

Travel back on track in Middle East



Mamoun Hmedan Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director MENA and India. Weoo It is once again time to witness the rapid growth of tourism within and outside GCC as summer approaches, more searches have already begun to determine the favourite summer escapes. **Mamoun Hmedan, Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director, MENA and India, Wego** shares insights on trends this summer with **EXAMPLE**.

🗊 Shehara Rizly

hat are the new trending destinations for summer this year?

We see an increase in searches for the summer as more people are planning longer holidays. We recorded 13 million flight and hotel searches on our platform for summer and we expect to see more demand closer to summer and Eid break. The top destinations dominating the searches are Egypt, India, Saudi, Thailand, UAE, Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco.

As the next Eid is during summer, what is the duration of the visits? The duration of the visits during the Eid holidays tend to be longer and this summer travellers will get a longer break in the MENA region. The average trip duration is between eight-14 days during the Eid period.

Are travellers going to combine and take a longer break this year?

We have been seeing revenge travel for quite some time post COVID, where people want to make up for the lost time. Bleisure and workation continue to be among the top trends we are observing and as a result people can travel longer. *Contd. on page 26* ►

Adopting sustainable hospitality

The UAE has been working on sustainability over the years, the hospitality industry was the first to adopt it. speaks with the pioneer behind adopting sustainability in hospitality, Iftikhar Hamdani Area Manager, Northern Emirates, Coral Beach Resort Sharjah, and Bahi Ajman Palace.



🔐 Shehara Rizly

s the hospitality industry ready with infrastructure that suits sustainability? The industry has made significant progress in recent years towards sustainability, but there is still a long way to go. Many hotels and resorts have implemented eco-friendly practices such as energyefficient lighting, water conservation measures, and waste reduction programs.

However, there is still a need for more sustainable infrastructure, such as renewable energy sources, green building materials, and sustainable transportation options. Also, there is a need for more education and awareness among both the hospitality professionals as well as the guests about the importance of sustainability. Overall, while progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the hospitality industry is truly sustainable.



Iftikhar Hamdani Area Manager for Northern Emirates, Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace

What are the initiatives taken to incorporate sustainability? There are many initiatives being taken to incorporate *Contd. on page 18* ►

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Wellness tourism growing in Dubai

Medical and wellness tourism is fast becoming one of the key source markets for both inbound and outbound travel. Participating at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), **Ashiya Nazar, Director, GCC, Akbar Travels** shares with their plans for the year. The platform enables to get ideas, information of enhanced products and establish links with reputed brands in travel and tourism industry.

Shehara Rizly ow important is ATM? Will you be participating this year? If so, what are the key objectives/focus this year? We will be participating this year at ATM as it is the biggest markets, explore the potential and acquire the emerging travel trends and innovations. The Akbar Travels will also be showcasing medical tourism, health, and wellness products, which is steadily catching up with tourism industry.

GCC travellers are currently opting for both outbound destinations and staycations, depending on their preferences and circumstances

global event for travel and tourism hosted in Dubai for three decades. Dubai is known for providing the most lucrative and fastest growing tourism market in the world. This platform enables to get ideas, information of enhanced products and establish links with reputed brands in travel and tourism industry. Our objective is to reach new Do you see new source markets coming into UAE and other GCC countries? If so, which would you say are the most popular ones? Post pandemic, we have seen new source markets coming into the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and GCC countries, especially from Asia and Africa. Oman and India have been increasing year on year, upcom-



Ashiya Nazar Director, GCC, Akbar Travels

ing once are Kazakhstan, Israel, China, and Africa.

What are your thoughts on the new Schengen visa digitalization? Will this ease the process? Or is it too early to tell?

The Schengen visa digitalization will be a game changer. The Schengen visa digitalization is a welcome development as it streamlines the visa application process and makes it more convenient for travellers. We all witnessed travel surge post COVID and there was surge in Schengen visa applications, hence many families changed their travel plans and went to Singapore and Turkey among others, as families did not get allocation for appointments.

Would you be able to share some of the new trends that you see in travellers today?

Some new trends we see in travellers today include a growing interest in sustainable tourism, personalized travel



experiences, and a focus on health and wellness. GCC travellers are opting for outbound destinations and staycations, depending on their preferences and circumstances. Personalization is also important and offering flexible experiences.

Are travellers opting for outbound destinations or staycations? Who does what? Are the locals or expats? Among locals and expatriates in the GCC region, we see a mix of outbound and staycation preferences. At Akbar Travels, we have evolved over the years by embracing new technologies and trends, while maintaining our commitment to providing excellent customer service.

Will you be able to share how Akbar Travels has evolved over the years? What are the new B2B products?

For 40 years, we have maintained our position as a market leader in Middle East and India. We adapt to new technologies and set up our own in-house technology firm, Benzy Info-Tech. Akbar Travels' dedicated R&D team strives to enhance its services for its customers and identify new opportunities in niche markets. In 2022, Akbar Travels opened 15 new offices in GCC, offering a range of products, including Akbar Corp, Akbar B2B, Akbar B2C, and Arabian Journeys (DMC).





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Revenge tourism & rise in green travel

This saw individuals determined to 'make up for lost time' and undertake in travel and tourism which they missed during the pandemic. This trend was evident since the reopening of domestic and global boundaries, where travel bookings experienced a significant surge. Travellers appear to be less concerned about higher travel prices in pursuit of revenge tourism.

A though it may seem unusual to combine a phrase with negative connotations such as 'revenge' with 'tourism', the term 'revenge tourism' has gained popularity. Revenge tourism emerged in 2021 as the world began to reopen after modation) in pursuit of revenge tourism, contributing to growing tourism numbers and change in traveller behaviour. Italy, Portugal, Thailand, and India benefited from revenge tourism in stimulating growth in their domestic and international tourism sectors.

Revenge tourism will continue to influence tourism trends in the near future. Dubai and Abu Dhabi experienced a rise in revenge tourism

COVID curbs lessened. This saw individuals determined to 'make up for lost time' and undertake in travel and tourism which they missed during the pandemic. This trend was evident since the reopening of domestic and global boundaries, where travel bookings experienced a significant surge. Travellers appear to be less concerned about higher travel prices (travel and accomMoreover, the sudden surge of tourists can disrupt local cultures and traditions, leading to a loss of authenticity and heritage. The pressure on resources can exacerbate existing challenges in regions where resources are already scarce. Places such as Hawaii and Machu Picchu have reported overcrowding, causing concern among local stakeholders. Therefore, it is crucial to advocate for sustainable tourism practices to strike a balance between demands of tourists, welfare of local communities, and environment preservation. This ensures that tourism can continue to drive economic growth and development, while safeguarding the natural and cultural resources of travel destinations.

UAE, popular 'revenge travel' destination The UAE has shown resilience and growth in the past few years. As per the latest figures released by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), the number of global overnight visitors to Dubai reached 14.36 million in 2022, indicating a YOY growth of 97 per cent from the 7.28 million tourist arrivals recorded in 2021. The desire for travel appears to have risen, with many individuals eager to discover new destinations and activities.

Therefore, revenge tourism will continue to influence tourism trends in the near future. Dubai and Abu Dhabi experienced a rise in revenge tourism, with more people seeking to visit the UAE to make up for missed travel opportunities. By reopening its borders, the UAE has become an attractive destination for revenge travel, both domestically and internationally. The development of new attractions such as the Museum of The Future and Deep Dive Dubai contributed to revenge travel growth. The UAE will take advantage of revenge tourism through the return of travellers from China. With China allowing organised groups to travel to the UAE, and plans by Emirates and Etihad Airlines to increase ops between the UAE and China, this provides the former with an opportunity to attract this former lucrative market.



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



TravTips—pioneers in leisure travel

Expanding its portfolio with global leisure giants, such as Europamundo Vacations, Thomas Cook India & Satguru Travel Group, TravTips has established itself as a leisure genius catering to outbound leisure travellers. **Suraj Mainat**, **Founder and CEO**, **TravTips** shares with their various feats over the years and strengthening their presence in the UAE catering to expats from Asia, Middle East and Europe.

😯 Shehara Rizly

TravTips, known for its customer-centric outlook, reliability and efficiency, has established itself as one of the fastest growing leisure travel been a great journey for us. Firstly, the main markets we cater to are the expats living in the UAE; Asian, Middle East, Western and European. Our unique feature is being customer centric, TravTips leisure

TravTips leisure experts understands the needs of the customer and offer appropriate leisure products with high level of service delivery

companies in the UAE/ GCC region over the past decade. From its inception in 2013, their journey of success was inevitable, as one of their first feats was signing of the franchise agreement with Thomas Cook India, which is predominantly known for escorted group tours.

Suraj Mainat, Founder and CEO, TravTips, says, "Establishing TravTips brand in the UAE has experts understands the needs of the customer and offer appropriate leisure products with high level of service delivery; thereby strive to achieve excellence through Customer Happiness. Under TravTips brand we offer All Inclusive Escorted Group Tours for Asian community and Customized Tours bespoke arrangements for mid and high-income group travellers for all Nationalities."



Suraj Mainat Founder and CEO, TravTips

In 2016, TravTips had gained its brand loyalty and recognition as the leading leisure travel leader specialised in group tours and customized holidays. It is a leader when it comes to the outbound leisure sector, as it is by far one of the companies that have more than 25+ specialised curated leisure products to support their clientele.

An additional source of success pitched in when they signed as a distributor for Europamundo Vacations – world's largest tour operator with guaranteed departures from two travellers. TravTips cater to both B2C and B2B with their varied travel brands. They offer a range of specialised outbound leisure products such as Group and Van mitment to achieve success, from get go TravTips have been climbing its way to the top rung and today it's one of the most successful group tour leisure leaders, customised tant travel trade exhibitions in the world, this year we will be participating with our three main brands - TravTips, Thomas Cook India and Europomundo Vacations. I would like to



tours, Customised Holidays, Educational Tours, Cruise Holidays and MICE to B2C & distribute Thomas Cook India in UAE & Europamundo Vacations in the region. Any business model requires a great deal of comtake this opportunity to wish exhibitors, buyers and global travel fraternity – a great success at this year's ATM, which will be the first time, the world meets with all borders open for travel." >



35% business accrued from travel biz

Issam Slaimi, General Manager, Golden Tulip Media Hotel in conversation with shared that 35% of its business is accumulated from the travel trade. In an exclusive interview, the hospitality leader shares the way forward approach by the hotel and the Louvre Hotel Group when it comes to sustainability practices, which has gained paramount importance today.



in place, including eliminating the single-use plastic, smart thermostats, energy-saving LED bulbs, and smart climate control, among others. This practice not only benefits the environment, but also helps one

The hotel industry contributes 1% of worldwide emissions and to slash that, the hotels have taken many steps to ensure sustainability practices

businesses that already incorporated sustainable practices into its operations to reduce the adverse environmental impact. As per studies, the hotel industry contributes 1 per cent of worldwide carbon emissions and to slash that ration, the hotels have taken many steps to ensure sustainability practices are in place. On a hotel level, we already have several practices

to save money on running the daily operation.

Will sustainability mean guests will have pay extra? If so, how much would that be?

As the guests are the main consumers of water and energy resources, it is important to involve them in our efforts. So, we do communicate to all the guests to be mindful of



Issam Slaimi General Manager Golden Tulip Media Hotel

water and energy use. The cost of sustainable product is often higher due to expensive raw materials. However, we are not planning to implement any sustainability charges on guests.

How important is ATM? Will you be partnering with the group?

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) provides us a unique platform for us to meet with our existing partners and industry colleagues, considering the position of Dubai and UAE on the



world tourism map. The Louvre Hotel Group has taken a stand, and we will be representing our hotel or the group from there in the ATM.

What will be your key objectives at this year's ATM?

Our significant objectives will be to network with top professionals and explore the latest

travel technologies, meet our existing partners to re-establish our valuable partnerships. Another focus area of the Louvre Hotel Group is to secure new business relationships and to attend some of the conference sessions, especially the new sustainability hub.

Will you be looking at new source markets?

Besides what we have, we will also be looking to increase the demand from China as they are an important part of the the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) source markets before the pandemic.

Do you work with travel agents? What is the percentage of business with agents/corporate bookers?

Yes, we do work with destination management companies (DCMs), wholesalers, and tour operators. Nearly 35 per cent of our business comes from the travel trade segment.



Training is key for industry growth

In today's fast paced world, training has become an important asset in the travel and tourism industry. A workforce, which is properly trained, turns out to be profitable at the end of the day. Shakir Kantawala, Co-founder and Managing Partner, WingsWay Training Institute LLC (Dubai) and WingsWay Global Training Academy (India) shares with ______.

🗊 Shehara Rizly

ow critical is training and upskilling for our industry workforce?

Upskilling and re-skilling has gained importance in a stiff competitive work environment. Training existing and new talent is the bridge between the current state of our industry and a successful future. Efficiency and profitability depend on a well-trained workforce. Continuous 'learning and development' are a must to maintain the competitive edge and deliver customer delight. This is due to the industry's rapidly evolving nature, emerging technologies, new-age developments, regulatory changes and shifting customer preferences.

Investing in the right training ensures we stay informed about the latest industry needs, adapt to new challenges, im-





Shakir Kantawala Co-founder and Managing Partner, WingsWay Training Institute LLC (Dubai) & WingsWay Global Training Academy (India)

prove productivity, and contribute to the organization's overall growth, while keeping clients happy and loyal. Being imparted training boosts the emploee's morale, motivation, professional growth, career progression and prosperity.

Which roles in company hierarchy can benefit from education?

Relevant training and certifications benefit the employee and the employer. Frontliners, sales teams, operations department, contracting team, accounts and finance, senior-management, all will benefit if they are trained and certified. The industry thrives on 'continuous improvement' and adapting to the rapidly evolving landscape is essential to maintain your competitive edge. Consistent training is useful for the workforce to remain agile, and provide outstanding levels of service.

What is the impact of advanced tech in travel and tourism?

ChatGPT is one of the many emerging technologies options available such as AI. These new-age developments may not lead to any immediate job losses in the travel and tourism industry, but not effectively embracing these technologies can make you redundant. Travel, tourism, and aviation industries remain experiential and handson in nature. Replacing this aspect will not happen soon. The impact will be slower due to adaptation issues and steep costs of implementation. WingsWay's training and upskilling programs help professionals ing of client preferences, allowing us to recommend better suited personalized travel arrangements enhancing loyalty

Emerging technologies like ChatGPT can redefine business models, enhance customer experiences, and streamline operations

develop the required skills to understand, implement, and manage them effectively. This ensures the industry remains competitive and innovative.

How can the travel trade ease their back-end processes using emerging technologies?

Emerging technologies can redefine business models, enhance customer experiences, and streamline operations. Superior data-analysis with AI, will provide better understandand satisfaction. Chatbots will provide real-time client support with lower operational costs. Blockchain will enable secure transactions and offer more payment options. Simplification of processes will save time.

Are Gen Z & Millennials keen to join aviation, airports, travel and tourism industries? If so, why? Yes. We can see Gen Z and showing interest to join the aviation, airports, and travel and tourism.



Korean Air flights take off from Dubai

Korean Air flights resumed from Dubai to Seoul/Incheon from 20 April 2023 on a daily basis. This shows the solidarity between the two destinations as the travellers are keen on discovering both sides of the world. Business travellers can enjoy the daily flights now as they used to travel before the pandemic, says **Kyung Seon Park**, **Regional Manager**, **Middle East**, **Korean Air**.

🎧 Shehara Rizly

The past few years witnessed an increase of travellers opting to visit Korea especially due to the K -Pop music culture, which became a crowd puller towards the destination. In the UAE, concerts were held pulling massive crowds of both local and expat communities enjoying the muroute has served as a gateway that connects South Korea and the Middle East. To provide a more convenient schedule for business travellers related to Korean companies' projects in the Middle East and visitors interested in travelling to the Korea and Middle East, the frequency of Korean Air flights has been increased to the same daily as before COVID. Passengers can

Visa free entry to citizens of the UAE, Oman, KSA, Kuwait and Qatar is quite an advantage. This gives Korea an edge to attract more visitors

sic of this great nation. Business travellers can enjoy their travel once again just as it was prior to COVID.

Kyung Seon Park, Regional Manager, Middle East, Korean Air, says, "Korean Air's Dubai taste *bibimbap*, Korea's unique food (vegetable mixed rice), as an in-flight meal, and receive the best service on board. We truly provide excellence in flight."

Korean Air has been serving the Middle East clientele for

a long period of time. The flight timings are quite convenient for travellers, whether on business or leisure visit to Korea, as it departs Dubai in the evening and arrives in Incheon the next day. In terms of Incheon to Dubai, once can hop in on a flight late morning or early afternoon and be in Dubai later that night. Middle East is quite a strong market for Korea hence the website by the national tourism board of Korea has both in Arabic and English languages explaining the ways in which one can discover the country. Visa free entry to citizens of the UAE, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar is quite an advantage.

This gives Korea an edge to attract more visitors to the destination. As Korea bids for the 2030 Expo, Korean Air is

providing support for Korea's successful bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Busan, the second-largest city in Korea.

The World Expo is an international event that celebrates humanity and tackles current issues that our civilization is facing. In the past world expos, landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty were unveiled, as were new technologies such as the telephone, television, and elevator. The host country of World Expo 2030 will be decided later this year by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) through an election following a project examination of the candidate countries. The airline is showcasing a promotional video of Busan's bid through its in-flight entertainment system and airport lounges.



Smart Travel strengthens digital platform

This year Smart Travel will be attending ATM so that would be able to explore new partnerships and strengthen the ones they enjoy at present in the biggest travel trade show of the year. With cutting edge technology emerging into the travel platforms, it has become easier and efficient in terms of backoffice processes. Afia Ahmed, Founder and CEO, Smart Travel shares with

Ω TT Bureau

Whis year as buyers. The objective is to identify suitable suppliers to partner and collaborate our expansion plans. The leading travel and tourism exhibition is an ideal platform to look for quality suppliers with ethical and proven track record.

Could you share the general trends in the travel sector post COVID and this year in particular?

Post COVID unleashed travel and in many cases, the demand was higher than the supply. There was a huge demand for short getaways and staycations. Our Musandam getaway and Haffa overnight camps has seen huge demand, especially the weekends. In fact, they were fully sold out for the Eid holidays. Travellers from the UAE are now looking for offbeat destinations such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Eastern Europe to explore.

Will you be able to share the significant areas you will work on for this year?

We recently launched our portal www.smartzett.com. Within weeks of its launch, the portal got registered with 600 travel agents in the UAE. We will continue to add user

Travellers from the UAE are now looking for offbeat destinations such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Eastern Europe to explore



Afi Ahmed Founder CEO, Smart Travel

friendly features in the portal. Soon we will launch our B2C portal followed by B2E version for bookings tool. Being on the digital platform, we plan to expand in India with hospitality and aviation academy and to mark our presence in Saudi, the United Kingdom, and South Africa.

How are the hotels and airlines incentivizing you? Have there been any changes?

Smart Travel LLC is an IATAaccredited agency. Most of the airlines have offered IT fares and corporate deals to Smart Travel LLC. With increasing capacities post pandemic, we expect most of the airline will keep incentivising TMCs. NDC and modern retailing are two important fields in the minds of the agents or travel curators.

How do you define or see this in the industry?

NDC is the future of the air ticketing. Technical ability to adapt and distribute NDC will be the key. www.smartzett.com is proud to be one of them with the technical capability to integrate and distribute NDC-based ticketing to its users.

As all the borders have opened, how do you view summer this year? Any new destinations have come up?

Travellers are looking for offbeat destinations, as I have mentioned above. Because there is



a generation of travellers who have matured going to regular destinations such as Georgia, Armenia, and Paris among other places. So, we see destinations in East such as Montenegro, Vienna in Europe, Vietnam, Cambodia being explored by travellers this summer.

In your opinion, which would be the most popular destinations this year for summer?

Apart from Europe, Japan, Far East-SIN, and Malaysia, China

will also attract travellers this year as it has withdrawn all restrictions recently.

Do you see a difference in spending from guests in Middle East, GCC region?

Post pandemic, the economies of the Middle East and GCC countries have reported a steep rise recently. This has given a clear indication that the guests from Middle East and GCC countries would have more purchasing power.





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Embracing sustainability in hospitality

Over the past years, the hospitality industry has been involved in ensuring that the necessary infrastructure has been created to accommodate sustainability. Today, the industry has prioritized sustainability and implemented various measures in a bid to reduce the carbon footprint. ask the hospitality experts for their views on the current situation.



General Manage Grand Plaza Mövennick Media City

CThe industry is progressing towards sustainable infra with many hotels implementing energy-efficient systems, utilizing renewable energy sources, and implementing waste reduction measures. As hoteliers, we must continue to prioritize sustainability in all areas of operation to make an impact. Accor has been at the forefront in eliminating single-use plastic in their hotels and resorts and has contributed towards sustainability. Our hotels look to implementing initiatives such as reducing water and energy consumption, using ecofriendly materials, implementing recycling programs, and promoting sustainability practices.



Bianca Nastase Director of Operations & Commercials - Sofitel Duba Jumeirah Reach

🖌 At Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach, we are at the forefront of sustainable hospitality. Our eco-friendly practices reflect our commitment to preserving the environment and align with Accor and DTCM standards. We have eliminated single-use plastic, provided reusable amenities, and have given paper-based key cards to our guests, a eco-conscious experience. While achieving zero-carbon status by 2050 is doable, it requires substantial investment to convert existing infrastructure. We are committed to providing luxurious comfort, while safeguarding the well-being of our planet. 55



Nuran Kilan Director Sales and Marketing The Tower Plaza Hote

66 Hospitality firms are increasingly keen to jump onto the sustainability bandwagon. Too often they get lost in the complexity of the subject and limit their engagement to unimaginative solutions such as towel reuse in bathrooms. Much larger challenges loom in the physical infrastructure of the hotel itself. While making fundamental decisions about sustainability in construction, the situation of a new construction vs the renovation of an existing structure pose unique challenges and opportunities. When renovating an existing property, the objective is to turn "old into new".



General Manager - Ramada Hotel & Suites by Wyndham .IRF

G The hospitality industry has made strides towards sustainability but needs to align its infrastructure with sustainability principles. Initiatives include energy-efficient practices, water conservation, waste reduction, sustainable food practices, green building certifications, and community engagement. Achieving zero carbon status by 2050 is a challenging goal that requires a collective effort from all stakeholders, significant investment, and government policies. However, it is necessary to mitigate the impacts of climate change and create a sustainable future.



Radisson Hotel Groun

General Manager & District Director Or

4 At Radisson Hotel Group. we care for the future of our planet so does the rest of the industry. This is reflected in the industry's goal to reach net zero carbon status by 2050. I do believe we are ready to make sustainability the center of all our endeavours as an organization and industry. The sustainable hospitality alliance encourages hotels to steer towards a sustainable future by bringing changes in all aspects, from the supply chain, to team commitment and energy efficiency. We work with our partners to support the locals and we encourage our guests to adopt a sustainable lifestyle.



General Manager, The Diplomat Radisson Blu Ho Residence & Spa. Kingdom of Bahrai

Generation In the sector, achieving net zero and embracing sustainability, renewable energy, green building design, and green mobility is our aim. However, there is still much to learn. Proactive approaches and willingness to change are crucial. Tourism relies heavily on natural and cultural resources for growth and development. Hospitality leaders can further adapt their sustainability plans to current trends like reducing plastic waste and using environmentally friendly cleaning products. But a holistic approach must be taken from the outset, considering materials used and hotel structure for a more sustainable future.



David Allan Cluster General Manager Radisson Hotel Group

We are proud to be part of the industry's journey towards sustainability. Our three hotels are implementing infra to support sustainability as part of Radisson Hotel Group's Responsible Business culture. We have taken initiatives, such as reducing single-use plastics, presenting food in bulk quantities, and aiming to produce our own mineral water. We have a zero waste policy for food and support local initiatives to minimize waste. With our unwavering commitment, I have no doubt that the industry will achieve sustainability goals well before 2050, making hospitality a global leader in this endeavour. 77



Mohamad Yassine General Manage Radisson Blu HotelBeirut - Verdu

4 I am sure 10 years from now, the hospitality industry will be ready with infrastructure that support sustainability, from constructing solar panels, to renting bicycles instead of cars, I can see our industry will play a role in adopting to sustainable hospitality. By asking the employees to close the light after finalizing their shift, or making sure no food is wasted, or ensuring limited use of plastic through our carbon neutral meetings, we will all aid in adopting sustainability in hospitality. If hotels continue using the resources, while being sure that tourists still visit their destinations due to their preserved eco-attractions, then the industry will achieve zero carbon status by 2050. 55



Albert Meow Habtoor Grand Resort, Autograph Collecti

G Beverage, waste reduction and recycling, and certification and reporting: these initiatives are helping the industry reduce its environmental impact, improve its social and economic sustainability, and meet the expectations of guests who are looking for sustainable travel options. As the industry continues to evolve, we can expect to see innovative approaches to sustainability and environmental protection. Achieving a zerocarbon status by 2050 will be a challenge for the industry, but it is not impossible. It will require efforts from the industry and the stakeholders. New technologies are replacing the old system. It will require a change in the way the industry operates. 77



G The hospitality industry has made rapid strides in sustainable infrastructure, but yet more work remains to be done. At Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh Convention & Exhibition Center, we are committed to sustainability by taking up eco-friendly initiatives such as reducing water and energy consumption, waste reduction, and eco-friendly amenities, among others. Achieving zero carbon status by 2050 is an ambitious measure, but with collective effort by the hoteliers as well as the guests, the hospitality industry can steadily make progress. We believe that it is our responsibility to contribute to a greener future and inspire others to do the same.



Aldert van Zyl General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel Rivadh Convention & Exhibition Cente

Tiana Amanr Head ESI Kerten Hospitali 💪 As we strive to connect hospitality offerings to the local communities, we must integrate locality into our strategies to meet Saudi Vision 2030 Sustainability Goals. Collaboration is key to advancing these measures, as we have learned through UBBU's butterfly effect. Actions in the name of sustainability can have an impact on the economy, stakeholders, and local communities. Our approach is flexible to all the destinations we operate in. We prioritize working with local suppliers and artists to integrate and preserve the local culture and traditions. KSA is in a position where we in the industry could grow the

local economy, entrepreneurs,

and suppliers. 55



Shady Dawad Gen Copthorne Hotel Duba

🕌 In recent years, sustainability has become ingrained in the industry's DNA. Not only have we focused on measures such as water and energy conservation, but the sector is increasingly transitioning toward Sustainable Tourism. Hotels have implemented initiatives such as developing their own gardens and farms, sourcing out local produce instead of imports, minimizing food waste, and shifting to re-usable bottles that the industry partakes to implement sustainability. With support from the Dubai Government, and with the industry's proactive approach to sustainability, I believe that hospitality will be able to achieve the zero carbon status by 2050. 55

10

Program on Spain for trade partners

To familiarize travel trade with wealth of knowledge about the country, its rich history, culture, gastronomy, Turespaña, has compiled a Spain Specialist Program campaign for the trade partners in the Gulf Region. The program has been designed to suit the requirements of the travel trade in the Gulf Region, says **Daniel Rosado, Director GCC, Spain Tourism**.

🗊 Shehara Rizly

Rosado, Direcaniel tor GCC, Spain Tourism shares, "Turespaña has designed different online training programs about Spain in the Gulf Region so that the partners in travel trade can obtain the expertise on how to present Spain to their customers. These tools will help the travel trade discover everything about Spain through its different courses, which starts off with a basic one followed by an advanced course, it also entails cultural routes and other products and autonomous regions."

He says, "The Spain Specialist Course offers a wealth of knowledge to plan a vacation to Spain. Travel trade partners can learn about the different regions of Spain, including Capri or Canary Islands, Mediterranean Spain, and the beautiful Green Spain also known as the North-



Daniel Rosado Director GCC. Spain Tourism course today to learn all about the varied offerings the destination has to offer."

He explains the travel trade partners can become a certified expert on one of the most visited countries in the world, Spain. They will obtain the 'Certificate of Specialist in Spain'. Rosado says, "There are four different courses with 41 mod-

A trade partner can become a certified expert on Spain. On completion of the course, he or she can obtain the 'Certificate of Specialist in Spain'

west regions. With popular itineraries that include the incredible gastronomy, scenic wine routes, and cities with World Heritage Sites that cannot be missed, it is recommended that trade partners should begin this ules with more than 1,700 minutes of training. One starts off with the basic course, which gives an opportunity to discover Spain containing useful information about the country, that will help travel profession-

als to plan their clients' vacation in Spain. Once you get on the Advanced Content, you will enhance your knowledge and tap into some of the more intricate areas, which will broaden your whole outlook and knowledge about Spain. You will get to know Spanish art, culture, and gastronomy in depth. You will also discover the many types of tourism that the country has to offer, so that you can recommend Spain to those clients who have not yet decided to visit it. If you pursue the cultural routes, this is a very specialized area, which provides you enhanced details about the destination, Spain with the routes, itineraries and types of tourism that are most popular among travellers who visit Spain every year. Next step is to learn about the autonomous regions. In this you can learn in depth about the various autonomous regions of Spain." Do not miss the opportunity, join the Spain Specialist Program and start enjoying everything it has to offer: Registration https://www.spainspecialistprogram.com/en/ **D**



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Expo: the hub of Dubai's 2040 masterplan

Expo 2020 Dubai inspired and mesmerized the world after the challenges of the pandemic. It provided a wealth of opportunities to the 192 participating countries, and continues today as a business and entertainment destination. Sholto Douglas-Home, Chief Sales & Marcomms Officer at Expo City Dubai shares the city's plans with

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ow did Expo 2020 Dubai become Expo City Dubai? Expo City Dubai is the pioneering legacy of Expo 2020 Dubai, which has been at the core of planning since 2013 when the UAE won the bid to host the World Expo. It builds on the World Expo's success to create a clean, green, peoplecentric, innovation-driven city of the future-one that harnesses the collaborative spirit in a curated ecosystem for living, leisure, and business, with wellbeing, equality, and sustainability at its core.

Every aspect of the Expo 2020 Dubai Master Plan was designed with consideration to its afterlife and with a defined strategy for re-use. A 15-minute city, Expo City Dubai is a blueprint for how we can live and work in the



Sholto Douglas-Home Chief Sales & Marcomms Officer Expo City Dubai

energy, excitement and retains many of its flagship pavilions entertainment and technology offerings. An Attractions Pass grants access to all flagship pavilions, including Alif—The Mobility Pavilion, Terra—The Sustainability Pavilion, the Vision and Women's Pavilions as well as three new stories of nations exhibitions, one each in the Opportunity, Mobility, and Sustainability Districts. Individual pavilion tickets are also



A night view of Al Wasl Plaza

City Dubai has a proven track record in staging large, global events, while our continued commitment to sustainability across all programmes, guide-



An interior view of the Women's Pavilion

future. It retains 80 per cent of Expo 2020's built infrastructure, including many of Expo 2020 Dubai's attractions, to create a comprehensive city featuring educational, cultural and entertainment offerings, offices, leisure, dining options, event venues, exercise grounds, among others. Expo Citv has announced recently new residential developments, beginning with the Mangrove Residences apartment complex, with units priced from AED 1.2 million. The result is a new, growing urban residential and business destination. a hub on the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan

There are some pavilions that have reopened, what can you tell us about them?

Expo City Dubai carries forward the World Expo's magic, available. Soon, visitors will also have the chance to revisit many country pavilions that are set to re-open.

Meanwhile, the Al Wasl Plaza welcomes visitors for immersive projections on its iconic dome, as well as the popular Surreal water feature. Like the rest of the Public Realm, Al Wasl and Surreal are free of charge. In addition, programmes such as Expo Live and the Expo School Programme live on in Expo City Dubai, continuing to support social innovators around the world and inspire the next generation.

Why was Expo City Dubai chosen to host the upcoming COP28?

As the host of the Expo 2020 Dubai, which brought the world together and welcomed more than 24 million visitors, Expo lines and plans also factored into the decision to host COP28 at the Expo City Dubai.

The city offers world-class facilities and infrastructure, a secure, convenient location, and first-rate operational capabilities, while sharing similar objectives with COP28: achieving sustainability and enabling international action towards climate security. As a clean, green, innovation-driven, human-centric city of the future, we are proud to host this important global event.

Looking at the destination's future and keeping in mind the sustainable approach, how does Expo City Dubai conform to all the strategies required to be ahead of the rest?

Expo 2020 Dubai was committed to delivering a megaevent sustainably-one that respected the environment and engaged the public on social and environmental issues. while presenting a vision of a sustainable future. This unwavering commitment continues, with the innovative sustainability techniques deployed at the World Expo laying the foundations for yet more progress at Expo City Dubai-a city designed as a blueprint for 'green' urban planning, galvanizing

action on its journey to carbon neutrality. Among a range of pioneering sustainable characteristics, the city's districts are car-free to improve safety and air quality, and it features 10-km cycling tracks, a 5-km running track and 45,000 square meters of parks and gardens.

The city's sustainability plan aligns with UAE Centennial 2071 Plan, UAE Vision 2050, Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, and the United Nations' 2030

Expo City Dubai will build a community where people from all backgrounds connect, collaborate, towards resilient, and sustainable way of life

Agenda for Sustainable Development, and reflects the commitments of the national 'Green Economy for Sustainable Development' initiative.



and diverse calendar of programing that incorporates conferences, summits, meetings, exhibitions, workshops, tours, talks, sporting events and entertainment. It includes managing our commercial tenants, who we see as crucial partners in our long-term sustainable growth, and exciting new projects, such as the expansion of our residential developments. Our audience is wide and diverse-children, students, tourists, residents, entrepreneurs, multi-national businesses, and governments. We welcome all to experience everything Expo City Dubai has to offer, while taking our unique story to the world through connecting platforms such as the Arabian Travel Market.

Once COP28 is over, what will be the next goal and how will you promote it?

Expo City Dubai will continue to build a community where people from all backgrounds and organizations of all sizes connect, collaborate, and innovate towards a smarter, balanced, resilient, and sustainable way of life. This includes continuing to promote Expo City Dubai as a go-to destination for globally significant events, such as COP28, while building a wide



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Enjoy an enlightening day out at Expo City Dubai, where visitors can explore all the flagship pavilions with a one-day Attractions Pass. Everyone is welcome to enjoy daily access to the public areas of Expo City Dubai, including the Surreal water feature and Al Wasl Plaza, free of charge. In addition the AED 120 one-day Attractions Pass offers a raft of engaging and immersive exhibits, workshops and special programming at the Vision Pavilion, the Women's Pavilion, Terra – The Sustainability Pavilion, Alif – The Mobility Pavilion and all three Stories of Nations exhibitions.

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Heritage city targets 250k visitors this year

The past few years have placed the Royal Commission of Al Ula on the map of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia boasting different activities and experiences for guests from across the globe. The wow factor of the destination amazes every traveller. **Phillip Jones Chief Destination Management and Marketing Officer, The Royal Commission of Al Ula**, shares with **Example 1** their plans for this year and a further 10 years.

🗊 Shehara Rizly

ow important is ATM this year for The Royal Commission of AI Ula and what will you showcase?

ATM is a significant event for the Royal Commission for AlUla, and for many organisations worldwide. It offers a unique opportunity to showcase our destination to a sizeable group of stakeholders, partners, and the media. Arabian Travel Market (ATM) also enables those in the tourism industry to keep up to date with the latest trends and to effortlessly network with a wide range of people. From a destination perspective. ATM is a platform for us to connect with and learn from



Chief Destination Management and Marketing Officer, The Royal Commission of Al Ula

tory and showcase it as an ideal location for discerning travellers seeking boutique and luxury experiences. We are confident we will be able to reinforce our position among travel industry professionals and consumers as the region is the leading destina-



tors, travel agents and industry professionals. We have made it a priority to work closely with the travel trade and create opWe do work with the travel agents from the region to share the most relevant and up to date information about the city with 200 year old history with domestic consumers, who are and international destinations, in line with our goal to position the city as a regional touristic spot open to all. One of the new destinations will be for the launch of a direct flight from



a key priority for us. To familiarize agents and encourage them to get the word out about RCU, we offer family visits to the destination, training website, along with incentive program managed by our representative offices in the region.

Flights started off to AlUla some time ago, will there be new flights this year? If so, which are the destinations?

There are strategic plans in the pipeline to enhance and increase flights between AIUIa



tions and constantly developing new and engaging experiences for visitors.

AlUla used to be a popular winter destination in the past with many events and festivals, will you be initiating more events in the destination?

Currently, we have events and festivals all year round as part of AlUla Moments calendar of events and festivals, including the flagship Winter at Tantora Festival that came in its fourth edition this past December/ January to celebrate the culture, heritage, and music of AlUla.

Will it be right to say that AlUla is a year-round destination?

While there are seasons that might traditionally be busier, there is still plenty to see and do in AlUla throughout the year, such as adventure activities, fine dining, nature trails and more.

There were some accommodation facilities announced earlier in RCU, how is it now? Is there an increase in hotel rooms?

There has been an increase in hotel rooms in RCU in recent years as we now offer a wider range of accommodations, including luxury resorts, eco-lodges, and camping experiences. There is more to come, as we strengthen relationships with top hospitality brands.

What are the expected visitor numbers this year?

RCU is targeting 250,000 tourists and visitors in 2023, with an eye on our overarching goal for 2035 of two million visitors.



industry professiontravel als and explain the vision and goals of the RCU, which is to share our ancient city with the world. AlUla has seen exceptional growth over the past year, so we are excited to share the latest developments and highlight the range of activities and experiences that visitors can enjoy. We will also be revealing new details about upcoming world-class luxury resorts and hotels, expanded flight routes, and events that people can look forward to soon.

What are the objectives and expectations from this year's Arabia Travel Market as you have many offerings at AIUIa for visitors?

The objectives are to connect with the most relevant travel and tourism stakeholders from the region who share the same values as RCU to showcase our destination of AlUla, which is home to over 200,000 years of human histion for heritage, nature, arts and culture, and adventure among others.

How important is the travel trade for the ancient city of AIUIa?

RCU's growth as a destination is reliant on a variety of factors, one of which is our relationship with tour operaportunities for collaboration and learning, such as through the online portal 'AlUla Specialist', our international agent training programme and trade information hub.

Do you work with agents from the region to spread the word, and incentivise them? Amman on Royal Jordanian starting in October 2023.

Would you share some of the strategies that you will utilise to get more visitors to AlUIa?

The heritage city is considered one of the last untouched tourist destinations in the world, which makes it extremely attractive to intrepid explorers who are in search of something new. That already adds great value to RCU as a destination, however, we are also engaging

in campaigns and collabora-

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Qatar Tourism to deal with core markets

Qatar Tourism is all set to lead a delegation of 43 partners at the upcoming 30th edition of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) between 1-4 May 2023 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. This follows the country's remarkable success in hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, where Qatar's hospitality and tourism showed its ability to host world-class events, says Berthold Trenkel, Chief Operating Officer.

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Tourism's 603 sq.mts., double-decker pavilion will feature the destination's one of a kind attractions and its unique blend of modernity and cultural authenticity. Qatar's partici-

tar's incredible offering as a world-class tourism destination. The travel and tourism exhibition allows us to engage directly with core markets that we have identified as part of our 2030 strategy. We also invited industry professionals to step into our exceptional pavilion

Qatar's participation at ATM shows the country's ongoing commitment to position itself as a leading global destination for travel and leisure

pation at ATM demonstrates the country's ongoing commitment to position itself as a leading global destination for travel and leisure.

Berthold Trenkel, Chief Operating Officer, Qatar Tourism, said, "We are pleased to participate in the ATM and showcase Qaauthentic culture and hospitality that our country is famous for. We look forward to highlighting the latest leisure developments taking place in Qatar and strengthening our partnerships with significant travel and tourism stakeholders throughout the event."

and immerse themselves in the



old Trenke Chief Operating Officer Datar Tourism

Qatar Tourism's pavilion at ATM will feature an array of unique attractions, including a Whale Shark activation, where visitors can view up-close the beauty of this endangered species. It will also include an augmented reality photobooth that will allow visitors to take pictures in iconic Qatari destinations.

Additionally, there will be an immersive room that will play scenic destinations across Qatar, providing visitors with a 360-degree experience of

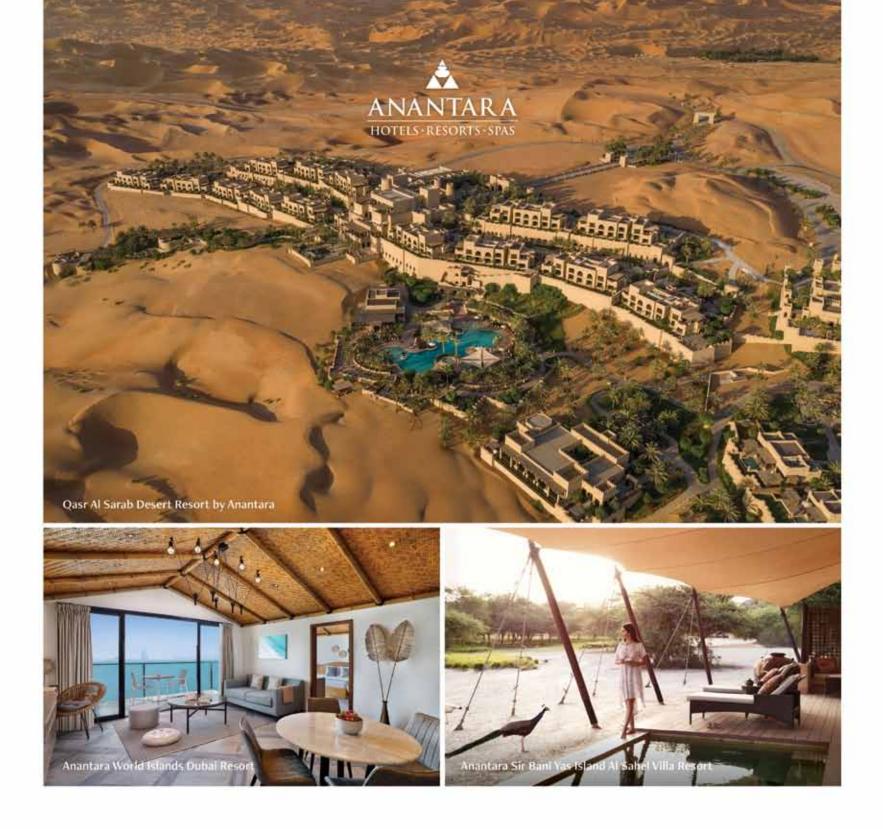


country's attractions. the Qatar Tourism will also have a Gesture Control booth for visitors where they can explore and interact with unique tourism offerings of Qatar in real-time, according to their interests and free of wearables or any controls.

In addition to the pavilion's attractions, Qatar Tourism will have a dedicated cultural area that depicts Soug Wagif, the country's most popular traditional market, and serve Arabic coffee to the guests. With the forthcoming Expo 2023 Doha taking place later this year, Qatar Tourism will also shine a spotlight on this major upcoming event with an area at ATM dedicated to the upcoming Expo Doha.

ATM unlocks business potential within the Middle East for tourism professionals. The worldclass event brings together tourism destinations from around the world to showcase their brands alongside the biggest names in accommodation and hospitality, renowned tourism destinations and attractions, innovative travel technology providers, and airlines.





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Hotels taking steps to reduce CO₂ footprint

Contd. from page 1

sustainability in hospitality industry in the past few years. The use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind is becoming increasingly popular to reduce carbon emissions and promote susand increase recycling, with initiatives such as composting, recycling programs, and waste-to-energy projects.

The use of electric vehicles, public transportation, and

try to achieve zero carbon status by 2030, but it will require significant effort and investment. Many hotels are already taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint by implementing energy-efficient technolo-



tainability. New hotel buildings are being designed and constructed with sustainability in mind, using materials that are environmentally friendly and energy efficient. Efforts are being made to reduce waste cycling is being promoted to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability.

Will the industry be able to achieve zero carbon status by 2030? It is possible for the hotel indus-

gies, using renewable energy sources, and reducing waste. However, achieving zero carbon status will require a comprehensive approach that involves all aspects of hotel operations, including transportation, food and beverage, and guest behaviour. It will also require collaboration between hotels, governments, and other stakeholders to create policies and incentives that support sustainable practices.

In your opinion, how can the Middle East or UAE hospitality leaders focus to achieve this milestone?

The UAE and Middle Eastern hospitality leaders can take initiatives, i.e. reducing energy consumption, using renewable energy sources, reducing water usage, and minimizing waste. Hospitality leaders can encourage guests to participate in sustainable actions. Sourcing food locally and using organic ingredients can reduce the carbon footprint of the hospitality industry. They can educate quests and staff on the importance of sustainability and how they could contribute to it.

Is there an impact when it comes to pricing, with sustainability standardisation or infrastructure development to adapt to sustainability? Yes, there can be an impact on pricing when it comes to sustainability standardization or infrastructure development to adopt sustainability. For example, if a company decides to implement fully sustainable practices in their hotels, it may require investments in new equipment or green technology, which can increase the cost. However, in the long run, these sustainable practices can lead to cost savings through increased efficiency and reduced waste. While there may be shorthelp reduce costs and minimize waste. Innovation can help hotels develop new revenue centers that are sustainable and profitable. Engaging with stakeholders can help hotels understand their clients' needs. Being transparent and accountable about sustainability performance can help build trust with stakeholders and improve profitability.

New buildings are being constructed with sustainability in mind, using materials that are environmentally friendly and energy efficient

term costs associated with sustainable standardization, the long-term benefits outweigh these costs and lead to a more sustainable and costeffective future.

Which would be the most relevant criteria to ensure profitability and sustainability go hand in hand? There are several criteria that can help ensure profitability and sustainability go together. Efficient use of resources can

Do you see enthusiasm from the younger generation of travellers towards hospitality?

Of late, we are receiving many youngsters and groups. So far, we hosted many young players of the UK cricket teams in both our hotels. Rise of social media has made travel accessible and appealing to young travellers, which has led to an increase in demand for the hospitality services.

Enhancing the attractiveness of RAK

The 2030 vision of Ras AI Khaimah's Tourism Development Authority's (RAKTDA) is to attract more than three million travellers/visitors and increase the overall attractiveness of the emirate, making tourism one of the most important sectors and focus for Ras AI Khaimah's (RAK) GDP growth. Looking ahead, RAK has already announced approximately 5,000 keys to open in the next five years.

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n a recent paper by Colliers, it looks at the emirate's growing hospitality market, its resilience during the pandemic and the announcement of the Wynn Al Marjan Island Resort. In order to achieve the emirate's target of attracting over





 $\mathbf{0}$ **maint** May 2023 — Atm day 2



keys to open in the next five years, in addition to the 1,200 keys that will be offered by the Wynn resort following its opening in 2026.

Introduction of Wynn Al Marjan Island is expected to bring multiple benefits, including job creation, increased visitation and global image enhancement. The first integrated resort may

With the aim to reach three million target by 2030, it leverages its diversified source markets, clear growth strategies and investment

of the region acts as a gateway to further develop the emirate's alternative tourist segment, inviting more investment in eco-concepts with themes of sustainability and conservation.

When the pandemic struck the globe, Ras Al Khaimah was able to shift its focus to domestic tourism, thus minimizing the impact of the pandemic on performance of the hospitality sector. In 2022, with the return of inbound tourism and growing competition from other destinations, occupancy was impacted and post-COVID performance has yet to exceed pre-pandemic figures.

In 2022, the emirate saw a 16 per cent increase in tourism arrivals compared to the previous year, bringing total arrivals to over 1.1 million. With the aim to reach the three million target by the year 2030, the emirate leverages its diversified source markets, clear growth strategies and strong levels of investment.

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Experiential Tourism the growing niche

Travellers today seek niche experiences, experiential or immersive as one may call it, which would provide exceptional personalized services. From specialized retreats to glamping, the types of experiences added increase every time. **Shaji Abu Salih, Corporate Director Business Development, Shaza Hotels and Mysk Hotels** shares with their journey over the years.

î Shehara Rizly

Can you please explain about the new trend in Experiential Tourism?

As the name suggests, Experiential Tourism, also called Immersive Tourism, features experiences first and all other norms are created around it. The product is handcrafted to provide an immersive experience to the user, by actively engaging with either heritage, culture, environment, adventure, wellness, people, food among others or even



Shaji Abu Salih Corporate Director Business Development Shaza Hotels and Mysk Hotels

people to enjoy a holiday, but to collect experiences that are cherished forever. oping immersive experiences in agro/farm concepts, beach adventures, culture, and trade. Our centralized approach and expertise in managing these retreats ensure efficiency and profitability in the retreats we manage.

In your opinion, what is the USP of this concept?

It is not just a USP, but a series of benefits in different multitudes. Experiential Tourism has less investment outlay. It does not burn a hole in the inves-



a combination of these multi experiences. This niche kind of Immersive Tourism has existed for a long time. However, COVID brought attention to such touristic offerings due to the size, privacy and the personalization offered by these products. People wanted to disconnect, immerse themselves in a new world and explore more of what they would like to see. It is no longer a stay in a hotel room or enjoy the typical hotel facilities for

What is Shaza's role in Experiential Tourism?

Shaza has created Mysk Retreats to promote experiential tourism and its offerings. We are currently the leading brand in the region specializing in managing experiential tourism, operating four active retreats and many more under development. All our retreats feature unique themes such as adventure, wellness, heritage, and nature. We are also develtor's pocket with fixed assets that need huge investments. Hence the ROI is easier and quicker. The yield from such investments is high. People are willing to pay more for unique experiences. Operationally, the overhead costs are less due to the size of retreats. On another note, these projects advocate sustainability and responsible tourism as well. They reduce the CO_2 footprint to maximum and ensure renewable and





sustainable resources in operation. However, we must factor the high infra development and utility costs in developing such experiences rurally.

At present, in which areas do you have this concept?

We opened our first nature retreat in Kalba called Mysk Kingfisher Retreat under Shurooq Investments. After the success of Mysk Kingfisher Retreat, we opened the adventure and heritage concept at Mysk Al Badayer, in the red dunes of Mleiha Desert. Then the first wellness retreat concept in Mysk Al Faya Retreat, next to the fossil rocks of Al Faya area. We

All our experiences are curated around exploration and engagement to families of all sizes. We are also targeting couples and honeymooners

We are entering into farm tourism with Mysk Najd Al Meqsar village on the mountains of Khor Fakkan.

Will you be looking at launching them elsewhere too?

Due to the success of our retreats in UAE, we are receiving multiple interests from various parts of the world to develop Levant. So please keep watching this space.

Who is your target audience? Our key target audience is families. All our experiences are curated around exploration, engagement and entertainment, catering to families of all sizes. We also target couples/honeymooners. We also cater to



recently opened the adventure concept at Mysk Moon Retreat in the Mleiha area of Sharjah, featuring glamping in domes and tents with private pool and DIY concept. We are also developing more such retreats across GCC. We will open the first 'Glamping on Wheels' concept called Mysk Nomads, a fun filled stay in the Caravans near the Hamriyah Beach in Sharjah. similar immersive experiences. We are excited to announce our first immersive experience in Oman called Mysk Muttrah Collection, a first of its kind featuring stays in traditional Omani houses embedded within the old Mutrah Souq. Moreover, we have active Mysk Retreats projects, currently in the development stages in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, UAE, and small incentives and corporate retreat groups, who look for productive meetings or training along with activities.

Are they more family friendly or children friendly?

All our retreats are familyfriendly. We have handcrafted experiences created for kids of all ages and to engage in family group activities.

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Hospitality offerings to attract tourists

A straight walk into the museum of the future, the metro station to Dubai Mall or a few minutes to the business precinct DIFC, the Tower Plaza Hotel is one of the most sought-after hotel by both business and leisure travellers due to its many offerings. The Tower Plaza hotel will be exhibiting this year within the DTCM pavilion at the Arabian Travel Market.

î Shehara Rizly

The strength of ATM

Over the past few years, the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) has become one of the strongest networking and business developing platforms, as the glittering city is the first to throw open its doors and welcome business partners from across the world.

Being the safest country in the world, with the busiest airport, Dubai keeps strengthening its business events and exhibitions year on year. The hotels surrounding the business hub, which is the World Trade Center on Sheikh Zayed Road can strengthen their operations and gain more visitors in their properties.

The Tower Plaza hotel will be exhibiting this year within the

This year brings in an era of new business opportunities, especially as all borders are now open for travellers across the globe

DTCM pavilion at the ATM. With easy access to the metro and to leisure hotspots such as the museum of the future and the Dubai Mall is also within the

inbound and outbound tourism professionals. This year, the Tower Plaza hotel will be participating within the DTCM pavilion and expect to meet some

the Middle East countries for

hub, a few minutes away.



of our existing clients as well as new potential clients."

Unveiling new business

This year brings in an era of new business opportunities, especially as all borders are now open for travellers from across the globe. With findings across different platforms, there is a surge in travellers, firstly those who yearned to travel are now able to travel, secondly those who never considered travelling have their own bucket list and the new

generation of travellers across the GCC and other regions who will be taking their first break to experience travelling to destinations that are unique, sustainable and with many offerings. The Tower Plaza has been able to identify some of the new key markets over various studies conducted and it is revealed that new source markets have an untapped potential for growth.

Galal reiterated, "We currently have a mix of different markets

at present from the USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Israeli, European, Iraqi, GCC, Iran, India and Latam (Latin American), but we are looking at developing new source markets to the hotel to add them to the classic and key performing markets such as CIS, Italian, French, South African, Seychelles and other markets."

Travel trade

As the hotel grows from strength to strength, the contribution from the travel trade and

will represent the base business for the hotel and no doubt their contribution to our business is pioneer. I have developed a professional and friendly relationship with the major players in this market over the past 20 years and it will have a positive impact on our business." Galal sorted out a gameplan, consisting tapping both domestic and global visitors as well. He explains, "For the global markets, we have in place attractive rates and promotions with a decent room inventory to push traffic. With regards to the domestic market, we have put in place attractive staycation packages too."

corporate bookers is on a high

roll. He adds, "Travel agents

MICE and events

The hotel could house five-200 quests with its banquet and meeting facilities, which is a positive outlook on the MICE and business events segment. Galal concludes, "We are working on a plan for our rooms and outlets to further cater to the MICE market. Our participation at the ATM is important, as it is a good potential platform to strengthen your rapport with your international business partners and be introduced to latest market trends, we look forward to the event which will add value to our business further."



110<mark>111 -</mark> May 2023 — Atm Day 2

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The bleisure stop in the city is easily accessible for every traveller as it is adjacent to the Dubai metro, the most convenient way to discover Dubai. Through our partnership with DTCM, efforts are on to discover new markets and widen marketing activities. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, the hotel engages with the requirements of the new markets.

🗊 Shehara Rizly

wo Seasons has been enjoying a good number of visitors over the past years mainly due to its location. This year, once again they are looking at participating at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), which is the leading meeting hub of the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector leaders from across the globe. Freddy Farid, Managing Director, Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments, shares, "The ATM is the leading trade fair for the Middle East's inbound and outbound travel industry that generates massive deals for the hotel

industry, which is very vital to explore latest travel trends and insights. The main objective for most visitors and exhibitors, is to conduct business with new clients, and re-affirm busiDubai as a destination received many new source markets over the past few years mainly due to the fact that it was the first to open for travellers and that it is one of the

ATM is the leading trade fair for the Middle East's inbound and outbound travel industry that generates massive deals for the hotel industry

ness relationship with existing clients and partners; also reach new markets and meet international suppliers."



safest cities with a fully vaccinated population. Speaking on how they seek new source markets, Farid explains, "Yes, whenever an opportunity presents itself, we are eager to engage with the requirements of the new markets and learn the market dynamics of any new source market. Through our partnership with DTCM efforts to discover new markets and widen marketing activities, we have received new markets from Asia and South America."



Freddy Farid Managing Director Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments

Travel agents and corporate bookers have been the lifeline for the hospitality industry. Most often, some forget the importance of working with them in order to smoothen the process one step further. Farid reiterates, "These are important business segments, contracting with travel agents will help increasing traffic from the leisure market, and source market to the hotel which is almost 25 per cent of our business mix and as for corporate segment, it is one of the strongest pillars of the hotel representing 30 per cent of our business mix."

Now that travel is back to stay, Two Seasons is looking at renovating itself to be more relevant in today's industry expectations. Farid says, "This summer, we are planning for major renovations, which will include Inner Lobby renovation, La Terrasse Lounge, Ballroom receive Green Globe gold status before COVID, and we have continued to adapt the DTCM sustainability requirements focusing on Green Events with Emirates Environmental Group. Energy Management for utility consumption, and procurement of eco-friendly products.



renovation, three-apartment Floors, (in 2022, we have completed three-apartments floors, as we are planning for the apartments' renovation over 3-phases)." Sustainability is the focus in every industry, we inquired how Two Seasons adopt sustainability. "We were one of the pioneer hotels to By mid-May this year, will also launch our water bottling and refilling station so we will eliminate all plastic bottles usage in our hotel. The premium water filtration system will replace PET bottle with glass bottles, while maintaining the same water quality that meets UAE bottled water standard."

Red Sea's smooth over water orbs

The giga projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia keeps on mesmerizing global travellers. Red Sea Project known as the KSA's regenerative luxury tourism project has added a new concept in accommodation in hospitality sector. Their latest addition to the Red Sea Project is the inland and overwater luxury accommodation with 73 keys, entailing reflective overwater orbs and inland luxury villas.

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A ccording to various research conducted over the past few years, travellers from the Middle East are willing to pay extra to enjoy sustainable luxury experiences. In the Red Sea, they have gone a step ahead and offer a brandnew experience for visitors from across the globe. A 45-minute boat ride from the mainland or a stay on Sheybarah guarantees ultimate exclusivity and bliss.

Surrounded by crystal clear waters and away from the hustle and bustle of daily life, guests can enjoy water-based activities or choose to unwind on one of the island's many white sandy beaches. The island features a spectacular 30 to 40-meter reef drop-off

📕 MAY 2023 — ATM DAY 2



close to the beach providing the ultimate spot for exploring ocean life.

Each overwater orb weighs around 150 tons, and they complement the horizon with reflective mirror surfaces. The

inland villas are inspired by sand dunes. Each villa will be set apart to give guests a sense of privacy. RSG appointed Mammoet for transport and installation of Sheybarah Island Resort's villas, a significant part of the Red Sea Project in Saudi Arabia. The Red Sea Global appointed Dubai-based Killa Design, leading architectural design firms, one of the region's leading architectural design companies, to design overwater and inland villas on Sheybarah Island. Sheybarah is one of their most ambitious islands, with futuristic steel orbs that float over the water, reflecting the sea, sky, and reef below. The designs of the overwater villas are inspired desert sand dunes and are set apart to give guests a sense of privacy. The design of the resort demonstrates how innovative architecture can gracefully connect to nature, with

The resort's design demonstrates how innovative architecture can gracefully connect to nature, with villas that balance between the sky and sea

by the natural surroundings, particularly corals in their purest form, which make up the circle effect. The circle represents unity, integration, and wholeness, giving the guests a sense of completion, confidence, and harmony. The inland villas are inspired by sweeping villas that delicately balance between the sky and sea and ensconce into the landscape. From the eco-materials chosen, to the panoramic views on offer, our priority has been to honour the natural beauty that exists here, while combining with absolute luxury.

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Chanelling tourism in Middle East

World Tourism Organization, the specialized agency for development of tourism in UN, and Annual Investment Meeting, a reputed investment platform in the Middle East, are formally committed for effective implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals through tourism investments, and the promotion of innovation and technology.

\Upsilon TT Bureau

The UNWTO and AIM will work together to harness the power of tourism to drive global development and to accelerate the implementation of the agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly now that economies are now starting to recover from COVID.

The two organizations', through this new agreement, are formally committed to jointly sup-



Zurab Pololikashvili General Secretary, UWWTO The UNWTO and AIM's collaborative works related to investment facilitation and promotion will see them share and dis-

The UNWTO will spearhead Tourism Investment Forum to be held on the framework of the upcoming AIM Global 2023 in Abu Dhabi

port the following goals: the effective implementation of the agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs through tourism investments, and the promotion of innovation and technology.

seminate knowledge regarding investment policies among their stakeholders and networks and maximize foreign direct investments' positive economic impact on the sector. The UNWTO is the leading international organization in the field of tourism. It promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development, environmental sustainability and aims to drive the digitalization of tourism and create an innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem. The organization offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

The AIM provides an invaluable and unparalleled opportunity for public and private entities to come together to achieve their shared vision of growth and sustainability. Anchored around the theme of "The Investment Paradigm Shift: Future Investment Opportunities to Foster Sustainable Economic Growth, Diversity and Prosperity," this year's AIM edition will focus on 10 key sectors that include tourism and hospitality, among others. In line with their commitment to cooperate in the implementation of projects as stipulated in the MoU, the UN-



Dawood Al Shezawi

WTO will spearhead the "Tourism Investment Forum" to be held on the framework of the upcoming AIM Global 2023 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates between 8-10 May 2023.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili commented, "The UNWTO has recognized investments as our key priorities for tourism right now and into the future. Investments are essential for the tourism sector to grow. A thriving tourism sector can also attract investors. The UNWTO is proud to collaborate with the AIM around our shared goal of boosting investments into tourism and into the projects that will deliver greater sustainability and resilience for the sector."

Dawood Al Shezawi, President, AIM said, "It has been the AIM's mission to provide an interactive platform where investment opportunities can ideas is of utmost importance. We welcome this great chance to cooperate with the UNWTO and we are certain that this collaboration will be fruitful."

The AIM Global 2023 has engaged in several technologically driven initiatives as part

UNWTO and AIM works related to investment promotion will see them share knowledge of the stakeholders' networks and maximize FDI

be formed, thereby strengthening economic relations among nations and addressing issues that have profound effects on a global scale." He added, "The AIM takes pride in its belief that keeping abreast of the latest changes and issues, while at the same, time making available the best venue where the brightest minds, from all sectors, can converge to find solutions and scale up development of its commitment to build the global economy roadmap and bolster the five key pillars, which include foreign direct investment, SMEs, future cities, startups, and foreign portfolio investments. Besides tourism and hospitality, the other key sectors are agriculture, energy, technology, manufacturing, transportation, logistics, finance and healthcare, and education.

Workation, leisure travel hold sway

Contd. from page 1

Most travellers are now clubbing their business and leisure travel as travelling and working remotely has become popular during the pandemic. Hotels are seeing a great demand regardless of seasons. Since people can work from anywhere, they are booking more hotel stays based on their new remote work destination. As a result, we continue to see a demand on holiday homes, hotel apartments and apartments and an increase in the overall trip duration.

Who are travelling outside? Expats and locals or both?

In terms of tourists travelling to this region, particularly Dubai, we are seeing that many people relocated to Dubai in the past couple of years. The new range of visas introduced will drive more global tourists to the country where they can stay longer and visit the country during different seasons. The city



has become one of the preferred destinations for family offices and companies. And a lot of those companies made Dubai as their headquarters.

Do you see an increase in family travel this summer?

We see more couples and families travel this summer, as the people tend to travel to visit their families back home and celebrate Ramadan with them.

Is there an increase in luxury travel? Or what class of travel seems to work out during this period?

Post pandemic, we are seeing more people inclined to travel and spend more. They are spending more on luxury holidays and wellness retreats that will make up for their lost time and give them a better and safer seamless travel experience. Maldives tends to be one of the preferred luxury destinations for summer and it offers a tourist visa on arrival to passengers of nationalities, including those from the GCC countries, for a stay duration of 30 days. With the prices of air tickets and holiday packages on a high note, are there travellers opting to satisfy themselves with a staycation? According to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council, nearly a third (31 per cent) of travellers intend to spend more on travel this year When you look at KSA, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain, what are the key drivers of tourism? The GCC countries are one of the world's most competitive countries. Their development rate is spectacular. The success of the tourism sector in those countries, particularly

Most travellers are now clubbing their business and leisure travel as travelling and working remotely has become popular during the pandemic

than they did in 2022. It comes after the vast majority (86 per cent) said last year they raised travel budgets for 2019 as consumers "spend more on travel than on any other experience. The number of people willing to spend more on travel could be higher, as costs go up. UAE, has set a model for many countries. We have a large user base in MENA, UAE and Saudi ranks among the top searched and booked tourist destination. They are home to amazing landscapes, which all tech-savvy youngsters are interested in.



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STA to woo 4 mn Chinese visitors by 2030

Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) concluded its first roadshow in China with 13 partners, including DMCs, hoteliers and airline partners in attendance recently. The roadshow showcased KSA's rich cultural and heritage and why it is the perfect travel destination for Chinese travellers. Meetings, round table discussions and networking events were hosted, which resulted in 20 strategic partnership announcements.

介 TT Bureau

uring the multi-city roadshow, Saudi Tourism Authority (STA), held meetings with more than 300 trade partners and travel buyers in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou to promote Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a leisure destination, sharing insights into the emerging trends in MICE tourism. KSA's inclusion in the 'Approved Destination Scheme', alongside China's inclusion in Saudi's e-visa program and 96-hour Stopover Visa-where guests flying onwards on SAU-DIA can avail a complimentary one-night hotel stay in the kingdom-facilitates seamless group travel.

STA's presence in China is an indication of how important the Chinese market is for the kingdom and its commitment to China as a significant source market for KSA. Saudi Arabia has witnessed incredible growth since opening to tourism in 2019 as its post-pandemic tourism recovery outpaced G20 countries with a 121 per cent year-on-year growth, according to UNWTO. As part of its ambition to achieve 100 million visits annually by 2030,



Fahd Hamidaddin Chief Executive Officer Saudi Tourism Authority

China represents immense potential as it is expected to be the kingdom's third top source market by then.

Fahd Hamidaddin, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Member of the Board, STA, said, "Our first roadshow held in China has been a tremendous success and was a testament to the KSA's potential to



become the region's tourism hub and a gateway to the cultural and natural riches for Chinese travellers. Supporting us in realizing our vision are our local and international partners whose expertise is crucial for our understanding of the Chinese market and how to better unlock business opportunities for everyone.

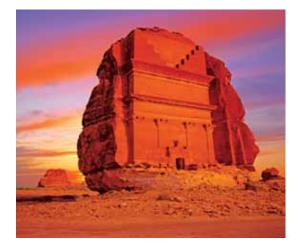
STA's presence in China indicates how important the Chinese market is for the Kingdom and its commitment to China as a source market for KSA

"KSA is growing at the speed of light-the world's biggest tourism developments are in the kingdom and there is so much to share. Examples of this are the milestone project, Bujairi Terrace, and developments in Al Ahsa Oasis and Hegra, which underscore our commitment to meet China's demand for cultural and heritage tourism in the kingdom and a shared future where the country and China can cement our relationship through investment and close collaboration to meet our goal of welcoming four million Chinese visitors by 2030."

Alhasan Aldabbagh, President-APAC Markets, STA, said, "We are delighted to showcase the beauty of the kingdom and its diverse tourism offerings across China. We have also received an overwhelmingly positive response from our partners here and the tourism authority is committed to ensuring our product offerings are attractive to the Chinese market. These engagements are important in helping us achieve our ambitious goals and drive visitation numbers from China to Saudi Arabia." Chinese travellers can look forward to a diverse range of experiences from adventure,

US\$50.6 billion masterplan will transform Diriyah, a 300-yearold city, into one of the world's most exciting cultural sites.

• Nature: The kingdom boasts some of the world's most vibrant, untouched coral reefs in the Red Sea. Holidaymakers can charter a boat for some deep-sea fishing, relax aboard a cruise or scuba dive and snorkel yearround off the coast off Jed-



of the latest developments and most attractive destinations in Saudi Arabia, including:

culture, heritage, and nature.

The kingdom has curated

packages specifically for the

Chinese travellers based on

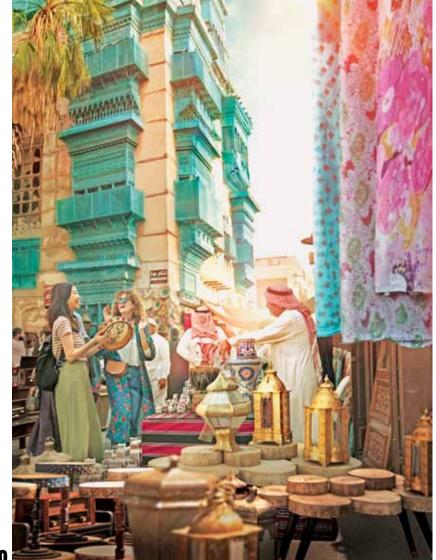
their interests and insights. The

packages also highlights some

• Culture and heritage: The kingdom has rich cultural and historical sites. KSA is home to six UNESCO world heritage sites and more than 10,000 archaeological sites that are unexplored and waiting to be discovered. This includes historical places such as Al Balad in Jeddah and Turaif in Diriyah, which is the birthplace of the Saudi Dynasty. Preserv-

dah, while enjoying pristine beaches offering every water sport imaginable.

• Entertainment: The kingdom is emerging as a major entertainment hub in the region, having hosted large sporting events and world-class festivals such as Diriyah E-Prix and Formula 1 in Jeddah; MDLBeast, the world's largest music festival and Riyadh Seasons, which is a mega festival that attracted more than one million visitors in its first week alone.



Aviation industry in ME to get makeover

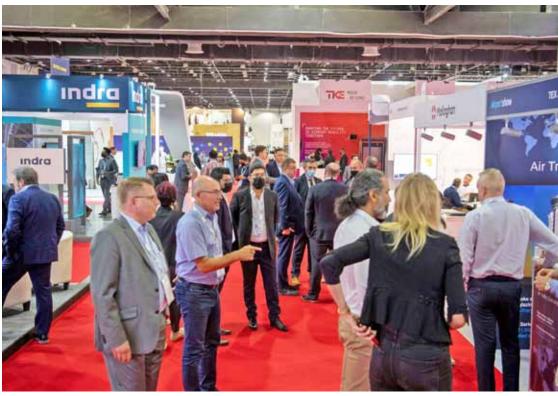
After most of the multibillion-dollar airport construction projects were put on the back burner or temporarily stalled over the past three years, operators and investors have been racing down the tarmac as the Middle East and Asia Pacific regions are expected to account for 58 per cent of the global air passenger demand by 2040. There are 425 construction projects at existing airports, according to CAPA.

î TT Bureau

Centre for Aviation (CAPA), one of the world's most trusted sources of aviation market intelligence, states there have been 425 major construction projects at existing airports, with US\$450.7 billion in total committed expenditure globally, each of which is at various stages of completion, along with 225 new airport projects and airport investor numbers swelling to 1,074, including 258 airport operator groups or consortiums. Its database has region-wise listed the total numbers of the airport project and the volume of investment include 155 in Middle East worth US\$209.4 billion.

The Middle East region, positioned on the strategic crossroads of major economies— Asia, Africa and Europe—has transformed into a major international hub and continues to be a growth story. With 110 airports, this is among the fastest growing region in the world, accounting for 170 million of the global traffic.

Airports in the Middle East will need to invest US\$151 billion in capacity expansion as the



Airport industry players, seeing huge investments coming back on the track, will get energized at the Airport Show 2023

up and existing facilities are getting expanded and upgraded to meet future passenger demands. The airport industry players, witnessing the huge investments coming back on the track, will get enthused at the airport show to be organized in Dubai from May 9 to 11. It will be held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai France, Germany, Denmark, Turkey, Netherlands, China, Belgium, Korea, Sweden, and the UAE. May Ismail, Event Manager, Reed Exhibitions, its organizer, said the Airport Show-2023 will showcase almost everything that airports require. The jects in the pipeline have a combined value of US\$1.64 trillion, while the global fleet of aircraft is projected to touch 36,500 aircraft by 2031 and the global airport construction market size has been revised to US\$1.4 trillion by 2026. There too are in the race to catch up with new airport developments. Turkey's TAV will continue its investments in Almaty and Antalya airports in 2023 and it is building a new terminal and additional units in Almaty by investing US\$200 million to



2022 edition has seen 4,200 attendees from 71 countries and 160 exhibitors from 23 nations and 100 buyers from 35 companies and 23 countries along with five country pavilions. This edition will break those records for sure as the industry is coming back in full splendour.

According to GlobalData, the new airport construction pro-

are several countries, which are pursuing airport developments at a breakneck speed now.

India, the world's third largest civil aviation market, plans to increase to 220 operational airports by 2027, up from 141 now. China is expanding and by 2025 will have 30 civil airports with a capacity of two billion passengers. Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines double the capacity to 60 million. TAV will start investing in Esenboğa Airport in the Turkish capital Ankara. Oman Airports has signed a pact to develop Kilimanjaro Airport and plans to develop a Southern Africa hub in Harare in Zimbabwe.

In the UAE, the New Sharjah International Airport Expansion, costing an estimated US\$517 million, will get completed in Q4 of 2024. The work involves the construction of a new passenger terminal and supporting infrastructure to raise its capacity to 20 million passengers by 2023. Earlier, it had been reported that the Arab world's most vibrant economy had planned investments of more than US\$23 billion in airport development and expansion projects over this decade. The Kuwait Airport's Passenger Terminal 2 expansion, costing US \$4.36 billion, will boost the airport's annual passenger handling capacity to 13 million passengers per year with the flexibility to increase to 25 million passengers and 50 million passengers in the future. As the project aims for the status of the world's first LEED Goldaccredited passenger terminal building, the project is expected to be completed fully by 2025.

In Qatar, Hamad International Airport Phase 2B's expansion work on the passenger terminal and extension of concourses D and E in Doha is likely to begin this year and will enhance passenger capacity to 60 million annually. The new cargo terminal will be completed by 2023 and will feature a new threelevel facility and an 85,000 sq. mts building footprint. Musandam Airport in the Sultanate of Oman, costing US\$250 million, is likely to be completed sometime in Q4 2026. The work includes the construction of two runways and a passenger terminal with a capacity with a strength of 250,000 passengers per year. In Egypt, plans are afoot to build Terminal 4 at Cairo International Airport.

The KSA is set to build one of the world's largest airports, which will have six parallel runways. The airport will help drive annual passenger traffic to 120 million by 2030 and 185 million by 2050. The KSA is undertaking an airport expansion and upgrades program to serve 330 million travellers by 2030 through US\$147 billion investments. The Red Sea International Airport is set to open in late December 2023. King Salman International Airport aims to house 185 million passengers and process 3.5 million tons of cargo by 2050. 🦻

2040, and 19.7 billion passengers may traverse the global airports and

ACI stated the Middle East airports

will handle 1.1 billion passengers by

global air passenger demand is expected to increase two-fold in 2040. "This necessitates an investment totalling US\$2.4 trillion for the Middle East and Asia-Pacific airports until 2040 to accommodate this growth," the Airport Council International stated.

The ACI forecasts close to 19.7 billion passengers are expected to traverse the airports across the globe by 2040 and the Middle East airports will handle 1.1 billion passengers by 2040—a significant increase from 405 million in 2019. The airport industry's growth story is far from over as new airports are coming

Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group.

The 22nd edition of the world's largest annual airport industry B2B platform will connect over 200 aviation brands and 100 buyers from more than 30 airports and aviation authorities from 20 countries. Also taking place on the Dubai airport show's sidelines is the Global Airport Leaders' Forum (GALF).

The high-profile global platform will see more than 4,500 visitors, and exhibitors have been confirmed from the USA, Italy,

Perfect bleisure escape in Yas Island

Located amidst family leisure domain, Crowne Plaza Yas Island, caters to a bleisure experience for its travellers. Yas Island, which is a few minutes' drive from Abu Dhabi Airport, is a destination with the fastest roller coaster and renowned theme parks such as Warner Brothers and Ferrari World and a pristine beach that add on to the many activities in the island.

î Shehara Rizly

Picturesque beauty

One of the most important factors when booking the Crowne Plaza Yas Island is the spectacular view, which you could enjoy every morning with the golf course and the sea together. This

people who greet you at the door. From the time you step out of the vehicle and proceed to reception, where you are welcomed and made comfortable after a long flight or drive from another emirate. The way in which the front office greeted me as I walked in was so warm and wel-

One of the first experiences that welcomes you to the property is its ambience and the people who greet you at the door

breathtaking view surrounds you with a relaxing nature and a great start to your morning. You can enjoy a cuppa on the balcony or set off early morning to tee off.

Superior service

Standard of service is most important in the hospitality sector, hence one of the first experiences that welcomes you to the property is its ambience and the coming. It basically took away the exhaustion I felt driving for a long period of time. It was by far an experience that deserve five stars in terms of making sure your guest feels right at the time of his/her arrival.

Bleisure new way of travel

The challenging years placed way more importance not only

about business but also about the family time spent together. Over the time when people were tired of being indoors, they would take their families out to a different scenery and stay put in a pleasurable hotel space. This continues today and Abu Dhabi's Yas Island has just the right mix with the business precinct a few

minutes from the family leisure destination of Yas Island, home to the great Ferrari World, Warner Brothers, and now coming up this month will be SeaWorld, another exciting experience adding on to its leisure list. In terms of business, all establishments are minutes away and easily accessible.

Comfortable spaces

Crowne Plaza Yas Island boasts as having the most comfortable spaces for families, as the size of each room and its wardrobe are more suited for families as well as those who will come in for a business meeting amd the same time, need space to relax a little more with its wide spaces. Rooms come with different view options hence it is up to the guests to decide what they prefer to see as they wake up every morning.



At the start of the day, you are

spoiled for choice with a great

breakfast spread, which is a

combination of East meets

West, catering to the far east and

Western front as the Americas.

The spread is fantastic and for

families with children, there are

special breakfast dishes, espe-

cially made for kids, available

at the buffet. If you feel that

you prefer to sit in for a silent

breakfast, room service or in-

room dining is an option that you

must try as they are amazing

from Asian flavours to Western

Activities and family fun

ent palette altogether.

cuisine, which is a totally differ-

If you are staying with your familv at the ultra-luxurious Crowne Plaza Yas Island, one of the first and most important factors to be taken into consideration is that you are already in the realm of fun, where the children can find themselves trying out the most magnbificent experiences at the Ferrari World to a more relaxed drive as they have another experience.





Hospitality leaders meet in Saudi Arabia

TravTalk spoke to **Jonathan Worsley, Chairman, Bench** about the Future Hospitality Summit, which will bring leaders and stakeholders of the hospitality industry to attend the event between 7-9 May 2023 to be organized at AI Faisaliah Hotel in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Attendees will have many opportunities to interact, network, make new connections and do business.

介 Shehara Rizly

of FHS, its key objectives and why it is held in KSA?

Bringing together government leaders, hotel investors, owners, developers, and operators at what is set to be the biggest Future Hospitality Summit (FHS) to date, FHS Saudi Arabia will take place from 7-9 May at the Al Faisaliah Hotel in Riyadh. This will be the sixth industry conference organized for the Saudi Arabian market as the flagship hospitality investment platform for the region.

We are excited to be back in the KSA at a larger venue this year thanks to our sponsors Al Faisaliah Hotel and Al Khozama and others for the event. FHS is a platform that brings together some of the most influential hospitality investment decision-makers to connect, exchange knowledge, explore new partnerships and shape the future of the hospitality sector. The convergence of thought leaders and experts will result in reshaping the industry through revolutionary ideas, groundbreaking innovation and avantgarde practices and I cannot wait to see Kingdom of Saudi



Bench tality investors in the Kingdom. FHS brings together govern-

ment leaders, hotel and F&B in-

ment, technology, innovation, and human capital ecosystems, amongst others. Delegates will have 50 opportunities to network, learn and discuss with sessions that range in format from main stage presentations, 'hard talk interviews and panel discussions to case studies, culinary tours, among others.

Sunday 7 May is dedicated to Global Restaurant Investment Forum signature Culinary Tours followed by the Opening Reception hosted by Al Khozama, at

More than 100 speakers are set to take the stage at the FHS Saudi Arabia next month, including industry titans and top visionaries

vestors, developers, to address the KSA's latest developments and the industry's hottest topics. This year, we launched an Advisory Board for FHS Saudi Arabia comprising 37 industry leaders, who came together in November to help shape the conference programme.

What are the key areas covered? This year's theme for the sumthe luxurious Al Faisaliah Hotel.

What are the FHS' expectations? Besides our three-day conference agenda, attendees will have opportunities to network, make new connections and do business. This includes our signature networking events. The opening reception will be hosted by Al Khozama at Al Faisaliah hotel and the first



Arabia's brightest minds and leaders in our industry come together to invest in change.

How many speakers and audience are expected?

More than 100 speakers are set to take the stage at the FHS Saudi Arabia next month, including industry titans and top visionaries, to address hospimit is 'Invest in Change' and highlights the importance of the positive change that can be brought forward through the investment in time, intellect, and expertise in the hospitality industry to keep up with changing times and trends. Conference tracks include hospitality and F&B investment, industry start-ups, sustainable developday will conclude with a networking reception at Mansard Riyadh, a Radisson Collection Hotel, hosted by Radisson Hotel Group. In addition, FHS is known as a deal-making platform and we already have several signings scheduled to take place at FHS Saudi Arabia next month, which is very exciting.

Will this be an annual event? How will this summit help the sector?

Yes, it is an annual event. Launched in partnership with Saudi Arabia's G20 Secretariat in 2020, FHS Saudi Arabia is the most influential hospitality investment conference for industry leaders and senior decision-makers in the hospitality industry of Saudi Arabia and beyond.

Chris Newman, Executive Director, NEOM Hotel Development Please tell us about the topic you

will be focusing on at FHS KSA? NEOM will be covering several topics at FHS this year, and I am proud to say that we have strong representation from our Saudi talent pool in the Hotel



Chris Newman Executive Director NEOM Hotel Development

Development team. Abdulhalim Awlia, an Operations Specialist, will be speaking on key trends in the local market, while Aseel Bondagiy, Hotel Talent Development Lead, will contribute to a panel on how to best train the NextGen employees. Lastly, we have lan Wilson, who is the Regional Director for Hospitality at THE LINE, who will cover the reinvention of commercial spaces and how hotels, retail and F&B outlets are merging to bring added value to customers and owners.

How does this help the industry?

Knowledge sharing in general is crucial for the growth and development of our sector. It helps us connect, perform better and ultimately become stronger as professionals. It is also important to note that many of the challenges we face, such as being agile to adapt to changing trends or making this industry a career path for young nationals cannot be overcome alone. We see value in coming together as it brings us one step closer towards reimagining the future of global hospitality, in line with the KSA's Vision 2030 strategy.

What are the key areas the sector needs to focus on at present?

Innovation for one. At times our industry can be slow to embrace technology and new ways of doing things. This is something we want to fix. We wish to shape a new frontier iin experiential hospitality that sets NEOM Hotel Development apart, as it brings to life properties built around seamless services tailored to guest profiles. We do not wish to use tech as a tool to diminish the value of human input.

Clint Nagata, Founder & Creative Partner BLINK Design Group

Please share about the topic you will be focusing on at FHS KSA?

The focus of our discussion is the business of luxury and wellness in a changing world. The rise of the importance of wellness is can be seen in the success of such brands like Six Senses, which at wellness and luxury coexist at the core of their brand DNA. Having just been through COVID, many of us have adjusted our lifestyles and are more conscious about our wellbeing more than ever. The shift to more of a WFA mindset has led to hotels embracing this shift and the success of branded residences as people the world over shift towards this new idea of a balanced life.

What are the key areas the hospitality sector needs to focus on at present?

The sector needs to focus on adapting to changing lifestyle of guests. Since post COVID there is a rising interest in people's interest focusing on their wellbeing.

Sustainability is a key component in hospitality, is it viable for those properties which are older? How can they infrastructurally change? Older properties should look for ways to be more sustainable to reduce operational costs and drive higher guest satisfaction

Digitalisation still leaves questions in the industry, with chatGPT and Al slowly coming in, does it mean job loss for certain cadre?



Clint Nagata Founder & Creative Partner BLINK Design Group

Without a doubt technology is a potential game changer in the industry. When it comes to design of hotels Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT will soon be able to deliver standard designs of hotels but I think it will be a while before technology will be able to duplicate the creativity of humans.

Hicham Hassouni, Chief Strategy & Business Development Officer, Boutique Group

"I will be participating in the session, how do we differentiate the Saudi tourism product from the global competition," says Hassouni. This will help the industry as it will reach a stage of maturity, a market needs



Hicham Hassouni Chief Strategy & Business Development Officer Boutique Group

to offer diversified products, not only in terms of category but also in terms of concepts. Saudi market has initiated that journey of maturity by offering diversified concepts from wellness retreats, to beach resorts. futuristic destinations, spiritual/ religious, cultural and heritage related, etc. Some of the key areas the hospitality sector needs to focus on at present which are critical areas are: Product/Concept integrity (avoid cookie cutter approach), Execution and delivery (get the brick and mortar game on point) and Talent (inspire, hire, train, reward and retain) 🦻

Yachting primed for sustainable future

The Dubai International Boat Show 2023 that ended at Dubai Harbour, showcasing the latest sustainable innovations and advancements in the yachting industry. The 29th edition of the show saw prominent yacht manufacturers accelerate efforts to promote environmental sustainability, in line with the increasing demand for greener yachts and an industry-wide movement towards protecting our oceans.

î TT Bureau

'he Middle East's largest and most established boat show was a proud industry changemaker attracting exhibitors showcasing eco-friendly materials and electric engines, as well as other solutions aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the yachting and water sports industries. Prominent distributors and brands leading the charge include Silent Yachts, as well as the JLS Training Institute, OKTA core, Magonis, Cummins Arabia, Sunkiss. Ocean 360, and the GEMS Education network.

While some emerging energy technologies are still in various stages of development, many options available today can make a big difference. Silent Yachts, which exhibited at Dubai International Boat Show 2023 for the first time, produces the first ocean-going production yachts in the world powered by solar energy, used to charge the batteries and run the electric motor.

According to Ahmed Almousawi, General Manager, "This makes them carbon-free and the process is as sustainable as can be. They are called Silent Yachts; you will not hear any noises or feel any vibrations as you would from a traditional yacht fuel engine. Not only does this make the yachting experience more pleasurable, but it also protects the coral reefs and the marine life."

As the exclusive UAE dealer for the Ferretti Group brands, including Ferretti Yachts, Riva, Pershing and Itama; Ocean



360 has seen greater integration of green energy technologies into the full spectrum of yachting products, says Bogdan Borascu, Marketing Director, Ocean 360.

To cater to this demand, Ferretti Group has allocated a significant budget towards research and development, which is focused on renewable sources of energy such as solar power. Bogdan also mentioned that the industry is seeing a lot more innovation in watercraft and water toys. "Here, we see the push for green energy is stronger and easier to achieve, because of Silent Yachts makes for a pleasurable experience. Not only does this make

Silent Yachts makes for a pleasurable experience. Not only does this make yachting pleasurable, but also protects the coral reefs and the marine life

New advancements in solar energy technology today have meant it is possible to power yachts through renewable enthe smaller size of the craft," he said at the show. "In line with this, Belassi, the ocean manufacturer of the Burrasca—a

ergy. Ferretti Yachts' new In-

fynito line is a prime example

of this trend, featuring yachts

fitted with a solar roof that gen-

erates electricity to charge the

onboard lithium battery pack.

marine hypercraft—is preparing to introduce a fully electric stand-up jet ski. We also have the SEABOB brand, which, since its inception, has focused on green energy and they have electric-powered water sleds."



To lock in its commitment to a greener way of living on and off the water, the S.E.A Mission; Sustainable, Environmental Action was introduced at Dubai boat show this year. ≥

Cruise Saudi superyacht ready by 2027

Adding to its exceptional portfolio, Aman at Sea will be the latest superyacht to be added for cruising. At a recent event, the management of Cruise Saudi shared more details about the joint venture with the super yacht. The new ultra-luxury yacht will have a 2:1 crew ratio to guests, placing a priority on the guest space ratio, along with creating the biggest suites in the industry.

Υ TT Bureau

Girector Fawaz Farooqui shared about Aman at Sea, Cruise Saudi's joint venture with Aman, which is a new ultra-luxury yacht for Very High Net Worth (VHNW) travellers. "Aman at Sea is a truly unique brand and it's authentic intent is to provide a level of service, which is a home away from home, that is peerless in every way."

The 183-metre superyacht Aman at Sea will have 47 spacious suites along with a full spectrum of luxury amenities, including an Aman-style spa with Japanese relaxation



garden, several international Michelin-quality restaurants, and an on-board beach club, giving the guests access to the water from the stern of the yacht. The ultra-luxury yacht is expected to be ready for cruising by 2027. Fawaz revealed that the new ultra-luxury yacht will have a 2:1 crew ratio to guests, prioritizing the guest space ratio, along with creating the biggest suites in the industry. Speaking about what makes Saudi a premium destination, Fawaz said it was Saudi's warm hospitality, authenticity, culture, and nature that made it such a valuable proposition. **D**

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