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Sharjah focuses on innovation @



Sharjah focuses on sustainability and innovation as it showcases its multiple offerings at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM). Travel leaders from across the world connect, interact and sign off valuable deals and partnerships over the four days of extravagant show.

“ As we mark our 24th participation at the ATM alongside 23 public and private entities representing the emirate, SCTDA's commitment to innovation and sustainability within Sharjah's tourism sector remains unwavering. The emirate stands out as a pioneer in the travel industry, embracing a comprehensive approach that includes significant progress in infrastructure development, the launch of authentic tourism and leisure destinations, and dedicated efforts to preserve cultural and historical treasures. Sustainability practices lie at the heart of these endeavours. In line with ATM's theme of 'Empowering Innovation - Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship,' we are dedicated to reflecting the entrepreneurial spirit of Sharjah in the tourism sector, fostering opportunities for individuals to craft unique travel experiences that are eco-conscious, sustainable, and innovative. The emirate's entrepreneurial environment fosters groundbreaking initiatives across all sectors. ”



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

Compiled by Dr. Shehara Rizly

Themed trips find fervour in ME

An emerging travel trend evolving in the Middle East region since even before the pandemic is people seeking unique and life changing experiences, termed as 'themed trips' or 'experiential travel' in the region. Let's take a look at what the experts have to say about this trend.



Jamal Abdulnazar
Chief Executive Officer
Cozmo Travel

“ Experiential travel to our customers means engaging intimately with the local culture, environment, and people to create memorable and personal experiences that go beyond traditional sightseeing. Absolutely, experiential travel is a lasting trend, offering unique, immersive experiences that cater to modern travellers' desire for authenticity and meaningful connections. Boosting the travel industry is super important. It helps keep it strong, encourages new ideas, and makes travellers happier, leading to more growth and better experiences for everyone. ”



Daniel Rosado
Director
Spain Tourism GCC

“ Travel in 2024 is all about experiences. When travelling, the aim is to get an immersive experience that allows the traveller to develop a personal and deep connection with the destination, ensuring an experience as authentic as possible, to be able to feel the place as a local rather than as a visitor. In Spain tourism we are looking at giving truly authentic experiences in more known places with immersive local experiences and discover new sides of the country which are less known in this region, such as ski experiences. ”

Contd. on page 4 ▶



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Satguru eyes key biz deals at ATM

Showcasing its various verticals at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) this year, Satguru Travel plans to sign important business deals with some existing partners, as well as some new ones, shares **Dinkar Dasaur**, General Manager, UAE, Satguru Travel. From their recent ventures like luxury hotels to desert camps, the company has a steady growth strategy working alongside its partners.

TT Bureau

How important is ATM this year for Satguru?

ATM is an important platform for everyone involved in the field of travel, tourism and hospitality, as well as those supporting the industries, such as technology and government entities. ATM is a platform where we meet people, network with them, showcase our products and most importantly sign contracts. So, for us, ATM is a global platform, where we get the opportunity to meet our global suppliers, it would be airlines, agencies, TMCs and DMCs. As you know, we at Satguru have several verticals and, being in the UAE as a mature market, we are in the space of B2B and B2C, we are in the space of corporate TMCs, outbound, inbound providing packages and also in the space of GSA. With all these verticals,



Dinkar Dasaur
General Manager UAE
Satguru Travel

ATM is an opportunity for us to showcase all these products and ensure that we lock in some good partnerships for the year.

Tell us about your recent acquisitions of luxury hotels, car rentals etc?

We have acquired luxury hotels in India and Africa, as well as car rental companies. So, these

are the products that we are going to showcase at this year's ATM stand. The chain of hotels is called Bravia and we have got four hotels in Africa and three hotels in India, which we will be promoting aggressively at ATM.

We at Satguru have several verticals and, being in the UAE as a mature market, we are in the space of B2B and B2C

What are the expectations from ATM?

ATM presents an opportunity to grow, it's an opportunity to do business, and it's an opportu-



nity to expand. We are looking forward to meeting a lot of new partners from some of the new countries who will be present this year. We started up small, we grew and we are growing today. We are in a position to say that our technology front is at the materialisation front to cater to all countries and all businesses in the UAE and we look forward to meeting up and tying up with companies from untouched countries. The rea-

son why I say that is that some countries are traditional countries where we go for vacations but there are some untouched countries which are beautiful and we would love to encounter those people and meet up with them and sign up contracts, so that we enhance our portfolio with business opportunities.

How are your MICE and weddings verticals?

We are proud to say if the re-

ATM presents an opportunity to grow, it's an opportunity to do business, and it's an opportunity to expand

gion is growing so, it is because we are present in all the countries in the region, especially UAE. However, there are our neighbouring countries like Qatar, Oman and Saudi Arabia also venturing into this and opening the platform for a lot of companies to come into the MICE activities, as well as weddings, or rather destination weddings, which is becoming an important segment in the region. ▶

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Times weekly

Craze for authentic experiences

► Contd. from page 1



Amer Alazaiza
General Manager
Al Mulla Travels and Tourism

“Experiential travel to our customers embodies immersive, authentic journeys that go beyond sightseeing. It’s about actively engaging with local cultures, traditions, and landscapes, creating meaningful connections, and crafting unforgettable memories that resonate long after the journey ends. Experiential travel is more than a trend; it’s a fundamental shift in how people seek fulfilment from their journeys. Its enduring appeal suggests it’s here to stay.”

“With travel accessibility rising, the focus shifts to immersive, authentic experiences. Travellers crave for deep connections with local cultures, indulging in regional cuisines and community immer-



Aga Pytlík
General Manager
Panworld Travel

sion. It’s vital for travel programmes to adapt, prioritising customised, authentic offerings over traditional sightseeing. Crafting experiences fostering genuine interactions and a sense of belonging is key.”



Emily Jenkins
Senior Manager - Product Development, DW Travel

“Experiential travel is about engaging in immersive, authentic experiences that connect our clients with the culture, people, and natural environment of a destination. It focuses on creating meaningful, transformative memories. Travellers are increasingly seeking personalised, enriching experiences that go beyond traditional tourism. A focus on experiential travel is crucial, as it ensures high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive travel experiences.”

“Currently, observed in the behaviour of travellers, whether individuals or groups, is experiential tourism, encouraging meaningful engagement with history, people, culture, gastronomy, and environment. Experience-



Ayman Al Qudwa
General Manager
Falcon Travel

led tourism is slowly becoming the norm. With visitors immersing in local culture for a longer period, it is expected to remain popular this year. Experience travel is a good trend in the travel industry.”



Basel Atassi
Travel Counsellor
Travel Counsellors

“Experiential travel for customers often entails immersive, authentic, and engaging experiences that go beyond mere sightseeing. It’s about connecting with a destination on a deeper level, experiencing its culture, traditions, and lifestyle firsthand. For some, it might involve participating in local activities, such as cultural workshops, or adventure sports. For others, it could mean staying in boutique hotels or homestays.”

“The post-pandemic situation has brought with it new trends, and one of them is bleisure. At Civitatis, we do appreciate that this type of booking has increased. Our team, comprising over 300 individuals,



Enrique Espinel
Chief Operating Officer
Civitatis

takes pride in using our visits to the world’s major tourism fairs and events to engage in our own activities. The most popular activities always depend on the destination itself and the tastes of the traveller.”



Divya Nanda
Travel Counsellor
Travel Counsellors

“Customers are embracing experiential travel. Dive into culture, cuisine, and community for genuine memories. Beyond sightseeing, it fosters personal growth and meaningful connections, reshaping how we explore. This trend isn’t fleeting; it’s a transformative shift. It challenges destinations to prioritise authenticity, sustainability, and local involvement. Travel becomes more than a journey—it’s a force for positive change, enriching both travellers and communities.”

“Experiential tourism aims at creating a deeper connection with the place, its culture and people. Oman has embraced the tenets of modernisation while preserving its cultural tapestry. Adorned by its



Malith Chamika
Holidays Supervisor - Travels & Tours LLC, Muscat

mesmerising landscapes, unique culture, architectural marvels, timeless traditions, culinary delights, adventures and the hospitality and kindness of the Omani people, it has indeed set the trend of experiential travel.”



Rashida Ginwala
Director of Holidays
Bin Ham Travel, Abu Dhabi

“Experiential travel to our customers is more than a vacation; it’s a journey of discovery. Nowadays, people crave for genuine interactions with diverse cultures, traditions, and landscapes. It’s all about forging connections. It appears to be more than a passing trend. The demand for immersive journeys is likely to endure, shaping the future of the tourism industry. It’s not just a fad; it’s a fundamental shift in how people explore the world.”

“In a recent analysis of tourism trends spanning from 2019 to 2023, it has been observed that while pre-pandemic levels have not yet been fully regained, promising signs indicate a steady recovery. Projections



Juana Muro
Chief Operating Officer
TourReview

for 2024 suggest that the tourism industry may even surpass previous benchmarks, signalling optimism for the future. One notable trend is the burgeoning interest from Asian tourists in the Middle Eastern market.”



Varsha Pherwani
Travel Counsellor Associate
Travel Counsellors

“Experiential travel goes beyond what you will usually find in the guidebooks. This kind of travel is appreciated by customers who do not want an off the shelf itinerary and look for something unique that enriches their whole travel experience to another level. This kind of travel includes culturally immersive experiences like homestays, cooking lessons, and getting hands on with making traditional handicrafts that are truly unique to the destination.”

“Experiential travellers seek meaningful interactions and authentic experiences that allow them to connect with the destination on a deeper level. This involves activities such as staying in locally-



Mohamed Al Rais
Executive Director
Al Rais Travel Group

owned accommodations, participating in cultural workshops, or volunteering with community projects. Essentially, it’s about creating memorable and personal experiences that go beyond the typical tourist itinerary.”

Distinction of biz, leisure travel blurs



Elmira Heshmati
Founder CEO
Elaxiom Travel and Tourism

“Different concepts of ‘travelling’, such as exchanging minds, cultures and history, are showing that the meaning of experiential travel is more understandable when it’s about creating meaningful memories and gaining insights where it goes beyond the typical touristic experiences. Travelers increasingly seek authentic and new experiences.”

“In Germany, experiential travel goes beyond famous landmarks. It’s about travellers immersing themselves in regional life, feeling the pulse of diverse landscapes, savouring authentic



Yamina Sofo
Director, Marketing & Sales
Office, GNTD GCC

markets, discovering the rich cultural tapestry of the country, and finding true relaxation in nature.”



Samir Mehta
Chief Operating Officer
Desert Adventures Tourism

“Our clients crave for experiences that go beyond typical tourist fare. They seek a range of experiences, including cultural, adventure, nature, gastronomy, and spiritual encounters. We customise and curate experiences through deep engagement with our partners to leave a lasting impression on our diverse clients from Europe, CIS, the Americas, and Asia.”

“Accor closely monitors travel patterns. The distinction between business and leisure travel continues to blur, with all guests increasingly seeking longer, more immersive experiences. From cultural exploration



Kerry Healy
Chief Commercial Officer, Middle East,
Africa and Asia Pacific - Premium,
Midscale and Economy brands, Accor

to indulging in amenities like spa treatment, Accor properties cater to diverse preferences.”



Douglas Quinby
Co-founder & CEO
Arival

“The typical traveller’s bucket list used to consist of places to go, countries to check off, passport stamps to collect. But in 2024 and beyond, it will be more about the who, what and why, than the where and when. Experiences are no longer just ‘things to do’, but the reason to go in the first place. They are increasingly driving the destination decision.”

“There are three kinds of tourism trends for younger generation. They prefer experiential holidays as what really excites them is something out of the box. The next trend we see is purpose tourism. Lastly,



Sapna Aidasani
Director
Pluto Travel

the main trend is ‘detox holidays’ where travellers just want to kick back and relax.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

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Growing reliance on digital platforms

Middle East hospitality today has become the most dynamic with its diverse offerings to guests from across the globe. The resilient region is able to cater to the discerning guests whether it is ultra luxury, premium, mid-scale or any market. The trends vary from sustainable practices to immersive experiences. We have our leaders in hospitality to share more with .



Paul Stevens
COO, Middle East, Africa and Türkiye – Premium, Accor

“Hotel prices in Dubai are influenced by seasonal patterns and special occasions, often resulting in high occupancy rates and elevated prices. Major events such as conferences and international

“In the dynamic hospitality landscape, trends are reshaping the way we welcome and take care of our guests at more than 275 properties across the Middle East. Loyalty is evolving, evidenced by a significant surge in bookings through All.com while spontaneous travel and short lead times will continue to be rife in 2024. We see travellers are seeking sustainable and authentic experiences.”



Rubén Sánchez
CEO and Co-Founder
BEONx

exhibitions can trigger spikes in hotel prices. During Q1 2024, events like Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships saw a significant increase in travel.”



Petr Dubsky
GM, The Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel, Residence & Spa

“Year on year, travel in the region during the first quarter has declined compared to 2023 for two reasons; the shift of Ramadan and fewer groups in the market due to certain large events not repeating in the region. When it comes to the transient segment, both volume and rates remained almost the same, with a slight spike in volume and a downward shift in rates. There was a record-breaking interest in F1 event.”

“Hotel trends in the Cairo region showcase a blend of tradition and modernity, catering to diverse traveller preferences. Booking patterns highlight a growing reliance on online platforms, particularly



Yasser Bahaa
Cluster GM, Radisson Blu, Cairo
Heliopolis Radisson Residences,
Cairo Heliopolis

OTAs, for convenient reservations. Despite this, direct bookings and personalised services remain integral, especially for corporate longer stays.”



David Allan
Cluster General Manager
Radisson Hotel Group

“Business in Q1 2024 continued with the upward trend coming from Q4 2024. Especially in the first two months of the year, we have experienced positive movement and healthy results from a mix of segments. The booking patterns remain relatively unchanged. Key feeder markets for Dubai, including Western Europe, South Asia, CIS & Eastern Europe and MENA, are going strong.”

“GCC like any developing country is witnessing a rapid technological boost from booking a stay and choosing recreational activities to best dining options. Deals, locations, services, online



Emre Kocamustafaogullari
General Manager
Radisson Blu Hotel, Doha

reviews, influencers and traveller recommendations are key factors in the decision making nowadays. Guests are seeking for memorable experiences.”



Anna-Marie Dowling
General Manager, Nofa Fiyadh
A Radisson Collection Resort

“The hotel industry is changing with the guests seeking unique experiences. Regional hotels are witnessing a shift towards shorter stays centred around local attractions and culture. While online

“In the GCC hospitality sector, key trends are still showing strong growth in new hotels and serviced apartments, with the latter projected to see rapid growth. Saudi Arabia is a key leader in the market due to progressive policies. Booking through digital technologies has become a major trend. Most of the global hotel groups have invested heavily in improving online booking platforms.”



Olga Borucu
Project Manager
Prime Travel

travel agencies remain popular, direct bookings are increasing thanks to special deals and promotions. Hotels need to adapt to new technology like self-check-in and mobile apps.”



Philip Jones
Senior VP – Operations, Middle East & Africa, Accor

“Booking patterns have evolved post-pandemic, notably with shorter lead times across the region, previously typical only for GCC travellers but now evident in other source markets. Duration of the stay varies by location and travel purpose; resorts see 5 to 7-day stays, while city hotels host stays of 1 to 3 days. The All.com app bookings and our ALL - Accor Live Limitless, loyalty memberships have surged.”

“In the region, booking patterns lean towards OTAs due to their convenience, though traditional travel agents remain popular for personalised service. Length of stay is on the rise, driven by a desire



Issam Slaimi
General Manager
Golden Tulip Media Hotel

for quick getaways and business trips. Popular activities include desert safaris, cultural tours, and luxury shopping. Travellers prioritise seamless booking experiences and seek incentives.”



Arijit Paul
Director - Sales & Marketing,
Movenpick Grand Al Bustan, Dubai

“The Dubai hospitality sector is undergoing a profound transformation driven by socio-cultural, economic, and technological shifts. Consumers are prioritising eco-consciousness, prompting hotels to adopt green initiatives and eco-friendly practices. Technology is revolutionising the guest experience, with contactless services and AI-powered amenities enhancing both service quality and operational efficiency.”

“Ras Al Khaimah is experiencing strong demand from source markets due to its exceptional positioning as a destination blending culture and nature within the UAE. The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism



Fabien Chesnais
General Manager
Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island

Authority (RAKTDA) is notably active in promoting the region. Booking patterns have shifted towards shorter notice bookings, yet visitors enjoy a healthy length of stay.”

Are booking trends seeing a shift?



Haitham Galal
General Manager
The Tower Plaza Hotel

“ We have seen a remarkable decrease in lead booking times, even for long-haul trips like those from Europe, and despite the rising costs of flights, the UAE still remains a high value travel destination due to



Wael El Behi
General Manager
Cophthorne Hotel Dubai

“ Travel booking trends have reverted to pre-pandemic norms, with vacation planning resuming well in advance. The industry finds stability as predictability returns to travel patterns, reflecting a



Ahmed Hassib
Chief Executive Officer
Gewan Hotels & Resorts

“ Hotel demand across the Middle East is skyrocketing, but guests from more markets have led to an increasingly fragmented booking landscape. Hoteliers need to rethink how they capture demand - and

“ As GM of The Tower Plaza Hotel, I witness firsthand the vibrant evolution of Dubai’s hospitality scene. To excel in this dynamic market, we must align with key trends such as sustainability, technology integration, personalised experiences, diverse wellness and culinary offerings. Booking patterns reveal a shift towards online platforms. ”



Alexander Musch
General Manager
Pullman Dubai Downtown

its robust infrastructures and safety. Additionally, there has been a shift towards booking via online channels. ”

“ The GCC hotel market is expected to grow annually by 3.51 per cent from 2024 to 2028 to reach an estimated volume of \$5.4 billion by 2028. The trend of high-end hotels outperforming others is set to continue, with luxury RevPAR expected to rise by 3.8 per cent and 3.7 per cent YoY. In 2024, urban locations are projected to show the strongest growth. ”



Ravi Santiago
Cluster General Manager
Wyndham Hotels Ajman

renewed confidence in exploring destinations. Travel agents play key role in boosting occupancy and revenue. ”

“ As travellers increasingly seek unique experiences, we have observed a notable trend towards personalised bookings and last-minute reservations. While travel agents and OTAs remain invaluable in driving business, we recognise the growing importance of direct bookings and loyalty programmes. At Gewan, we deeply value our partnerships. ”



Sudhir Ghildiyal
Director of Sales, the Middle East and Indian Sub-continent, Cendy

Google’s role in travel is obvious; it’s where around 90 per cent of bookings originate. ”

Compiled by TT Bureau



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Air India deploys A350 on Dubai-Delhi route

Air India has deployed its brand new A350 aircraft on the Dubai-Delhi route to start off its new summer additions. The aircraft features 28 private suites with full-flat beds in business class, 24 seats with extra legroom and other enhancements in a dedicated Premium Economy cabin, and 264 spacious seats in economy class to offer flyers a plethora of choices.

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Air India (AI) guests flying between Dubai and Delhi can experience the A350 aircraft in its bold new livery. The airline deployed its brand new A350 aircraft on the Dubai-Delhi route on 1 May 2024. Operating as AI995/996, the aircraft departs Delhi daily at 20:45 hours, arriving at 22:45 hours in Dubai. The return flight departs Dubai next day at 00:15 hours and arrives in Delhi at 04:55 hours. All timings are local. With this, Air India becomes the only carrier to operate the A350 between India and Dubai. The A350 seats on the Delhi-Dubai route are available for reservation on Air India's website and mobile app or via travel agents.



Parminder Pal Singh
Regional Manager - GMEA
Air India

us at Dubai that Air India deployed its brand-new A350 aircraft on the busy Delhi-Dubai route from

1 May 2024. This is the first Air India A350 International Destination. Now, Air India becomes the only carrier to operate the A350 between India and Dubai. Air India's A350 aircraft features 28 private suites with full-flat beds in business (class), 24 seats in a dedicated Premium Economy cabin offering extra legroom and other enhancements, and 264 spacious seats in economy (class). All seats on the A350 come with the latest-generation Panasonic eX3 in-flight entertainment system and HD screens that offer more than 2,200 hours of entertainment content from around the world."



It is a proud moment for us at Dubai that Air India deployed its brand-new A350 aircraft on the busy Delhi-Dubai route from 1 May 2024

Parminder Pal Singh, Regional Manager - GMEA, Air India, shared, "It is a proud moment for

Singh added, "We invite all to experience this new beauty which will ultimately be the leading Air India fleet and would fly on ultra-long-haul routes ex India. Big transformation in progress for Air India to become

a world-class airline with an Indian heart."

Air India, a Tata Group company, started inducting the A350s earlier this year, which have since operated flights

within India for crew familiarisation and regulatory compliance purposes. Air India currently operates a total of 72 flights a week to Dubai from five Indian cities, of which 32 flights are from Delhi. ➔

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Coral Beach clears 'zero carbon' test

Sharjah's Coral Beach Resort has been transforming into a hotel with zero carbon emissions over the past year with international experts carrying out the necessary programmes and auditing the property recently for the certification. **Iftikhar Hamdani**, Area General Manager, Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace, shares more on this with .

 Dr Shehara Rizly

What will you showcase this year at ATM?

Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is known for its family-friendly resort. Its extensive garden, beach front and rich recreation facilities like pools, spa, tennis court, kids club, including recreational activities like kids' games and aqua aerobic programmes, give a variety of options to enjoy while at stay.

Could you share a brief of the latest news from Coral Beach Resort?

We are leading towards its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. Our latest initiative at Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is the commencement of its comprehensive strategy towards achieving zero carbon emissions. The action initiated with comprehensive audit by the



Iftikhar Hamdani
Area General Manager
Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace

experts in order to assess the hotel and coordinating on solutions and recommendations to further move forward. Coral Beach Resort Sharjah provided and distributed 600 Iftar meals to individuals and families in Ajman emirate in the holy month of Ramadan. It also accomplished a healthy occupancy and revenue in the first quarter of 2024.

How has the year been for Coral Beach Resort?

The year for Coral Beach Resort Sharjah has been great and resulted to a positive outcome in terms of revenue. Our team played a crucial role in the success of our company.

Do you see an increase in visitors? Do you see new source markets coming in? If so, from which countries?

This was one of the best year after COVID-19 for Coral Beach Resort Sharjah, as we had amazing flow of occupancy in 2023 and majority of the guests were from Russia,



Germany, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries and new

markets were Georgia, Baltic, Balkans and the UK. Additionally, we are working with Sharjah Tourism to tap into more markets e.g. India, China and GCC by attending more roadshows and travel fairs in these countries

Sustainability strategy is firmly in place at Coral Beach Resort Sharjah. We are currently working to further improve on waste management system through the Composter Machine, which will convert organic scraps into nutrient-rich compost, diverting them from landfills where they contribute to environmental pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. 

Coral Beach Resort Sharjah provided and distributed 600 Iftar meals to individuals and families in Ajman emirate in the holy month of Ramadan

As the pioneer in sustainability, what are the latest actions taken at Coral Beach Resort?

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Cozmo Travel forays into logistics

Cozmo Travel launches its latest verticals at the Arabian Travel Market. The first is where everyone gets the opportunity to meet Cozmic, its latest venture into space tourism, and the next exciting new vertical on the horizon is Cozmo Logistics under Cozmo Travel. **Jamal Abdulnazar**, CEO, Cozmo Travel and **Deepa Rajesh**, Director, Sales & Business Development, Cozmo Travel, share details with **TT BUREAU**.

TT Bureau

Where will you be at ATM this year?

This year, we will be exhibiting at ATM with two stalls under the Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority, as well as under Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. Exhibiting in ATM always brings about many opportunities to create new partnerships from different sectors within the travel and hospitality industry to make travel and tourism more accessible and convenient for all. Furthermore, this ATM will mark the debut of our new mascot, Cozmic, an astronaut who loves to explore the cosmos and has landed on earth to explore it with Cozmo Travel. His journey and adventures are being shared over our social media and we are excited to have people meet Cozmic at ATM this year.



Jamal Abdulnazar
CEO
Cozmo Travel



Deepa Rajesh
Director Sales & Business Development
Cozmo Travel



Cozmo Travel launches its new mascot, Cozmic, an astronaut who loves to explore the cosmos, at this year's Arabian Travel Market

What are new verticals/products that you will showcase?

Since the last ATM, we have achieved many milestones and worked towards strengthening our network over nine countries and its array of services to ensure that we are catering to all segments across our network. As Cozmo Travel, we have been successful in assessing the demand in the region and cre-

ating verticals that specialise in all niche sectors and services within the travel industry. We

are always excited to announce around ATM all the new ventures and brands that we have started,

such as the latest brand launch, that is Cozmo Logistics, which aims at reimagining logistics solutions in the region with the support of the Cozmo Travel brand. A few of the many services that Cozmo Logistics offers include air logistics, sea logistics, customs brokerage and many more customised solutions that fits the needs of our clients. Another brand that has been relaunched

this year post COVID-19 is Beyond the Classroom, which offers curated experiences for students from different age groups and majors to make travelling educational and fun with top notch services and consultants. What sets this segment apart is the packages that aims to nurture minds of students to become seasoned travellers with great experiences. **D**

We are excited to announce around ATM all the new ventures and brands that we have started, such as the latest brand launch, that is Cozmo Logistics



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Journey to a balanced lifestyle

Pioneer in Ayurvedic holistic treatments for a balanced lifestyle, Siddhalepa Ayurveda Health Resort Sri Lanka recently conducted a special power breakfast for a selected number of agents and media in Dubai. First in a series of sessions to be conducted across four key markets in the GCC gave a comprehensive presentation on the many services and facilities available for the GCC guests.



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Sustainable escapes dot breathtaking eastern coast of

SHARJAH

Sharjah - a leading driver of sustainable travel in the Middle East - offers a plethora of eco-conscious discoveries dotted along its breathtaking eastern coast. From Kalba's Hanging Gardens and Al Hefaiyah Lake to Shees Rest Area in Khorfakkan, the emirate of Sharjah has been unveiling new attractions that offer travellers and residents more eco-friendly ways to explore and enjoy the emirate.

TT Bureau

As travellers worldwide become increasingly conscious about their ecological footprint, Sharjah - a leading driver of sustainable travel in the Middle East - offers a plethora of eco-conscious discoveries dotted along its breathtaking east coast. With several natural escapes, leisure destinations, rest houses,

and more, including new offerings, namely the Hanging Gardens and Al Hefaiyah Lake in the quaint town of Kalba and the Shees Rest Area in coastal Khorfakkan, Sharjah's East Coast offers distinctive natural havens suited to families, adventure lovers, nature and history buffs alike. The developments champion top sustainability ethos and are a reinforcement of Sharjah's

commitment to preserving nature while offering authentic and immersive tourism experiences to the world travellers.

KALBA'S PROTECTED GEMS

Kalba is one of the most popular destinations for ecotourism in the UAE, with opportunities to go wildlife spotting while trekking, kayaking, as well as scuba diving. It also houses numerous protection areas.

The Hanging Gardens: A green oasis in the mountains

Tucked away amid the rugged terrain of Kalba lies a lush green marvel: Kalba's Hanging Gardens. This brand new development is spread across more than 1.6 million square feet and perched 281 metres above the sea level. The lush sanctuary is home to over 100,000 trees, creating a green tableau that captivates the senses. Traverse

mountain climbing trails, meander through agricultural terraces, or test your skills on the 24,000 square feet skating rink.

Al Hefaiyah: A tranquil oasis nestled in the heart of the mountains

Named Al Hefaiyah, the water body is located on the Sharjah-Kalba Road and covers an expanse of 132,000 square metres. It also features a 3.17-kilometre dual-lane road surrounding the lake, allowing tourists to stroll and enjoy the picturesque view.

Al Qurm Protected Area, Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre and Wadi Al Helo

Kalba is not only a destination for thrill-seekers but also a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts, as it offers an in-depth exploration of protected areas where rare bird species and nesting turtles find refuge amid the pristine wilderness. For instance, with over 500 hectares of protected mangroves - or qurm in Arabic - the Al Qurm Protected Area houses rare bird species, sea turtles and mammals. Here, one may also

spot the endangered Arabian-collared kingfishers flying over the mangroves, or hawkbill and green turtles nesting on the nearby beach. Spread over 12 sq.km. in the Khor Kalba area, Al Hefaiyah Conservation Centre is home to 30 native mountain and desert species. It is also one of the only parks in Sharjah with indoor exhibits, featuring

Kalba's Hanging Gardens, spread across more than 1.6 million sqft, is home to over 100,000 trees, creating a green tableau

snakes, lizards, hedgehogs and scorpions. Larger landscaped enclosures are dedicated to the Arabian leopard, wolf, tahr and caracal or desert lynx.

Next, nestled between the Hajar mountains is the breathtaking Wadi Al Helo - a protected area





for endangered birds, reptiles, rodents and freshwater fish. The wadi's landscape also makes it one of the most scenic hikes in the UAE. One is very likely to encounter wildlife like the Arabian Oryx, the UAE's national animal, and find desert flowers blooming along the way.

KHORFAKKAN'S ELEGANT COAST LINED BY RUGGED MOUNTAINS
Nature's playground in Khorfakkan

In the serene embrace of Khorfakkan's mountains lies Shees Rest Area, a sparkling

new addition to Sharjah's tourism landscape. Designed with utmost respect for its natural surroundings, this oasis of tranquillity boasts more than 58 diverse shops, ensuring a unique tourism and leisure experience for all.

A panoramic vista of the east coast

Perched 600 metres above the sea level, Al Suhub Rest House offers panoramic views of Sharjah's east coast, providing visitors with a glimpse into the region's natural beauty. There is a 3-km mountain path that con-

nects Al Suhub Rest Area with the Al Rafisah Dam. The path provides a unique experience for adventure lovers to enjoy their favourite activities and provides a spectacular view of the Khorfakkan mountains. The dam, originally built in the 1980s, has had an upgrade with a new visitor centre and rest area.

A grandeur-filled destination

Inspired by Roman architecture, the Khorfakkan Amphitheatre serves as a local landmark, featuring advanced lighting and acoustics within



its 190,000 square feet area. With a capacity for 3,600 individuals and a year-round cooling system, it offers a unique venue for events. The 45-metre-long waterfall, constructed from the city's rocky landscape, overlooks the Khorfakkan Corniche, enhancing tourism in the region with its panoramic views and entertainment offerings.

Preserving nature, embracing heritage


Whether you are seeking ad-


Khorfakkan's Shees Rest Area boasts more than 58 diverse shops, ensuring a unique tourism and leisure experience for all

venture in the mountains or tranquility by the sea, Shar-

jah offers destinations like no other. As travellers venture through the east coast of Sharjah, they are not only immersed in nature's splendour but also get to closely experience local customs and heritage, and the unique Emirati way of life. What is more, each destination offers all the modern amenities desired by 21st-century travellers, while also having a keen focus on furthering Sharjah's decades-long successes in promoting sustainability and authentic travel experiences. ➤

Al Rais to showcase latest verticals

Al Rais Travel Group, the official Destination Management Company partner for Arabian Travel Market (ATM), will focus on some of their latest verticals at the event, including travel technology solutions, such as mobile apps, analytics tools, booking and platforms. **Mohamed Al Rais**, Executive Director, Al Rais Travel Group, spills some more beans with .

 TT Bureau

What will you showcase at ATM this year?

At this year's ATM, we are excited to spotlight the cutting-edge features and capabilities of our travel technology solutions, including booking platforms, mobile apps, analytics tools, and more. By demonstrating how our technology streamlines processes, enhances customer experiences, and fuels business growth, we aim to capture the attention of tech-savvy attendees and decision-makers seeking innovative solutions. In addition, we will emphasise on the value of our GSA representation services for airlines, highlighting our market expertise, extensive distribution network, sales optimisation strategies, and cost efficiencies. Through targeted messaging and compelling case studies showcasing suc-



Mohamed Al Rais
Executive Director
Al Rais Travel Group

cessful airline partnerships, we will position our company as a trusted and reliable GSA partner capable of driving revenue and market expansion for airlines.

Furthermore, we will showcase the unique attractions, experiences, and offerings of the destinations we represent. Through immersive visuals, captivating storytelling, and in-

teractive presentations, we will transport attendees to these destinations and inspire them to choose them for their next adventure. Additionally, we will highlight our marketing strategies and campaigns designed to resonate with specific target markets, demographics, and travel preferences, empowering tourism boards to maximise the effectiveness of their destination marketing efforts.

Our goal is to drive more travellers to the UAE by leveraging our expertise in destination marketing

As DMC partner for ATM, how will you drive more travellers to the UAE?

As a Destination Management Company (DMC) partner for ATM, our goal is to drive more travellers to the UAE by leveraging our expertise in destination marketing, strategic partnerships, and innovative promotional campaigns. We plan to achieve the goals by developing targeted marketing campaigns aimed at key source markets identified through market research and analysis. These campaigns will highlight the unique attractions, experiences, and offerings of the UAE, tailored to resonate with the preferences and interests of different traveller segments. Also, leveraging digital marketing channels and social media platforms, we will amplify our marketing efforts and reach a wider audience of potential travellers. Engaging content,

Destinations like Japan & South Korea attract UAE travellers with unique blend of heritage and modern innovations

stunning visuals, and interactive storytelling will showcase the diversity and beauty of the UAE, enticing travellers to visit.

How is the outbound market looking this summer?

Outbound market looks good this year. Emirates typically plan their outbound trips by April, strategically booking in advance for summer vacations. With a preference for longer stays of 2-3 weeks, they max-

imise their time to fully immerse themselves in the culture, attractions, and experiences of their chosen destinations. This extended duration allows for in-depth exploration, relaxation, and the opportunity to create lasting memories with family and friends.

Key outbound destinations booked by travellers from the UAE this summer will reflect a blend of cultural exploration, iconic landmarks, and diverse experiences. Paris, London, Barcelona, Rome, and Istanbul consistently rank among favorites. Additionally, destinations like Japan and South Korea attract UAE travellers with their unique blend of heritage and modern innovations. Australia and New Zealand emerge as sought-after destinations for UAE travellers seeking outdoor adventures and natural wonders. 



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Air India hosts UAE partners

During Ramadan, Air India GCC operations hosted travel partners and important stakeholders from the UAE to break fast together. It was a special networking meeting for the key agents across the region, who discussed the current trends and activities, especially in the region, with new routes and new source markets coming in and new markets opening up for outbound travel.



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2,100 exhibitors @ATM 2024

Arabian Travel Market greets more than 2,100 exhibitors, ranging from startups to established brands in travel, tourism and hospitality industry. About 500 accommodation providers, 200 tours, attractions and activities are expected over the next four days. This year has seen Travel Tech space sell out, reveals **Danielle Curtis**, Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market.



What is the theme and focus of ATM this year?

The 31st edition of ATM will be held under the theme 'Empowering Innovation: Transforming Travel Through Entrepreneurship'. Every year, we concentrate on a particular aspect of the travel and tourism industry that contributes to its growth. Recently, entrepreneurs have played an essential role in pushing the industry forward and have transformed how we approach travel, from online booking tools to eco-friendly travel experiences. Over four days, ATM will explore how travel and tourism entrepreneurs are working to attract more significant funding to increase the sector's overall contribution to GDP. The event will feature exciting innovators in aviation, accommodation, hospitality, and attractions, exploring how innovative sustainable trends will evolve and identifying strategies for growth within vital vertical sectors. The travel and tourism sector has demonstrated impressive resilience and growth in recent years, but the industry must continue to innovate and adapt to achieve



the industry's long-term goals. Thanks to our 2024 theme, we have a golden opportunity to showcase expert insights, cutting-edge technologies, and commercial opportunities that have the potential to completely reshape the sector.

Could you share the total area this year?

ATM will occupy 12 halls at the Dubai World Trade Centre, up from 10 last year. We have seen extraordinary growth in several sectors of the tourism industry this year, with the number of hotel brands up 21 per cent year on year and a phenomenal 56 per cent rise in new Travel Technology products on the show floor. We have also seen the return of national pavilions from Hungary, Spain, China and several African destinations, so we have allocated additional floor space to accommodate this growth.

How much space will the Middle East section be allocated this time?

The Middle East area will be located across Sheikh Saeed Arena and Halls 1 – 3.

Will you be able to share the number of exhibitors?

This year, ATM will welcome over 2,100 exhibitors, ranging from startups to established brands, covering the full spectrum of the industry.

Who are the new exhibitors this year?

This year, over 120 new exhibitors have joined the show, including new hotel brands, Destination Management Companies (DMCs), cruises, air charters,

Thanks to our 2024 theme, we have a golden opportunity to showcase expert insights, & cutting-edge technologies

hotels, and tech companies. New country pavilions include Macao, Kenya, Guatemala, and Columbia, while 17 per cent of the Saudi participants are first-time exhibitors.

Do you have a count on the total number of hotels, destinations, attractions, and technology?

We shall have over 500 accommodation providers and nearly 200 tours, attractions and activities. This year has also seen

Travel Tech space sell out, with more than 100 travel tech exhibitors, a 33 per cent year on year increase.

Would you be able to share how this year will be different from last year?

An eagerly awaited addition to ATM 2024 is the new entrepreneurship-focused summit, which will delve into the role



of travel start-ups in the Middle Eastern economy, spotlighting their pioneering approaches. As entrepreneurship and innovation take centre stage, the exciting ATM Start-Up Pitch Battle, in partnership with Intelak, provides the perfect platform to celebrate the immense potential of innovators in the region and for brands to present their industry solutions. Tech giant Huawei will sponsor this year's Capitalising on China's Predicted Tourism Surge summit on the ATM Global Stage.



We will also host a dedicated Saudi Village, which will showcase a full overview of Saudi products. Given the significant interest in this market, there will be a range of panel discussions that will enable attendees to identify and capitalise on new opportunities in the Kingdom.

How many visitors do you expect this year?

More than 40,000 travel trade professionals, including 30,000 visitors, attended the 30th edition of ATM in May 2023, setting a new show record. We expect to welcome over 40,000 attendees from over 155 countries this year.

Which will be the main stage discussions?

ATM 2024 is gearing up for an exciting lineup spread across two stages, with the Global Stage returning alongside the

Travel: Learnings from Europe, Capitalising on China's Predicted Tourism Surge, and The Potential of Cruise: Creating Swell in the Middle East, among others.

This year, over 120 new exhibitors have joined the show, including new hotel brands, DMCs and tech companies

The ATM Future Stage will host presentations and sessions designed to highlight opportunities within this space. These include Navigating the Future: A Futurist's Prediction, Strategic Capabilities and Implications of AI within Business, Putting the Traveller First with AI and Unlocking the Value of Travel:

new Future Stage (formerly the Travel Tech Stage). The conference agenda will feature key industry speakers from around the world and address the emerging trends fuelling the travel and tourism sector's growth.

The Global Stage will host several sessions revealing the latest travel insights and strategies, as well as inspiration from industry leaders. These include the Ministerial Debate: Streamlining Tourism Beyond the GCC, Strengthening Inter-Regional

Harnessing Technology for Enhanced Traveler Journeys, which will be held in association with Amadeus.

How many stages, sections will there be for interaction?

This year, ATM will feature the Global Stage, the Future Stage, the Buyers Club Lounge, and a dedicated bar and restaurant, ensuring plenty of networking opportunities, discussions around the latest impacting the industry, and, of course, to do business. 📍



Danielle Curtis
Exhibition Director
Arabian Travel Market

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Feeling the 'Pulse' of ME clientele

From all-inclusive concepts, to providing private and bespoke experiences, Pulse Hotels and Resorts caters to the family and ultra luxury clientele from the Middle Eastern region. Their signature properties The Nautilus, Kandima and Nova in Maldives have become popular among them. **Mohamed Khaleel**, MD, Pulse Hotels & Resorts, says they will be showcasing more offerings at ATM this year.

Dr Shehara Rizly

How important is the ME market for your hotels?

The Middle East market is crucial for the Pulse Hotels & Resorts properties, as it aligns perfectly with the luxury and privacy we offer. Our resorts cater to the high expectations with opulent accommodations and exclusive experiences, featuring private villas, superb entertainment and halal food options. The proximity and excellent flight connectivity make our resorts an attractive destination for Middle Eastern tourists.

What is the USP catering to the ME region?

Our resorts excel in providing luxury and privacy, with extensive living spaces and private pools in villas ideal for Middle Eastern travellers. At Kandima and The Nautilus we are family-friendly, offering extensive amenities like kids' clubs and activities suitable for all ages. Our resorts ensure



Mohamed Khaleel
Managing Director
Pulse Hotels & Resorts

a range of halal-certified dining options and are conveniently located to benefit from direct flights from major Middle Eastern cities. The tropical Maldivian climate of-

fers a picturesque escape from the typically hotter Middle Eastern weather.

Could you share some numbers in terms of travellers from the ME region?

The GCC markets account for 8-10 per cent share of the overall market production to Pulse Hotels and Resorts. The key aspect of 2024 is the improvement of contribution from the UAE, which has increased by 30 per cent compared to same time in 2023.

When do travellers from GCC visit the properties?

GCC guests travel to our resorts year-round, with notable spikes



often choose direct flights for convenience, provided by major airlines like Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar Airways.

What type of travellers do you receive from the ME? Is it more family travel, couple travel, or a combination of all?

The clientele of our resorts includes families, couples, and groups, with a significant portion travelling as couples drawn by the privacy and romantic settings, and families who appreciate our family-oriented facilities and activities.

What are your plans to attract more visitors to your properties in Maldives this year?

This year, we are intensifying our marketing efforts in the Middle East through the engagement of a dedicated PR & Sales representation in the region, digital campaigns and collaborations with influencers. We also participate in trade fairs like the ATM. ▶

during Eid due to the convenience of short travel distances.

What are the much-loved activities they like to do?

Middle Eastern travellers enjoy a blend of relaxation and adventure, including water sports like

snorkelling and jet skiing, private beach dining, spa treatments, and cultural experiences. Yacht excursions and fishing trips are also popular.

Do ME clients fly direct?

Our Middle Eastern guests

The key aspect of 2024 is the improvement of contribution from the UAE, which has increased by 30% compared to same time in 2023

Two Seasons adds recreation facility

Located in the business precinct of Dubai, Two Seasons Hotel initiates a strategy to enhance guest experience by renovating its apartment and adding a brand new recreation facility, including a new padel court and gym equipment. The renovation of five apartment floors include the transformation of 160 apartments of one bedroom and two bedrooms.

TT Bureau

Two Seasons Hotel completes the final phase of its apartment renovations this year. The renovation of five apartment floors include the transformation of 160 apartments of one bedroom and two bedrooms. Apart from the installation of new flooring, furniture and décor, the room boasts of an elegant combination of blue and golden modern interiors to enhance guest experience.

Furthermore, the hotel upgrades its recreation facilities with a new padel court on the 41st floor and new gym equipment at Elixir Fitness on the 8th floor. With the guest wellbeing in mind, Elixir Fitness introduces new treadmills, cross trainers, ladder, chest press, and shoulder press fitness equipment as part of its state of the art facility. The gym is open 24/7 to ac-



Freddy Farid
Managing Director
Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments

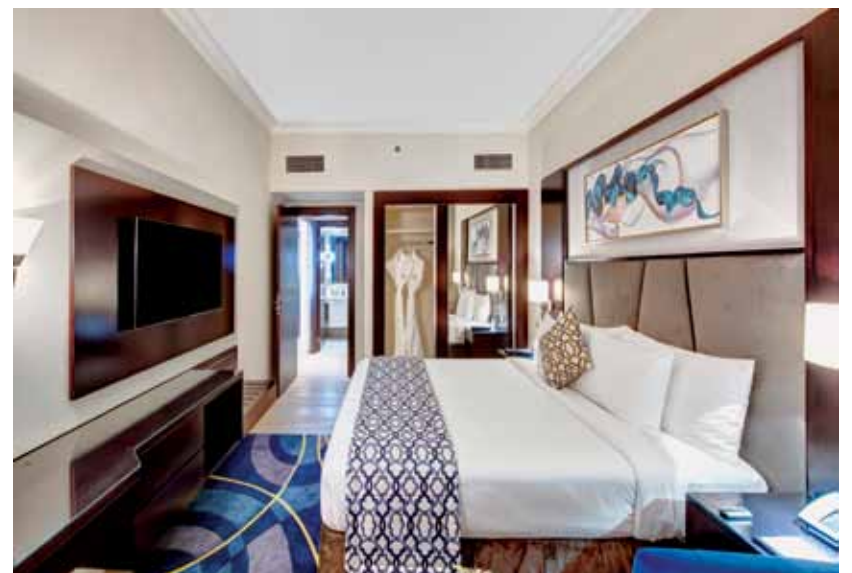
promote health and wellbeing among guests and the nearby residents. Gym members get the free parking during workout time, discount on food and beverage, and free access to sauna and steam room, jacuzzi and heated swimming pool.

Freddy Farid, Managing Director, Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments, stated, "I am thrilled that we will conclude the third and final stage of apartment renovations this year, and our unwavering commitment to enhance guest experience in all aspects of our hotel facilities."

commodate every guest's fitness goals and timings.

The padel court is scheduled to open by 1 May 2024.

Guests can book the court per hour and have the option to bring or rent the racket through the recreation reception desk. Single gym membership promotion was extended to



Apart from the new flooring, furniture and décor, the room boasts of an elegant combination of blue and golden interiors to enhance guest experience

The metro station connectivity of Two Seasons Hotel makes it an ideal accommodation for guests and the metro is easily accessible to gym members living within the Internet City, Media City, Al Barsha and Dubai Marina areas.

Two Seasons Hotel & Apartments' latest upgrades in its apartment rooms and recreation equipment and facilities reflect its promise to provide comfort and innovation to its guests and make the stay memorable for them. ▶



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Hard Rock Marbella: Music lovers' haven

According to Skyscanner research earlier this year 72 per cent people consider travelling to a gig or concert in a different country. Hard Rock Marbella is known for its live music performances from flamenco fusion to sitar or DJs. Located in Puerto Banús, the property could be included as a 'gig tripping' getaway in your bucket list destinations.

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Hard Rock Hotel Marbella, located in buzzing Puerto Banús, is the perfect place to enjoy your next vacation. It opened in 2022, and remains open all year round, thanks to the fantastic climate that the city welcomes. With around 325 days of sunshine a year, and an average annual temperature of 20 degree Celsius, it is the perfect enclave. Since its inception, the property has amazed guests with its sev-

enties style, its live music and its cocktails and sublime food. Those who stay feel like real rock stars and let themselves be carried away by the musical rhythm that accompanies them from the beginning of their stay.

Guests can enjoy surprising performances, taste delicious cuisine, have a moment of pure relaxation in Rock Spa or take a dip in pools, as the property facilitates plans of all kinds and for all tastes!

Since its inception in 2022, Hard Rock Hotel Marbella has amazed guests with its seventies style, its live music and its cocktails and sublime food



❖ Asian and Spanish fusion restaurants, a lively pool bar and an open-air lounge.

❖ Ideal location in Marbella, steps from the dreamy Nueva Andalucía beach.

❖ SoundBody™ wellness experiences: Body Rock®, Rock Om®, Rock Spa®.

❖ Stylish indoor and outdoor event spaces for groups of up to 550 people.

❖ Golf courses 5 minutes away, to complete your vacation with your favourite sport.

❖ The possibility of renting luxury cars and yachts.

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Hard Rock Hotel Marbella breaks the mould; if you are at the property do not settle for convention, as it maintains its rock essence to offer an exceptional experience in every minute.

❖ Brand-new rooms and suites up to 140 square metres with a fashionable retro vibe. Every corner of the rooms is impregnated with the rebellious attitude and unbreakable spirit that identifies the brand.

Do you want to know more about this fantastic hotel?
❖ **Live music and performances:** from flamenco fusion to sitar or DJs.

❖ **Pet friendly hotel***, which welcomes its guests' pets with open arms (*Only valid for dogs up to a certain size. Check conditions).

Emirates unveils latest A350

Starting this year on a strong note, Emirates will be showcasing its latest A350 at the Arabian Travel Market. Their game changing products such as the fully enclosed private suite in their first class cabin, to the next gen A380 onboard lounge and premium economy will be some of their offerings on showcase, shares **Adil Al Ghaith**, SVP, Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East and Central Asia, Emirates.

TT Bureau

How was the Q1 2024 in terms of recovery?

We have just started the new financial year, and so far bookings remain strong over the course of the next few months. With regard to the last financial year, our results will be announced in May. So, watch this space.

Will you be introducing any new product onboard?

The Emirates A350 will be entering service later this summer, and will come with next generation products across Business, Premium Economy and Economy. The newest Emirates cabins will offer a host of enhancements, including new features, stylish interior finishes and next level in-seat technology.

What will you showcase at ATM this year?

Visitors to the Emirates ATM



Adil Al Ghaith
SVP, Commercial Operations, Gulf, Middle East and Central Asia, Emirates

stand will have the opportunity to experience our latest roster of innovative products and fan-favourites, including the highly popular Emirates Premium



Economy seat, which is currently available on 27 A380 aircraft flying to 15 destinations. We will

also be featuring our iconic Boeing 777-300ER game-changer First Class fully enclosed private suite, Boeing 777 Business Class seat, the newest generation of the A380 Onboard Lounge and First Class Shower Spa, as well as Economy Class seats. There will also be a dedicated area showcasing our latest sustainability initiatives, including onboard items that

incorporate responsibly sourced materials, and items from 'Aircrafted by Emirates' - a unique collection of luggage, bags and accessories made from upcycled materials from retrofitted A380 aircraft.

Are you looking at new routes or special routes for summer?

This summer, we will be reinstating services to Phnom Penh via

Singapore. Bogota, our newest destination in South America, will debut on our network in early June. We will also be announcing exciting network updates soon. So, stay tuned.

Could you share about the impact of having been awarded the autism certified centre?

We recognise the challenges customers with autism and sensory sensitivities face in airport environments. The certification we received, awarded by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards represents a significant step towards making travel more inclusive and accessible to neurodiverse customers.

Do you see the Chinese market returning?

The Chinese market has not fully returned as anticipated; however, we are seeing some improvement in traffic in and out of China. ▶

The newest Emirates cabins will offer a host of enhancements, including new features, stylish interior finishes and next level in-seat technology

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Siddhalepa Ayurveda is a leading Ayurveda treatment and Ayurveda (herbal) products company in Sri Lanka, having an Ayurveda history exceeding 200 years. The company maintains a full-scale Ayurveda hospital, a dedicated Ayurveda Health Resort and a city hotel with optional Ayurveda while producing a wide range of Ayurveda products including medicines based on 100% natural ingredients. All the oils, tonics, creams, powders, and decoctions are produced by Siddhalepa's own manufacturing facilities under strict international standards conforming to ISO 9001, 14000, HACCP, GMP, and EU Pharmacopeia Standards. All Siddhalepa products are approved by the Department of Ayurveda, Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka. The company celebrates 90 years in 2024.

Siddhalepa Ayurveda Health Resort

861, Samanthara Road, Pothupitiya, Wadduwa, Sri Lanka. E-mail : leisure@siddhalepa.com Web : www.siddhalepa.com

'Domestic market flyadeal's strength'

The Low-Cost Carrier (LCC) concept is still in its infancy in Saudi Arabia and Middle East compared to Europe, North America and Asia. However, flyadeal, one of the most modern LCCs ideal for short-haul travel with their seamless booking experience, has slowly but steadily ventured into the LCC market effectively. In an interview with , **Steven Greenway**, CEO, flyadeal, shares their future plans.

 Dr Shehara Rizly

Tell us about flyadeal, aircraft used, number of routes etc...

flyadeal is Saudi Arabia's only home-grown low-cost airline operating since 23 September 2017 when we launched our first scheduled flight from Jeddah to Riyadh on the country's National Day. We are a subsidiary of Saudia Group, which owns and operates full-service airline Saudia.

As a pioneer and innovator, flyadeal's mandate has always been to shape air travel in a high demand domestic and rapidly growing international market out of Saudi Arabia. Given the Kingdom's young population – 80 per cent being under 40 years – a domestic consumer that is tech savvy with at least two mobile devices, we established ourselves as the Middle East's first regional low-cost airline to launch only across digital distribution channels. To remain low-



Steven Greenway
Chief Executive Officer
flyadeal

cost, simplicity is key. Hence, we operate a growing fleet of single-class all-Economy Airbus A320s, each with a capacity of 186 seats in a 3 – 3 configuration. Our strength is the domestic market serving 18 towns and cities through three primary hubs of Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam, and an international network of over 11 year-round and summer seasonal destinations in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Earlier this year, we recorded a cumulative



total of having flown over 25 million passengers since Day 1.

What is the main focus of the airline?

To become the airline of choice offering everyday low fares and providing consumers with the convenience to choose a variety of competitive fare packages that suit their travel requirements. To continue using innovative technology that drives cost-effective sales and consumer engagement with our new age digital mobile book-

flyadeal aims to drive repeat business with a growing customer base and a focus on delivering service excellence

ing app that is central to our e-commerce enhancements. We have already set ourselves a target for 2024 to achieve 99 per cent of all transactions. Most importantly, flyadeal aims to drive repeat business with a growing

customer base and a focus on delivering service excellence.

Who prefer to travel in the LCCs?

The LCC concept is still in its infancy in Saudi Arabia and

Middle East compared with Europe, North America and Asia where the business model has flourished for over two decades. Given the projected travel numbers for Saudi Arabia – 150 million domestic and international tourists by 2030, up from the current 100 million – and the national focus on economic reforms, building a national aviation ecosystem and huge investment in mega tourism projects in the Kingdom, the appetite for travel across all segments is strong. 

Championing sustainability in travel

ATS Travel and Amadeus recognise the importance of playing a role in promoting sustainable practices in the travel industry. Among the innovative solutions driving ATS Travel's efforts are the sustainability related solutions provided by Amadeus, which align with the sustainability goals of travel companies, by offering a range of tools to make informed decisions to help reduce carbon footprint.

One of the key focus areas for ATS Travel and Amadeus is environmental-minded travel and ecotourism. These areas offer immense potential for positive impact, and both companies recognise the importance of playing a role in promoting sustainable practices in the travel industry. ATS Travel understands that measurement or science-based data can be a real challenge for many businesses but is the most essential step in the journey towards reducing carbon footprint and taking steps to mitigate climate change.

ATS then, through its Go Green Initiative, began to offer science-based data on the carbon footprint as science-based targets are one of the most effective ways to tackle carbon emissions. Among the innovative solutions driving ATS Travel's efforts are the sustainabil-



ity related solutions provided by Amadeus. These solutions align with the sustainability goals of travel companies, by offering a range of tools to make informed decisions about promoting more sustainable choices.

At Amadeus, our environmental sustainability strategy is based on three pillars:

- ❖ **Responsibility:** addressing the environmental efficiency of our operations.

- ❖ **Commitment:** supporting our customers with our sustainability value proposition.

- ❖ **Collaboration:** working with industry stakeholders on joint sustainability initiatives.

A recent highlight for Amadeus and ATS Travel was the Climate Fresk Conference, a collaborative effort with partners to champion climate change awareness.

The conference showcased the commitment of both companies to drive meaningful change and inspire others to join the quest for a more sustainable travel industry. The Go Green Initiative of ATS Travel has already started to yield benefits. From implementing sustainable practices within the company's operations to promoting more sustainable

supports clients by offering solutions through sustainable procurement practices across the supply chain.

ATS Travel also offer verified certifiable carbon offsetting solutions across the globe and are setting an example by offsetting the company's own footprint through various plan-

or choose a more sustainable option the next time.

Similarly, Amadeus' commitment to sustainability in travel is reflected in its investment in Chooose, a climate-tech company that integrates climate action options into the customer experience. The travel technology provider continues to invest in helping the industry minimise its environmental impact.

Measurement or science-based data can be a real challenge for many businesses but is the most essential step for reducing carbon footprint

travel options, the company is leading by example. It is taking important steps towards reducing carbon footprint by ensuring its clients' travel programmes are designed with sustainability at the core. The company also

tations across Asia & Africa using the world renowned Miyawaki afforestation method. ATS ensures all communication to its clients carry the carbon footprint data for the services used, making it easier to offset



Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont
GM, Amadeus Gulf
(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

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\$11 tn GDP contribution of tourism in 2024

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) is projecting 2024 as a record-breaking year for travel and tourism, with the sector's global economic contribution set to reach an all-time high of \$11.1 trillion (tn). International visitor spending is expected to come within touching distance of the 2019 peak, to reach \$1.89 tn, while domestic tourists are forecast to spend a new high of \$5.4 tn.

 TT Bureau

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC's) 2024 Economic Impact Research, Travel & Tourism will contribute an additional \$770 billion (bn) over its previous record, stamping its authority as a global economic powerhouse, generating one in every US \$10 worldwide. As the global sector soars past its pre-pandemic prosperity, WTTC expects 142 countries of 185 analysed will be outperforming previous national records.

The latest EIR of WTTC, conducted in partnership with Oxford Economic, showcases Travel and Tourism as a sector brimming with opportunities, underpinning almost 348 million (mn) jobs globally. This represents an increase of more than 13.6 mn jobs compared to its highest point in 2019. Inter-



Julia Simpson
President & CEO
WTTC

national visitor spending is expected to come within touching distance of the 2019 peak, to reach \$1.89 tn, while domestic tourists are forecast to spend more than in any year on record to hit \$5.4 tn.

A look back on last year

Despite economic uncertainties and geopolitical shake-ups, the Travel & Tourism sector is

thriving. With an economic injection of nearly \$10 tn, the sector matched its pre-pandemic zenith, flexing its resilience and proving its critical role in the global economy. Representing

By 2034, Travel & Tourism will supercharge the global economy with a staggering \$16 tn, making up 11.4% of global economy

9.1 per cent of global GDP at just over \$9.9 tn in 2023, Travel & Tourism's financial footprint was the largest it has been since the golden year of travel in 2019, trailing its peak by a mere 4 per

cent. The sector also bolstered its workforce by an additional 27.4 mn, propelling the total to nearly 330 mn jobs worldwide. International spending increased by 33.1 per cent to reach \$1.63 tn, underscoring a vibrant comeback story for many countries around the world, with domestic spending increasing by more than 18 per cent to reach almost \$5 tn. The growth comes despite two of the world's biggest tourism markets lagging in terms of international visitor spending, with both the USA and China seeing a far slower return of international tourist spending. Last year in the USA, international visitor spending remained more than a quarter below the peak of 2019, while China's visitor spending remained almost 60 per cent down.

Julia Simpson, President & CEO, WTTC, said: "Against the backdrop of uncertainty, the

The sector also bolstered its workforce by an additional 27.4 mn, taking the total to nearly 330 mn jobs worldwide

Travel & Tourism sector remains a global economic powerhouse. This is not just about breaking records, we are no longer talking about a recovery – this is a story of the sector back at its best after a few difficult years, providing a significant economic boost to countries around the world and supporting millions of jobs. There is a risk however, we need the US and Chinese governments to

support their national Travel & Tourism sectors. The US and China will continue to suffer while other nations see visitors' return much faster."

Tourism 10 years from now

Looking ahead, WTTC is forecasting a promising future for the next decade. By 2034, the sector will supercharge the global economy with a staggering \$16 tn, making up 11.4 per cent of the entire economic landscape. This booming industry is also set to be a job creation juggernaut, providing employment for 449 mn people worldwide. Nearly 12.2 per cent of the workforce will be powering this vibrant sector. With more than three quarters of the countries analysed expected to exceed the high point of 2019, in terms of GDP contribution, Travel & Tourism is on the brink of its most transformative era yet. 



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MOVEMENTS

MERCURE MUSCAT Oman

Castle Hotel Management has appointed **ISMAIL IBRAHIM** as the General Manager of the soon-to-open Mercure hotel in Muscat, under the Accor brand.

With over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Ibrahim brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his new role. In his previous positions, Ibrahim has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and a strong commitment to delivering unparalleled guest experiences. His strategic vision and passion for hospitality will be instrumental in ensuring the success of the property. He holds a university degree in International Hotel Management from Alexandria University, the most prestigious Egyptian academic institution. He has held multiple leadership roles with prominent hotels in Oman, the UAE, and Egypt.



SOFITEL AL HAMRA BEACH RESORT Ras Al Khaimah

KARIM ABDELHAMID has been appointed as the General Manager of Sofitel Al Hamra Beach Resort. He is no stranger to Sofitel's brand and has garnered over 25 years of rich experience in managing luxury and lifestyle properties globally. Sofitel Al Hamra is thrilled to welcome back Abdelhamid. During his last assignment as Vice President of Hotel Operations at The First Group in Dubai, Abdelhamid has demonstrated exceptional leadership in driving operational success across the group's diverse hotel portfolios. His remarkable skills from executing profitability strategies, along with a strong track record of building and sustaining high-performing teams, have led to the overall success of the group's properties. His strength also lies in Food and Beverage operations.



THE RITZ-CARLTON, JEDDAH Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Ritz-Carlton, Jeddah, appoints **PETER KATUSAK-HUZSVAR** as the General Manager. A seasoned professional, Peter brings with him a wealth of international hospitality expertise. Taking the helm of this iconic establishment, he is dedicated to crafting unforgettable experiences and further enhancing the renowned legacy of the Ritz-Carlton, Jeddah. Armed with a BSc in Hospitality Administration & Management from Corvinus University Budapest and an MSc in Business Administration & Management from the University of Pécs, Peter boasts of an illustrious career that spans more than three decades. After starting his career in Hungary, Peter has held pivotal roles in renowned hotels across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.



TIME HOTELS Dubai

TIME Hotels appoints **WILLIAM COSTLEY** as its new Chief Operating Officer. With an extensive background in the hospitality industry and a proven track record of driving operational excellence, Costley is poised to spearhead the company's growth initiatives and elevate its guest experience to new heights. Bringing over three decades of leadership experience to his new role, he joins TIME Hotels with a wealth of knowledge garnered from his previous senior positions within Hilton and Minor Hotels. His comprehensive understanding of hotel operations, business strategy, innovation and service excellence makes him a valuable addition to the team. In his capacity as COO, Costley will oversee the day-to-day operations of all TIME Hotels properties, ensuring seamless efficiency across all departments.



THE TOWER PLAZA Dubai

AHMED IBRAHIM has joined The Tower Plaza Dubai as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Ibrahim brings 20 years of experience with a diverse portfolio in the MENA region. Prior to this, Ibrahim worked for various international hotel brands in the UAE. He brings forth his expertise to drive revenue growth, execute strategic sales plans and foster relationships with key partners. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, he collaborates closely with his team to elevate The Tower Plaza Hotel's standing as a premier destination for both for business and leisure travellers. Having the experience with international brands for over two decades, Ibrahim will be looking at increasing their brand presence. He will be looking at tapping into new source markets by attending various events which will bring in visitors from across the globe to one platform.



ANANTARA AL JABAL AL AKHDAR Oman

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar has appointed **AIDAI ISMAILOVA** as Cluster Director of Sales for Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar and Al Baled Resort Salalah by Anantara. Ismailova, who hails from the Kyrgyz Republic, continues her journey with Minor Hotels, after spending over a year at NH Collection Oasis Doha Hotel in Qatar, where she was Director of Sales. She has built a strong reputation in hospitality, beginning her career in the Middle East in 2009 in the Front Office department for Hyatt Hotels Corporation, before moving to the commercial department in 2012. After thriving in roles with 5-star hospitality groups in the UAE and Qatar, managing key corporate and government accounts, she is eager for the new challenge in Oman.



INTERTOUCH EMEA and India

interTouch, the leading provider of cloud-based Internet and guest-facing technologies to the global hospitality industry, has appointed **MOUSTAFA FAWZI** as Vice President of Sales and General Manager, EMEA and India. In his new role, Fawzi will be responsible for supporting the company's growth and business strategy in the regions, reporting to Ernest Teng, Managing Director, interTouch. He will be heading Sales & Managing EMEA & India region with a demonstrated history of working in the information technology and services industry. Fawzi re-joins interTouch after 12 years, during which he worked with top global hospitality brands such as Airangel, Acentic Hospitality Technology, Hoist Group, Swisscom Hospitality Services, and Nevotek.



COPTHORNE HOTEL Dubai

WAEEL EL BEHI joined Millennium Hotels & Resorts and has been appointed as General Manager of Copthorne Hotel Dubai, UAE. With more than 30 years of experience in hospitality and tourism sector, El Behi is a seasoned hotelier with proven expertise in business development, operational strategies, revenue optimisation, product enhancement, cost management and asset value maximisation. He has a diversified career journey in the hotel industry. El Behi started his career as Sales Executive at the Golden Tulip El Mechtel Hotel, a large business and convention hotel in the heart of Tunisia. He then moved with Corinthia Hotels International Sales team to contribute to their expansion plan in Tunisia and North Africa. He then moved to Dubai to start an international career experience.



GEO GEORGE, a native of Mumbai, has been appointed as the Director of Finance at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, moving from sister property, Anantara Iko Mauritius Resort & Villas. He has been a respected part of the finance team at Anantara since 2013, holding managerial roles in Doha and Tunisia. Prior to joining Minor Hotels, George has been integral to opening, rebranding and restructuring finance operations at several luxury properties in the UAE and Qatar. George's responsibilities will include collaborating with all departments to foster operational efficiency and contributing to the resort's continued reputation for excellence his years of expertise in the field of finance.



MILLENNIUM PLACE MIRDIF HOTEL Dubai

SHADY DAWAD has been appointed as the General Manager of Millennium Place Mirdif Hotel. With a successful tenure as General Manager of Copthorne Hotel Dubai, Dawad brings over 21 years of experience and expertise in hospitality management's multiple fields, particularly in operations. His proficiency in overseeing daily operations and enhancing guest experiences, combined with his strong leadership skills, highlights his exceptional capabilities. Moving forward, Dawad is dedicated to driving innovation and maintaining the highest standards of service quality at Millennium Place Mirdif Hotel, creating memorable experiences for every guest and the team. The management wishes him a successful stint with Millennium Place Mirdif Hotel.



BEONx Spain

BEONx has appointed **RICARDO SERENO** as its new Pre-Sales Director. In his new role, Sereno will lead the pre-sales efforts at BEONx, working closely with hoteliers to tailor tech solutions that optimise profitability using the company's platforms. He will leverage his diverse skill set to craft tailored tech propositions for each client, with the aim of maximising their profitability through the utilisation of BEONx platforms. He will collaborate with various departments, including Product Development, Sales, Marketing, and Customer Success, to ensure that hoteliers receive expert guidance from a seasoned Revenue Manager throughout their journey with BEONx. Before joining BEONx, Ricardo held various key roles at prominent Portuguese hotel companies, including Tivoli Hotels, Vila Galé, SANA, and Altis Hotels.



YOUSUF ABDULLAH JUMA AL AMRANI, a seasoned professional with an impressive 25-year track record in Human Resources, Finance, Accounting, Legal, and Operations, has been appointed as the new Director of People and Culture at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar. An Omani national from Al Musanna, Yousuf brings a wealth of experience garnered from various prestigious organisations. In his most recent role as the Director of Human Resources at Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Yousuf played a pivotal role in the pre-opening phase. He demonstrated strategic foresight by developing a 5-year HR Strategic Plan aligned with the company and department goals. Throughout his career, he has actively engaged with government authorities.



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