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Europe top summer choice

With summer arriving, it is time for locals and expats from the GCC region to enjoy their holidays to destinations around the world. A few travel experts share their views on this with **TRAVTALK**.



Aga Pylik
General Manager
Pan World Travel, UAE

“The trend destinations for outbound travel this summer are influenced by a combination of factors, including flight accessibility, visa requirements, and the preferences of UAE nationals. As we explore the current travel landscape, it becomes evident that certain destinations have captured the attention and wanderlust of luxury-seeking travellers or kept high demand. One of the top trend destinations for UAE nationals this summer is Switzerland. With its breathtaking landscapes, world-class hospitality, and a wealth of cultural treasures, Switzerland continues to captivate the hearts of travellers from Dubai. Additionally, Japan and Korea have emerged as sought-after destinations due to increasing flight accessibility and relaxed visa requirements, along with competitive rates of Korean Air.”

Contd. on page 7 ▶

Vision 2030 drives Saudi hotels

From major international brands to homegrown local brands, Saudi Arabia's hospitality sector is on a fast track to achieve its visionary goals. Hospitality leaders speak their mind on the issue.



Gloria Guevera Manzo
Senior Advisor
Ministry of Tourism, Saudi Arabia

“The Vision 2030 is the best that could have happened to Saudi Arabia. It defined a path for us to transition and it's an impressive transformation. As part of the Vision 2030, we are aiming to develop the tourism sector under the leadership of His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb. He is creating the foundation needed for Saudi Arabia in order to make this destination a top destination in the future. I believe, this country can be among top five in the world due to the assets, the diversity, culture and heritage it has to offer. The goal is to receive 100 million travellers, creating one million jobs and to have 10 per cent GDP contribution from travel and tourism. Last year, we had 94 million, which is a fantastic number. The first quarter of this year we had the highest number of international arrivals with 7.4 million, which basically is a new record.”

Contd. on page 10 ▶

Cruise Saudi launches AROYA cruises

Aiming 1.3 million cruise visitors by 2035, Cruise Saudi, a 100 per cent Public Investment Fund owned business and pioneer in the development of tourism in Saudi Arabia, recently launched their own cruise line, AROYA Cruises.

TT Bureau

Cruise Saudi recently announced the launch of its owned cruise line, AROYA Cruises, which will offer Saudi nationals, expatriates, and regional guests a unique opportunity to explore the wonders of Saudi from the sea.

The word AROYA combines “Arabian” and “roya” (meaning vision or dream).

With a commitment to showcasing Arabian experiences, AROYA Cruises will reflect the country's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and warm hospitality, providing an immersive journey,

designed and tailored to reflect its brand values of inspiration, enrichment, generosity and respect. AROYA Cruises is committed to an exceptional passenger experience and will offer the highest standard of service, facilities and shore excursion program culminating in a unique offering in the region.

“This momentous step marks a historical milestone in Cruise Saudi's ambitious strategy to create a premium cruise ecosystem in Saudi, in line with Vision 2030,” says **Lars Clasen**, CEO, Cruise Saudi. “AROYA Cruises will be operating as an autonomous brand within the Cruise Saudi portfolio,” he added.

The launch of AROYA Cruises' will be led by Ghassan Khan. The brand will be managed as a separate business unit supporting the fulfilment of Cruise Saudi's strategic goals of welcoming 1.3 million cruise visitors by 2035 and providing 50,000 direct and indirect jobs. Ghassan Khan quotes: “This is an extremely



Lars Clasen
CEO, Cruise Saudi

exciting time. It is a privilege to bring this cruise line to launch as a core element of Saudi's development as an international cruising destination.”



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ME spends \$65bn on sports infra

The Middle East nations have been diversifying their economies to include sports and tourism in their fold. According to PwC, the GCC member states including Saudi Arabia and the UAE have spent more than \$65 billion on development of sports and last year's FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar showed the region's prowess in organising international sporting events.

TT Bureau

Some sporting bodies already have established their headquarters in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) such as the International Cricket Council. **Alexey Milovanov**, an expert involved in the FIFA 2022 World Cup, recently urged international sporting bodies to embrace the Middle East as the best place to host sporting events. As a sports infrastructure expert, Milovanov believes that the Middle East will become the international sporting hub by 2026. His views come amid a new research from PwC revealing that the sports industry in the Middle East is expected to grow by 8.7 per cent by 2026 compared to the global projection of only 3.3 per cent.

Milovanov is a global expert known for leading the delivery of seven new stadiums for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and the overlay for official sites



Alexey Milovanov
Sports Tourism Expert

of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Having advised and worked closely with numerous international sporting organisations, he has been at the forefront of the Middle East's rising prominence in global sport. Milovanov said: "While Europe has traditionally been the home of international sports tournaments, the tide is turning towards the Middle East. Europe is often constrained by its existing infrastructure and is reluctant to build something completely new. This not only restricts architectural vision, but it also

means we have to adapt to buildings that are not fit for purpose. By contrast, Middle Eastern countries are eager to put their resources behind world-beating, made-to-measure infrastructure in a way Europe is not prepared to."

The halo effect for Middle Eastern economies is predicted to be significant – the World Trade Organisation has found that the region is becoming the world's fastest-growing sports tourism destination, valued at US \$600

drawing crowds from around the world. They also noted the growth of motorsports and esports in the Middle East. The Lusail Iconic Stadium, which hosted the final of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, demonstrates the Middle East's investment in modern infrastructure, gaining a five-star sustainability rating according to the Global Sustainability Assessment System. It is also designed for long-term use to complement surrounding infrastructure projects.

the region as a new hub for international sport, bolstered by Saudi Arabia's joint bid with Egypt and Greece for the 2030 World Cup. Milovanov added: "The calibre of design and the commitment to high-quality projects I see in the Middle East is unparalleled. They are willing to challenge conventional norms to bring these projects to the next level at every opportunity, pushing the boundaries of modern sporting events.

"Developing major stadiums doesn't stop at the turnstiles – it also provides a great opportunity to develop supporting infrastructure such as new roads, accommodation, and airports, which can add significant value to local areas. Sports leaders must now take advantage of the number of global experts across various industries gathering in the Middle East for projects such as the World Cup to build lasting relationships in the region. If this is done

successfully, the Middle East will easily become an international sporting hub by 2026."

World-class sporting events in ME till date

- ❖ Formula One Grand Prix Abu Dhabi
- ❖ Formula One Grand Prix Bahrain
- ❖ Dubai World Cup
- ❖ The Saudi Cup
- ❖ Mubadala World Tennis Championship
- ❖ Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship
- ❖ Aramco Saudi Ladies International
- ❖ Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship
- ❖ Major UFC Events (UFC Island)
- ❖ Dakar Rally
- ❖ Formula One Grand Prix in Saudi Arabia (November 2021)
- ❖ FIFA 2022 World Cup in Qatar

Apart from that, the 2030 and 2034 Asian Games are scheduled to be held in Qatar and Saudi Arabia respectively.

Middle Eastern nations are eager to put resources behind world-beating, made-to-measure infrastructure in a way Europe is not prepared to

billion. The World Economic Forum has highlighted the popularity of football in the region, with the World Cup and Arab Cup

Milovanov is now calling for sports leaders to recognize the long-term potential of projects in the Middle East and embrace



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Engaging Gen Z to revitalize travel

After oil and gas sector, travel and tourism sector continues to serve as a key revenue generator for the GCC nations. Talking to **TT Bureau**, **Rasha El Ghoussaini**, Head of Industry – Travel, Luxury and Tech in MENA at Snap Inc., highlights the significance of the emerging sector, and how platforms like Snapchat are helping travel companies to revitalize the sector by engaging Gen Z.

TT Bureau

As someone who works with many brands in the travel sector, do you think the industry has now bounced back from challenges of the past few years?

Over the past few years, the travel and tourism sector has faced many challenges – from the COVID-19 pandemic to labour shortages and volatility in energy pricing. Yet, the industry has also demonstrated impressive resilience, with 22 countries showing growth in the travel sector on one of the latest indexes.

How is the industry's performance in the MENA region compared to the wider trajectory of the global travel market? In the Middle East specifically, the region's travel and tourism sector continues to make its mark on the global stage. As

just one example, local entities such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, and Qatar Airways were among the key winners at the most recent World Travel Awards. In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 aims to increase the tourism industry's contribution to the GDP from 3 per cent to 10 per cent, and attract 100 million visitors per year. From relaxing the visa regulations to making sizeable investments in travel infrastructure and entertainment offerings, the Kingdom is on a mission to build its reputation as the world's hottest new leisure tourism destination. The large-scale growth of the Saudi tourism sector has also seen new entities mushrooming.

Meanwhile, the UAE Tourism Strategy 2031 aims to raise the sector's contribution to the GDP to AED450 billion while attracting AED100 billion in additional tour-



Rasha El Ghoussaini
Head of Industry – Travel
Luxury and Tech in MENA at Snap Inc

ism investments. According to the TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards, Dubai, the world's favourite tourist destination, hopes to welcome 25 million tourists in 2025. The capital Abu Dhabi is not far behind with its drive to hit 23 million annual tourists by 2030, more than doubling 2019 figures. In Qatar, last year the number of visitors exceeded 2.5 million, more than 1.4 million of whom came for the FIFA

World Cup. The country aims to attract 6 million visitors annually by 2030. During the same period, it seeks to boost the share of the travel and tourism sector in its GDP from 7 per cent to 12 per cent while doubling job opportunities in the industry.

With such opportunity at hand, how important is Gen Z as a growth audience for the future? According to a report by Morning Consult, Gen Z cur-

rency hampered by the pandemic, Gen Zers were keen to explore the world as soon as the movement restrictions relaxed. More than half of Gen Z adults are frequent travellers, buoyed their by discretionary spending power that reached \$4.4 trillion globally in 2021.

Travel brands looking to tap into the Gen Z audience cannot rely on traditional engagement channels. How do platforms like

digital platforms for destination discovery and vacation planning, and is thus exposed to a wealth of travel inspiration. But there is a nuance that is usually overlooked – the youngest generation of adults craves authenticity and unfiltered experiences over polished facades. When it comes to travelling, Gen Zers prioritize authenticity and living in the moment. They do not only share the most picture-perfect photos. They appreciate the funny, silly, real moments that make a trip truly memorable.

So, where are you setting your eyes next in the travel space?

While Snapchat has emerged as a key platform to engage Gen Z and spur the travel industry's recovery, it is only the beginning. Innovative technologies such as generative AI and AR have the potential to take the industry to new heights. ➔

In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 aims to increase the tourism industry's pie to the GDP from 3% to 10%, and attract 100 million visitors per year

rently plays an instrumental role in shaping the travel industry. With their entry into the cat-

Snapchat fit into the mix today? Born into 24/7 internet connectivity, Gen Z tends to rely on

Green projects see 32% rise in UAE

Tourism being one of the most promising catalysts for global economic growth holds the potential to drive the transition towards a green economy, contributing to sustainable and inclusive development. Given its extensive connections to various sectors, progress towards sustainability within the tourism industry can have a significant positive impact on responsible global prosperity.

Investment and financing play a vital role in facilitating the shift towards low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive tourism development. The opportunities for investment and financing are diverse, ranging from public and private investments in low-carbon transportation options to the development of resource-efficient tourism infrastructure. Additionally, initiatives to support innovation, encourage the adoption of responsible business practices, and foster the integration of tourism enterprises into low-carbon and sustainable supply chains are crucial components of this process.

According to a recent report from the consulting firm Arthur D. Little, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) experienced a 32 per cent year on year (YoY) increase in green and sustainable finance issuance in 2022. The UAE boasts a rich landscape encompassing expansive deserts, pristine coastlines, and awe-inspiring



architecture, making it attractive to millions of tourists annually. As the demand for authentic cultural experiences and sustainable and eco-friendly activities continues to grow, there is a pressing need to leverage green financing opportunities within the UAE's tourism sector. By harnessing these opportunities, resource-efficient and sustainable tourism development and consumption can be encouraged and developed.

Across the UAE, the support for sustainable tourism is evident from the public focus and investments within this area. For example, in 2021 the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development, in partnership with RAK Hospitality Holding and the RAK Chamber of Commerce and Industry, pledged to invest AED500 across 20 sustainable tourism development projects in the Emirate. By allocating

financial resources to these endeavours, the carbon footprint of the UAE's tourism industry can be significantly reduced. As the global tourism landscape increasingly prioritises sustainability, foreign investors are more inclined to support projects that align with environmentally friendly principles. Green financ-

ing responsible business is another key area where investment and financing can make a difference. This involves supporting initiatives that promote ethical operations, environmental conservation, and social responsibility.

Through the strategic application of green financing, the UAE

can integrate sustainability concepts into their curricula, they can prepare future professionals to address sustainability challenges in the tourism sector. Furthermore, universities can conduct research on green finance, identify innovative financing models, and collaborate with industry stakeholders to develop sustainable investment strategies. Their knowledge-sharing platforms can drive the adoption of green finance practices.

According to a recent report from Arthur D. Little, the UAE experienced a 32% YoY increase in green and sustainable finance issuance in 2022

ing opens doors for UAE-based businesses to access these international investors, promoting sustainable tourism practices within the country.

Moreover, green financing holds the potential to generate employment opportunities within the UAE's tourism industry. Encour-

ing can forge a path towards a more sustainable and vibrant tourism industry. Higher education institutes and universities can contribute to this by offering specialised courses and programs that educate students about sustainable finance, green investment, and environmental economics. By integrating green finance



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

Two Seasons scales up sustainability drive

Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments is committed to pursuing sustainable practices that minimize environmental footprint and contribute to community. Recognizing the importance of water conservation and reducing plastic waste, significant changes within operations have been implemented. In a latest move, the hotel has launched its own water filtration and bottling system to replace plastic bottles.

TT Bureau

In their latest move to strengthen their sustainability drive, Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments launched its own water filtration and bottling system to replace plastic bottles and reduce its carbon footprint.

The hotel is committed to pursuing sustainable practices that minimize environmental footprint and contribute to community. Recognizing the importance of water conservation and reducing plastic waste, significant changes within operations have been implemented. "One of the key initiatives we have undertaken is the installation of state of the art water filtration and bottling. Not only does this eliminate the need for single-use plastic bottles in the hotel guest rooms, but it also significantly reduces the energy and resources required for their



Freddy Farid and Malke at the Water Filtration and Bottling System

production, transportation and disposal," shared **Freddy Farid**, Managing Director, Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments.

The premium water filtration system involves a 7-stage puri-

fication system, which includes a UV sterilization process to ensure compliance to microbiological safety of water for drinking. The glass bottle is made up of breakage-resistant borosilicate glass with high

quality UV resistant, stainless steel lid in 500ML and 1,000ML bottle capacity.

The purpose of the system is to carry out in-house bottling of drinking water in re-usable

glass bottles. It includes pre-fill UV sterilization of washed bottles, pre-cap UV sterilization of washed caps, volumetric filling of filtered water in bottles under aseptic environment, capping of bottles, post-cap UV sterilization of filled bottles and labelling of bottle cap area in one

remaining detergent inside. The special basket with rack adapter can accommodate large bottles up to 370 mm high and can easily be retrofitted in seconds.

The circulation of the glass bottles in the hotel suites will commence towards the end of

The water filtration system involves a 7-stage purification system, including a UV sterilization process to ensure compliance to microbiological safety

system. The bottling system has the production capacity of 240 bottles per hour for a specific water volume.

The unique two-nozzle system for wash and rinse ensures the water goes directly into the bottle and eliminates the chance of any

the month. The guests will be encouraged to take part in this sustainability initiative with the option to purchase additional water in glass bottles. The next phase will include rolling out glass bottle usage in banquet events and in the food and beverage outlets' operations. ➡

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Tech to drive business for Swissotel

Amro Nagah, General Manager, Swissotel Al Murooj Hotel, Dubai, shares with  the many areas of growth in the hospitality industry in Dubai over the years. Social media has played an important role and the usage of different innovative technologies has placed Dubai as a destination attracting both business and leisure travellers, he says.

 Shehara Rizly

As Dubai sets records across the boards, how has Dubai's hospitality changed over the years?

Tourism and hospitality sector plays an important role in Dubai. We can see that Dubai is one of the leading markets, where social media has played a key role and the usage of different innovative technologies has placed Dubai as a destination attracting both business and leisure travellers.

What is the hotel industry's role in sustainability?

Sustainability has been gradually taking importance in Dubai over the past few years. Sustainability is the way forward, it is the lifestyle and the way forward in future. In terms of Swissotel Al Murooj, we have participated in many programs on sustainability such as Planet 21 initiatives by



Amro Nagah
General Manager
Swissotel Al Murooj Hotel, Dubai

Accor where we are removing the plastics in our hotel. We, with Dubai municipality, have participated in many programs as well, such as clean-up UAE campaign, tree planting, earth hour and carbon calculator compliant by the government. We at Swissotel Al Murooj are committed to sustainability as we are in the process to be certified by Green Globe. By earning Green Globe certification our hotel can further demonstrate our commitment to

sustainability, and get recognition for being energy efficient, conservation of water and indoor air quality achievements.

COP28 is a few months away, how will this contribute towards the hospitality landscape in Dubai?

I believe that COP28 will contribute a lot, especially towards the hospitality industry. This will bring in leaders from across the

Could you share your opinion on disruptive technologies in hospitality?

Emergence of disruptive technologies has both advantages and disadvantages. This again will impact the guests and the companies that develop them. However, the main benefit in utilising these technologies is that it makes life much easier for guests and helps companies increase their profits.



of the industry depends on innovation and technology.

GenZ are the new age travellers of the day, are hotels ready to cater to their requests?

When you take Dubai, yes. I will say that hotels are more than ready to provide a more meaningful experience for these new age travellers. Their commitment to sustainability is an important

aspect to keep in mind, as they always look out for experiences that are one of a kind. Government of Dubai keeps the hospitality industry ahead by providing the latest insights and making sure that the new age travellers get the experience that they are looking for and ensure their return to the destination with the varied innovative programs in store for these travellers. 

COPS28 will bring in leaders from across the world to discuss the importance of climate change, which will impact the Dubai's hospitality

world to discuss the importance of climate change, which will, in turn, impact the hospitality industry in Dubai.

At the same time the flip side is the security risk, which as hotels in Dubai, we have taken that step further as the future

Ajman: A hidden gem in UAE

The Ajman Department of Tourism Development (ADTD) organised an exclusive media tour to Ajman, a hidden gem nestled in the UAE. This extraordinary tour offered a truly immersive experience, unveiling the emirate's rich history, breathtaking natural beauty, and vibrant cultural heritage, while showcasing that sustainability is at the forefront of Ajman's tourism development plans.

 Shehara Rizly

The adventure commenced with an exhilarating kayaking expedition, organized by Quest for Adventure. As we (media) glided through the serene mangrove forests, meandering creeks, and picturesque lagoons that adorned Ajman's landscape, we were treated to a remarkable array of flora and fauna. This unique experience not only fostered a profound connection with the environment but also supported the UAE's noble mangrove tree-planting initiative.

Continuing our journey, we found ourselves at the prestigious Al Zorah Golf Club, a magnificent creation by the renowned Nicklaus Design group. Surrounded by striking mangroves and enveloped in a tranquil atmosphere, we had the privilege of testing our golfing skills on the challenging 18-hole course. The combination



of Ajman's natural splendour and the thrill of the game created an unforgettable experience.

Delving deeper into Ajman's heritage, we were led to the captivating Heritage District, where the Ajman Museum stood as the centerpiece. As we meandered through the district's narrow lanes and alleyways, we found

ourselves immersed in authentic Emirati and themed establishments that beautifully echoed the region's rich heritage. The buildings adorned with vibrant artistic murals took us on a captivating journey through time, showcasing the traditions and cultural legacy of Ajman. Undoubtedly, one of the tour's highlights was our visit to the House of Rashed

Alkhadar, a revered poet whose legacy is meticulously preserved within the walls of a personal museum. Here, advanced technology breathed life into his biography and poetic works, offering profound insights into Rashed Alkhadar's contributions to Emirati cultural heritage. This museum which was opened recently serves as a prominent

historical landmark, inviting visitors to deeply immerse themselves in the life and works of this esteemed poet.

To conclude our day filled with exploration, we were treated to a delectable fusion of international and local flavours at the Radis-

ing an exclusive interview with **Hamda Sultan Almatroschy**, Director, Strategy & Performance Development Office, ADTD. Almatroschy shared invaluable insights into the plans and initiatives that the ADTD has in store for the year to enhance and develop tourism in Ajman.

ADTD is committed to launching new marketing campaigns, organizing cultural and entertainment events, and developing tourism infra at Ajman

son Blu Hotel. This modern establishment seamlessly blended contemporary hospitality with Ajman's distinctive charm, offering us a luxurious dining experience.

During the media tour, we had the privilege of conduct-

One of the key strategies highlighted by Almatroschy was the department's commitment to launching new marketing campaigns, organizing cultural and entertainment events, and developing new tourism infrastructure in Ajman. 

Europe, Turkey in demand this summer



Abdullah Alhajji
Co-Founder
Travel Ticket KSA, Saudi Arabia

“Let me start by saying Thank God COVID is done, we are receiving lots of requests from our clients unlike last year. The requests are versatile as Saudi people wander all over the world. However, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro are in high demand due to visa exemption and colder weather and high Muslim population. Turkey is number 1 destination for the people of Eastern Province Saudi Arabia, which share the same characteristics as the countries mentioned before. Outbound travel this year is higher than before as I mentioned before, summer is a time when travellers from Saudi take a longer break due to the school holidays. It is also a time when families travel together.”



Sufian Sayed
Holidays Manager
J.S. Tourism and Trips, Saudi Arabia

“Outbound travel from Saudi Arabia has been on the rise in recent years, with more and more Saudis venturing beyond their borders for leisure, business, and education. The Kingdom's strategic location, coupled with the increasing connectivity of its airports, has made it easier for Saudis to reach destinations across the globe. Popular destinations for outbound travel from Saudi Arabia include Dubai, London, Istanbul, Bangkok, and Paris. The Government of Saudi Arabia has also taken steps to facilitate outbound travel by introducing e-visas and relaxing some of the restrictions on women travelling alone. As a result, outbound travel is expected to continue to grow in the coming years.”



Zohab Fazal Musa
Sales Manager
SalamAir, Saudi Arabia

“Some of the most popular outbound destinations are Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, UK, France and Spain. These are mostly visited by Saudis during summer holidays. Travelling to Thailand can be an exciting and rewarding experience. From the bustling streets of Bangkok to the tranquil beaches of Phuket, there is something for everyone. Popular destinations include Chiang Mai, known for its ancient temples and hill tribe villages and Krabi, which offers stunning limestone cliffs and crystal-clear waters for diving and snorkeling. The country is also home to numerous national parks, such as Khao Yai and Doi Inthanon, which offer opportunities for hiking.”



CP Ashraf
Manager
Dune Travel and Tours, Qatar

“It's a time for annual summer break. Movements in Qatar's inbound and outbound tourism have begun picking up steam with the gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Residents from Qatar have also started resuming their long-awaited foreign trips with some Qataris now back to their pre-pandemic travel mode. Country representatives participating at QTM 2023 took note of this, and are now wooing Qataris to discover or rediscover their tourist destinations. The most popular summer destinations for the country's travellers includes the UK, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Jordan, Russia, and Thailand.”



Varsha Pherwani
Travel Counsellor Associate
Travel Counsellors

“We are seeing an increasing number of bookings coming through for Summer 2023. Being an outbound business we have made the highest number of bookings to the Indian Ocean destinations like the Maldives and Seychelles since pandemic for the fact that people prefer privacy and a secluded getaway. Because the Maldives offers not only privacy but also is a halal friendly destination, it still remains popular even during the summer months, although it is the monsoon season in the Maldives. Our next popular destination for Summer 2023 is 'the Land of the Four Seasons' Turkey. For travellers seeking to spend longer time around Turkey, Istanbul and Capadocia are popular.”



Samer Madi
General Manager
QTC Travel and Tourism WLL, Qatar

“Turkey is a great Halal holiday destination, particularly if travellers are interested in visiting somewhere with a rich Islamic history. Muslims make up around 99 per cent of the population in the country, and Islam has been present in the country since the 7th century. Some of the best places to visit in Turkey are Istanbul, Bursa, Sabanja and Izmir. And, of course, there is the coastal town of Antalya, famous for its beautiful beaches. When it comes to Halal food, travellers can find that there are a plenty of restaurants to select from in the country. Some of the best Turkish dishes to try are kebabs, pides and Shawarma. Turkey is a destination that can be visited during all the year.”



Basel Allassi
Travel Counsellor
Travel Counsellors

“As air fares to Europe are soaring as much as the UAE heat, together with the current challenges with Schengen Visas appointment. Cape Town emerges as a captivating alternative, boasting a delightful winter season from June to August. Famous for its pristine beaches, breathtaking landscapes, and cool ocean breezes. With reasonable air fares on Emirates, comparing to European destinations, families will have endless possibilities, from witnessing majestic whales, encountering adorable penguins, and get immersed in a world of savage wildlife. Finally, families will be able to satisfy their hunger with diverse cuisine options including Halal food; thanks to the Muslim and Indian old-dated influence on the land of Cape of good hope.”



Rahul Pradhan
CEO
Vacation Krafters, UAE

“Outbound travel is on the rise and the customers are looking at new destinations or new cities in the existing ones. While there are challenges on Schengen visa, there are customers who have gone ahead and secured appointments way back and are well prepared to travel in July and August. At Vacation Krafters, we have partnered with promoting the Wallonia region in Belgium and, of course, Brussels. Trabzon in Turkey and Kashmir in India are the new destinations that one must add to their bucket list. We can not shy away from our traditional countries like Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Greece whereby the customers are now venturing the unseen areas within these cities. Vacation Krafters provides programs that are crafted to suit each customer.”



Sushant Pilankar
Manager Leisure
Uranus Travel

“Halal travel has been a growing market for the last decade, it has been growing at a significant percentage mainly because the Middle East traveller's aspiration to travel is very high and on an average, it is growing at the rate of more than 8 per cent. For example, in Europe very few destinations knew about Halal before, but now, if you see every important market, for instance like Courchevel or smaller and newer destinations like Andermatt Switzerland, want to receive their share of Middle East travellers, hence they are more aware of the needs and have become a popular destination among the Middle Eastern travellers. I recently came from Lusail, almost all restaurants serve halal meals, hotels even go a step further and ask if you need a prayer mat.”



Bassim Khamis
General Manager
NBK Travel and Tourism, Qatar

“Travel and tourism are some of the prime economic drivers nowadays, as they contribute greatly to the economic advancement of the world. One of the growing segments is Halal tourism. Since the Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries have characteristic fortes to provide to Muslim travellers, they have an exceptional opportunity to gain a greater share of this growing segment. As an agency, we automatically cater to most Muslim travellers in the GCC region. The Muslim travel market should witness sustained growth and Muslim travellers are becoming a significant segment within the global travel and tourism sector. Turkey, Maldives, Indonesia and Malaysia are some of the key halal destinations for this summer.”



Zayeem Mohtisham
General Manager
Falcon Travel, UAE

“There are several Halal-friendly outbound destinations to explore this summer, with key considerations such as halal food certifications, prayer facilities, and halal-friendly activities in mind. Most sold are the famous three Turkey, Malaysia and Maldives. Turkey, with its rich Islamic past and innumerable Halal-certified eateries, combines history and breathtaking scenery. Malaysia, recognized for its rich culture and Islamic influence, has an abundance of Halal cuisine options as well as various mosques to visit. The Maldives, a paradise of turquoise oceans and magnificent resorts, has Halal food options as well as private villas with prayer rooms. A new Halal-friendly destination that is gaining popularity from this region is the city of Marrakech in Morocco.”



Ayman Al Qudwa
General Manager
Falcon Travel, Qatar

“Yes, Turkey is the first destination for Qataris and residents in the State of Qatar to spend the Eid al-Adha holiday and the summer vacation this year. It is the first destination because of its tourist places and historical monuments, in addition to its picturesque green nature. And the Turks, especially the food culture and customs, which are based on halal food. Therefore, it was not surprising that Qatar Airways, the national carrier in the State of Qatar, working and preparing early this summer, to make Turkey one of its most important tourist destinations, as it operated over 58 weekly flights to cover seven main destinations and airports, namely Istanbul, Sabiha, Ankara, Adana, Trabzon, Bodrum, and Antalya.”

200 exhibitors attend Riyadh Travel Fair

The 13th edition of the Riyadh Travel Fair, organised with  as media partner, concluded in Riyadh recently. About 200 exhibitors, including leading travel and tourism companies of Saudi Arabia, along with some GCC and international companies, showcased their offerings at the annual event, specifically to the Saudi Arabian market.



Travel trade inks more deals in Riyadh



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Saudi hotels get ready for 30mn visitors



Khalid Saud Abu Haimed
CEO
Al Khozama

“With Vision 2030 and the way in which the government has supported the hospitality industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is a great opportunity for every entity and individual in the industry. Al Khozama being one of the first companies that have developed the first inception of the real hospitality or the luxury hospitality experience into the country. We continue to be the leaders for the past many years. We are excited to be one of the leaders and also one of the drivers of that vision through what we have. We are thankful to our government, for all of what they have done and also all of the support that we are getting today. So, these components together make the destination attractive.”



Sandeep Walia
Chief Operating Officer - Middle East
Marriott International

“In line with the strategic framework for Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has developed ambitious and visionary plans for the travel sector, which is having a positive impact on the hospitality industry. There is a strong demand for hotel accommodation across primary, secondary, and tertiary markets in the Kingdom and the government is taking the right steps to ensure that it is meeting the demands of what is required now as well as for the future. Marriott International's growth outlook in the Kingdom looks positive with more than 35 properties in our development pipeline and we continue to see opportunities to further expand across the country.”



Jean-Baptiste Recher
Regional Vice President, Development, Luxury Brands
Middle East, Africa & Turkey, Accor

“Accor is accelerating growth across Saudi Arabia and is proud to support Vision 2030, an ambitious project that will transform and diversify the country's economy, and attract more visitors to the Kingdom. In this culturally rich region, our existing luxury supply of five hotels is growing at a rapid pace to a pipeline of 14 hotels with an additional 2,750 keys. In particular, we are seeing strong momentum with our Raffles and Fairmont brands across major cities, including Riyadh, Jeddah and Madinah. The first ever Sofitel Serviced Residences and Fairmont Serviced Residences will also launch in Saudi Arabia, further reinforcing our strong commitment to this region.”



Jana Bader
General Manager
The Bench KSA

“Travel, Tourism, and Entertainment is a priority sector under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic diversification initiative. The Saudi government aims to increase domestic household spending related to entertainment and leisure activities, and to transform the country into a major global travel destination. Tourism is at the forefront; it boosts the gross domestic product and creates jobs. We are keen on helping the private sector and international investors to support us and explore opportunities (in the Kingdom) and (work) together to unlock the potential for this country through investment conference in the hospitality sector such as The Future Hospitality Investment Summit.”



Tariq Dowidar
Vice President, Saudi Arabia
Midscale & Economy Division, Accor

“Saudi Arabia has experienced significant growth in the hospitality sector in recent years. According to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, the hospitality sector is expected to contribute 6.5 per cent to Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2022 and attract 30 million visitors by 2030. Key drivers for the hospitality sector's growth in Saudi Arabia include the government's Vision 2030 plan, the country's location as a geographic hub for both leisure and business travellers, religious travel and the growing demand for luxury tourism experiences, leading to an increase in high-end hotels and resorts, both international and local. The development of new tourist destinations include the Red Sea Project.”



Paul Stevens
Chief Operating Officer, Middle East & Africa Premium,
Midscale & Economy Division, Accor

“The Premium, Midscale & Economy Division for Accor in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has an existing portfolio 34 hotels (13,533 rooms) across brands, including Adagio, Ibis, Mercure, Movenpick, Novotel, Pullman and Swissotel. In 2022, Accor opened two properties under the same division, Novotel Makkah Thakher City and Swissotel Living Jeddah, the first Swissotel Living property in the Kingdom. This year, we are aiming to open the Movenpick Waad Al Shamal - Turaif, which will add 243 rooms to our existing portfolio in the Kingdom by Q3 this year. Our active pipeline for the Premium, Midscale & Economy Division in Saudi Arabia consists of 18 properties (4,244 keys).”



Maher Abou Nasr
Vice President, Operations
Saudi Arabia

“The Saudi hospitality sector is experiencing significant growth, highlighting the nation's unwavering commitment to its tourism industry. In line with Saudi Vision 2030, we are delighted to expand our presence in the Kingdom. Our commitment is reinforced by recent milestone agreements, including our recent partnership with Mohammed Bin Salman Nonprofit City to bring a best-in-class Hotel Indigo to the destination, and the highly anticipated debut of the Kimpton brand in the country in collaboration with The King Abdullah Financial District Management and Development Company. Our growth in KSA is underpinned by our 'Journey to Tomorrow' 10-year action plan of clear commitments to drive change for our people, communities, and planet.”



Clinton Negata
Founder and Creative Partner
Blink Design Group

“I think it's a really special time to be working on projects in the Middle East. It's an opportunistic time for design firms to be working in the Middle East. It's sort of like the best of the best is here. It's hard to avoid. The opportunities are just tremendous. It's sort of like equating it to every project is a jewel in itself. You know, clients are visionary, they have very big goals and dreams of where they see hospitality coming within the next 5 to 10 years. The future is here within the Middle East and I think that is something we are very excited to be part of so. In Saudi Arabia particularly, they really pay attention to the heritage and create something different and fresh from the base of the building, which is a common theme throughout our projects in Saudi Arabia.”



Turab Saleem
Partner Head of Hospitality
Knight Frank

“Hospitality is one of the main focus of the Saudi government, as diversifying from oil and hospitality is going to play a major role. If you look at it under Vision 2030 the government has announced up to 325,000 keys, new keys are going to be rolled out now until 2030. We already have 130,000 to 135,000 keys, so altogether Saudi will have half a million keys, which is a very healthy number to complete as a hospitality and tourism destination. So, the intentions are there, they are rolling it out and its a matter of time when it will be one of the economic pillars to support the KSA economy. When it comes to the most popular brand of hotels, internationally branded and operated hotels are preferred (56 per cent) over local brands (44 per cent) by Saudis.”



Bart Carnahan
President, Global Business Development and Portfolio
Management, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

“Four Seasons' upcoming resort in NEOM will be a one-of-a-kind project, blending the natural wonders of the Red Sea with the future-forward technologies on which this new and exciting destination is being built. We are proud to be part of the ambitious vision that our partners at NEOM have for transforming the future of hospitality in the region and look forward to welcoming guests to discover a new part of the Kingdom. The Resort will feature 225 guest rooms and suites with terraces overlooking the beaches of the Red Sea, as well as 52 villas with one to four-bedroom configurations with plunge pools and beach views, and with the Presidential and Royal Villas offering private swimming pools, gyms and access to private yacht docks.”



Guy Hutchinson
President & CEO
Rotana

“Saudi Arabia presents one of the fastest-growing markets in the region, increasingly establishing itself as a leading tourist destination. These new properties located in the heart of Riyadh include a mix of hotels and serviced apartments, offering our guests diverse options to suit their varying needs. We are excited to partner with Memar Development & Investment on this project as we work together to deliver on Rotana's singular brand promise of delivering 'Treasured Time' for all our guests. The five new Riyadh properties will add 618 keys to Rotana's growing portfolio. This is in line with the group's target of adding triple the number of rooms to 6,000 over the next four years. The Edge by Rotana will deliver the ultimate guest experience.”




Sultan Al-Otaibi
CEO
Dur Hospitality

“Dur has diligently worked on the studies required to set up The Project Company, which will embody Dur's strategic expansion roadmap and its role in the Saudi hospitality's digital transformation journey. The hotel will embrace next-generation technologies with ultra-modern digital designs, in line with the top international standards. This JV supports Dur Hospitality's direction to expand strategic partnerships with leading institutions in the Kingdom to develop top-notch hotels and increase the contribution of the tourism sector to the Kingdom's GDP, in line with Saudi Vision 2030. Dur is happy to join hands with Smart Zone Real Estate Company to develop this outstanding project.”

Inputs by Shehara Rizly

Enjoy luxury with privacy, in Maldives

Sun Siyam Maldives with its four and five-star resorts has become the most prominent destination for Middle East travellers. Whether guests are looking for a relaxing holiday or one that is full of fast-paced and thrill-seeking activities, it offers tailored and personalised holiday experiences to each traveller. **Deepak Booneady**, CEO, Sun Siyam Resorts, shares more with .

 TT Bureau

What are your unique offerings to the Middle East travellers?

We offer anyone travelling to one of our six resorts a home away from home. With a quick flight and short distances to the Middle East and GCC regions, Maldives is already providing the Arab traveller with a unique geographical advantage of an ideal environment to enjoy beautiful surroundings in safety and comfort, enhanced by the 'one-island-one-resort' approach.

Whether guests are looking for a relaxing holiday or one that is full of fast-paced and thrill-seeking activities, Sun Siyam Resorts offers tailored and personalised holiday experiences to each traveller and is accustomed to the needs and preferences of travellers from the Middle East or GCC region in particular. Whether it



Deepak Booneady
CEO
Sun Siyam Resorts

is a private picnic on a secluded sandbank, incredible fine dining experiences, top notch spa and wellness treatments, or never-seen-before activities in the Maldives such as the very first horse ranch or largest floating water park in the Maldives, Sun Siyam Maldives has it all. Families are also most welcome as we have several deals and activities especially catered to large families and a few of our resorts offer two kids under 15 years stay for free in the same room.

Could you share about your performance last year and expectations for this year, especially with summer already setting in?

We have had an incredible 2022. Despite the ongoing economic and global issues, we were able to overcome these challenges and welcomed guests to stay with us at five Sun Siyam Resorts. The Maldives itself received over 1.6 million tourists for the year, surpassing its tourist arrival targets despite the challenges faced due to the pandemic and recent geopolitical conflicts. In 2022, we saw a trend for larger groups of friends and extended families travelling together. We are looking forward to 2023, building on the success we experienced last year.

How do travel agents/ operators help in generating business for you?

Travel agents and operators play a crucial role in generating business for Sun Siyam Resorts by



promoting and selling the resort to potential customers. They serve as a direct link between the resort and the customers, providing expert advice and recommendations to travellers, which increases the chances of booking. Travel agents also have a vast network of clients, which allows for wider reach and exposure for the resort. By working

with travel agents and operators, Sun Siyam Resorts is able to tap into their established customer base and reach new audiences, ultimately helping to drive bookings and revenue.

Future plans for the property?

There are several plans in the works to continue to grow Sun Siyam Resorts, both in the

Maldives and in other parts of the world. We plan to reopen our Sri Lankan boutique beach property Pasikudah in Q3 of this year and looking at upgrading and refurbishing our popular Sun Siyam Iru Fushi resort. In addition, we will be introducing new attractions at Siyam World, Sun Siyam Iru Veli and Olhuveli in the upcoming months. 



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'Kanoo Travel More' offers superior travel

Kanoo Travel's 'Kanoo Travel More' is an extension of its service offerings, introducing clients to superior travel experiences. By joining forces with G Travel International, the first IATA member agency in the GCC aims to 'unlock an exceptional potential' to serve customers with unique opportunities for travel suited to their needs by employing their network in the marine and energy market.

TT Bureau

Kanoo Travel, the first IATA member agency in the GCC, has announced the launch of its new vertical, 'Kanoo Travel More' for offshore, marine, resource, and energy travel solutions, as well as the emergence of a strategic partnership with Norway-owned company, G Travel International, to deliver global travel management services.

Kanoo Travel More is an extension of Kanoo Travel's service offerings, introducing clients to superior travel experiences. By joining forces with G Travel International, Kanoo Travel strives to provide unrivalled travel management solutions to its clients.

Zaeem Gama, Divisional CEO, Kanoo Travel, said, "Kanoo Travel More is a landmark in pursuit of innovation. Our tie-up with G Travel International adds



(L-R): Fahad Kanoo, CEO, The Kanoo Group (UAE and OMAN) and Finn Hansen, Owner, G Travel International give a smiling gesture while Ali Abdulla Kanoo, Chairman, Strategic Business Units, The Kanoo Group, hands over a document to Sverre Husby, Director, G Travel International.

a distinct dynamic. We unlock an exceptional potential to serve our customers with unique opportunities for travel suited to their needs by employing their network in the marine and energy market. We are forging an innovative path in the sector by leveraging our skills to

push the market's boundaries and provide remarkable experiences that exceed expectations. This partnership highlights our dedication of staying ahead of the changing industry trends and cementing our position as a leader in the field of travel management."

Ali Abdulla Kanoo, Chairman, SBU Trading Divisions, said, "We are thrilled to join forces with G International Travel. This collaboration boosts our market position and highlights our shared goal of providing our clients with excellent travel experiences and services. We

are positioned to expand our capacity to fulfill our clients' demands by employing G Travel International's world-wide network, technical skills, and experience in the marine and energy sector."

Founded in the late 1930s, Kanoo Travel has an extensive network of offices in MENA, specializing in corporate travel, MICE, leisure and holiday and marine travel.

ence in regions we operate in, strategically positioned to provide customers globally with outstanding value. Also, our effort in innovation strengthens inspires us to define new standards."

Sverre Husby, Director, G Travel International, said, "We are excited to announce the launch of Kanoo Travel More - G Travel International to the public. Together, we will bring unrivalled

This tie-up highlights our dedication of staying ahead of the industry trends and cementing our position as a leader in the field of travel management

Finn Hansen, Owner, G Travel International, said, "We look forward to aiding Kanoo Travel on this journey. As we join forces, we create a powerful pres-

knowledge and resources, establishing new standards and travel solutions. Our common vision towards excellence will enable us to provide value to our clients."

Copthorne gets top rank

Copthorne Hotel Dubai has been recognized and ranked as the top hotel in the Digital Reputation Report for the year 2022 (4-star) by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

TT Bureau

The Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) has extended recognition to Copthorne Hotel. Commenting on the achievement, **Shady Dawad**, Gen-

ereral Manager, Copthorne Hotel, Dubai, said, "Our team right-

fully earned the trust and confidence of our guests by going above and beyond to meet and exceed guest expectations. The

pathway to success is paved by the collective efforts of a dedicated team working towards a common purpose."

He reiterated, "We are overjoyed to announce that the Copthorne Hotel Dubai has been recog-

nized and ranked as top hotel in the Digital Reputation Report for the year 2022 (4-star) by Dubai Economy and Tourism. The journey towards winning this prestigious award resonates

define our benchmark towards our service level and we will strive to maintain and achieve better results in the upcoming year. We thank the DET Dubai for the recognition."



Copthorne hotel team with GM Shady Dawad

eral Manager, Copthorne Hotel, Dubai, said, "Our team right-

fully earned the trust and confidence of our guests by going above and beyond to meet and exceed guest expectations. The

pathway to success is paved by the collective efforts of a dedicated team working towards a common purpose."

Spain, Wego tie up for summer

As summer sets in, two leaders in the travel and tourism sector join hands to ensure that the Middle Eastern travellers are able to enjoy an unforgettable experience this summer.

TT Bureau

This strategic collaboration brings together the extensive reach and expertise of Wego in the online travel industry and the allure of Spain's rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and vibrant cities. Summer in Spain is one of the most enjoyable travel experiences. The vibrant cities such as Madrid and Barcelona offer a plethora of shopping options from high-end boutiques to traditional markets.

Mamoun Hmedan, Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director, MENA and India, Wego, said: "Spain is a preferred destination for MENA travellers. Through our partnership with Spain Tourism, we aim to attract a wider audience and boost tourism to this captivating country. We will be providing curated itineraries, and personalized travel recommendations, to inspire and

assist travelers in planning their dream trips to Spain."

Wego will showcase Spain's diverse attractions, including its historic landmarks, breathtaking beaches, and world-renowned culinary scene, to its user base.

in demand year after year. To consolidate this trend and build on it, we are partnering up with Wego to reach more and better the potential audience. Spain is a world in a country where travellers will find all they are looking for and that they desire, as Spain caters for all tourists. Through




Daniel Rosado and Mamoun Hmedan

Daniel Rosado, Director for Middle East, Spain Tourism, said: "Spain is a well-known country in the GCC region and it's experiencing a continuous increase

this campaign we will increase the awareness in the destination and focus not only in the most renowned destinations but also discover new ones."

Int'l hoteliers see GCC as key market

dnata Representation Services organised its GCC roadshow third time this year with partners from Indian Ocean, Asia, Europe and Middle East. The three-city roadshow started off in Riyadh, followed by Jeddah and ended in Dubai with over 185 travel trade partners in attendance.  talked to many participants to know their views on the present day travel scenario.



Adrien Michel Marie
General Manager
Movenpick Resort and Spa, Jimbaran, Bali

“For us in Bali, as you know Indonesia has a very close link with the GCC market and Bali has been listed among the top three destinations in the world, and we wanted to come and share the beauty of the highlands of Gods and gather a new market for us, which is recently growing very fast so we wanted to showcase what we do and how we can attract more of our GCC market all the way to Indonesia. We recently launched our halal breakfast which is a very important component of our food and beverage offer and we always try to promote local produce so our GCC guests can discover Indonesia's food, coffee, chocolates made in Bali to really discover Bali.”



Annie Karapalaki
Head of Sales
Columbia Beach Resort, Cyprus

“This is a very important event for us as we have experts introducing us to the market. These markets are basically new for us. We have direct flights to the island and all of this area is very important for us. We are hoping to introduce the hotel in the best possible way and to start a close collaboration with all the partners we are currently meeting. Well, in order to open up markets, we always check the flights because obviously direct flights are very important to every single destination. We are hoping to start collaborating when it comes to the leisure market with a number of travel agencies or tour operators here in the market.”



Aristos Diomedous
General Manager
Constantinou Bros Hotels, Cyprus

“First of all, dnata is now our representative here in GCC market, for us it is a very important market. We want to introduce Cyprus as an alternative destination. And we want to introduce Cyprus in our hotels together with my colleagues. We push with marketing, with social media, with offline, online activities in marketing and we want to present our product and get knowledge to the agents that are selling to the clients. Cyprus has great potential and the market here is very important. Not only the expats that live here, but also the locals in the GCC market. Cyprus is part of Europe, so anyone who has a Schengen visa, can easily travel to Cyprus.”



Ayu Putri
Sales Manager
Ayana, Bali

“We want to grab more business from GCC market, especially from UAE and we want to make more awareness about our brand, Ayana is a local brand, but we are quite famous in certain countries because we are 5 star hotel luxury. In Ayana Labuan Bajo Flores Island, we are the first 5-star luxury hotel there and in Bali the unique one, we have the largest area, almost 100 acres and we have a full proper team there with all the specific categories. So, I am pretty sure our property is very suitable and fit for GCC market. Beside the destination is already famous for Bali. One of our properties is Fila, which is quite a good and fit for GCC market.”



Berivan Gungor
Sales Manager
Warwick Paris - Hotel Westminster

“The GCC market is very important for Paris, especially for Europe. The timing of this event is good. Summertime is very busy with the GCC clientele. We as hotel Warwick are very present in the GCC area, we are coming very often physically, but as well having very good partners as dnata, as wholesalers, we are working with lots of tour operators with direct companies. We are presenting Hotel Warwick Paris, we have got two properties, one is the key property for the GCC market which is the Warrick Paris, Champs Elysees, a very good spot, the best spot for the GCC market and we have got the second property the Hotel Westminster.”



Costandinos Christofi
Senior Sales Manager
Leisure - City of Dream Mediterranean, Cyprus

“The GCC market is important for Cyprus because of the variety of travellers that come to the island - its expats, its locals, its all types of travellers. It is very important for us because of the connectivity that we have to Cyprus with our daily flights from Dubai. So, we are here at Ahlan Arabia to showcase a brand new property that we are opening in a few short days in Cyprus. It is the Mediterranean's and Europe's first luxury integrated gaming resort in the Mediterranean with more than 8000 square meters of gaming space but also family resort with great facilities for families, adventure parks, the largest swimming pool complex on the island.”



Josefine Dahgren
Head of Sales
MEA and APAC - Yalago

“Yalago is part of the dnata travel group. We are very closely related to dnata representation services. So for this event, we are very interested in meeting all our partners here in the UAE, many of them who we are already cooperating with but also a lot of new names and faces that we will try to tie up with and also to help with dnata representation services to distribute the product that they have in their portfolio. We want to build a network with the agencies here and help them to widen their distribution network and to connect the suppliers we have here with the agents because we have a platform that can help B2B agents. We want to provide global platforms for the agents.”



Khadija Eddaf
Sales Manager
Leisure & MICE - Al Raha Beach Hotel, Abu Dhabi

“Well considering the GCC or local market, it's one of the important markets for UAE in general and for Abu Dhabi specifically. Nowadays, we can see the GCC, it's become very attractive and all the activities that is coming to Abu Dhabi recently, it's attracting the GCC. So, being in this road show, it will help us to promote the destination and also to promote our hotel, considering the location, it's near to Yes Island and near and accessible to Dubai. So it's very important to promote the property for GCC and also for local markets, attending a couple of cities, starting from Riyadh, Jeddah and also Dubai. So hopefully we will push as much as we can for this market.”



Manolis Arvanitis
Revenue Manager
Mitsis Hotels

“Ahlan Arabia is a great opportunity for us to show our business and show our properties and show our destinations to the market. GCC market is a very good market for us because they are customers with big expectations from their holidays. They are customers who care about culture, good food, good vacations, and good customer service. We are here to coordinate directly with the agents who represent the GCC market so they can have preferential rates from us in order to start a good corporation for us to have a lot of guests coming from the Arabic countries. The Mitsis hotels are a company with 20 hotels in Greece in five destinations.”



Nuchanart Sairhuan
Director, Sales and Marketing
The Nai Harn, Phuket

“The GCC market is very important for us, not only for my hotel in Nai Harn, but for Thailand and also for Phuket as a destination as well. For us, for example, last year we have more than 1,000 clients, guests from GCC countries visiting us so that's a very great honor to welcome you. We want to explore and want to know more of this market. So that's why we decided to join the Ahlan Arabia Roadshow. And we selected to join our roadshow with dnata because we know that they are one of the biggest players in the market. So this is actually our very first roadshow and the choice is very important. And I hope dnata could help us explore more of this market.”



Prodromos Chamboulides
Sales and Marketing Manager
St. Raphael Resort and Marina, Cyprus

“For us it is a very important market as the hotel used to be (insert old name) we experience clientele from GCC market and now we are back with a different name and would like to continue our strong corporation with GCC market. We had a lot of individuals, royal families as well because our resort is a 5 star resort (elimisol) on the beach and our services are beyond expectations. The St.Raphael resort is the only private marina in Cyprus and luxury tower we call this a hidden paradise in Cyprus. We are only 40 minutes away from both international airports. We are offering eight restaurants, a lot of bars, cuisine, halal food and we also make people feel like home.”



Rai Viany Pande
Assistant Director, Sales
Radisson Blu Maldives

“Ahlan Arabia roadshow is quite important for us because it gives us the opportunity to meet the B2B partners, the travel agents from the Saudi Arabia market and UAE market. So it's giving us a good opportunity to meet the travel agent directly face to face, which is quite important. Okay, basically GCC market is very important for us because it has become our top five market since the resort is opening from 2020. So, Saudi Arabia market used to be our number one market as well from the GCC, followed by UAE and other part of the GCC region. So, definitely GCC market is very important for us.”

Inputs by TT Bureau

dnata showcases summer offerings

Ahlan Arabia, a roadshow conducted recently by dnata Representation Services, brought together the Middle East travel trade and outbound players from across the globe, including hotels and DMCs. The 3rd edition of the roadshow, kicking off in Saudi Arabia and concluding in Dubai, offered some fascinating destinations for summer.



ME market expansion in focus @TTM+

Thailand is focusing on the Middle East as a key source market, as the Southeast Asian country last year received 96,389 travellers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, followed by 65,857 from the UAE, 44,566 from Kuwait, 26,745 from Oman and 23,170 travellers from Qatar. Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2023, held recently in Bangkok, was one of the key steps in this direction.

TT Bureau

Thailand's leading B2B travel industry show, the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2023 concluded in Bangkok recently. **Hon. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn**, Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand, inaugurated the event, which was attended by key agents in the Middle East.

Welcoming the participants, Ratchakitprakarn said, "It is indeed an honour and pleasure for me to meet every one of you, who have travelled from around the world, and entrepreneurs living in Thailand, who have come to participate in the Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2023 in Bangkok today. After COVID-19, 'shaping supply' is what Thailand's tourism has put in mind and has been increasingly concerned about. In other words, we realize that developing the quality of tourism products and services and most importantly experiences for the entire journey are key to meeting the demand of quality travellers. Meanwhile, sustainability is playing a crucial role in improving the supply side.



we cannot do it alone. However, we need support from you and the stakeholders in the tourism industry to make it happen."

Last year, Thailand received 96,389 travellers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, followed by 65,857 from the UAE, 44,566 from Kuwait, 26,745 from Oman and 23,170 trav-

Speaking about the event, Supasorn said, "This year, the TTM+ 2023 will continue to shine a spotlight on the Thai tourism industry's ongoing efforts towards a meaningful travel direction through the promotion and development of high value and sustainable tourism. As the premier showcase of Thai tourism,

confidence in Thailand as a preferred destination."

The TTM+ 2023 has been conceptualised in line with the 'Visit Thailand Year 2023: Amazing New Chapters' marketing campaign, to showcase travel products, services, and experiences that promote Thai cultural values for a meaningful travel

Asia, America, and Australia – and emerging markets – Eastern Europe, Middle East, South America, and South Africa.

Chattan Kunjara Na Ayudhya, Deputy Governor for Marketing Communications, TAT, explained about the expansion to new markets such as Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam in Saudi Arabia, and Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab

overall strategies have included luxury tourism experiences, wellness tourism, and tourism towards sustainability. Highlights for luxury tourism experiences include Live the Bangkok Life and Relaxing Phangnga plus Youthfully Phuket, while for wellness tourism, Thailand's wellness possibilities include family-friendly wellness breaks in Chiang Mai; and immunity booster vacations in Ko Samui, Surat Thani.

Developing the quality of tourism products, services and experiences for the entire journey are key to meeting the demand of quality travellers

Emirates at the Thailand Product Update for buyers and media attending the Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2023. The TAT underlined quality and experience-based tourism among key elements of Thai tourism products and services as part of its strategic move to transform Thailand's tourism towards high-value and

Thailand's tourism towards sustainability comprises a wide range of destinations and activities that deliver sustainability experiences, including exploring local community by bike at Bang Krachao, Samut Prakan; adventurer travel in Umphang, Tak; slow life at low-carbon destination on Ko Mak in Trat; and exploring the Little Amazon and surfing at the Memories beach in Takua Pa, Phangnga.

TAT is also developing a national drive that encompasses the entire Thai tourism industry with the development of the Sustainable Tourism Goals (STGs) based on the 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations. Among new initiatives include a STAR (Sustainable Tourism Acceleration Rating) system to certify sustainable tourism businesses.

Meanwhile, TAT continues to develop a new tourism ecosystem and elevate supply through such initiatives as the Thailand Tourism Awards, 'Up-Skill Re-Skill' human resources development project, and 'CF Hotels' online platform for hotel and lodging operators to sustainably manage businesses. TAT continues to collaborate with strategic partners and increase air connectivity, expand markets, and promote Thailand as an all-year round destination. Thailand celebrated a milestone achievement in 2022, welcoming a total of 11.15 million international arrivals, which generated a revenue of 589 billion Baht.



Thus, it has been addressed in our strategy that implements the 'Bio-Circular-Green' economy concept to design travel experiences and deliver meaningful trips to travellers, as well as initiate and implement the sustainable tourism goals to set a framework advocating sustainability in the environment, socio-economy, management, and culture for tourism related businesses in Thailand. In order to successfully drive Thailand towards sustainable tourism and being a quality destination,

This year, the TTM+ 2023 will continue to shine a spotlight on the Thai tourism industry's ongoing efforts towards a meaningful travel direction

ellers from Qatar. Last month, addressing the Arabian Travel Market, **Yuthasak Supasorn**, Governor, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), reiterated that they expect one million visitors from the Middle East by 2025.

this year's TTM+ will present how we are elevating supply and sustainable standards while leveraging the kingdom's 5F soft-power foundations of Food, Film, Festival, Fight and Fashion to maintain tourists'

experience. It also corresponds with TAT's strategy to leverage technology and innovation to add value and transform Thai tourism to 'Smart Tourism' and accelerate Thailand's tourism ecosystem to quality and sustainability.

This year's TTM+ attracted over 850 participants, including 350 buyers from 50 countries, 400 sellers from across all five regions of Thailand, as well as 100 local and international media. Buyers include those from key source markets – Europe, ASEAN, East

sustainable tourism. He further reiterated, "TAT is illustrating Thailand as offering meaningful-driven travel to improve visitors' experience. Encompassing discovery, transformation, fulfilment, and engagement between people, cultures, and nature, this underscores TAT's direction to making a destination for protecting the country's vast natural and scenic beauty and instigating a range of environmental initiatives."

Key elements of tourism products and services that reflect TAT's

Kanoo and G Travel join hands

Kanoo Travel, the first IATA member agency in the GCC, recently announced the launch of its new vertical, 'Kanoo Travel More'. The company has tied up with a Norway-owned company, G Travel International, to use their network in the marine and energy market and serve customers with unique travel opportunities suited to their needs.



LIVE AT THE HEART OF EXPO CITY DUBAI

Expo Central

True to the values and ambitions of the World Expo, Expo Central is a new model for smart, sustainable, people-centric urban living. Comprising three distinctive residences located in the centre of Expo City Dubai, it forms part of a 15-minute urban community with a seamless mobility network and easy access to daily amenities and attractions.

Expo Valley

Captures the desire to live better, kinder and freer – a community that connects with nature, with villas and townhouses dispersed throughout an undulating native landscape that overlooks a nature reserve, lake and wadi.

Find out more.
Visit expocitydubai.com

EXPO VALLEY

AT EXPO CITY DUBAI

MANGROVE RESIDENCES

AT EXPO CITY DUBAI



DEVELOPED BY



مدينة إكسبو دبي
EXPO CITY DUBAI

MASTER DEVELOPER

MOVEMENTS

SWITZERLAND TOURISM Dubai

Switzerland Tourism (ST) has appointed **LIVIO GOETZ** as the new Director for the GCC market. Goetz starts this new position on 1 July 2023 in Dubai, where he will succeed Matthias Albrecht, who is the new Director for the Nordic Countries. Goetz has been working at the helm of Switzerland Tourism in Sydney since July 2019. Previously, he worked as Head of the Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau in London for five years. The seasoned tourism expert started his career at the Switzerland Travel Centre in Zurich, followed by management positions at Lucerne Tourism (Switzerland) and Worldwide Events (UK). In March 2021, Goetz was appointed as Vice-Chairperson of European Travel Commission's overseas chapter in Australia.



MANDARIN ORIENTAL Doha

Mandarin Oriental, Doha, appoints **THOMAS KINSPIERGER** as the new General Manager. Kinsperger will succeed Martin Schneider, who has served as the General Manager since the hotel's opening in March 2019. Schneider will continue his longstanding tenure with Mandarin Oriental as the General Manager of Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur. With over 20 years of hospitality experience across Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Kinsperger brings a wealth of experience in his role. He joined Mandarin Oriental, Doha, in 2019 as the Hotel Manager. Since then, he has demonstrated his exceptional leadership capabilities. Kinsperger began his career with Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group in 2008 at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok. He holds an Executive MBA from RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia.



JUMEIRAH GROUP Dubai

Jumeirah Group appoints **NIAMH O'CONNELL** as its first Vice President of Wellbeing, Group and Corporate. The move is part of the group's renewed focus to elevate the wellness offering across its portfolio and craft distinctive experiences that meet the needs of today's discerning luxury traveller. With nearly two decades of experience in luxury wellness and hospitality across Europe, the United States, and the Asia Pacific region, O'Connell will work alongside Jumeirah Group's hotel and operations teams to craft an all-encompassing wellbeing strategy. This will include spa services, fitness offerings, longevity programmes, therapies, and holistic wellness as well as branding, design and programming. Most recently, she was the Group Vice President at Rosewood Hotel Group.



KEMPINSKI HOTEL Muscat

Kempinski Hotel Muscat has appointed **MANAL AL OMARI** as Assistant Director of Marketing & E-Commerce. Manal brings with her more than 10 years of experience in e-commerce and marketing, having led the e-commerce and digital departments for leading hotel chains across several countries in the Middle East. Al Omari joins Kempinski Hotel Muscat from her most recent role as Marketing Manager for the prestigious Burj Al Arab in Dubai, where her mission was to develop and execute marketing campaigns to drive further business growth. In her new role, Al Omari will use her knowledge and skills for the hotel's success, deploying innovative marketing campaigns and growing the revenue and market share from e-commerce activities.



CHOICE HOTELS EMEA

Choice Hotels, EMEA, has appointed **ARNOUD VINK** as its new Head of Development. Vink is responsible for driving the group's growth strategy across EMEA and the appointment supports the company's ongoing focus on building a scalable network of high-quality hotels across the region. Vink will focus on signing new partnerships and franchise agreements in EMEA, alongside working to develop new opportunities with existing franchisees. With over 15 years of experience in hospitality, he has held various senior leadership positions at the Accor Group in France. Most recently, he managed the development and franchising of all Accor brands in the French market as the group's Senior Vice President, prior to setting up his own consultancy.



LE MÉRIDIEN DUBAI HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE Dubai

WOJTEK ORLEWICZ takes leadership responsibility at the Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre complex of hotels, overseeing all aspects of guest accommodations, from front desk reception to housekeeping and facilities. In his new role as Complex Director of Rooms, Orlewicz will work closely with the hotel's senior team to ensure guests receive exceptional service throughout their stay, while taking responsibility for mentoring and developing his team of 340 associates. His portfolio of six hotels includes Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre, Le Meridien Fairway, Aloft Al Mina and Aloft Dubai Airport, Element Al Mina and Element Dubai Airport, totalling 1,247 keys.



News in pictures



Almosafer partners with Riyadh Chamber of Commerce to train Saudi talent



Sri Lankan Airlines opens new branch office in Sharjah, UAE



For the first time, the Spanish Tourism Office and Tourism Board of Andalusia organized Middle East Meet in Andalusia



Snow Abu Dhabi opens for guests



IGY Marinas partners with Sindalah to support vision of establishing world-leading yachting destination



Dubai Summer Surprises to increase tourists to Dubai

PARTNERING TOWARDS SUCCESS & CREATING VALUE



33 Countries in 1 Pass

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Book Passes + Seat Reservations with Rail Europe

With Eurail Pass, travel agents can now book seat reservations for TGV, Lyria, Eurostar, Frecciarossa, and other trains through Rail Europe

Everything in one app - The Rail Planner App

Plan your journey, keep track of your trips and show mobile tickets straight from your device.

Paper-free, always in your pocket

Your Eurail Pass is precious, but you don't need to worry about losing or damaging it.

Quick and easy ticket inspection

Simply add journeys from the in-app planner to your mobile pass before you board, then show your mobile ticket to the inspector in just a few taps.

In-App User Guide

Refer FAQs and the user guide in the app.

