖ One of the biggest sport complexes in history, an international standard football field, two futsal courts, three tennis courts with three different surfaces, padel tennis, badminton, volleyball and basketball
- ❖ Indian Ocean's biggest floating waterpark
- ❖ Colourful and vibrant Mokes (electric cars) that guests can rent throughout their stay to explore the island and get around
- ❖ All villas with pools, all water villas with pool and slide
- ❖ Many multi bedroom villas
- ❖ One of the largest kids clubs
- ❖ Our unique experiences, we tend to do a lot of immersive experiences, especially when it comes to Halloween
- ❖ WOW 24-hour premium all-inclusive has dine around four restaurants and a sports bar where you can drink and 24/7, includes experiences as well



Habtoor Palace in your bucket list

Habtoor Palace, located on the banks of Dubai’s water canal, is one of the most iconic properties in the capital of UAE. A key feature in the hotel, which offers sophisticated authentic palatial experience with 234 guest rooms and suite, is the special Sir Winston Churchill Suite with artefacts from the original archive, shares **Soufiane ElAllam**, Complex Commercial Director, Habtoor Palace.

TT Bureau

What is the USP of Habtoor Palace?

Habtoor Palace Dubai, located in the heart of Dubai and on the banks of the Dubai Water Canal, offers sophisticated authentic palatial experience with 234 lavishly appointed guest rooms and suites, signature butler service, seven well-defined restaurants and lounges and the exquisite Silk Spa. The décor is a reminiscent of a Maison de Maître, a true French neo-classical style gilded marble symmetric staircases and Versailles manicured gardens make it the perfect location for luxurious weddings and corporate events. The Sir Winston Churchill Suite includes artefacts from Sir Winston Churchill’s original archive, whereas the Bentley Suite takes after the Bentley Mulsanne, where the interiors of the suite are the same used in the car,



Soufiane ElAllam
Complex Commercial Director
Habtoor Palace

such as the sound system, wood, leather and much more.

Why should one include it in their bucket list?

Habtoor Palace Dubai is the epitome of luxury, as one walks through the grand golden doors to a Dubai made palatial journey. With a large chandelier and two spiral staircases, where guests will be spoilt for

choice with exclusive access to facilities and services available across Al Habtoor City. Habtoor Palace Dubai is also home to the multiple award-winning World Cut Steakhouse that serves luxurious classic steaks served right out of the grill. During November all through January, guests can enjoy the Winter Garden, the festive wonderland, right in front of Habtoor Palace Dubai. We are a 15 minutes’ drive from Dubai International Airport, Museum of the Future, DIFC, Dubai Downtown, Dubai Mall and much more. Guests can even request for a private shuttle for beach access at our sister property Waldorf Astoria, The Palm. With over 20 dining and entertainment venues, three rooftop pools, two rejuvenating spas and the gorgeous Winter Garden that takes place every year. Not to miss the world class water themed show La Perle by Dragone.



Could you share the current source markets and your intended source markets as well?

Habtoor Palace Dubai’s current top 10 source market are UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia, USA, UK, India, Germany, Kuwait, Iraq and Egypt, which consist of 64 per cent of market share

at Al Habtoor City and 137,000 room nights. Moving forward, our intended source markets are China, Qatar, Russia, France, Iran, and Australia. Al Habtoor City was also the official hotel for EXPO, MOPA and MOFA. Moving forward, UAE is now hosting COP28 from 30 November to 12

December at Expo City Dubai to unite the world towards agreement on bold and ambitious solutions to the most global pressing challenges currently. At Al Habtoor City, we are already seeing a rise in bookings and are at nearly 90 per cent occupancy during this time. ➡

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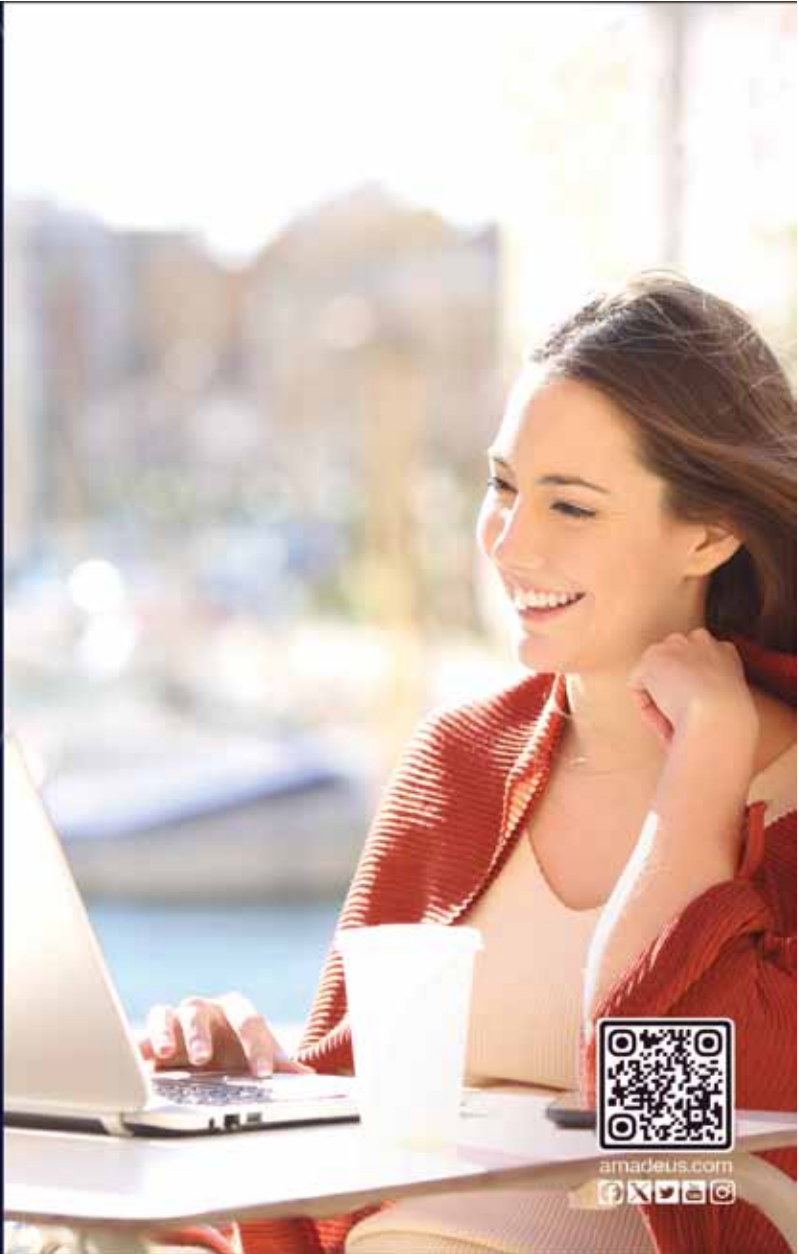
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Middle East travel trade gather at WTM

It was once again time of the year when travel trade meet at the most important travel event - World Travel Market, with representation from across the globe. The event, held at ExCeL London exhibition & convention centre from 6-8 November, provided the participants a great time to network and also meet some new potential partners for the next year.



for extensive networking opportunities



Malta focuses on Qatar market

Over the past few years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been a new but lucrative market for Malta Tourism Authority, which bagged the 'Best Market Engagement by a Tourism Board' title at Arabian Travel Award 2023. **Arthur Grima**, Marketing Director, Malta Tourism Authority, says that they expect Qatar Airways to start operations 'very soon' to Malta.

 Dr. Shehara Rizly

Whilst Malta beat the 2019 visitor numbers by September this year, GCC spend for the country has been the highest. Keeping this in view, Malta Tourism Authority has formulated campaigns to cater to the GCC market, shares **Arthur Grima**, Marketing Director, Malta Tourism Authority, in an exclusive interview at the Qatar Travel Mart. "One of the main reasons that we are participating at Qatar Travel Mart is to showcase our rich offerings to the travellers from Qatar. We are also expecting Qatar Airways to start operating direct flights very soon to Malta. In the meantime, of course, there are other air-



Arthur Grima
Marketing Director
Malta Tourism Authority

year when we reached over 2.7 million. At this point in time, until September, we are ahead by like 150,000 more than what we had in 2019. So, we are looking forward to close the year with a

GCC is a brand new market for us. We are still growing here. We are still in our infancy. We are still learning. However, these are very important markets because they represent the future for us, because they represent the type of clients which we are aiming to attract. Better quality, better spend, and it's part of our overall strategy to improve the quality of our tourism," Grima reiterated.

Malta Tourism Authority has been active in the GCC over the past few years through their representative Aviareps, which has been closely engaging with the travel trade, as well as TravTalk, on various promotional campaigns. Grima further explained how



lines operating with convenient connections via other European points," Grima shares.

"We had a very interesting and fast recovery post the pandemic. I have to say that we have always remained active and, on the market, even during the pan-

new record, both when it comes to visitor numbers and also as regards to spend. So, the revenue from tourism has increased a lot," Grima explained.

Grima says that their tourism future is focused on the GCC market, as they like to focus on qual-

the Maltese language can be an asset to the GCC, as it includes a number of words that are Arabic, French, and Italian. For example, the counting of numbers are same as in Arabic. "One added advantage for our island, for visitors from this region is that all the Maltese speak English. English is, in fact, an official language as well. However, interestingly enough, our language, the

Maltese language, is the only Semitic language in the world written in Latin alphabet. So, when I meet my colleagues in the morning, I say 'Bongu', which for you is French, but for us is Maltese. And in the evening when I leave from work, I say 'caw', which sounds Italian for you, but for us it is Maltese. However, if we are counting numbers, we say, wiehed, tnein, tileta, erbgha, hamsa, sitta (Arabic numbers), which sound very similar to and are basically Arabic. And there are a lot of other words which are Arabic, like man in Maltese is ragel, sea is bahar. So, we have got a lot of similarities

in our language. Also, our old capital city is Mdina. We have towns with Arabic names like Rabat. We have surnames, which are also of Arabic origin, like Muscat. So, I think it's an interesting blend to learn the similarities in culture and heritage as well. This country can surprise you in many ways," Grima explained.

Their target for the next year is to receive over 3 million tourists. Hitting this landmark number rests within the travel trade in the Middle East, but they are also working on many other campaigns which also attract more women from the GCC to explore

the various activities they seek in a destination. Grima shares, "we listen to our audience, the travel trade provides us with various information which enables us to stay up to date and proactive, hence we expect next year to continue with this momentum that we have witnessed this year and remain on an upward growth trajectory."

Apart from their B2B campaigns, they will also focus on B2C by running 365 screens in Dubai Mall promoting their winter season, where the world spends their time looking out for quality products, brands and experiences. ➤

One of the main reasons that we are participating at Qatar Travel Mart is to showcase our rich offerings to the travellers from Qatar

dem, so that we facilitate the rebound. During that time of the pandemic, we took the opportunity to train our staff, to train the industry, so they are ready when the business returns and the business did return. And, in fact, we are running ahead of 2019 figures. 2019 was our record

ity of travellers and this has been an untapped source market for them over the years. As a new source market, they have seen a keen interest from the region to explore new destinations, hence they will be conducting various campaigns to ensure that they attract the GCC travellers. "The



Singapore Airlines thanks partners

Singapore Airlines hosted a special ceremony to express gratitude to the the travel trade for their continued support. The event was attended by partners from the UAE, who enjoyed networking with their fellow colleagues and exchanged insights on the season, as the whole world is now open for travel and many new destinations and experiences have emerged even in the routes connected by the airline.



NEOM unveils luxury island

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's NEOM announced its latest luxury coastal tourism destination, Epicon, located on the Gulf of Aqaba, which aims to set a new standard of hospitality and architecture.

TT Bureau

Rising from NEOM's desert landscape like a glistening mirage, Epicon, located on the Gulf of Aqaba, will feature two striking towers, one 225-metre tall

rooms and 45 stunning residential beach villas.

Designed as a gateway to the future, Epicon provides an opportunity to escape the stresses of the everyday. Whether relaxing at the beach club, visiting the spa

A highly attractive visitor destination and an optimum place to live and thrive, Epicon's guests and residents can expect a truly immersive and life-affirming experience. The luxurious residences and beach villas aim to deliver new levels of liveability through cutting-edge innovations, world-class services and first-class experiences, positioning the resort as a benchmark for iconic living.

Guests and residents of Epicon will enjoy unrestricted access to world-class facilities, complemented by views of one of the most desirable shorelines in NEOM. Amenities include a state of the art gym, library, workspaces, pools and lounges.

News of Epicon follows the recent announcement of Leyja, NEOM's sustainable tourism destination set within a magnificent natural valley. The extensive range of experiences and activities offered in Epicon and Leyja will strengthen and enrich the NEOM ecotourism offering, aligned with the broader objectives of the Kingdom.



and one reaching 275 metres. The towers will be home to an ultra-premium 41-key hotel and luxury residences that comprise 14 suites and apartments. A short distance from the hotel is the Epicon resort, which blends tranquillity with indulgence and features 120

for bespoke wellness treatments, exploring the surrounding nature, participating in one of the many watersports on offer, or dining at destination restaurants for an unforgettable culinary experience, Epicon has been conceived to meet the full array of guest and resident needs.

WOW to launch 300-key hotel

The project worth US \$1.3 billion is to be launched in Al Marjan Island, Ras Al Khaimah, with 300-key hotel and 524 residences by JW Marriott. The construction work is expected to start in February 2024.

TT Bureau

Anwar Ali Aman and Bhupender 'Bruce' Patel, founders of WOW Resorts, have joined hands with Marriott International and Abdulla Al Abdouli, Chief Executive Officer, Marjan, to launch a 300-key hotel and 524 residences in Al Marjan Island, Ras

wards the end of 2026, JW Marriott Al Marjan Island Resort & JW Marriott Residences Al Marjan Island herald WOW Resorts' debut in the UAE's Northern Emirates, a favoured destination for leisure and luxury.

Aman expressed his gratitude for the prestigious partnership. "It is a privilege to work with the

are committed to optimising and elevating the experiences of all our cherished guests and residents as we embark on this remarkable project in the UAE." Abdouli said: "We are delighted to welcome JW Marriott and WOW Resorts to our flagship development, in line with our commitment to creating unparalleled living experiences for residents



Al Khaimah. This exclusive collaboration marks the birth of the first JW Marriott-branded resort and residences on Al Marjan Island, poised to captivate over five million visitors annually. Anticipated to open its doors to

prestigious Marriott International and Al Marjan Island to unveil our flagship project in one of UAE's most eagerly anticipated developments," he said. Patel said: "With the demand for waterfront living on the rise, we

and guests on Al Marjan Island." Jaidev Menezes, Regional VP, Mixed-Use Development EMEA for Marriott International said, "We are thrilled to be a part of the new development in Al Marjan Island."

RezLive networks with trade in Oman

RezLive.com organised a networking evening for travel agents in Oman recently. More than 100 travel agents attended the event. Expressing his gratitude for the overwhelming response, Jaal Shah, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group, said, 'It reflects the industry's eagerness to connect, collaborate, and thrive together. RezLive.com remains dedicated to fostering strong partnerships.'



UK's new ETA for GCC

With the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) announced for the citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Jordan, VisitBritain conducted a special webinar for the agents in the GCC region. More than 300 agents attended the webinar posing their questions to the two speakers, one from the NTO and another from the UK government's home office.

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Kicking off the webinar, **George Christakis**, Commercial Manager – GCC, VisitBritain, shared about their new campaign for 2024, which included a host of experiences for the travellers. A special video was placed showcasing all important areas to explore, including the winter wonderland in Hyde Park, Oxford, and Regent. "Britain has got it. I invite you to see it for yourself. This is our brand-new brand campaign that has launched this month. Welcome to Britain, where there is always more to explore. Journey, wild coastlines, adventures through our vibrant cities, go monster hunting, meet the locals. Come see things differently. Plan your trip and visit Britain.com. There is so much to see and do in just 30 seconds. But what I want to do is start with the most magical time of the year. So, basically there is nowhere else in the world, I think, that does the festive season quite like the UK. We all know of winter wonder-



land in Hyde Park, Oxford, Regent and Carnaby Street, Drakes and Twins and Lights, and the famous Ice Rink at Somerset House," Christakis said.

of Winter (London), Christmas Markets (Birmingham), Wishmas at Wembley (London), Castle of Light (Edinburgh), Christmas at Kew Gardens

London Fashion Week, Chelsea Flower Show, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Glastonbury and Royal Ascot were revealed. Getting on to what is new in 2024 included Icons of British Fashion at Blenheim Palace, 200th anniversary of National Gallery, Rebalance Bath - Festival of Wellbeing, RHS Urban Show, Manchester and of course Brit Fest.

Moving on to the most important Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), **Aaron Walton**, ETA Engagement from UK Government Home Office, shared an introduction to Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) and Future



Border and Immigration Systems (FBIS) Programme. "An ETA is advance permission to travel to, or transit through the UK, for those who do not currently need to obtain a visa, or do not have a UK immigration status. An ETA will be valid for two years or until passport expires, whichever sooner and for multiple journeys to the UK within that period. The applica-

tion process will be light touch, low cost and online. If successful, an ETA - digital permission to travel - will be granted," Walton informed.

He moved on to show the benefits of an ETA, which is to strengthen the security of the UK border, enhance ability to screen travellers and stop those posing a threat to the UK. ➡

Welcome to Britain, where there is always more to explore. Journey, wild coastlines, adventures through our vibrant cities, and meet the locals

The power point presentation included Winter Wonderlands and Festive Season, Coronation Christmas (London), Kingdom

(London) and Christmas at Heaton Park (Manchester). In terms of anniversaries, exhibitions and events Wimbledon,

Unified visa for GCC nations

► Contd. from page 1

gratitude to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said**, Sultan of the Sultanate of Oman and Chairman of the current session of the GCC Supreme Council, and the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the people of the Sultanate, for their efforts made to support the joint GCC action for meeting the aspirations of the citizens of the



GCC countries are exemplary in terms of the progress and prosperity, as well as the regional and international status they have reached in development

council countries and the quest for more cohesion, cooperation and integration among the council's countries.

His Excellency Albudaiwi said that the GCC countries are exemplary in terms of the progress and prosperity they have achieved at all levels, as well as the regional and international

status they have reached in development, especially the development of the GCC citizen.

Furthermore, he stated that making these accomplishments by the GCC countries requires securing a high level of national security, and ensuring monitoring and deterrence of everything that may hinder

this blessed march that the GCC countries have achieved in record time. The Secretary General pointed out that the increasing danger of the scourge of drugs, which has become worrying for society at all levels, requires everyone to work hand in hand to confront its spread among the youth of the council countries according to a unified strategy that addresses all fronts (prevention – control – treatment). Additionally, he hailed the multiple national campaigns undertaken by the GCC countries, in addition to the great efforts made by security personnel in combating drugs in the member states. ➡

Abu Dhabi's T-A upgraded

► Contd. from page 1

weeks of operations. The number of flights operating from Terminal A is set to further increase in December to 12,220, as will the number of passengers using the new terminal projected to be 2.29 million.

Elena Sorlini, Managing Director and Interim Chief Executive Officer, Abu Dhabi Airports, said: "With all airlines now operating from Terminal A, I'm

ence, whilst enabling international airlines to further increase their presence in Abu Dhabi."

As the UAE's national airline, Etihad Airways operated the first commercial flight from Abu Dhabi International's highly-anticipated new Terminal A. To commemorate the occasion, all passengers had the unique opportunity to be the inaugural guests at the new flagship Etihad Lounges,

to celebrate our 20th anniversary in November, we are ready for the next growth chapter in our new home. Our congratulations go to the Abu Dhabi leadership for their vision in creating what is one of the world's most spectacular airports."

Sorlini said: "This is an historic moment for Abu Dhabi International Airport, our partners at Etihad Airways, and the emirate as whole. The first flight



pleased to announce a new era for operations at Abu Dhabi International Airport. Bringing new state of the art facilities and a major increase in aviation capacity, Terminal A will greatly enhance the passenger experi-

which span three floors at Terminal A.

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer, Etihad, said: "This is a pivotal and exciting moment in Etihad's history. As we begin

from Terminal A marks a major milestone in the journey of Abu Dhabi's aviation sector. Terminal A brings a significant increase to capacity, and delivers state-of-the-art facilities to both airlines and passengers." ➡

Virtual show of Sharjah's splendour

The Sharjah Pavilion at the World Travel Market in London, which was organised from 6 to 8 November 2023 at the ExCel international exhibition and convention centre, attracted hundreds of visitors. The pavilion was set up under the umbrella of the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) with participation of 18 government and private entities.

 Dr. Shehara Rizly

The pavilion served as a virtual expedition connecting Sharjah's heritage with modern tourist destinations, as it presented an array of authentic experiences through a wide spectrum of landmarks, activities, scenic marvels and attractions, catering to aficionados of history and culture, sports and leisure enthusiasts, and nature admirers among others.

The immersive and life-like metaverse known as 'SharjahVerse' provided a gateway for attendees to embark on a virtual journey to discover the splendour of Sharjah's destinations and activities. For sports enthusiasts, the Sharjah International Marine Sports Club showcased a high-speed Sharjah Formula 1 team boat in anticipation of the upcoming F1H2O World Championship Week in December, a premier global sports event in the emir-



His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman
SCTDA



'SharjahVerse' provided a gateway for attendees to embark on a virtual journey to discover the splendour of Sharjah's destinations and activities


ate. Visitors were also treated to a kayak simulator, offering them a glimpse into Sharjah's tourism destinations and water sports activities.

Classic car fans, on the other hand, enjoyed an exceptional 360 degree augmented reality experience provided by the Sharjah Old Cars Club, which offered them a virtual tour

of the Sharjah Classic Cars Museum. An exclusive classic car was also on display at the pavilion, showcasing the region's vintage automotive history and culture.


The event also dedicated a prominent space to environmental and nature experiences, where attendees had the opportunity to embark on a unique virtual Sharjah Safari tour,

courtesy of the Environment and Protected Areas Authority (EPAA). Finally, the "Sharjah Museums Experience" allowed

audiences to explore the emirate's 16 museums, each narrating a piece of Sharjah's rich history and heritage. 



Holidaying? Go with the flow

There has been an increase in inbound travel to the Maldives from the GCC region in recent years. **Althaf Mohamed Ali**, Chief Executive Officer, Pulse Hotels, Maldives, in an interview with , shares the importance of the Middle East market and the many ways they intend to get more visitors from the Middle East region. Ali also shares how holidays should not be rushed but simply go with the flow.

 Dr. Shehara Rizly

What is the USP of Pulse Hotels?

We believe that the guests should not be rushed on holiday. Our purpose is to give the perfect space and let our guests enjoy and relax on holiday. We cater to their every aspect, for instance, breakfast can be had all day, we don't conform to times, the guests have their say. We just say that they flow with the tide. When you are on holiday especially, the last thing you want to do is to be rushed, take a moment, just don't think about anything else. Pulse Hotels & Resorts launched with an entrepreneurial mindset to re-imagine and innovate the hospitality offering of the Maldives.

Importance of the GCC market
There has been an increase in interest and travel to our resorts from the GCC region in recent years. Our resorts cater



Althaf Mohamed Ali
CEO
Pulse Hotels, Maldives

resort targets a different market segment and offers a range of facilities and amenities, including stylish and affordable over-water villas, modern all-inclusive community concepts, and an entire ultra-luxury private island resort that guests can take over for maximum privacy. GCC travellers seek the nature, privacy, and convenience of travel to the islands of the Maldives. The destination continues to grow in popularity as more resorts open for business.

Our purpose is to let our guests enjoy and relax on holiday. We cater to their every aspect, for instance, breakfast can be had all day

to luxury travel experiences, not only for short breaks and weekend getaways, but also for extended escapes from the region's warmer summers. Each


Would you describe the properties as ultra luxury?

Currently, we have three (properties) at a very unique kind of



positioning. So, we have the Nautilus which opened in late 2019 with the vision that we wanted to kind of disrupt the traditional concept of ultra-luxury. When we did our research for Nautilus, took two years before we actually finalized our concept. One of the key takeaways from that research we found that ultra-high-network

individuals in their public life are always wearing a kind of a metaphorical mask of putting on a public persona because they need to carry that public image. So, if they go to a social function or even if they meet somebody, they are always on guard because they know they need to maintain a very public profile that is aligned to their

social standing. What we realize is when they go on holiday, they are looking to completely get away from that having to be conscious of having to always dress themselves not only physically but in terms of metaphorical. So, what we realize when we did this research is they seek places that are completely off the radar. 



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MOVEMENTS

ACCOR Dubai

SOUFFIAN ZAERAOUI has been promoted as Regional General Manager, Dubai South and Abu Dhabi, Premium, Midscale, and Economy Division, Accor. Zaeraoui has more than 15 years of experience within the Accor Group. Hailing from France, he holds an MBA degree in International Hospitality Management from ESSEC Business School. Under his leadership, the properties achieved significant milestones in various aspects, including guest satisfaction, brand awareness, financial performance, and innovative sustainability projects. He is known for his strategic and forward-thinking approach, with a strong emphasis on revenue growth, brand awareness and team engagement.



NISHAN SILVA has been promoted as Regional Manager, Dubai and Northern Emirates, Premium, Midscale, and Economy Division, Accor. Silva holds an MBA degree from the University of Leicester, UK, and has more than 25 years of international hospitality experience. He has a strong educational foundation, having also earned a Doctorate in Business Administration, with a thesis on 'A Ten-Year Outlook on the Role and Importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation in High-End Hotels', from California Southern University, USA. Silva has overseen a portfolio of seven Accor properties in Dubai, totalling an impressive 1,667 rooms – one of the largest hotel cluster operations in the UAE. His leadership underscores his capabilities in managing the region's hotel operations.



dnata TRAVEL GROUP Dubai

dnata Travel Group has appointed **SHAINA WIJ** as PR lead for its Pulse Hotels & Resorts account in the GCC. dnata Representation Services is the Maldives-based hospitality development company's exclusive sales and marketing representative in the market, showcasing its latest news, exclusive rates, and more to travellers across the region, as travel demand for the Maldives continues. In her new role, Shaina is responsible for a range of exciting promotional activities to bring Pulse Hotels & Resorts' unique, luxury portfolio of properties across the Indian Ocean archipelago including Nova, Kandima and The Nautilus, closer to the region's traveller base. Shaina is a seasoned professional with over a decades' worth of experience in PR and Communications.



JUMEIRAH SAADIYAT ISLAND Abu Dhabi

Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts' eco-conscious beachfront resort in Abu Dhabi, has appointed **VIVIAN TRIDA** as the Director, Sales and Marketing. During her 15 years of career, Trida has worked with many luxury hospitality brands in the region. She has previously managed the sales front for high profile luxury resorts across the UAE, including the rebranding of Emirates Palace as a Mandarin Oriental and Grand Hyatt Dubai. In her new role, she will be leading the charge in devising and implementing the commercial strategy across local and international markets with the vision to continue working with destination stakeholders in positioning Abu Dhabi and Saadiyat Island as a luxury destination.



HOLIDAY INN AND STAYBRIDGE Dubai

IHG Hotels & Resorts has appointed **BRUNO HIVON** as General Manager of Holiday Inn Hotel, which is set to open in the Business Bay district in December this year. With over 29 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Hivon has taken on the role of Cluster General Manager for the Holiday Inn and Staybridge Suite Dubai Business Bay in the United Arab Emirates. In addition to overseeing all operations and implementing strategic commercial plans to enhance its market position, Hivon is spearheading the launch of a cluster of hotels comprising over 400 rooms and four enticing food and beverage outlets in Dubai. Hivon's vision includes the integration of various sustainable initiatives, such as the installation of solar panels to harness renewable energy, and a desalination plant to provide in-house drinking water.



SHADAB AMIN has been appointed as Director, Sales and Marketing, Holiday Inn Hotel. Amin has demonstrated exceptional expertise in sales and marketing within the hospitality industry. Currently serving at Holiday Inn Dubai Business Bay, he is responsible for leading the commercial team, aiming to achieve goals such as managing budgets, as well as developing and executing strategic sales and marketing plans to optimize revenue. Additionally, he is dedicated to efficiently allocating resources towards the hotel's pre-opening budget. His keen market insight allows him to adjust strategies in response to changing market conditions and maintain strong relationships with industry influencers and partners.



VOCO Dubai

IHG Hotels & Resorts has appointed **TAMARA SALHA** as the new Area General Manager for Premium, Essentials & Suites – UAE hotels and General Manager at voco Dubai. With a distinguished career spanning two decades within IHG Hotels & Resorts, Tamara brings a wealth of experience to this key role. In her new role, Salha will play a pivotal part in supporting the growth of IHG's Premium, Essentials & Suites hotel brands in key gateway cities in the UAE. Leveraging her extensive background in hospitality management, she will enhance the brand's reputation for excellence and strong relationship with the owners. In her recent role as the General Manager at Crowne Plaza Dubai Marina, Salha demonstrated exceptional leadership by cultivating a high-performing team.



SBK HOSPITALITY UAE

Seasoned hotelier, **ALEXANDER SUSKI**, has been appointed Chief Hospitality Officer of SBK Hospitality Business Group, a part of SBK holding & The Private Office of His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Suski will be overseeing the overall asset management and developments of the three iconic Fairmont properties: Dubai, Ajman, and Fujairah. He will also be spearheading the reopening of Moon Island in Abu Dhabi. A Belgian national, Suski has garnered valuable experience in the hospitality sector with a career spanning almost two decades, including senior management positions across the UAE, the Middle East & Africa, and Europe for brands, including Terra Solis by Tomorrowland, Ishraq Hospitality, and Millennium Hotels and Resorts among others.



VFS GLOBAL Corporate Office UAE

JOSE MANUEL AISA MANCHO joins VFS Global as Chief Financial Officer and member of the Executive Board. He reports to Zubin Karkaria, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, and is based in Dubai, UAE, the organisation's global headquarters. Manuel joins VFS Global from Cellnex Telecom. He has over two decades of experience across the suite of finance sub-functions, including mergers and acquisitions, financial planning, investor relations, management control, treasury, and tax. In his new role, he will be responsible for the overall finance function, and will also be responsible for legal, data privacy and corporate risk functions. As the board member, he will also play a pivotal role in the overall strategic decision-making.



MEDIA ONE HOTEL Dubai

Media One Hotel welcomes **JAN MAJERSKI** as Hotel Operations Manager. Majerski brings with him an extensive hospitality experience with a diverse range of regional and international experiences in hospitality under his belt. He initiated his career in hospitality management at National Louis University in Poland, where he completed a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and a Master's degree in Business Administration. In his new role, Majerski oversees the hotel's daily activities, ensuring every guest leaves highly impressed and ready to plan their next visit. He is also responsible for the property's financial performance, seeking opportunities to drive revenues across various areas.



Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort, Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts' eco-conscious beachfront resort in Abu Dhabi, has appointed **KHRYSTYNA MASZYCH** as the Assistant Digital Marketing Manager. The appointment follows a period of ongoing enhancements for the resorts' hospitality offering to drive continued growth for the resort on international, regional and local levels. With five years of global experience in creating successful media campaigns for brands across North America, Asia and Europe, Khrystyna will manage the property's online paid advertising campaigns, including the strategy, design and implementation, and search engine optimization.



IMAN SYAMI has been appointed as Head of Marketing & Communications at Media One Hotel. Syami brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry, with a career spanning back to 2013. Gaining extensive experience in marketing roles within the hospitality industry, Syami comes from a humble start in Malaysia to now overseeing all marketing activities at Media One and its on-site restaurants and event spaces. One of Syami's most notable first positions was as the Cluster E-commerce and Digital Marketing Executive for Park Regis Hotels from 2016 to 2018. During her tenure, she learned to successfully implement digital marketing strategies, resulting in increased brand visibility and revenue growth.



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