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Soaring spirits in New Year

The world is finally healing and leaders in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors look forward to the New Year with high hopes. What are the expectations of the industry in the coming year. Let's hear from the experts...

“2023 is set to be a volatile year with signs that major economies will be in for a rough ride, underpinned by instability in fuel prices and escalating inflationary pressures. In spite of these challenging dynamics, we continue to see extraordinary travel demand across our network, and we are closely watching how demand will shape up over the course of the year. With demand also continuing to outstrip capacity, and with more major source markets like China expected to relax their travel restrictions, we are also expecting travellers to begin planning ahead and lock their trips ahead of time.”



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

“We are witnessing strong passenger volumes continuing on from 2022 into 2023, as travel industry recovers strongly supported by pent-up demand. This year, we continue to evolve our product and service offering to meet the needs of our global traveller base. Recent product enhancements include the expansion of ‘Overnight Safari’ product for DMC Arabian Adventures, adding more camps in the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve. We also intend to expand our dnata Travel retail footprint further across the UAE.”



John Bevan
Chief Executive Officer dnata Travel Group

Contd. on page 5 ▶

Future travel with Gen Z

Now that travel is back on track and Gen Z in the driver's seat, it will revolutionize the way people travel in future, say experts.

“It's people who shape brands and destinations. In order to reach out to the newer generations, we need to include them in our thinking while developing new activities. If we reach out to Gen Z, we do that together with the Gen Z. The latest example is our close partnership with the techno and EDM SunIce Festival. Traditional St. Moritz brand is also undergoing a generational change with the third generation taking the lead with fresh ideas and offers for Gen Z guests.”



Marijana Jakic
Brand Manager
St. Moritz, Member of the Management Board ESTIM AG

Contd. on page 20 ▶

Dubai's key move on autism

Dubai initiates measures to get designated as the first-ever Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) outside the US to enhance its accessibility for visitors from all over the world to next level.

TT Bureau

Dubai is taking steps to enhance the destination's accessibility and inclusion for travellers from all over the world to the next level. The Dubai Economy and Tourism department is spearheading a movement with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to designate it as the first-ever Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) outside the United States. The first phase of this initiative means all Dubai attractions, hospitality and entertainment organisations will have access to specialized autism-specific training designed to enhance staff knowledge, understanding and



Issam Kazim
CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce

strategies for communication, guest experience and safety to better serve and accommodate people of determination. With one in six people having sensory needs and rising global autism diagnosis rates, there is an overwhelming need for more accessibility options in the travel and entertainment industry.

Through the training and eventual certification with IBCCES, Dubai's leading entertainment, hospitality and travel facilities will become essential entities to furthering the initiative and create an accessible destination for people of determination.

“We want to ensure that all visitors have the best possible experience when visiting Dubai. We are proud to partner with IBCCES to provide staff training to equip Dubai's hospitality and entertainment teams with the tools and training needed to better serve people of determination, including those who are autistic or sensory-sensitive,” said **Issam Kazim**, CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce. ▶

New initiatives & approaches

Travel, tourism and hospitality leaders from the Middle East share initiatives to draw more business towards their destinations, showcasing their unique offerings that stand out against the rest.

“As we are about to enter 2023, it is imperative to focus on what the travellers seek from travel destinations, and Germany thrives on its narrative ‘Germany Simply Inspiring’, which was set in stone in 2017 and will continue to do so in the next year as well; this is aimed to further elevate Germany's positive image as a travel destination and its wide-ranging tourism experiences to a global audience. In the post-pandemic recovery phase, and against the backdrop of the transition to a more sustainable and more digital economy and society, the German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is relaunching ‘Germany Simply Inspiring’ as a new brand narrative that portrays Destination Germany as a champion of sustainable tourism.”



Yamina Soto
Director, German National Tourist Office (GNTO), the regional office of GNTB



Carol Maddison
Interim Deputy Director
VisitBritain

“The GCC is an important tourism market for Britain. We know there is pent-up demand for travel from the GCC and we want Britain to be the destination of choice. We also want to deliver a world-class welcome. The introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme for GCC visitors in 2023, alongside our strong airline and route connectivity, will make it even easier to visit the UK, boosting our competitive tourism offer to the region. We are also excited for launching a new marketing campaign across the GCC early next year, showcasing the reasons to choose Britain. We also continue to work closely with travel trade in market to convert the inspiration to visit Britain into bookings.”

Contd. on page 11 ▶

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To charge service fee or not?

Human interaction is an important asset in the field of travel, tourism and hospitality. However, COVID-19 changed the scenario when technology entered the arena; it started a whole new ball game, to pay for every service rendered. To charge service fee or not? It's a crucial, game-changing question on the mind of today's travel agents.

T Shehara Rizly

The pandemic taught us many lessons in life, one was that we should treat nature with utmost respect, the other that human interaction is imperative to go ahead in life. Those in isolation, realised this the hard way, families were separated for months, which turned to be almost years in this war against health of the human system.

Travellers from the Middle East plan their holidays with the travel agents, so that 24/7 access is provided for all their important inquiries. The travel trade in the Middle East has been instrumental in providing these services for many years. However, when technology entered the arena, it started a whole



Nasir Jamal Khan
Chief Executive Officer,
Al Naboodah Travel

new ball game, to pay for every service rendered, but at the end of the day when you try to cancel or rebook, you are charged. What travel agents carried out over such a long period of time, technology tried to sweep in and change it, and before the pandemic some were of the view that traditional travel agents, or whom we like to call as travel curators, would soon come to



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director
ATS Travel

an end, the pandemic brought everyone to their senses to understand the impact of human interference to better one's life.

If travellers are willing to pay for services offered online, could they not do the same for those who work 24/7 trying to coordinate and smooth things over to enjoy a hassle free vacation? In other industries everyone charg-

es a service fee, should this be the same in travel? **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel shares, "To fee or not to fee? It's a crucial, game-changing question on the mind of today's travel agents, and the answer is



Ayman Al Qudwa
Manager
Falcon Travel Qatar

an unequivocal "yes". Incorporating a service fees structure requires a well-conceived and easy-to-implement plan aimed

at explaining to existing and future clients why travel advisors deserve to be paid."

Saleem Sharif, Deputy Managing Director at ATS Travel, reiterates, "The kind of ser-



Arup Banik
Country Head
Shiji India & Middle East

vice we give our customers is something that clients do not get to experience anywhere in the world. We are unique. It's

got to do with the culture of the region, I guess. Post pandemic, the pricing model and the payment terms have changed to a greater extent in our industry. I am confident, this will continue in the future too - for our industry cannot suffer for eternity."

Ayman Al Qudwa, Manager, Falcon Travel Qatar explained, "Many companies operating in the sector and destinations have re-adjusted and developed their activities according to these changes." **Arup Banik**, Country Head at Shiji India & Middle East, states, "Travel has become more complicated with in-country & pre-departure requirements. Travellers also have an opportunity to experience the destination from the local's perspectives, get the latest information, and enjoy personalized services." ▶

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Sustainable Travel – are we ready?

With the increasing number of tourists opting for more sustainable and environmental friendly travel experiences, sustainability is going to be one of the most important core values for organisations across the world. It has been well established in trends, for example, a Google survey in 2021 revealed a 70 per cent rise in the number of people searching for sustainable travel options.

Sustainability is one of the most important core values for organisations across industries worldwide. The travel and tourism industry is no different, with the increasing number of tourists opting for more sustainable and environmentally friendly travel experiences. For example, a 2021 Google survey revealed a 70 per cent rise in the number of people searching for sustainable travel options. Additionally, a recent Booking.com study showed that 61 per cent travellers state that the COVID-19 pandemic has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future. The sustainable tourism market is also expected to grow considerably over the next decade. Recent research by Future Market Insights indicated that the sustainable tourism market is expected to reach a global value of US \$8.4 trillion by 2032.

Sustainable travel embraces a sense of responsibility towards local communities' environmental and socio-economic well-being. A recent report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that human-induced climate change is causing disruptions in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people globally.

Furthermore, the travel industry is also known to be one of the most significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions as well as an extensive energy user. The industry's negative impact has been a concern for years and consumers are now becoming more aware of how their travel choices affect the sustainability of the places they visit and the wider world. Understanding has grown around the enormous emis-

sions from air travel, the social harm from over-tourism, and the environmental destruction caused by the development of tourist infrastructure, including airports, hotels, and shopping destinations - especially in ecologically sensitive areas.

With heightened concern for the challenges associated

try stakeholders and wider influences impacting tourists' perceptions.

While the onus of travelling sustainably does fall on the shoulders of vacationers, the industry plays an important role in supporting these choices. For example, destinations and travel providers can play

ences such as encouraging visits to lesser known but equally important local sites rather than focusing on honeypots. Across the world there are unique examples of how different industry stakeholders have embraced sustainable approaches – Singapore's Jewel Changi, Copenhagen's Copenhill, and the recently completed Aile Est terminal at La Genève Internationale, Switzerland. Destination policymakers are also embracing strategies to educate stakeholders, such as local businesses, regarding the importance of sustainability. One example is the Dubai Sustainable Tourism initiative. The hospitality industry has also played a significant role in promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly travel. For example, hotels can avoid supplying mini toiletries such as creams in small plastic tubes, which go into the bin once they are over.

The travel industry is uniquely positioned to make a huge difference and support the global sustainability and net-zero agenda. As tourism has picked up after a nearly two-year gap, the sector can be a key ally through initiatives and creating practical solutions to travel activities that harm the environment and have a negative impact on local communities. 

Sustainable travel embraces a sense of responsibility towards local communities' environmental and socioeconomic well-being

with tourism, the question 'Are we ready for Sustainable Travel?' is often asked. There is no question that sustainable travel, or the motivation for sustainable travel, is at the forefront of many travellers' minds. Much of this originates from the actions by the indus-

a key role in making sustainable travel more accessible. Examples include, encouraging sustainable forms of transport, promoting ethical consumption and how to engage with local communities positively, and clearly marketing to tourists' sustainable tourism experi-

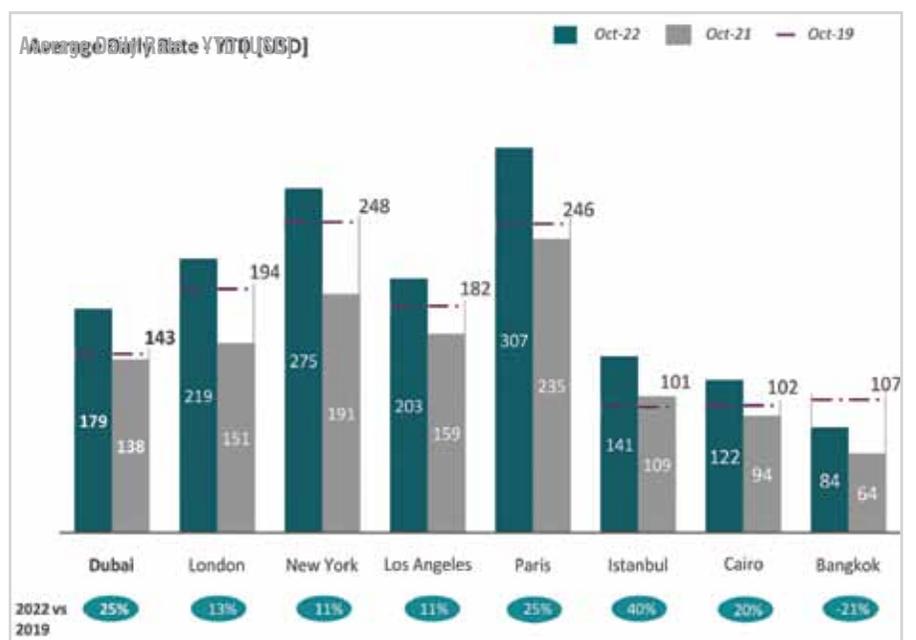


Dr Sean Lochrie
Assistant Professor at the School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt University Dubai

(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

Dubai gets 11 mn int'l visitors in 10 months

Data showed that Dubai welcomed 11.4 million international overnight visitors between January and October, an impressive year on year increase of 134 per cent, taking the city further on its journey to becoming the world's most visited destination. The trend represented a quantum leap over the 4.88 million visitors that the city welcomed for the same period in 2021.



High expectations from New Year

“For 2023, we expect the growth trajectory of Aleph Hospitality to continue in the Middle East and Africa. Leads, generated through word of mouth and Aleph’s extensive regional network, are currently being negotiated in markets like South Africa, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Ghana and the Maldives. We have already entered key target markets in the Middle East. Aleph operates a hotel in Doha and has advanced discussions underway across the UAE, in places such as Ras Al Khaimah, as well as in Saudi Arabia where giga projects are key targets.”



Ittikhar Hamdani
Area General Manager – Northern Emirates
Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel

“With 2023 just around the corner, we continue to see progress as the global appetite for leisure & business travel is at its highest point as we witnessed highest occupancy in 2022. In my opinion, tourism’s outlook in 2023 appears to be strong as we approach the new year. Looking ahead, people who wants to travel for sustainability and responsible tourism also be the key to travel recovery. Through the last few years, we have seen sustainability emerge as a growing travel theme as consumers want to live more sustainably and carry through on that desire when it comes to how they travel.”



Bani Haddad
Founder & Managing Director
Aleph Hospitality

“In 2023, I expect wellness and adventure tourism to grow in the Middle East. Wellness goes hand in hand with the region’s world-leading luxury hospitality offering. And while adventure is still a relatively small market for the Gulf, it has tremendous potential – particularly in Saudi Arabia, where destinations such as AlUla and the Red Sea Project look set to offer truly unique visitor experiences. On a broader level, sustainability will be a key factor, as airlines, hotels, attractions and F&B venues work to re-double contributions to decarbonisation targets.”



Jaill Mekour
Founder & CEO
inHovate Solutions

“Our industry has shown incredible resilience in what was the most tragic time for travel and hospitality in decades. With the need for fast recovery post pandemic and tackling challenges like manpower shortages and increased competition, it’s critical to rethink the way hospitality businesses are operated and invested into. This includes looking at how we can use technology to streamline operations and optimize productivity and financial performance, hence maximizing Return on Investment. At inHovate, we see the intelligent use of data as the answer.”



Danielle Curtis
Exhibition Director ME
Arabian Travel Market

“After an incredibly strong 2022 with record growth, we fully expect 2023 to show continued progress for Hudini. With over 60 per cent of hotel executives looking to introduce a fully contactless experience by 2025, we are witnessing unprecedented demand for our solutions, designed to transform the hotel guest experience. The pandemic has not just accelerated the demand for contactless technology, but caused a significant shift in mindset when it comes to digital transformation.”



Taghrid Al Saeed
Executive Director of Group Communications & Destination Marketing, Miral

“The travel industry is well on the road to recovery and we expect both domestic and international hospitality to surpass pre-pandemic visitation numbers in 2023, as Yas Island saw a 90 per cent hotel occupancy rate this summer. This uplift will continue until 2030 when 23 million annual tourists are expected to visit Abu Dhabi. While we have seen an emphasis on leisure tourism, we have identified the business tourism segment as a major travel trend and so we established the Abu Dhabi Convention & Exhibition Bureau and Miral Joint Business Event Fund.”



Prince Thampi
Founder & CEO
Hudini

“As we look ahead to 2023, there are three trends that I feel will dominate the hospitality industry in 2023, value, technology and sustainability. We are experiencing a shift away from large traditional luxury hotels to more accessible, sustainable, and value-led options. Millennials with Alpha kids and Gen Z travellers are part of a new dynamic, looking for compact, well-located hotels with a blend of personal service and seamless connectivity, that digitalises their experience from making an online reservation to check out. This demographic travels more often, but for shorter stays, so affordability is also a major consideration. Sustainability is another significant trend.”



Ahmed Kamal
General Manager
Ajman Saray, a Luxury Collection Resort

“The city of Ajman has witnessed a significant growth in the hospitality sector in recent years and Ajman Saray, a Luxury Collection, has been at the forefront. Curating unique, luxurious and authentic experiences that evoke lasting and treasured memories is what we are known for and we will continue to go above and beyond the usual, to stay true to our brand promise. Ajman Saray is a renowned vibrant dining destination and has already set the bar high in the Northern Emirates. We aim to continue creating elevated and innovative epicurean moments for our international and local residences alike. From a travel perspective, we will continue taking a proactive approach to ensure we stay ahead of the game.”

“2023 will be the year of local discovery; travellers seeking more authentic experiences that immerse them in the true spirit of their destination. Globetrotters will be on the hunt of hidden gems, uncommon trails, and local flavours that capture the essence of the city they’re visiting, away from mass tourism attractions. This is why Lokalee is expanding its network of local heroes to offer truly exceptional itineraries and recommendations for travellers, bringing them unique experiences that take their exploration journey from touristic to authentic. The 2023 wanderer will be hunting authenticity, and Lokalee will be there to deliver.”



Daniel Rosado Bayón
Director – Spain Tourism Office
Tourism Counsellor GCC

“There are several ongoing trends moving forward into the New Year. We expect demand to continue high, at the same time the tourism sector strives to cope up with the continued surge. By summer 2023, we will reach a more balanced situation, but it will still be uneven in sectors such as aviation. Prices will continue on the high side. We must highlight the increasing importance sustainability, as awareness increases visitors’ search for less carbon footprint, with zero-kilometre food and immersive food experiences, experiencing the real culture and people of the places visited. There is a rise of countries encouraging digital nomads through visas and incentives.”



Samir Abi Frem
Chief Executive Officer
Lokalee

“The pandemic is now behind us and people are now travelling a lot, as ‘revenge tourism’ is today’s new normal. The future of aviation, especially in our region, looks very promising and a testimony is the United Arab Emirates’ BSP data, which by November 2022, already reached 93 per cent of 2019. The global passenger demand is also expected to reach 85 per cent of 2019 in 2023, from an estimation of 70 per cent in 2022. These are all encouraging factors for the industry, especially with IATA anticipating that airlines will post a small net profit of \$4.7 billion, which is the first profit since 2019.”



Nasir Jamal Khan
Chief Executive Officer
Al Naboodah Travel

“Travel and Tourism industry has shown itself to be remarkably resilient, resourceful, and innovative it is continuing to bounce back from the pandemic, and, despite all the hurdles we face, I believe 2023 will see a strong revival in fortunes. It’s very important that everybody understands how fragile the recovery is. The global tourism arrivals will increase by 30 per cent in 2023, following growth of 60 per cent in 2022. The UAE has also launched its National Tourism Strategy 2031 which targets acquiring \$27bn investment with the aim of welcoming 40 million guests in a year, which, in turn, is expected to raise the industry’s contribution towards the GDP.”



Mohamed Awadalla
Chief Executive Officer
TIME Hotels



Shahzad Naqvi
Country Manager
Oman Air

Germany eyes GCC medical tourists

Germany conducts a special webinar 'Feel Good Germany' to promote the destination as an year-round sustainable touristic destination and also showcases Berlin's strength in medical tourism. **Yamina Sofu**, Director, German National Tourist Office, shares the numbers from the Gulf region, which stands out, especially during the COVID era.

TT Bureau

Germany is promoting itself as an year-round sustainable touristic destination and also showcasing Berlin's strength in medical tourism. "Germany as a traveller destination has the ideal ingredients for an exceptional and sustainable holiday experience and it also helps to protect our climate and the environment," said Yamina Sofu, Director, German National Tourist Office (GNTO).

"A sustainable holiday conserves natural resources, strengthens intercultural understanding and supports regional businesses. Germany is committed to this goal and is developing an increasing number of resource saving offers that are good for the environment, as well as for the hosts and the guests. Many



Yamina Sofu
Director, German National Tourist Office

offers and recommendations can be found in our website, Germany.travel. In our 2022 market studies we can see the growing interest and attitudes of the guests towards environmental protection," she added. She also shared some figures from the UAE in terms of the interest shown in sustainable travel.

Michaela Kehrler, Director, Medical Tourism, VisitBerlin, shared the offerings the city has



Michaela Kehrler
Director, Medical Tourism, VisitBerlin

for the GCC clientele. She reiterated that Berlin medical tourism is popular due to availability, affordability and accessibility and Germany ranks 5th in the world medical tourism destinations, mainly due to infrastructure, specialised hospitals, with multi lingual staff, who could cater to the requirements of the GCC clientele. She shared the new marketing initiatives conducted to promote Berlin as a medical touristic destination with 29

medical facilities. She concluded saying that all relevant information is in the website, www.berlin-health-excellence.com, which is currently available in six different languages.

National and international experts work in Berlin, their expertise encompassing virtually the entire spectrum of medical treatment. Patients from all over the

Berlin medical tourism is popular due to availability, affordability and accessibility and Germany ranks 5th in the world medical tourism destinations

world put their trust in Berlin's hospitals and physicians. The number of international patients has risen by 15 per cent since

2012 and before the pandemic between 17,000 and 21,000 patients were coming to Berlin for check-ups, receive medical treatment or rehabilitation. Many hospitals and clinics in Berlin have adapted themselves to the needs of the patients from abroad. They offer multilingual service with the help of their international staff and run an international office in order to provide the patient with a most pleasant medical stay. Several hospitals feature comfort wards where the international patient is being offered greater privacy in single and double rooms. ▶



Emirates' USP: Unique flight experiences

Being in the forefront of aviation, Emirates airline continues to provide customers a seamless onboard experience. Their commitment to accessibility, sustainability and unique flight experience make them the leader in the region. **Adil Al Ghaith**, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East and Central Asia, shares plans for the New Year with **TRAVTALK**.

Shehara Rizly

What will be the focus of Emirates this year in terms of new products onboard?

Our overall focus for 2023 will continue to be our Premium Economy experience as we begin rolling it out to more cities. Premium Economy has proved hugely popular with cabins fully booked up. Since we began selling Premium Economy in August 2022, we have seen many of our Economy Class customers trading up to fly this cabin, and the feedback so far has been fantastic.

We will also continue to build on the commitment we made in 2022 to invest US \$2 billion in the inflight customer

experience across all cabins, including dining and service enhancements, onboard amenities underpinned by sustainability, rolling out more cabin upgrades and integrating new digital initiatives both in the air and on the ground to ensure we continue to provide an unrivalled customer proposition.

How do you cater to travellers with accessibility issues?

Emirates works hard to make air travel as comfortable and as seamless as possible for all our customers, including those with special needs and disabilities. We regularly listen to and review feedback from our customers, employees and advocacy groups, and we are on our own journey in taking a joined-up approach with our partners within



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

the aviation and travel ecosystem to develop improved services and solutions and provide the consistency that travellers with disabilities expect.

All of our current projects in place as well as future initiatives around accessibility ladder back to Dubai's aim in becoming one of the world's most accessible

cities for People of Determination. For more information, visit: <https://www.emirates.com/ae/english/before-you-fly/health/accessible-travel/>

Would you be able to share the new platforms or services to be introduced to generate seamless travel for customers and how partner travel agencies could assist in ensuring that this would go further?

Throughout the last few years, we've been further strengthening our customer focus by developing products and services based on key insights and travel trends. We've meticulously mapped out the pain points across the customer journey and doubled down to ensure a frictionless experience, introducing initiatives like our

'biometric path' for an entirely contactless airport experience, technology driven services like self-check in and bag drop kiosks, mobile check-in ports, remote check in facilities in Ajman with more to be added in 2023, amongst other ini-

tiatives to facilitate pilot projects like a robot check-in agent that leverages facial recognition to interact with customers, as well as a robot waiter to serve passengers in our airport lounges. All of these pilot projects aim to deliver seamless experiences to

We will continue to build on the commitment we made in 2022 to invest US \$2 bn in inflight customer experience across all cabins

tiatives. In 2023, we'll continue advancing these initiatives and exploring new cutting-edge technologies like robotics, artificial intelligence and automation. We recently signed an MoU with the Dubai Future Founda-

our customers, in line with our world-class proposition as an airline and as a destination, to ensure our trade agency partners have more unique selling points for Emirates when engaging with travellers. ▶

Experts' take on China biz

Chinese market is one of the key source markets, and the UAE maybe the first destinations to receive the Chinese visitors whenever China allows travel. A few experts speak their mind on the issue.

“ At SLS Dubai, we fully understand that we need to stay relevant to stay attractive for this generation. Gen Z travellers are set to change the consumer travel pattern, that's why understanding their travel behaviour is crucial. Gen Z like change and fresh new concepts – as a brand, at SLS we are always coming up with new ways to be able to surprise guests and bring them unique experiences. We'll continue to take this approach.”



Tamara Loeffel
Head of Business Development
Graubunden Tourism Board

“ Upon the quarantine policy, currently international arrivals have been cut to 5 days in a designated quarantine facility, plus 3 days of home isolation. Since 7th December, strong rumours have been circulating that China's inbound quarantine will shift to a 2+3 model later in December, and be further reduced to 0+3 in January. That's correct, it appears that the Chinese government is taking a step-by-step approach to opening borders.”



Spencer Wadama
General Manager
SLS Hotel and Residences

“ The whole world is waiting to receive Chinese Travellers. Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, more than 154 million Chinese tourists travelled the world. And today the world is feeling the pinch of this shortfall. Our DMC partners in China are optimistic that outbound tourism will start by Q2 of 2023. They have already sought our rates. I don't think tourism from China will be in the same scale of what we used to see prior to 2020, at least till next year.”



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director
ATS Travel

Dubai for accessible tourism

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum has launched 'Dubai Team for Accessible Travel and Tourism' to promote the emirate as a round-the-year destination accessible to all.

TT Bureau

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group recently launched Dubai Team for Accessible Travel and Tourism as part of the endeavours to consolidate the emirate's global standing as round-the-year destination accessible to all. He unveiled the decision during a meeting with senior officials from government agencies and private organisations dealing with travel and tourism businesses.

His Excellency Jamal Al Hai, Deputy CEO at Dubai Airports and Team Leader, expressed deep appreciation for the support provided by His Highness Sheikh Ahmed to the travel and tourism industry in Dubai. He said: "Accessible



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

tourism is an important sector for our national economy as well as helps promote the rights of People of Determination to move around and travel without hassles and obstacles. The Dubai team will work to offer a good image of the UAE to the world as a pioneering tourism with hospitality services for all visitors being of the best in class."

The senior Emirati official called upon the team members, each expert in their fields, to jointly work

to advice on improvements at airports, airlines, hotels, shopping centres and other touristic places to provide the best services for tourists with disabilities.

Ghassan Suleiman Amhaz, Team's General-Coordinator, said that the number of People of Determination has reached about one billion, or the equivalent of 10-15 per cent of the total population in the world. The World Health Organization has called them an important segment of society that pumps hundreds of billions of dollars annually into the global economy through the travel and tourism streams. He said that the number of Tourists of Determination has reached about 150 million annually, who look to travel and visit cities and other destinations. According to the European Network for Accessible Tourism estimates, the volume of lost opportunities for the global economy stands at 142 billion euros. ▶



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Tatarstan tourism enhances its footprint

Al Rais Travel hosted more than 80 agents from the UAE to create awareness about the beautiful destination of Tatarstan. **Sergey Ivanov**, Chairman, State Committee on Tourism of the Republic of Tatarstan, and team from Persona Grata DMC in Tatarstan attended the inaugural session and interacted with the agents.



Tatarstan calls on trade

More than 80 leading agents from the UAE attended the first ever presentation over the Land of 1001 Delights, organised recently in Dubai by Al Rais Travel, along with **TRAVEL TALK** as the media partner.

TT Bureau

The event kicked off with **Mathew Zachariah**, Marketing Manager of Al Rais Travel, welcoming all the agents from the UAE for taking time off their busy schedules to discover a new destination, which could be shared among their clients for the next year. He introduced **Sergey Ivanov**, Chairman, State Committee on Tourism of the Republic of Tatarstan, to start off the presentation about the destination, known as the Land of 1001 Delights. The agents were kept glued to their seats as the presentation included some amazing places, attractions, and hotels that visitors from the UAE will enjoy. Ivanov said, "Middle East is a very important market for us, especially with the bilateral ties between the two countries, now we are here in the UAE after making



ter both Kazan and Tatarstan, expats do need to get a visa, it is much cheaper and can be processed at the Russian consulate within a very short period of time. We have a vast range of places to visit, we are number 3 in Russia in terms of city development, especially for tourists, it's an ideal place

available as part of Tatarstan follow Islam."

Ilia Raevskii, Vice-consul of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Dubai and Northern Emirates, reiterated, that the visa process is simple and can be obtained early. He further explained the documents needed for the expats and mentioned that for Indian expats it's much easier to obtain the visa from the consulate. The crowd was astonished when he mentioned that if you go early to the consulate to hand over the documents the better chance of obtaining the visa at a much faster time.

Next it was time to learn from **Mohamed Jassim Al Rais**, Deputy Managing Director, Al Rais Travel, about the experiences of visiting and exploring Tatarstan. He mentioned that as Emiratis,

destination can be promoted to their clientele. "Tatarstan has a lot to offer our travellers from the UAE, from historical wonders, to traditional locations, natural beauty of the destination with its many rivers, lakes, hills and not forgetting the culinary journey to be explored. We want our agents from the UAE to familiarise themselves with the destination and personally speak with the team from Tatarstan about every aspect necessary for their travellers today."

Speaking with travel agents, **Alan Torres Orong**, Travel Manager, South Travels DMCC, shared, "Every time a new destination is being introduced in the Middle East market, it's always a refreshing idea and exciting to embrace when you know that you have something unique to offer to the customers. With the roadshow being

We (Tatarstan) have a vast range of places to visit, we are number 3 in Russia in terms of city development, especially for tourists

sure that we have the necessary infrastructure to welcome visitors from the UAE to discover and explore our beautiful destination, both locals and expats. For locals in the UAE, they don't require a visa to en-

to spend their vacation with the family, especially the children have many areas to play from forests to parks, for those who need to shop, we cater to them and food wise halal certified restaurants and food is



We want our agents from the UAE to familiarise themselves with the destination and personally speak with the team about every aspect

how they look for places that are unique where the distance to walk is less, but more to explore and discover, and he mentioned the word safe several times, and suggested that it is a destination suited both for locals and expats, hence to speak with the partners at the event and see how the

held for us, travel partners, it's a huge advantage to understand the new destination well and to meet potential partners; and at the same time, to give way the Tatarstan Tourism Board to shake hands with the travel agents in the UAE for a fruitful business collaboration." **D**

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Cameron Highland's

Dream Bubble-Domes Glamping



Photo credits: A'Moss Farmstay

A'Moss Farmstay is an ideal getaway for couples who wish to spend time in solitude and quiet of nature

T T Bureau

Have you ever heard of Farmstay? It is ideal for a lone-ranger or lovely couple who desire to spend time in the solitude and quiet of nature. A'Moss Farmstay, popularly known as dreamy bubble domes, is a farmstay located in Cameron Highlands, Brinchang. Ee Feng Gu Bee Farm is a few minutes drive away, whereas Boh Tea Plantation is 28 km away from A'moss Farmstay. The nearest airport is Sultan Azlan Shah Airport in Ipoh, Perak, which is 35 minutes away from the lodging itself.



These domes are ideal for a romantic getaway with outstanding views such as marveling at spectacular sunrises and sunsets, sipping a hot drink with a

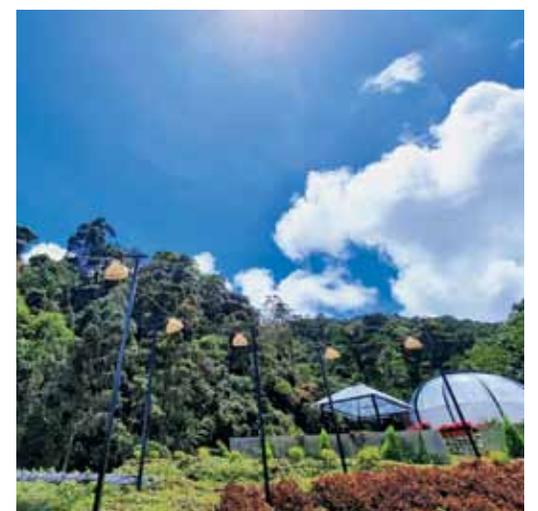
loved one beneath a gorgeous starry sky, and even savouring Mount Yong Belar's majestic perspective. A'Moss Farmstay is situated near the Boh Tea Plantation,

where it is largely bordered by woods, a cabbage farm and tea plantation.

Since it is located on the outskirts of the Mossy Forest, it may be very chilly at night. Therefore, don't forget to pack spare sweaters and socks for those who can't tolerate the cold. For people who wish to obtain more understanding about farming, this is the best spot for you.

A'Moss Farmstay comprises a total of three domes with basic utilities such as fan, kettle, and mug, of course, undoubtedly you will appreciate the scenic-view outside through the transparent wall. Each dome has one separate toilet and it's placed simply two steps from your bubbling dome, and don't worry,

A'Moss Farmstay comprises a total of three domes with basic utilities such as fan, kettle, and mug. And each dome has a separate toilet



you won't die from the cold, because they provide shower with heater.

Yet, each dome also has its own open space for you to rest, stargaze and even do steamboat! It's a necessity to eat your meal while staring out at the magnificent scenery! You might be wondering how about the privacy? Well, in terms of privacy, there are heavy drapes that totally cover the transparent wall

fully, remember, safety comes first peeps.

Aside from farm tours, they also offer a Mossy Forest tour for visitors who wish to hike or you may ride a 4x4 vehicle service, which is offered by the Farmstay itself. This gorgeous bubble domes glamping definitely recommended for those who wish to be close with nature without sleeping in a typical hotel or tent! 



'Innovative approach to drive business'

“Turespaña is always taking an innovative approach to market the destination. For 2023, we expect to come back with amazing events, such as presentations and roadshows with a Spanish touch that showcases through the senses the experiences awaiting in Spain. Some of this will also be shared with the public in an amazing B2C experience. Gastronomy and Spanish art and culture will also be showcased, along with specific products such as sports or wine, for immersive experiences.”



Nasir Jamal Khan
Chief Executive Officer
Al Naboodah Travel

“As travel and tourism is rebounding globally, especially in the leisure sector, hotel owners will be more conscious than ever of fluctuations in occupancy rates and costs. I believe that flexibility is paramount to protect assets and that the ability to adapt quickly will be key to financial growth for investors. I predict a continued interest in the benefits of independent hotel management, particularly in conversion projects. The hospitality sector in Saudi Arabia is developing at an incredible pace.”



Nikkie Singh
Senior Vice President
Shiji APAC/ Middle East

“The pandemic has ushered a new era for the global hospitality industry. Hotels and tourism establishments have suffered great losses over the past two years, but things are gradually picking up. Digitization has become a powerful tool that hotels can leverage to stand out from the crowd, and offer a truly distinguished hospitality experience to guests. Not only does our AI-powered app provide unique local content to guests, it also offers hotels an innovative channel for ancillary revenue.”



Diana Kornilakis
General Manager
Tilal Liwa Hotel

“This 2023, Tilal Liwa is keen to reach guests and introduce the beauty of the property. We are such a unique destination with unique experiences to offer that are incomparable to other destinations. As we recognized the rise of the digital age, we have been proactive in social media and other media platforms whilst remaining active in other channels where we can reach our guests. It is our goal to create an unparalleled experience and make sure that our guests are aware of it.”

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

“As 2022 winds down and 2023 countdown begins, it is very important to identify what will be the key trends for travel and tourism industry. Travel sales are pacing more than 47 per cent higher in 2023 than in 2019, and that was a highwater year for travel. Travellers are ready and willing to spend more in 2023 to discover new experiences and share them with family and friends. Key trend is travellers don't want the holiday to stop on a Monday morning, but to work where they could holiday too.”



Daniel Rosado Bayón
Director - Spain Tourism Office
Tourism Counsellor GCC



Bani Haddad
Managing Director & Founder
Aleph Hospitality

“As the world is only now beginning to recover from the pandemic that swept the entire planet, many people will place a high priority on their health and wellbeing. Because of the rise in costs, travelers are more conscious of their budgets when they are making plans for their trips. In the year 2023, marketing campaigns that reward loyal customers, extend all-inclusive holiday packages, and promote mental and physical health are likely to be successful in attracting travellers.”



Samir Abi Frem
Chief Executive Officer
Lokalee

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Sustainable LUXURY

COURCHEVEL The much-loved ski-resort for ME visitors

Alexia Laine, Acting Director, Courchevel Tourism, shares with **INSIDER TALK**, the ski destination which over the years has become a firm favourite among the UAE and Saudi Arabian travellers. Since the Middle East is a key source market for Courchevel Tourism, Laine also talks about what makes them a family oriented unique destination, most suited for the clientele from the region.

 Shehara Rizly

How important is the Middle East or GCC market for Courchevel?

The Middle East is an extremely important market for Courchevel, and we are thrilled to welcome increasing numbers of skiers and non-skiers from across the region year on year. There are many elements that come together to make Courchevel a firm favourite among the region's travellers, not least its reputation for the high-quality and consistency of its snow, the versatility of its terrain and its enviably glamorous feel – with over 16 per cent of all international visitors in the 2021/ 2022 season coming from the Middle East, a large proportion of which – 10.5 per cent – come from the UAE, followed by 2.7 per cent from Saudi Arabia.

How do you define luxury at Courchevel?

Courchevel is first and foremost a ski resort, a winter wonderland in the heart of the Alps. It forms part of Les Trois Vallées (The Three Valleys) – the largest lift-linked ski area in the world – which encompasses some 600km of slopes, with over 180

green-blue ski runs and 140-plus red-black runs.

Courchevel itself is made up of six linked villages and 150km of majestic, impeccably groomed



Alexia Laine
Acting Director of Courchevel Tourism shares

slopes set against a backdrop of incredible mountain scenery. A mix of green, blue, red and black runs and a family-focused snow park ensure that the resort offers something for all ages and

There are many elements that make Courchevel a firm favourite among the region's travellers, not least its reputation for high-quality features

abilities, while a seamless and speedy lift system makes navigating the area simple - combined with a unique French 'Art

de vivre', has enabled Courchevel to attract a broad range of international clientele.

While it is fair to say that the villages provide a wealth of choice when it comes to accommodation and dining, the exceptional quality and concentration of refined luxury offerings has helped Courchevel to carve out an incomparable position and secured the resort's credentials as one of the finest skiing destinations on the planet and a true bucket list destination.

In terms of luxury accommodation, Courchevel offers the whole spectrum – from cosy mountain chalets with glacier views and sleek, stylish apartments to high-end global and boutique hotel brands – and

we are proud to be home to five hotels that have achieved the supreme distinction of being accepted into the select fold of



French hotels with the right to call themselves a palace.

Courchevel's reputation for gastronomy is also world renowned, with plenty for the discerning foodie to enjoy too!

Are there specialized offerings or experiences more suited for GCC/ ME travellers?

On the practical side, having welcomed visitors from the Middle East for many years now, the various establishments in Courchevel are well versed in catering to the specific needs of travelers from the Middle East, whether it be providing Halal

menus or tailoring individual activities. Ultimately, the reason people come to Courchevel from the Middle East is the same that people come from the rest of the world, and that's to experience its sheer beauty and experience its unrivalled amenities mean there is always something to do for the whole family.

What will be your marketing initiatives to work with travel agents/ travel curators from the Middle East?

We had a really successful visit to the region back in November, visiting trade in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and we plan

to repeat this annually moving forwards to take in different cities, different countries. We were blown away with the response and it has further reinforced the important role that the region plays in our long-term plans, as well as providing some valuable insights which we will look to incorporate into our future plans. Looking ahead, we will continue to host an annual roadshow each year ahead of the new season, with a series of meetings and immersive events, culminating with a special gala dinner. We find this face-to-face approach works particularly well in the Middle East. 

Lunar experience in Dubai

Dubai will once again wow the world with its latest project, Moon World Resorts, which will introduce a new experience to the visitors, says **Michael R Henderson**, Co-Founder, Moon Resorts.

T Shehara Rizly

Could you share about the Moon World Resorts?

MOON is a contemporary, fully integrated, luxurious, technology driven, unique Destination Resort. MOON will be constructed to a LEED Gold five-star standard and operated at a five diamond level.



MOON will adhere to the highest global standards of environmental stewardship! MOON will welcome 10m+ annual guests, 2.5m of

whom will be able to visit MOON's signature attraction.

What is unique about the destination?

Within MOON one will find a huge array of components which will integrate to deliver a seemingly never ending journey of discovery. MOON's "signature attraction"

will enable guests to experience walking on the lunar surface while exploring a vast working lunar colony. An amazing, out of this

world attraction, MOON will form the "bridge" delivering an affordable and entirely authentic space tourism experience millions of enthusiasts around planet earth have been patiently waiting for; a chance to actually "participate". MOON touches on hospitality, entertainment, attractions, education, technology, the environment and of course space tourism. MOON's focus is on leading edge Architecture, Engineering, Design and Technology. MOON will also be an authentic training platform for various space agencies and their respective Astronauts. MOON will incorporate boutique "Sky Villas" known as "The Private Residence at MOON". These luxury units will be housed internally within the main superstructure disc buildings. Approximately 300 units will be available for purchase. Sky Villa owners will be members of the exclusive Private Members Club at MOON.

Sindalah, the luxury island

His Royal Highness **Mohammed bin Salman**, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Chairman of the NEOM Company Board of Directors, announces the first luxury island destination in NEOM.

T TT Bureau

A main gateway to the Red Sea offering bespoke nautical experiences, Sindalah is expected to start welcoming guests to enjoy its exquisite facilities and exclusive offerings from early 2024. It is anticipated that the development will create 3,500 jobs for the tourism sector and hospitality and leisure services. Extending over an area of approximately 840,000 square meters, Sindalah, is one of a group of islands that will be developed in NEOM, each according to its unique vision and design.

His Royal Highness said: "This is another significant moment for NEOM and a major step in the Kingdom realizing its tourism ambitions under Vision 2030. Sindalah will be NEOM's first luxury island and yacht club destination in the Red Sea, providing

a scenic gateway to the Red Sea that will become the region's most exciting and attractive tourism location. It will be a destination where travelers can experience the

marina, an ideal destination for accommodating luxury vessels, while offshore buoys will house superyachts. Providing one-of-a-kind nautical experiences, Sindalah



true beauty of NEOM and Saudi Arabia, above and below the water, making Sindalah the future of luxury travel."

Adding to NEOM's tourism offerings, Sindalah will reshape the luxury international yachting calendar offering a new season for guests to enjoy. It will feature an 86-berth

will offer 413 ultra-premium hotel rooms, in addition to 333 top-end serviced apartments. A luxe beach club, glamorous yacht club, and 38 unique culinary offerings will provide an incomparable experience in the Red Sea. It has an array of amenities, state-of-the-art marine facilities, strategic location and natural landscapes.

A new world of luxury

Luxury is a way of life for the Middle Eastern traveller. However, it exceeded its limits during the time of the pandemic taking a whole new outlook. **TRAVELTALK** speaks to half-a-dozen leaders from the industry to know how the luxury travel industry has shaped up in the recent years and what do they think about the industry's future.

"The luxury travel industry has experienced a huge transformation over the years. It has not only grown in size, as now we are seeing four generation of travellers seeking for premium experiences, but also we are watching a change in the trends of services and experiences. The sector is shifting as people are not any longer just looking for a room with a view, but rather an exclusive and personalised holiday."



Daniel Rosado Bayón
Director - Spain Tourism Office
Tourism Counsellor GCC



Spencer Wadama
General Manager
SLS Hotel and Residences

"I believe we are now at the stage where we are returning to normality and luxury travel today is becoming similar to the pre-covid era. I think the main difference is the awareness of hygiene amongst travellers. Guests are much more appreciative of, and are actively looking for, properties and brands that maintain high levels of hygiene standards. We also need to stay relevant to Generation Z."

"How has luxury travel evolved in the post COVID era? ATS Travel has traditionally been a travel management company that catered to luxury travel for the past 45 years. This profile has helped us tap into this market segment further after the pandemic stuck. We have found the trend to book luxury travel has grown manifold. More and more people want bespoke, luxury hotels and private tours."



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director
ATS Travel



Ahmed Abdrahoh
Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing
Fairmont Dubai | Fairmont Ajman | Fairmont Fujairah
Beach Resort

"COVID-19 has caused a surge in consumer travel patterns in the luxury travel industry. This includes a surge in high-end private aviation services, remote business from other countries, and interest in private acquisitions of expansive villas or upscale hotels. Despite the popularity of luxury travel, an increasing number of wealthy customers are choosing ethical consumption over obvious shows of wealth."

"Dubai's hospitality industry is set to grow exponentially due to plenty of hotel openings. Innovative hospitality projects, theme parks, and medical tourism are a few of the catalysts that would support the hospitality industry to thrive in future, as will the influx of tourists from Expo 2020. The hospitality industry in Dubai is showing signs of quick recovery, and we expect pre-COVID numbers to return by 2023."



George El Hawi
Sales Director
Grand Millennium Dubai Barsha Heights



Deepak Rajawat
Chief Commercial Officer
Vistara

"Travel, over the years, has come to mean a lot more than just going from one place to another and has become more about the overall experience. Travellers, today, are increasingly looking for enhanced comfort and joy while travelling, even if it comes at a marginal extra cost. We have also witnessed a preference for holidays that offer wellness elements and immersive experiences."

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

MEBAA show focuses on future of aviation

Business aviation leaders from more than 95 countries participated in the 9th edition of MEBAA Show, which concluded in Dubai recently. During the show, they connected with exhibitors. Key themes for the event included future aviation with a focus on digitalization, block chain, AI and crypto based payment.



UAE hackathon taps tourism talent

In keeping with the UAE's national tourism strategy to include human capital as an important pillar in the nation's development, the tourism arm of the ministry of economy conducted a hackathon, which gave the youth an opportunity to share their novel ideas and be part of the tourism sector.



Tourism demand to increase this year

“One of the most exciting aspects of the hospitality industry is how fluid it is, in the way it responds to what is happening in both local and global markets, and to the shifting consumer expectations that influence them. The UAE tourism industry experienced a significant boom after Expo 2020, and now we are seeing the positive effects of FIFA World Cup 2022, with hotel rooms in high demand despite an increase in proaches in 2023, tourism in Dubai should continue to see an upward trend this year as well, supported by the growing confidence among travellers and the industry.”



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director
ATS Travel

“We have just concluded our budgeting exercise for 2023 and our BU heads have projected aggressive numbers for next year. We hope to achieve revenues higher than what we have achieved in the past several years. Our “dipstick survey” with a large spectrum of our customers has sown a result that business travel is set to grow further in 2023. And so is the MICE business too. We have found, about 62 per cent of our corporate customers have amended their travel policy towards last quarter of 2023, paving the way to more business travel in 2023.”



Kirti Anchan
General Manager
Jumeirah Emirates Towers

“For some time now tourism destinations have been slowly taking the topic of ‘sustainable tourism’ more seriously and during 2022 we saw an acceleration of this, meaning 2023 could be a tipping point. This is in part being driven by increased consumer awareness of sustainability issues, and thus demanding higher standards. But equally destinations are starting to ask themselves about the economic contribution of the visitors versus their environmental impact, so that they can target those that offer them the most sustainable tourism model overall.”



Nikkie Singh
Senior Vice President
Shiji APAC, Middle East

“In spite of the fact that many nations will not open their doors to tourists from other parts of the world and the global economy will continue to be unstable, the number of people travelling will increase significantly in 2023. The decision-making process for travellers is heavily influenced by considerations regarding their health, convenience, safety, and flexibility. Many people also look for environmentally friendly travel options, such as places to stay, things to do, and restaurants. The provision of a personalised experience for guests remains an indispensable requirement.”



Carlos Cendra Cruz
Director of Marketing & Sales
Mabrian

“In 2023, Maldives’ tourism mechanism specifically on island resorts must focus on travel advisors. As the world continuously evolves nowadays and so with its people becoming practical and wise. The travel agent/ operators in alliance with a certain resort are who the travellers need as they decide to explore the island they want to know. With the knowledge that the agent has regarding everything the tourists desire to know about the island, the tourists will be guided to arrive at the best decision based on their goal of visiting the destination.”



Mikel Ibrahim
General Manager
Mondrian Doha

“The whole world was watching Qatar last year with the World Cup being hosted right on our doorstep here at Mondrian Doha. Viewers have seen how much Qatar has to offer with our growing cultural scene, traditional authentic experiences, a range of attractions to suit all types of travellers and our warm and welcoming hospitality. Following on from this momentous event, we are expecting a substantial boost in tourism interest and a host of opportunities brought into the city, not just for Mondrian but for Doha as a destination.”



Hassan Adil
General Manager
Sun Siyam Olhuveli

“In 2023, travel is set to rise exponentially in the Middle East in this post pandemic environment we see ourselves in. Dubai is the epicentre of this travel as it continues to grow amongst tourists as a place to be for leisure, rebounding business travel and entertainment. Important to add that luxury travel is on the rise as well, with younger travellers willing to splurge on their high-end holidays and experiences. The Dubai hospitality landscape only continues to grow with the openings of new properties, culinary destinations and must visit tourist attractions which draw tourism traffic into the city.”



Alex Barros
Chief Marketing & Innovation Officer
BeonX

“In 2023 the Hospitality industry must departure from room revenue to holistic experiences, changing the focus from RevPAR and occupancy rates metrics and instead adopt “total sustainable profitability” opportunities as the future of hospitality is about so much more than just rooms. Following a ‘revenue-per-available-guest’ (RevPAG) concept that looks at the full lifecycle of the traveller journey and explores new non-room revenue streams is the way forward. This could include co-working spaces, enhanced digital services or subscriptions, selling of in-destination activities, and use of retail spaces – as well as better use of all the on-property services like restaurants and so on.”



Spencer Wadama
General Manager
SLS Hotel and Residences

“With the upcoming 2023 Trade Shows in the United Arab Emirates, January is a good start in terms of market trends with such attractive and renowned exhibitions like Arab Health, World Future Environment Exhibition, Building Healthcare Middle East, or Otolaryngology Congress Dubai. These exhibitions will post strong double-price growth and lead global market at the beginning of 2023. Adding to that, Dubai as is already proved the world is one of the best places to live in and to invest by the way how has been handled the pandemic and post-pandemic. It is expected to be the world’s strongest growth in the next year.”



Deepak Rajawat
Chief Commercial Officer
Vistara

“Some key consumer trends gaining prominence include a growing preference for direct, non-stop travel to avoid transit points; stronger inclination towards trusted brands due to the customers’ confidence in them to maintain highest hygiene and safety standards; increased subscription of the premium cabins as people seek more privacy, space and comfort. We expect these trends to continue as we enter the new year. Customer needs and expectations are ever-evolving, and at Vistara, it is our constant endeavor to offer a holistic flying experience. As per the luxury tourism is con-crened, we have witnessed a preference for holidays offering wellness.”



Christina Rymbai
Sales and Marketing Executive
Mercure Gold Hotel

“Regarding trends and projections for 2023, I believe the coming year will be similar to 2019. As events such as Arab Health and Gulf Food anticipate unprecedented footfall next year, we hope that Dubai hotels will see a high volume of corporate clientele return. COP 28 is expected to attract more than 85,000 delegates, including bureaucrats and media professionals. Another big event for Q4 will be the Dubai Air Show, which has traditionally drawn thousands of aerospace stakeholders and media professionals to the city. During Quarter 2 and Quarter 3, resident offers are expected to drive domestic business at city hotels and beach resorts.”



Raheesh Babu
COO
Musafir.com

“The global travel industry has been on a steady incline, and it’s not showing any signs of slowing down. The revenge travel trend is one of the most recent trends in the travel industry. It is a result of the increased number of people who are travelling. In 2022, we witnessed revenge travel in the leisure & business segment and anticipate seeing the same in 2023. Musafir.com foresees that the leisure & corporate travel market will go back to pre-pandemic time. This is because travel has become less of a hassle and people are willing to spend more on their vacations. In 2023, winter destinations and shorter flight duration will attract leisure travellers from the UAE.”



Tamara Salha
General Manager
Crowne Plaza Dubai Marina

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

CEOs travel to McArthurGlen outlets

A familiarization trip was organised for prominent chief executive officers (CEOs) from the travel sector by leading shopping destination McArthurGlen at two locations, Netherlands and Italy. The CEOs were able to receive a first-hand experience of the many offerings by the retail outlet destination.



Revenue optimization by HSMAI hailed

Bob Gilbert, President and CEO, HSMAI, congratulates HSMAI ME for organising 29 events over the past year and highlights the importance of revenue optimization. HSMAI ROC has delivered the most compelling and comprehensive revenue optimization event for the hotel industry, convening key stakeholders to address the most critical trends affecting hotels today.

TT Bureau

The 5th edition of the Commercial Strategy Conference, organised recently by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Middle East, along with TravTalk, TravelTV MiddleEast and Tourismbreakingnews as media partners, concluded successfully. **Mona Faraj**, Managing Director, HSMAI ME, in her opening remarks, said, "This year we have created two stages – one the main stage for topical events and the other focused on trends and insights with topical content on marketing and communications. Last year, I was told Mona you are not covering enough topical content across commercial disciplines, specifically marketing and communications, you know we are

all marketers here whether we know it or not, but we don't have the skills for it and what we did is that we created or formed the most active marketing advisory board that have put a lot of the content over the past two years. Every single year we listen to your feedback and try to deliver educational content that is more meaningful to you. We also did a lot of new content this year, so you will see we have a new ROC star later on and you will hear why, we brought in the lightning round, now please make sure you attend all six of them, you are up for a treat. 2022 was a year full of educational webinars, activities, events and exposure because it is important to maintain that social element within our regional organisational members."

She concluded saying that over the past year, 29 events were hosted by HSMAI ME and that they look forward to make it 50 next year. **Bob Gilbert**, President and CEO, HSMAI, congratulated Mona and the team for the 29



Mona Faraj
Managing Director, HSMAI ME

events over the past year form the Middle East chapter. He reiterated the importance of the revenue optimization at this point of time for those engaged

in sales and marketing roles. HSMAI ROC has delivered the most compelling and comprehensive revenue optimization event for the hotel industry, convening key stakeholders to address the most critical trends affecting hotels today, with powerful educational and networking opportunities, ROC is the can't-miss event of the year for learning and engagement. It's where senior leaders in hotel revenue optimization connect and engage in meaningful, thought-provoking conversations about the most important strategic issues facing the business. The HSMAI is committed to growing business for hotels and their partners, and is the industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. The association provides hotel professionals

and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue.

This year's conference also featured speakers and experts from

day one included a fireside chat with HE Issam Kazim, CEO DET discussing the outlook of tourism to Dubai and what the destination needs to do to remain an attractive city for international markets, while Scott Livermore, Chief

The HSMAI is committed to growing business for hotels and their partners, and is the industry's leading advocate for sustainable hotel revenue growth

outside the hospitality industry who contributed with a fresh perspective, bringing in valuable insights and ideas to attendees. The event highlighted how the region has seized its unique position post-pandemic, as speakers focused on industry relevant issues. Some of the highlights of

Economist & Managing Director Oxford Economics ME delved into the impact of inflation and the looming fear of recession on the tourism industry. A Panel discussion on the role F&B today and how it forms critical revenue share for hospitality brands took centre stage. ▶

Experts deliberate hospitality strategy

The 5th edition of the Commercial Strategy Conference, organised recently by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Middle East, along with **TRAVTALK**, TravelTV MiddleEast and Tourismbreakingnews as media partners, concluded successfully. This year's meet also featured speakers from outside the industry.



Switzerland ends season with Dubai show

Switzerland tourism conducted a roadshow in Dubai recently, which was their last destination in the GCC region for the year. Key partners from the travel trade attended the event, which provided them opportunity to meet 18 different Swiss partners from tourism boards, hotels, and destination management companies (DMCs).



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Gen Z shaping future of travel

“ Before being real-life wanderers, GenZ travellers are digital explorers. They are constantly connected to their smart devices, hooked to online search engines, and completely immersed in social media. For them, time is of the essence as they value the present moment and seek to make the most out of every minute. This makes them digitally-wired, prioritizing quick access to information, easy navigation, and user-friendly online platforms that provide them with rich content. Lokalee offers them all of this and more.”



Natasha Hatherall Shawe
Founder and CEO
Tish Tash

“ Gen Z travellers in 2023 are looking for longer trips, to make up for ‘lost time’ ideally with a sustainable or ‘back to basics’ focus on wellbeing and the opportunity to work remotely whilst abroad. Gen Z also looks to ‘travel with a purpose’ and marketing must reflect this. As a ‘mobile first’ generation, all available channels must be utilised for customer service. These first impressions are as important for the sale as the trip itself. Social proof is vital in attracting to your property or destination. Now is the time to look at overall strategies and user experience from the ground up. Destinations must amplify experiences.”

“ Hotels need to be ready for Gen Z. Born into an on-demand world of instant everything, these first true “digital natives” have high expectations, and they interact differently with technology, social media, and brands. All of this means that hotels will need to market and communicate with Gen Z consumers differently, rethink the services and experiences, and understand the unique traits of Gen Z in order to form strong and meaningful relationships. Catering to Millennials has been a main focus for about as long as millennials have existed as a consumer in the hotel and travel industry.”



Nuran Kilani
Director of Sales and Marketing
The Tower Plaza Hotel



Matthew Clark
Regional Sales Director
APAC A & Middle East, Shiji

“ The generation known as Gen Z is the first to grow up with mobile technology and is concerned with issues of sustainability, authenticity, gender identity, and sexuality. When they are making their travel plans, they are looking for exciting content, one-of-a-kind experiences, and sources of inspiration. Connecting with Generation Z is made easier with the help of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, and Youtube. Attracting Generation Z will be easier for brands that have a strong digital presence and produce content that is both interesting and engaging.”

“ The new generation is an interesting market to welcome. They are curious and smart in choosing what experience they want to take. They like to try new things and explore new horizon. What is more interesting than a hotel resort in Abu Dhabi offering some desert action? This year, Tilal Liwa will be launching huge outdoor experiences from a falcon show in the desert, Moreeb sunrise safari and Moreeb sunset safari tours. They can now experience the lowest roll of sands up to the towering dunes of the desert, and relax in a well-appointed room with an elegant view after.”



Diana Kornilakis
General Manager
Tilal Liwa Hotel



Deepak Rajawat
Chief Commercial Officer
Vistara

“ As a contemporary Indian airline, we constantly aim to enhance our offerings to cater to the discerning modern travellers, who look for a holistic flying experience. We have progressively launched numerous customer-friendly services including Live TV, healthier and vegan meal options, calming inflight content as well as amenity kits by Forest Essentials and RAS luxury oils. Further, we persistently try to upgrade our operational infrastructure with state-of-the-art digital solutions such as chatbots and biometric facial recognition.”

Inputs by Shehara Rizly



Samir Abi Frem
Chief Executive Officer
Lokalee

SCTDA unveils revamped Al Rafisah Dam

The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) unveiled the brand identity of Al Rafisah Dam, a premier leisure and tourist destination in Sharjah’s eastern region. The move aims to bolster the destination’s position and support the inflow of tourists, as well as promote its array of inclusive entertainment and tourist offerings.



Event Talk 2023

JANUARY

- ❖ **Tourisma and Caravaning**
Date: 6-8 January
Venue: Germany
- ❖ **Fair for Special Journeys**
Date: 7-8 January
Venue: Beurs van Berlage, Netherlands
- ❖ **Tourism Fair Oslo**
Date: 7-8 January
Venue: Oslo, Norway
- ❖ **Grand Rapids Camper, Travel & RV Show**
Date: 12-15 January
Venue: Michigan, USA
- ❖ **Vakantiebeurs**
Date: 12-15 January
Venue: Utrecht - Jaarbeurs, Netherlands
- ❖ **Ferienmesse Bern**
Date: 12-15 January
Venue: Bern, Switzerland
- ❖ **Destinations The Holiday & Travel Show**
Date: 12-15 January
Venue: Manchester, UK
- ❖ **Boston Rv & Camping Expo**
Date: 13-16 January
Venue: Boston, USA
- ❖ **HOUSE | GARDEN | TOURISTICS | WEDDING | GESUND + FIT**
Date: 13-15 January
Venue: Germany
- ❖ **OKC Boat & RV Show**
Date: 13-15 January
Venue: Oklahoma, USA
- ❖ **Greater Chicago RV Show**
Date: 13-15 January
Venue: Schaumburg, USA
- ❖ **Chicago Travel & Adventure Show**
Date: 14-15 January
Venue: Rosemont, USA
- ❖ **CMT-The Holiday Exhibition**
Date: 14-22 January
Venue: Stuttgart, Germany
- ❖ **Bicycle & Hiking Trips**
Date: 14-16 January
Venue: Stuttgart, Germany
- ❖ **Detroit Boat Show**
Date: 14-22 January
Venue: Detroit, USA
- ❖ **Fitur (Fitur)**
Date: 14-22 January
Venue: Madrid, Spain
- ❖ **InterDive Stuttgart**
Date: 19-22 January
Venue: Stuttgart, Germany
- ❖ **Matka Nordic travel fair**
Date: 20-22 January
Venue: Helsinki, Finland

❖ IODE trade fair for outdoor hotels, tourism & leisure

Date: 25-26 January
Venue: Madrid, Spain

❖ Reismesse

Date: 27-29 January
Venue: Sacramento, USA

FEBRUARY

❖ OTM

Date: 2-4 February
Venue: Mumbai, India

❖ Destinations - holidays and travel show

Date: 2-5 February
Venue: Belfast, UK

❖ Balt Tour

Date: 3-5 February
Venue: Oldenburg, Germany

❖ Reisebourse travel fair

Date: 3-4 February
Venue: France

❖ Touristik tourism fair

Date: 4-5 February
Venue: Dresden, Germany

❖ ITF Slovakistour fair for travel and leisure

Date: 8-11 February
Venue: London, UK

❖ SATTE

Date: 9-11 February
Venue: NCR, India

❖ Reisebourse travel fair

Date: 10-11 February
Venue: Riga, Latvia

❖ Holiday and Spa Expo

Date: 15-17 February
Venue: Koblenz, Germany

❖ Alpe Adria tourism and leisure show

Date: 15-18 February
Venue: Regensburg, Germany

❖ Holiday and Spa Expo

Date: 15-17 February
Venue: Koblenz, Germany

❖ Reisebourse travel fair

Date: 17-18 February
Venue: Incheba Exhibition Center Bratislava, Slovakia

❖ TTF and tourism fair

Date: 17-19 February
Venue: Sachsen, Germany

❖ Kultur Reismesse

Date: 18-19 February
Venue: Ljubljana, Slovenia

❖ f.r.e.e

Date: 22-26 February
Venue: Sofia, Bulgaria

❖ Travel and camping

Date: 22-26 February
Venue: Potsdam, Germany

❖ Reisebourse travel fair

Date: 24-25 February
Venue: Hamburg, Germany

❖ Reisen and Freizeit Messe Saar (leisure and travel fair)

Date: 25-26 February
Venue: Saarbrücken, Germany

MARCH

❖ Boot Tulln Austrian Boat Show

Date: 2-5 March
Venue: Messe Tulln, Austria

❖ Reisebourse travel fair

Date: 3-4 March
Venue: Ansbach, Germany

❖ International tourist fair

Date: 3-5 March
Venue: Wrocław, Poland

❖ ScotHot

Date: 8-9 March
Venue: UK

❖ ITB Berlin

Date: 8-12 March
Venue: Messe Berlin, Germany

❖ Franken aktive and vital

Date: 10-12 March
Venue: Bamberg, Germany

❖ B Travel

Date: 10-12 March
Venue: Barcelona, Spain

❖ Ferien Messe

Date: 16-19 March
Venue: Vienna, Austria

APRIL

❖ Aitf

Date: 4-6 April
Venue: Baku, Azerbaijan

❖ WTM Latin America

Date: 4-6 April
Venue: Sao Paulo, Brazil

❖ Tourism leisure hotels

Date: 6-9 April
Venue: Chisinau, Moldova

❖ Kiff

Date: 19-21 April
Venue: Almaty, Kazakhstan

❖ RDA Group Travel Expo

Date: 25-26 April
Venue: Cologne, Germany

❖ Luga

Date: 28 April-7 May
Venue: Lucerne, Switzerland

❖ RHEMA

Date: 28-30 April
Venue: Alstätten, Switzerland

MAY

❖ Arabian Travel Market

Date: 1-4 May
Venue: Dubai, UAE

❖ Future Hospitality Summit KSA

Date: 7-9 May
Venue: Riyadh, KSA

❖ ILTM Latin America

Date: 9-12 May
Venue: Sao Paulo, Brazil

❖ International health tourism services

Date: 25-27 May
Venue: Dhaka, Bangladesh

JUNE

❖ Karibu Kilifair

Date: 2-4 June
Venue: Arusha, Tanzania

❖ ITE Hong Kong International Travel Expo

Date: 15-18 May
Venue: Hong Kong

❖ ILTM Asia Pacific

Date: 19-22 June
Venue: Singapore

JULY

❖ TTF Travel and tourism fair

Date: 28-30 July
Venue: Kolkata, India

AUGUST

❖ Allgauer festival

Date: 19-20 August
Venue: Kempten, Germany

❖ TTF Travel and tourism fair

Date: 23-25 August
Venue: Ahmedabad, India

SEPTEMBER

❖ Seatrade Europe - cruises tourism for river and sea

Date: 6-8 September
Venue: Hamburg, Germany

❖ Future Hospitality Summit UAE

Date: 25-27 September
Venue: Abu Dhabi

OCTOBER

❖ IFTM Top Resa

Date: 3-5 October
Venue: Paris, France

❖ Expo International

Date: 4-6 October
Venue: Astana, Kazakhstan

❖ ITB Asia

Date: 25-27 October
Venue: Singapore

NOVEMBER

❖ WTM

Date: 6-8 November
Venue: London, UK

❖ Qatar Travel Mart

Date: 20-22 November
Venue: Doha, Qatar

❖ HSMIA ME Commercial Strategy Summit ME

Date: 28-29 November
Venue: Dubai, UAE

❖ COP 28

Date: 30 November - 12 December
Venue: Dubai, UAE

DECEMBER

❖ ILTM

Date: 4-7 December
Venue: Cannes, France

For more details, contact: events@ddppl.com

The dates shown on the annual event calendar are subject to change. Please refer to Event Talk in  to track the changes in dates.

TRAVCO Dubai

ROCHELL SALEEM takes up reins as Holidays Manager at Travco bringing with her over 25 years of experience in the sector. Her expertise lies with cruise holidays, leisure, outbound and corporate travel. Rochell is known as a leading cruise holiday planner in the travel sector having worked with some of the world's leading cruise lines such as Costa and Royal Caribbean. Her previous role as Sales Manager at Alpha Holidays for over 10 years saw growth in the cruise tourism sector. Bringing together this niche market placed her as a leading cruise holiday planner. In her new role, she will look at reinventing tourism opportunities, recognising new strategies and initiatives to drive more tourists into the destination.



ROSEWOOD ABU DHABI Abu Dhabi

Newly appointed Director of Sales and Marketing, **MONA METWALLY**, joins Rosewood Abu Dhabi with more than two decades of cross continent career in luxury hospitality, bringing about an impressive wealth of knowledge in brand positioning and profit generation. Result oriented and guest centric, Metwally plans to extend an extraordinary level of service to guests and to build on Redwood Abu Dhabi's market position as a leading luxury lifestyle hotel. She joins the property after having worked in 11 markets within the most prestigious and luxurious brands in the world. Metwally finds it important to connect with people to understand their needs, to further extend a tailor made and memorable experiences.



Passionate hotelier, **REMUS PALIMARU** joins Rosewood Abu Dhabi as its new Managing Director. With over two decades of global hospitality experience across Europe, Asia, and the Americas, Palimaru brings a wealth of experience and outstanding knowledge. Prior to joining Rosewood Abu Dhabi, Palimaru was the Hotel Manager of Rosewood London since 2017, where he aligned the hotel's strategy to achieve outstanding performance by exceeding its budgeted profits for that year. Moreover, Palimaru was selected to support Rosewood Bermuda in 2019 as the Interim Managing Director. Palimaru has a proven track record in inspiring and leading change to impact performance as well as overseeing several lavishing global hotel properties through their brand repositioning.



RIXOS HOTELS GULF Dubai

Rixos Hotels Gulf announces the promotion of **ANJEANETTE MANUEL** to Country Public Relations Manager for all Rixos properties in GCC. Manuel will now oversee establishing a clear standard for Rixos Hotels PR & Communications Strategy, initiating regional and wider activations and campaigns for Rixos Hotels Gulf, along with organising larger FAM trips and international press visits and sourcing media opportunities for the properties. Prior to this role, Manuel served as the Marketing Manager for Rixos Premium Dubai for the last year. Born and raised in Dubai, Anjeanette comes from a family of seasoned hoteliers and has been around the industry from a young age.



SWISSOTEL AL MUROOJ Dubai

KAMAL KASHYAP has joined Swissôtel Al Murooj Dubai as the Director of Revenue. A 20-year veteran in the industry, Kamal joins the team with extensive experience managing revenue management teams for several prestigious hotel companies, including Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, RODA Hotels, Rotana, and Marriott Hotels with great success. As Director of Revenue, he will spearhead the development of the hotel's hospitality business and oversee all distribution channels, and revenue management strategies at Swissôtel Al Murooj Dubai. Kashyap received his Bachelor of Business Administration from Annamalai University. He completed the master's course on data analytics of hotel revenue optimization. He also received his certification in advanced hotel revenue management, pricing and demand strategy from Cornell University.



SWISSOTEL AL GHURAIR AND SWISSOTEL LIVING AL GHURAIR Dubai

Swissotel Al Ghurair and Swissotel Living Al Ghurair has appointed **AMAL EL ANSARI** as the new General Manager, who will lead the team and drive the business for the 620-room property. Born and raised in Morocco, she brings a wealth of experience in the hospitality industry and commercials, and provides a strategic vision to the flagship hotel for Accor. She has been with Accor for 11 years, and held key positions and cluster roles of Director of Sales and Marketing, Hotel Manager and General Manager. Prior to this, she was the General Manager of Novotel Sharjah Expo Centre, and had led her team through the pandemic, maintaining Accor's business strategy.



News in pictures



\$400 mn to be invested in Ennismore's lifestyle hotels in KSA



Marriott Palm Jumeirah opens in Dubai Palm



Sharjah to host region's first Footgolf Tournament



Conrad Hotels and Resorts debuts in Morocco



Cozmo travel opens its 20th branch in UAE



Dubai International adds Kenya Airways to its list



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Sumera Bahl

Business Development Manager
Crisna De Guzman

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