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# Tourism for peace & co-existence

Travel from one country to another is a way of discovering a new land, new culture, sometimes a new environment, enabling people to explore and learn from each other. Peaceful co-existence, respecting others is a trait that needs to be cultivated among human beings from young age, this message should be spread worldwide, as we celebrate UN Tourism Day on 27 September 2024.

**Dr Shehara Rizly**

When people live together respecting each other's culture, traditions, and customs, it automatically paves way for peaceful co-existence. For example, in the United Arab Emirates, there are people from more than 200 nationalities living together in peace. However, the

Middle East has been in conflicts with different countries at different times over the past many years, but tourism has proved to be a key game-changer. Today, you will witness more countries looking at tourism not just to drive their economy but also for people or tourists to learn about themselves and go forward in life. Tourism is one of the most

powerful tools to promote peace and co-existence. It certainly helps people understand each other, provides economic stability which becomes a safety net or safe haven, fosters respect for other individuals and ensures that the environment is also well maintained as they look forward in life. Key industry leaders share their views on this with

Travel & Tourism: A Force for Peace and Understanding. Travel & Tourism is a powerful force for global peace and understanding. As they say travel broadens the mind, fostering respect for different cultures. During natural disasters and conflict our sector keeps air routes, and hotels open. Economic growth lifts people out of poverty and provides work to millions. Today, as we celebrate World Tourism Day, let's harness the transformative power of travel to build a more peaceful, interconnected world.



**Julia Simpson**  
President & CEO, WTTC

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## NDC: Future of experiences

IATA has developed a 'New Distribution Capability' to modernise the way airfares and related services are distributed to travel agents. Airlines and travel agents are working together to enable this service.

For Emirates, NDC has enabled us to modernise distribution and expand our reach in the travel trade retail community to provide our partners with access to high-quality, enriched content, more dynamic offers and ancillary options. We are also committed to working with our trade partners to offer more choice and personalisation for our customers by providing them access to exclusive products and services via NDC. All Emirates products and services sold through NDC fall under associated norms set by the airline. Existing legacy distribution systems had a number of limitations, but with NDC systems like Emirates Gateway, we have evolved this technology in line with consumer expectations.



**Adnan Kazim**  
Deputy President & Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates

Contd. on page 4 ▶

## Dubai receives 9mn visitors in H1

Dubai welcomed 9.31 million international overnight visitors from January to June 2024, a 9% increase over the 8.55 million tourist arrivals in H1 2023, according to data published by the DET, Dubai.

**TT Bureau**

Dubai has continued to sustain its strong tourism momentum, as growth in the first six months of this year puts the city on track for a record performance in 2024. Guided by the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and driven by DET's efforts in collaboration with stakeholders, the rise



**H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**  
Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE

in international visits aligns with the ambitious goal of the Dubai

Economic Agenda D33 to further consolidate Dubai's position as a leading global destination for business and leisure.

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the UAE, and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, said: "Guided by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's strategic vision, Dubai's tourism

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# celebrates Emirati Women's Day

**TRAVTALK**, along with SLS Dubai, organised a special event to celebrate Emirati Women's Day, which was attended by 80 key women leaders from the industry. Suaad Al Suwaidi, first Emirati and Arabic female wildlife photographer, was the Chief Guest, while the Guest of Honour was Her Excellency Laila Rahha El Attani, Goodwill Ambassador and President & Founder of Business Gate and Woman Circle.

Dr Shehara Rizly

**H**er Excellency Laila Rahha El Attani, Goodwill Ambassador and the President/ Founder of Business Gate and Woman Circle, started off with the opening remarks at the importance of Emirati Women's Day. She was followed by the Chief Guest, **Suaad Al Suwaidi**, the first Emirati and Arabic female wildlife photographer. Seychelles Tourism, Tourism Malaysia and McArthurGlen Designer Outlet were the platinum partners. An interesting session kicked off with Clinical Dietician Mitun De Sarkar, who spoke on 'The Social media dilemma – navigating body image, self-worth and authenticity'.  
  
In the opening speech, Her Excellency Laila Rahha El Attani said, "Emirati women are in the forefront today in every field be-



Women leaders at the special event, organised by **TRAVTALK**, along with SLS Dubai, to celebrate Emirati Women's Day

cause of the support and vision of the leadership to ensure that education is provided in every field. Emirati women played a pivotal role over the past few years as leaders of Expo, COP28 etc to name a few." Al Suwaidi reiterated, "UAE has empowered us as women. Today, I travel around the world with my camera because of the support of our great nation. I have been able to carry the UAE

flag to the world, exploring different destinations."  
  
The panel session was moderated by **Buthaina bin Fahad**, CEO/ Owner of Experience Tourism, who shared some valuable notes on the new generation. "Younger generation is focused on enjoying their work than the generation before, as they are exposed to more opportunities," she said.

**Suhaila Ghubash**, VP - Events and Festivals, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (a part of Dubai Economy and Tourism), spoke on the strength of Dubai tourism. "Dubai is focused on the big picture; on the impact of tourism in the economy. As a tourism entity, Dubai is exceptional, ensuring that its top spot is maintained with diverse campaigns," Ghubash said.

the Middle East. "The valuation of this industry in the Middle East is almost \$500 billion in 2024. And in the Middle East specifically, the contribution of the GDP from tourism is 11.7 per cent," Ketait said.  
  
**Hessa Ali Alechla**, Manager Retail, Emirates Airline; **Maya Ziade**, Chief Development Officer Premium, Midscale and Economy Division Middle East, Africa & Turkey, Accor, and

**UAE has empowered us as women. Today, I travel around the world with my camera because of the support of our great nation**  
– Suaad Al Suwaidi

**Meerah Ketait**, Head of Retail and Leisure, dnata Travel, shared views on the impact of travel and tourism industry in  
  
**Sylvia Melika**, Director of People Culture, SLS Dubai, were also among those who spoke on the occasion.

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# Modern retail to empower agents

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**Rehan Ali**  
CEO  
Tawfeeq Travel

“NDC allows travel agents to access richer content from airlines, this is more beneficial for the airlines who are going to save huge cost on distribution channel. As direct sell they will be able to control the inventory making it favourable to those having access to NDC content. This will also give opportunities to agency to earn more incentives. Every airline will have their own policy which will be updated time to time. However, content might be up-graded as per need.”

“NDC is essential for airlines and travel agents, empowering them to modernize distribution strategies with richer, more personalized content. This approach enhances product differentiation, improves



**Ernesto Beaumont Sanchez**  
Managing Director  
Amadeus Gulf

customer experiences, and boosts revenue potential. This innovation is important in today's competitive landscape. The NDC technology provides new ways and opportunities for airlines to develop and offer attractive offers.”



**Talha Ahmed Ali**  
Manager KSA  
Cozmo Travel

“NDC is an IATA standard (distribution channel) that allows travel agents to have dynamic access to the airline products. It has no expiration date, and its policies are mostly set by individual contracts rather than being governed by industry-wide standards. Pros: Rich content, real-time data, personalized offers, increased revenue Cons: Implementation costs, operational issues, Variable adoption, and limited client data management. Cancellations are easier.”

“NDC is a content source that will enable better personalisation, more distinctive content and competitive airline offers for travel retailers (agencies) and travellers. While NDC is leading us in the right direction for more



**Kathryn Wallington**  
Head of ME, Africa, UK, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Eastern Europe & Russia, Travelport

modern, personalised retailing experiences, it's important to remember that content must be retail ready, which means it has to be easy to consume, understand, compare and service. And not all airlines deploying NDC are at the same place.”



**Malith Chamika**  
Holidays Supervisor, e-Travels & Tours LLC, Muscat

“The New Distribution Capability is a programme crafted by the IATA and has taken centre stage among the latest trends and technologies to modernise the distribution of air travel products. It provides detailed and personalised booking experience for travellers by offering competitive fares, ancillary services, such as seat upgrade, excess baggage, and onboard Wi-Fi, meals, which helps GDSs, OTAs, and other distributors to deliver good offers.”

“NDC (New Distribution Capability) is revolutionizing airline distribution & it is a data exchange standard by IATA that enhances communication between airlines and travel agents, offering more detailed and personal-



**Dinkar Dasaur**  
General Manager UAE  
Satguru Travel

ized booking options, benefiting customers with more choices. Cancellation policies can be more flexible or restrictive than traditional bookings. Fare validity or expiry works similarly to traditional systems, but NDC may offer more flexibility.”



**Smita Balachandran**  
Supervisor  
Pluto Travels

“NDC is an industry initiative launched and supported by IATA for the development and market adoption of a new, XML-based data transmission standard (NDC Standard). The NDC Standard enhances the capability of communications between the airlines and trade partners to meet the future need of airline retailing. The NDC agreement will continue until it has been terminated by either party. Airline holds the right to amend the conditions of sale on products.”

“When I think about NDC, I'm reminded of when British Airways first introduced the concept over a decade ago. At that time, NDC was still in its infancy, especially in markets like ours, where awareness of



**Ajay Boyanis**  
Regional Director - UAE, Qatar Oman, ITL World

airline offerings through the NDC platform was limited compared to more mature Western markets. However, the platform has evolved significantly, as Gulf carriers like Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar Airways began offering valuable content.”



**Saleem Sharif**  
Deputy Managing Director  
Travelarts

“In 2012, IATA introduced the concept of NDC as a response to the needs of both - airlines and passengers and not travel agents. IATA had set a deadline of achieving NDC capability for all airlines by 2025. NDC is a travel industry standard for the distribution and retailing of flight content. NDC is not a system, database, or piece of software - it is a standard for exchanging data. There is no policy and expiry. NDC is entirely dependent on what the airlines provide.”

“We are actively pursuing the integration of NDC, which will make a significant difference to the way our products are retailed to travel agents, TMCs, and other travellers, once implemented. It would enable our



**Kaizad Postwalla**  
Head of International Sales - North America and GMEA at Air India

travel agent partners to access a more diverse set of content, including ancillary services, dynamic pricing options, and fare families. This will improve our revenue management, and help us grow our ancillary revenues.”



**Ashiya Nazar**  
CEO, Akbar Group, International Division, Akbar Travels (India)

“NDC is indeed transforming the travel industry by allowing airlines to offer more personalized and dynamic pricing and services and many more benefits. Air France - KLM have been a leader in adopting NDC, and they use it to enhance their offerings. By leveraging NDC, Air France - KLM is not just improving its distribution capabilities but also creating a more personalised travel experience. This strategic focus helps the airline maintain a competitive edge.”

“NDC empowers airlines with capabilities to distribute more competitive offers. it enables dynamic Fare Adjustment with more price points for customers, rich airline content with new products, revenue generation



**Hichame Lahkim Bennani**  
Regional Commercial Director - Middle East, Air France-KLM

with new tailored made offers and bundles and access to new NDC selling platforms, easier to use by new travel agents. NDC is a transformative technology that provides airlines with the capabilities to optimise distribution.”

Compiled by TT Bureau

# Air India launches branded fares

Vistara’s integration into Air India will catapult the Air India group to a 300+ aircraft powerhouse by the end of this year, solidifying their position as a major player, says **Kaizad Postwalla**, Head of International Sales - North America and GMEA at Air India. Postwalla had been with the Singapore Airlines Group for over 20 years and initially managed corporate sales for the India team at Singapore Airlines.

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**What are the key highlights of the merger?**

Vistara’s integration into Air India will catapult the Air India group to a 300+ aircraft powerhouse by the end of this year, solidifying our position as a major player. With the implementation of the merger, customers of Air India and Vistara will have more options and greater choice across the combined airline’s robust worldwide route network. This means more flight options, the choice of more convenient times, and flights to more new destinations, in India and across the world. With a new aircraft arriving every six days from Air India’s orders with Airbus and Boeing for 470 aircraft, the combined airline will have one of the most modern and efficient fleets in the industry with world-class products and an enhanced travel experience.



**Kaizad Postwalla**  
Head of International Sales - North America and GMEA at Air India

**What are the new offerings for agents?**

After the success of branded fare families on domestic routes, we introduced the menu-based pricing model on international routes as well. The fare families are designed to let our guests choose the kind of fare and services that best suit their requirement, given that travellers today have varied preferences, and a one-size-fits-all approach

is no longer ideal. Another key development is our work on the codeshare partnership with Air India Express. This will enable our travel agent partners to use Air India document to cover both Air India and Air India Express sectors through GDS. We also have a codeshare agreement and Special Prorate Agreement (SPA) with Vistara, which enables Air India flights to be sold on international routes paired with Vistara’s domestic sectors. These initiatives are designed to



**The fare families are designed to let guests choose the kind of fare and services that best suit their requirements, as travellers have varied preferences**

significantly expand the network available to our agents, providing them with more options to

sell, not just within/ to/ from India, but also beyond. We are particularly focused on promot-

ing International-to-International connectivity and look forward to the support of our travel partners in the Gulf to grow the segment as we continue to expand our route network globally.

**Could you share further plans?**

We have significantly expanded our route network over the last two years as we added more than 40 new aircraft to Air India’s fleet, including the brand-new

Airbus A350s. The A350s started operating to Dubai earlier this year and will now be deployed on the Delhi-London Heathrow route next month, followed by Delhi-New York JFK in November. Our codeshare with Air India Express also opens up a much wider network. It won’t just be point-to-point (P2P) connections anymore, but an expanded network from international to domestic (I2D).



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# On-time, Saudia retains top position

On July 19, the aviation industry was thrown into disarray by a global IT outage stemming from a CrowdStrike and Microsoft software update error. The disruption resulted in the cancellation of over 5,000 flights worldwide, with thousands more delayed. Latin America and the Middle East & Africa experienced minimal impact. These disruptions were evident in the notable decreases in OTP scores.

TT Bureau

Saudia (SV) retained its position as the global leader in July with an On-Time Performance (OTP) of 88.15 per cent, just a slight decline from last month's performance of 88.22 per cent. While some airlines at King Khalid International Airport (RUH) were disrupted by the global IT outage on July 19,

Saudi officials reported that operations continued as the airport used an alternative system. The airport secured third place in the Global Airports category with an OTP of 83.27 per cent, down by more than 2 points from June's OTP of 85.60 per cent.

Similar to Latin America, the CrowdStrike outage had less impact in the Middle East and

Africa region. Affected airlines and airports were able to quickly resolve the situation and return to normal operations by using an alternative system for the check-in processes. The region saw an 8 per cent decrease in flight cancellation with only 1,849 recorded compared to 2,000 last month. Safair (FA) maintained its position as the regional leader this month with an OTP of 93.57

The most on-time Global Airlines						
	On-Time Ranking	On-Time Arrival	Tracked Flights	Completion Factor	Total Flights	Summary of Top Performers
Saudia (SV)	1	88.15%	97.55%	99.80%	16,503	Total On-Time Arrivals 81.33%
Azul (AD)	2	85.20%	99.09%	97.76%	28,033	
LATAM Airlines (LA)	3	84.65%	99.45%	98.78%	47,881	
Avianca (AV)	4	84.11%	99.82%	97.58%	22,889	Total Tracked Flights 99.44%
Aeromexico (AM)	5	81.51%	99.91%	99.19%	17,737	
JAL (JL)	6	81.24%	99.91%	98.90%	26,837	
Qatar Airways (QR)	7	80.88%	99.60%	99.93%	17,808	Total Flights 239,065
ANA (NH)	8	78.89%	99.98%	99.09%	26,023	
SAS (SK)	9	74.61%	99.94%	99.30%	18,543	
Iberia (IB)	10	73.82%	99.09%	98.72%	16,811	



Bookyourvoyage, a leading B2B online travel agency, is at the forefront of this transformation, offering range of services across Africa, Middle East and Asia. Our OTA platform is designed to cater to the diverse and dynamic needs of businesses, ensuring an efficient and hassle-free travel experience.

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Bookyourvoyage is honored to be recognized and nominated for the **ARABIAN TRAVEL AWARDS UAE 2024**. We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our travel partners for their trust and support. Our aim is to make your booking process seamless with our user-friendly travel website.

Visit our website at [www.bookyourvoyage.com](http://www.bookyourvoyage.com) to know more!

Trend Report				
	Airline	Jul 24	Jun 24	May 24
GLOBAL AIRLINE RANKING				
1	Saudia (SV)	88.15%	88.22%	86.09%
2	Azul (AD)	85.20%	84.83%	84.79%
3	LATAM Airlines (LA)	84.65%	85.83%	86.65%
4	Avianca (AV)	84.11%	79.97%	86.09%
5	Aeromexico (AM)	81.51%	86.18%	86.75%
ASIA PACIFIC REGION RANKING				
1	JAL (JL)	81.24%	85.10%	86.40%
2	ANA (NH)	78.89%	83.71%	84.89%
3	Thai AirAsia (FD)	78.35%	85.19%	83.55%
4	Singapore Airlines (SQ)	77.29%	74.53%	77.82%
5	Air New Zealand (NZ)	77.27%	80.78%	83.99%
NORTH AMERICA REGION RANKING				
1	Alaska Airlines (AS)	77.51%	77.79%	79.04%
2	United Airlines (UA)	73.12%	77.44%	75.95%
3	Delta Air Lines (DL)	72.36%	80.05%	81.04%
4	JetBlue (B6)	69.57%	71.83%	76.58%
5	Southwest Airlines (WN)	69.54%	72.48%	70.42%
EUROPE REGION RANKING				
1	Iberia Express (I2)	79.79%	82.50%	90.24%
2	Icelandair (FI)	79.13%	84.08%	84.36%
3	Vueling (VY)	76.47%	74.82%	83.73%
4	Finnair (AY)	75.20%	76.11%	77.03%
5	SAS (SK)	74.81%	77.08%	84.83%
LATIN AMERICA REGION RANKING				
1	Gol (G3)	89.34%	90.53%	89.82%
2	Azul (AD)	85.20%	84.83%	84.79%
3	LATAM Airlines (LA)	84.65%	85.83%	86.65%
4	Avianca (AV)	84.11%	79.97%	86.09%
5	Aerolineas Argentinas (AR)	83.97%	85.16%	89.22%
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA REGION RANKING				
1	Safair (FA)	93.57%	95.36%	96.81%
2	Royal Jordanian (RJ)	88.20%	86.11%	90.82%
3	Saudia (SV)	88.15%	88.22%	86.09%
4	Kuwait Airways (KU)	87.39%	91.13%	90.60%
5	Gulf Air (GF)	82.67%	83.33%	87.50%

The most on-time Middle East & Africa Airlines						
	On-Time Ranking	On-Time Arrival	Tracked Flights	Completion Factor	Total Flights	Summary of Top Performers
Safair (FA)	1	93.57%	99.32%	100.00%	4,720	Total On-Time Arrivals 79.98%
Royal Jordanian (RJ)	2	88.20%	99.45%	99.22%	3,313	
Saudia (SV)	3	88.15%	97.55%	99.80%	16,503	
Kuwait Airways (KU)	4	87.39%	97.43%	99.86%	2,805	Total Tracked Flights 95.59%
Gulf Air (GF)	5	82.67%	82.59%	99.34%	4,869	
Qatar Airways (QR)	6	80.88%	99.60%	99.93%	17,808	
Etihad Airways (EY)	7	75.33%	99.70%	99.83%	7,592	Total Flights 89,994
Flydubai (FZ)	8	71.95%	93.46%	99.83%	10,609	
Emirates (EK)	9	71.33%	99.85%	99.90%	14,855	
Air Arabia (G9)	10	60.33%	86.92%	99.13%	6,920	

per cent, despite a near 2-point decrease from the previous month's OTP of 95.36 per cent. O.R. Tambo International Airport (JNB), a hub for Safair, ended the month with an OTP of 89.59 per cent, slightly down from 89.79 per cent in June. Royal Jordanian (RJ) ended the month in second place with an OTP of 88.20 per cent, which was more than 2-points improvement over June's OTP of 86.11 per cent. Queen Alia International Airport (AMM) delivered an OTP of 82.10 per cent, which was a slight decline from 82.97 per cent in June.

Source: Cirium

6 SEPTEMBER 2024

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# Agents must evolve with technology

Travel Agents today need to be more dynamic than before, especially as technology has become part and parcel of the industry. Efficiency, being proactive, staying ahead in the game whilst ensuring that you stay relevant to what is required at present given time, times have definitely changed than before, says **Geoffrey Salatan**, Owner Geoffrey Travel, in a conversation with **TRAVEL**.

TT Bureau

**What are the main changes experienced by travel advisors these days?**

In today's dynamic travel industry, travel agents find themselves navigating a landscape shaped by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and a market increasingly driven by price sensitivity.

**How does an advisor stay relevant and efficient?**

Competition among travel agents has intensified in recent years, spurred by the rise of online booking platforms and the widespread access to travel information. With travellers increasingly turning to the internet to research and book their trips, agents must differentiate themselves to attract and retain clients. Providing personalised service, expertise, and insider



**Geoffrey Salatan**  
Owner  
Geoffrey Travel

knowledge are essential for agents to stand out in a crowded market.

**Do you see the digital landscape helping the travel trade?**

The proliferation of online booking platforms has reshaped the way travellers plan and book their trips. With just a few clicks, travellers can compare prices, read reviews, and make reservations, bypassing the traditional

role of the travel agent. To compete in this digital landscape, agents must leverage technology to enhance the booking experience and provide added value to their clients.

**In a price sensitive era, how do the agents make their profits?**

Operating in a price-sensitive market poses unique challenges for travel agents. With travellers increasingly price-conscious, agents must strike a balance

suppliers, stay informed about pricing trends, and demonstrate the value they bring to their clients beyond just cost savings.

**Could travel agents stay ahead in the game?**

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for travel agents to thrive in the evolving landscape of travel. By embracing technology, fostering strong relationships with clients, and continuously adapting to chang-



**While competition is fierce, there are ample opportunities for agents to succeed by providing personalised service and leveraging technology**

between offering competitive prices and maintaining profitability. This requires agents to negotiate favourable deals with

ing market dynamics, agents can position themselves as indispensable advisors in a price-sensitive market.

**Finally, what are the key elements for agents to be unique?**

The role of travel agents is evolving in response to technological advancements and changing consumer preferences. While competition is fierce and the market is price-sensitive, there are ample opportunities for agents to succeed by providing

personalised service, leveraging technology, and demonstrating their value to clients. As the travel industry continues to evolve, agents who can adapt and innovate will remain essential guides for travellers navigating the ever-changing landscape of travel with expertise, passion, and dedication. ➔

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7



# Tourism vital to promoting peace

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**Basmah Al-Mayman**  
Regional Director for the Middle East, UN Tourism

“The pursuit of peace is a continuing endeavour, and its progress through tourism diplomacy is more relevant than ever. Tourism can play a vital role as a catalyst for fostering peace and understanding between nations and cultures and in supporting reconciliation, tolerance, and acknowledgement of the rights of others. Reflecting the harmonious correlation between Tourism and Peace, tourism flourishes where peace prevails, and peace is promoted.”



**Markus Tan**  
Regional Director (India, ME, South Asia and Africa), STB

and inclusive approach to travel and tourism. This year's theme, 'Tourism and Peace,' aptly echoes this sentiment. Tourism in the modern day is influenced by several factors that influences how people travel and where they go.”



**Mohamed Al Rais**  
Executive Director  
Al Rais Travel

“When considering the profound influence of travel, it is crucial to recognize the important role that tourism plays in advancing peace and mutual understanding between countries. For almost fifty years, Al Rais Travel has been devoted to nurturing cultural ties and establishing connections through travel experiences that surpass boundaries. In today's world, where divisions and misconceptions often take centre stage, tourism serves as a symbol of hope.”



**Jaal Shah**  
Managing Director  
Rezlive

tourism is a bridge between cultures. At Travel Designer Group, we are committed to promoting responsible and inclusive tourism and celebrate the power of travel in promoting peace and harmony in the world.”



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

“This year's World Tourism Day highlights the ‘Tourism and Peace’. The theme reflects on the vital role of tourism in promoting peace and harmony across cultures and borders. Tourism is not just a means of leisure and economic growth, it is a powerful tool for bridging cultural divides and fostering mutual respect by allowing individuals to explore and engage with diverse communities. On this day, we acknowledge the efforts of the tourism professionals.”



**Daisuke Kobayashi**  
Executive Director  
JINTO Dubai Office

ability to connect cultures and promote respect among diverse communities. Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, with its theme ‘Designing Future Society for Our Lives’, offers an opportunity to showcase how tourism can contribute to global harmony.”



**Yamina Sofo**  
Director - Marketing & Sales Office, GNTO GCC

“Travel fosters global peace by bridging cultures and promoting mutual understanding. By connecting diverse communities, it creates a platform for cultural exchange. Germany, with its rich history and vibrant heritage, is a prime example. Its historic landmarks, cultural events, and welcoming people offer travellers deep engagement with its culture. The UNWTO highlights tourism's role in enhancing social cohesion and reducing prejudice.”



**Jamal Abdulnazar**  
CEO  
Cozmo Travel

traditions, cuisines, and ways of life, broadening their perspectives and challenging preconceptions. These experiences can break down stereotypes and build empathy, laying the foundation for peaceful interactions.”



**Dinkar Dasaur**  
General Manager – UAE  
Satguru Travel

“World Tourism Day reminds us how travel fosters unity and harmony across the globe. When we explore new destinations, we connect with diverse cultures and perspectives, breaking down barriers and building bridges of understanding. To me, tourism isn't just about seeing new sights; it's about spreading peace through shared experiences. Each destination teaches us that despite our differences, we all share a beautiful world worth cherishing.”



**Aga Pytlík**  
General Manager  
Pan World Travel

positive vibes, and share stories, learning from one another. This journey of integration allows us to disconnect from the world's chaos and find common ground in our shared humanity. Through tourism, discover the beauty in diversity.”



**Dileep Nair**  
General Manager  
Al Jaber Travels & Tours Qatar

“Tourism is a key foundation of many economies in the world, generating jobs and revenues. Tourism is more than just travel and exploration; it's a bridge connecting cultures, economies, and people across the globe. It plays a crucial role in environmental conservation and sustainable development. On this World Tourism Day, we reaffirm our commitment to harnessing the power of tourism for the betterment of our planet and its people.”



**Rochell Saleem**  
Sales Manager  
Travco LLC

and all walks of life were experiencing the ancient city, its culture and cuisine. They were laughing, joining in the street music, applauding the performers, taking selfies, and just enjoying themselves in the moment.”



# Why hotels need data for pricing strategy?

Setting the right room rates, at right time, to attract the right guests and maximise revenue can feel like an impossible task. The ongoing manual calculations and pricing updates across all the distribution channels are huge headaches to most hoteliers, especially if pricing is not your only responsibility. **TRAVTALK** spoke with **Marvin Speh**, Co-Founder & COO, RoomPriceGenie, makes it easy for you.

**TT Bureau**

**Why should hoteliers set business objectives for their property? How should they go about setting their business objectives?**

Setting business objectives helps hoteliers establish more effective pricing strategies and gives them a way to monitor the results, in a quantifiable way, that will make it more clear where and how you can maximise your bookings and revenue opportunities. Now, let's talk about the how for hotels setting business objectives involves establishing short and long-term goals related to key metrics.

**STEP 1:** Assess how much revenue your property is making and the current occupancy levels. Compare these figures with those from the previous year to identify areas for improvement. Key metrics to focus on include Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR),



**Marvin Speh**  
Co-Founder & COO  
RoomPriceGenie

which combines occupancy and ADR to give a comprehensive view of performance and reflect how well you are using your available inventory.

**STEP 2:** Set specific targets for total revenue, ADR, and RevPAR based on past performance.

**STEP 3:** Regularly track these metrics to stay on course and

adjust strategies as needed to optimise revenue and occupancy.

**How can hoteliers use data to improve their pricing strategy?**

In revenue management, leveraging data is crucial to developing effective pricing strategies. Knowledge derived from data empowers hoteliers to make smarter decisions more quickly and improve overall performance. Here are tips for how hoteliers should be using data to optimise their pricing strategies:

**TIP 1: Learn from the past**

Use reports from your Property Management System (PMS) to analyse historical data. This can help you understand past performance and make informed decisions about future pricing. For example, if your booking report reveals a high volume of deeply discounted rates through an OTA channel well in advance, it may indicate that you are al-



**Setting business objectives helps hoteliers establish more effective pricing strategies and gives them a way to monitor the results**

locating too much inventory to that channel. Adjusting your distribution accordingly will help you maximise revenue closer to the booking date.

**TIP 2: Booking window insights**

Pay close attention to your booking window. If you notice that deeply discounted rooms are being booked far in advance

(90 days out) while your typical booking window is only 14 days, it suggests you might be offering discounts prematurely.

**TIP 3: Understand the market segments that are most interested in booking with your property.**

It's important to understand the type of guests who book at your property, most frequently and act accordingly. **TRAVTALK**

## Digitalisation driving hospitality revenue

The UAE hospitality market, going through digital transformation, is expected to reach over US \$9 billion by 2029. The process is enhancing the quality of service provided to service users, while also driving efficiencies in business operations. While the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation through necessity, the tourism industry must continue to reap the rewards of ongoing digital transformation.

The recent global IT outage served as a stark reminder of the extent to which technology is embedded within critical hospitality and tourism industry systems, although the benefits derived by industry stakeholders from continuing digitalisation continue to increase. Digitalisation typically refers to the integration of digital technologies into everyday activities. In the hospitality industry, this includes a wide range of technologies, including online booking systems, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, mobile apps, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT). These technologies are fundamentally altering how hospitality businesses operate, interact with customers, and generate revenue.

Historically, booking travel services, including tickets and accommodation, required physical visits to service provider offices. This process was often time-



consuming. However, the integration of advanced technology within the hospitality industry has fundamentally altered these practices by enabling online bookings and streamlining the booking process. Digitalisation has enabled the incorporation of dynamic pricing which can benefit both parties in an exchange. The rapid shift towards increased digitalisation is characterised by the widespread adoption of digital transactions and

mobile applications, which have become critical in driving market growth. IoT has seamlessly integrated into daily life and supports the hotel experience guests may have. The increased use of smartphones has facilitated the development and use of various applications for online travel bookings, and leisure payments, check-in applications with real-time updates, and even added convenience through QR code-sourced digital menus.

Moreover, hotel revenue management has become increasingly intricate and crucial in the era of digital transformation. As competition escalates and guest expectations evolve, hotels are embracing new technologies and data-driven approaches to optimise pricing, boost revenues, and provide personalised

and offline channels, comprehensive revenue management is critical for managing availability and rates across all distribution points. Such data-driven insights can support more efficient management of hospitality venues.

In the digital age, there are new opportunities as well as chal-

lenges. Managing availability and rates consistently becomes more complex due to distribution fragmentation across multiple booking platforms. Furthermore, there is a need for enhanced capabilities and innovative solutions to meet evolving guest expectations for a more personalised and seamless experience. Thus, hotels must invest in their talent and continuous professional development culture to develop essential digital skills.

**The rapid shift towards increased digitalisation is characterised by the widespread adoption of digital transactions and mobile applications**

experiences through maintaining information digitally on specific customer preferences shared across multiple visits and brand locations (e.g. room preferences, dietary requirements). Given the fluctuating demand patterns, precise forecasting and dynamic pricing are essential. With guests booking through various online

lenges. Businesses need to prioritise data security and comply with privacy regulations, as they handle large amounts of personal information. In the tourism sector, where data naturally transcends national borders, it is particularly important that data protection policies are carefully reviewed, and regulations ad-



**Dr Ross Curran**  
Associate Professor, Edinburgh Business  
School at Heriot-Watt University Dubai  
(The views expressed  
are solely of the author.)



# Branded residences to launch @FHS

Branded residences, one of the fastest-growing sectors in hospitality, will take centre stage at FHS World, with a full-day conference led by one of the sector's leading innovators, Accor One Living. Debuting at FHS World on 2 October, The Branded Residences Forum will feature workshops and conference sessions exploring the sector's rapid growth in the Middle East and across the world.

TT Bureau

Savills data shows that the Middle East, which is rapidly emerging as a global hub for the hospitality sector, currently has 45,000 residential units in 200 branded developments across 80 brands. With a staggering 500 per cent increase in branded residences in the last decade – from 10 in 2014 to 50 in 2023 with another 50 in the pipeline – Dubai is the most active market worldwide and now rivals Miami, New York and London as a world leader in branded residential development. Saudi Arabia is also seeing significant growth, with a 65 per cent surge in its branded development pipeline between 2022 and 2023. The Middle East and Africa currently accounts for 19 per cent of the global branded residences existing and pipeline project network; Europe represents 16 per cent; Asia Pacific 22 per cent and



Jonathan Worsley  
Chairman of The Bench  
Organiser of FHS

The Americas 43 per cent. The world's top locations for branded residences are Dubai, Miami, New York, London, Phuket, Sao Paulo, Los Cabos, Istanbul, Bangkok and Cairo, according to GBR.

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of The Bench, organiser of FHS, said: "We are delighted to add this new and exclusive conference to FHS World. One of a host



Maya Ziade, Chief Development Officer,  
Premium, Midscale & Economy Division  
Middle East, Africa & Türkiye at Accor

of new features and attractions at our 2024 event, The Branded Residences Forum will bring together an elite group of industry



Jeff Tisdall  
Chief Business Officer, Accor One Living  
& Global Head of Mixed-Use

professionals and innovators to take a deep dive into the sector's growth, evolution and seeming endless investment opportuni-

es to our industry today, and how the sector will be a key driver in the future success of the hospitality industry on a local, regional and global scale."

Maya Ziade, Chief Development Officer, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division Middle East, Africa & Türkiye at Accor, said, "Over the last 20 years, the branded residences sector has matured from a niche concept to a key driver of global hospitality growth. Rising beyond luxury and lifestyle, branded residences are expanding into premium and

midscale segments. While many of these residences are connected to hotels or mixed-use developments, standalone properties are also emerging, particularly in the UAE." Jeff Tisdall, Chief Business Officer, Accor One Living and Global Head of Mixed-Use, said, "I believe that we have only just begun to tap into the potential in terms of helping our partners develop and operate branded residences alongside hotels anchoring mixed-use developments. With the market for branded residences continuing to proliferate, our Accor One Living

**The Middle East and Africa currently accounts for 19 per cent of the global branded residences existing and pipeline project network**



Zhann Jochinke  
Director - Market Intelligence and  
Research, Cavendish Maxwell



Ali Manzoor  
Head of Hospitality, Hotels & Tourism,  
CBRE Middle East Region

ties. We are proud to partner with Accor One Living – a global leader in this field – to explore the importance of branded residenc-

## Branded residences – facts and figures

- ❖ The branded residential sector has grown more than 160 per cent over the last decade, evolving from exclusively hotel branded in the beginning to a panopoly of non-hotel brands (predominantly fashion, design and automotive) today
- ❖ As of late 2023, there were approximately 1,300 branded residential projects globally, of which c.1,050 (82 per cent) are hotel branded residences. There are also over 200 brands actively licensed for branded residences
- ❖ Three of the leading hotel operators in the branded residential space - Accor, Four Seasons and Marriott - combined represent 43 per cent of all hotel branded residences worldwide. The global average price premium for branded residences is 30 per cent, with mature global cities recording around 24 per cent, emerging cities 52 per cent and resorts 32 per cent
- ❖ Over the past decade, Dubai has emerged as the world's branded residential capital, and is expected to realize more than 1,200% growth from 10 projects in 2014 to more than 130 by 2030. Source: Global Branded Residences
- ❖ The United States, where branded residences first started, represents 36 per cent of existing projects but just 18 per cent of pipeline branded residences, which shows the extent of the global growth
- ❖ MEA accounts for 19 per cent of the global branded residences network and pipeline projects. Europe represents 16 per cent; Asia Pacific 22 per cent and The Americas 43 per cent
- ❖ The world's top locations for branded residences are Dubai, Miami, New York, London, Phuket, Sao Paulo, Los Cabos, Istanbul, Bangkok and Cairo
- ❖ Standalone branded residential projects have surged in growth in recent years, and now represent more than 15 per cent of all branded residences globally, and 30 to 40 per cent of annual signings for hotel operators most active in the industry,

Source: Savills

platform and our Group's unrivalled brand portfolio both serve as key differentiators."

Zhann Jochinke, Director - Market Intelligence and Research, Cavendish Maxwell, said: "Hotels continue to be a popular choice for short-stay vacations, but demand for more personalised, flexible accommodation is on the increase. With branded residences, clients enjoy enhanced privacy and space in a home-from-home environment with world-class amenities. For investors, branded residences potentially offer increased revenue and stability compared to traditional hotels as they provide long-term rental income, capital appreciation and additional revenue streams."

Ali Manzoor, Head of Hospitality, Hotels & Tourism, CBRE Middle East Region, said, "Given the unprecedented scale of hotel development across the region, demand in the construction sector has undoubtedly outstripped supply. As a result, development costs have been steadily increasing, which is attributable in part to the escalating cost of raw materials but more poignantly due to capacity constraints."



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# Oman hosts four-city India roadshow

With Oman continuing to strengthen its position as a top-tier global destination for travellers, it recently organised a four-city India roadshow to showcase the sultanate's allure as a premier destination for Indian travellers seeking luxury, culture, and adventure. The destination's ongoing partnership with Indian travel agents and the strategic initiatives are poised to attract more visitors from India.

 Janice Alyosius

The Sultanate of Oman recently organised its four-city India roadshow to showcase the country's allure as a premier destination for Indian travellers seeking luxury, culture, and adventure. The roadshow, covering New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru, highlighted Oman's growing appeal for the Indian tourism market.

Emphasising on the significance of Indian market for Oman's tourism sector, **His Excellency Azzan Al Busaidi**, Undersecretary of Tourism for the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman, said, "India ranks as Oman's second-largest source market."

The statistics underscore this importance: Indian visitor numbers to Oman surged past 625,000 in 2023, reflecting a remarkable growth of over 70 per



**His Excellency Azzan Al Busaidi**  
Undersecretary of Tourism for the  
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism,  
Sultanate of Oman

cent from the previous year. This upward trend shows no signs of slowing, with a 15 per cent increase in arrivals recorded in the first five months of 2024 alone.

H.E. Al Busaidi attributed this growth to a combination of factors, including the success of the recent roadshows and the invaluable support from Indian travel agents. "The numbers we are seeing right now show a significant increase in inbound

tourists from India to Oman. I believe, this is due to many factors, but foremost among them are the roadshows and other activities that Oman Tourism is conducting here in India," he noted.

He expressed optimism about continued growth, saying, "I believe, in the next phase, the numbers are expected to grow even further."

In 2023, Oman welcomed 4 million inbound tourists, with over



**I am confident that we will surpass last year's numbers, for which, we need to conduct roadshows, campaigns, and raise market awareness**

600,000 coming from India—a significant rise from 350,000 the previous year. H.E. Al Busaidi anticipates even higher numbers for this year, with 265,000 Indian

travellers already recorded in the first five months. "If this pace continues, I am confident we will surpass last year's numbers. To further increase this figure,

which is our objective, we need to conduct more roadshows, campaigns, and raise market awareness. We also require support not only from our market-based representatives here in India but also from Indian travel agents, who play a key role in achieving these goals," he said.

Oman is also taking strides in creating an attractive investment environment. Seeking Indian investments in the tourism sector,

H.E. Al Busaidi said, "We welcome Indian investments in the tourism sector in various forms. Several incentives will be provided, including long-term land leases at minimal charges, tax incentives, and other financial and non-financial benefits to encourage more investments from India in Oman's tourism sector. I believe, these investments will not only increase the number of tourists from Oman to India but also vice versa."

# Dubai emerges as global trendsetter

► Contd. from page 1

sector continues to demonstrate its robust growth potential and attractive proposition for global travellers. With its sustained growth, Dubai is setting the standard for cities worldwide, in line with the objective of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 to establish Dubai as one of the world's top urban economies."

### Global accolades

The rise in international visits during H1 2024 is the result of citywide strategies established across key tourism pillars, created and implemented in partnership with stakeholders across the public and private sectors. Beyond the growth demonstrated through the performance, these efforts also yielded international recognition. Starting 2024 on a high note, Dubai was named the No.1 global destination for an unprecedented third successive year in the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards in January, making it the first city to achieve this unique accolade. The first half of the year also saw Dubai named the Middle East's leading destina-

tion by the World Travel Awards, while Dubai International Airport and Mina Rashid were named the Middle East's leading airport and leading cruise port for 2024 respectively.

**His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri**, Director General, Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Dubai, said: "The significant increase in visitor numbers in the first half of 2024 reflects the vision and leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and aligns with the D33 Agenda's objective to make Dubai the world's best city to visit, live, and work in. This robust performance, reinforced by global recognition, validates the ambition and agility driving Dubai's tourism and wider economy. Our success stems from a diversified market approach, strong public-private partnerships, liberal visa policies, and alternative growth pathways, all catalysts for the continued surge in both leisure and business travel, along with increasing



**His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri**  
Director General, Department of  
Economy and Tourism (DET), Dubai

levels of investment and inflows of global talent. Looking ahead, we are committed to sustaining and building upon this trajectory, leveraging diverse source markets to enhance tourism's contribution to Dubai's GDP."

### Key source markets

In collaboration with domestic stakeholders and more than 3,000 global partners in 80 markets, DET's targeted campaigns resulted in Dubai achieving impressive growth in key markets in the first half of 2024. With bespoke strategies



**His Excellency Issam Kazim**  
CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and  
Commerce Marketing (DCTCM)

and activities highlighting the city's unique offering, dynamic appeal and connectivity, Dubai has maintained its position as a first-choice travel destination for visitors both from key traditional and emerging markets.

From January to June 2024, proximity markets in GCC and MENA had a combined 26 per cent share of overall visitors, with 1.27 million (14 per cent) and 1.09 million (12 per cent) arrivals respectively. Western Europe accounted for 20 per cent of visitors to Dubai, with 1.89 million in

total. South Asia was another major source market, with 1.62 million visitors (17 per cent), as was CIS and Eastern Europe with 1.37 million (15 per cent). North-East and South-East Asia grew from an 8 per cent share at the beginning of the year to a 10 per cent share (896,000) of total visitors by the end of H1 2024,

city's appeal for global visitors, the first half of the year saw a number of high-profile openings, including The Lana, Dorchester Collection's first Middle East property; SIRO One Za'abeel, Dubai's first fitness hotel; and Hilton Dubai Creek Hotel & Residences. The city's accommodation portfolio will con-

**The rise in international visits during H1 2024 is the result of citywide strategies established across key tourism pillars, created in partnership with stakeholders**

driven by strong recovery from China. Other regions also saw a rise in visitation to Dubai, including the Americas with 617,000 (7 per cent), Africa with 404,000 (4 per cent) and Australasia with 154,000 (2 per cent).

### Hotels and hospitality

World-class hotels and accommodation continue to be one of the core pillars of Dubai's destination offering. Adding to the

tinue to grow with new openings planned throughout the rest of the year.

**His Excellency Issam Kazim**, CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), said: "Dubai has continued to stay ahead of the curve by further elevating standards with innovative and distinctive world-class infrastructure, experiences and attractions."



# Air India shares updates with UAE partners

Air India hosted a special gathering of leading travel agents in the UAE to share their latest updates with travel trade partners. At the event, they shared information about the recent launch of branded fare families, aligning with the global industry standards, the key attributes and other details. At the same time, they also announced one of their key developments, their codeshare partnership with Air India Express.





# Luxury getaway for GCC in Poland

A made to order format especially suited for the GCC guests, Poland’s Hotel Arłamów has a keen eye to attract them with their unique features. With sustainable luxury as a key focus for the property, **Michał Kozak**, President of Board, Hotel Arłamów, speaks to **TRADE** about their ‘unrivalled natural beauty’, which complements and ticks off all the boxes for travellers from this region.

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**Could you share the inventory of the property?**

We have 254 rooms and suites in our hotel. We are particularly proud of our Presidential Suites, which stand out from the entire hotel market in Poland. These spacious, one-of-a-kind suites are ideal for families with children, offering not only luxurious interiors but also additional amenities, such as private lift. For the comfort of our guests, these suites also have separate rooms for babysitters or extra security, making them unique on a national scale. In addition, the Hotel Arłamów places a strong



**Michał Kozak**  
President of Board  
Hotel Arłamów

bathing, which is increasingly appreciated by our guests. We also have a luxury spa, including a VIP SPA area which can be hired on an exclusive basis. Our

ing our hotel easily accessible to guests from all over the world. Our cuisine is based on local ingredients, including – among others - wild game, allowing our guests to sample the true flavours of the region.

As mentioned before, we are truly committed to our sustainability policies in all fields of operation. The Hotel Arłamów implements an eco-responsibility strategy, which includes minimising energy and water consumption, as well as reducing waste production. Our activities in this area also include educational programmes for guests to promote environmentally friendly behaviour.

**Do you receive travellers from the Middle East? If so, from which areas?**

We are at a stage of intensive entry into the Middle East market, but we have already had a pleasure to welcome guests from



**We cater to both-individual guests and sports groups, who appreciate our facilities and know-how in this area**



emphasis on sustainability and environmental protection. Our investment in a combined heat and power plant using tri-generation allows us to generate electricity, heat and cooling simultaneously, which significantly reduces our carbon footprint. In addition, we use renewable energy sources and take care to manage resources efficiently, making us one of the leaders in eco-hotels in Poland.

**What is the USP of the hotel?**

Our unique selling point is our unrivalled proximity to nature and the beautiful surroundings. The Hotel Arłamów is located on top of a mountain, in the heart of natural forests. This offers not only endless opportunities for walks or hikes but also forest

Russian traditional banya is ideal for a complete relaxation and stress-relief. Additional facilities include a helipad and runway for small, private aircraft, mak-

Dubai and Saudi Arabia. We cater to both-individual guests and sports groups, who appreciate our facilities and know-how in this area.

**Are you looking at attracting Middle East travellers?**

Yes. We believe that our hotel is able to meet all expectations of Middle Eastern guests. We offer a unique nature experience, ideal weather conditions and four distinctive seasons, each offering something unique.

**If so, what are the main areas/facilities that you have for the ME travellers?**

We have a wide range of offers for our Middle Eastern guests, including suites and family rooms. Our spa with VIP area, swimming pools, Kids Club, and sports offerings are just some of our highlights. We also organise private nature tours and scenic

**We offer attractive commission terms on completed nights, providing an additional incentive to establish long-term partnerships**

flights. We have a helipad and our sports facilities, including a golf course and football pitches, are an excellent place to train - it is enough to mention that Robert Lewandowski with the whole Polish National Football Team prepared for their world and European championships here, three-time Olympic champion Anita Włodarczyk and famous football referee Szymon Mar-

ciniak also train regularly at our facilities. We also implement our own #AriaMOVE programme, which combines physical activity with relaxation.

**How do bookings work? Do you work with travel agents and incentivise them?**

Bookings can be made directly through our website, by contacting our reservations department or through local travel agents with whom we are just starting to work. We have been working with European travel agencies for years and are continually expanding into new markets, including the Gulf. We offer attractive commission terms on completed nights, providing an additional incentive to establish long-term partnerships. Our partnership approach also includes the promotion of sustainability values, which can be an added benefit for travel agents looking for destinations that combine luxury with eco-responsibility. 





# Career insights for women in hospitality

The hospitality industry offers a vibrant and dynamic career path for women. However, navigating this path can come with unique challenges. **Julianne Holt-Kailihiwa**, CEO, Sumo International Inc. LLC, speaks to **TRAVEL MIDDLE EAST** about how they are empowering women and providing them with the tools and opportunities needed for career advancement. She shares some personal insights.

 TT Bureau

## Embracing continuous learning

In the fast-paced world of hospitality, continuous learning is crucial. The industry is always evolving, with new trends, technologies, and customer preferences emerging regularly. To stay ahead, it's important to embrace a mindset of life-long learning. Seek out training programmes, workshops, and certifications that can enhance your skills and keep you updated on industry developments. At Sumo Sushi & Bento, we prioritise continuous learning by offering our team access to various educational resources. This commitment to ongoing development ensures that everyone is well-equipped to meet the demands of the industry and deliver exceptional service.

## The power of mentorship

Mentors play an important role



**Julianne Holt-Kailihiwa**  
CEO  
Sumo International Inc. LLC

in career growth, especially in the hospitality industry by sharing their experiences, offering valuable advice on navigating career challenges. For women, having a mentor who understands the specific obstacles they may face can be particularly beneficial. Supporting our female team members by fostering a supportive environment where women can thrive and achieve their career goals.

## Building connections

Networking is essential for career advancement in hospitality. Building a strong network can open doors to new opportunities, provide access to industry knowledge, and offer support from peers and mentors. Engage with industry associations, attend confer-

employees gain valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration and growth.

## Strong communication skills

Effective communication is a cornerstone of success in hospitality. Whether it's interacting with guests, leading a team, or collaborating with colleagues,



## For women, having a mentor who understands the specific obstacles they may face can be particularly beneficial

ences, and participate in networking events to expand your professional connections.

Within Sumo Sushi & Bento, we encourage our team members to network both internally and externally. By connecting with industry leaders and peers, our

strong communication skills are vital. Focus on honing your ability to articulate ideas clearly, listen actively, and engage with others in a meaningful way.

## Embracing growth opportunities

Stepping out of your comfort zone and embracing growth op-

portunities is key to career advancement. We are committed to nurturing talent from within by providing our female team members with opportunities to take on new responsibilities and advance their careers. By promoting from within, we create a pathway for growth and development that benefits both our employees and our organisation.

## Industry today

The hospitality industry today offers a wealth of opportunities for women who are committed to their professional growth. By

embracing continuous learning, seeking out mentorship, building strong networks, developing communication skills, advocating for themselves, and embracing growth opportunities, women can achieve remarkable success in their careers. Our management teams are dedicated to supporting the career advancement of women in hospitality. Through our commitment to mentorship, networking, and continuous development, we empower our female employees to reach their full potential and thrive in their professional journeys. ➔

# Summit aims to boost China numbers

With China among the top five travel markets for Dubai, the emirate has taken several initiatives to attract Chinese travellers. Dubai will host China Visitors Summit 2024, a bespoke B2B event with **TRAVEL MIDDLE EAST** as media partners, at So Uptown from 5-6 September this year. **Alexander Glos**, CEO, China i2i Group - Shanghai, Creators of the China Visitors Summit 2024 in Dubai, shares details.

 TT Bureau

## Why Chinese travellers love Dubai?

Dubai and the UAE have firmly established themselves as cornerstone destinations in the Middle East, attracting Chinese travellers with a unique blend of luxury, culture, and modernity. Chinese tourists are increasingly seeking experiences that offer not just luxury, but also safety, high-quality service, and unique cultural encounters—all of which Dubai delivers in abundance.

## Top reasons Chinese travellers choose Dubai

**Openness and Safety:** Dubai is renowned for its welcoming atmosphere and commitment to safety, making it a top choice for travellers seeking peace of mind.

**High-Quality Hotels and Service:** With an array of luxury hotels and unparalleled service stand-



**Alexander Glos**  
CEO, China i2i Group - Shanghai, Creators of the China Visitors Summit 2024 in Dubai

ards, Dubai offers an experience that caters to the sophisticated tastes of Chinese tourists.

**Diverse Attractions:** From iconic landmarks like the Burj Khalifa and Palm Jumeirah to immersive cultural experiences in traditional souks and heritage sites, Dubai offers something for every traveller.

**Ease of Transportation:** Dubai's efficient transportation network,

including its modern metro system, ensures that visitors can easily navigate the city and explore its many attractions.

**Culinary Excellence:** With a diverse culinary scene that includes both local Emirati cuisine and international dining options, Chinese travellers can enjoy a wide range of culinary experiences.

**Shopping Paradise:** Dubai's world-class shopping centres, from the luxurious Dubai Mall to traditional markets, offer Chinese tourists an unmatched retail experience.

As the Gulf Cooperation Council and the entire Middle East region continue to evolve, Dubai's ability to continuously reinvent itself ensures it remains the number one destination in the region for Chinese travellers. The city's blend of innovation, luxury, and cultural authenticity



makes it a must-visit destination for those seeking a unique travel experience.

## CVS: connecting Chinese travellers with Dubai

The China Visitors Summit (CVS) is the premier global workshop where Chinese travel buyers come to learn about destinations, experience travel products firsthand, and net-


work with potential partners. Since its inception in China in 2008 and its expansion to the Middle East in 2013, the summit has become the essential meeting point for travel suppliers—hotels, destinations, attractions, shopping centres, airlines, destination management companies, and more—to connect with Chinese travel industry buyers.

## A dynamic marketplace

The energy at CVS is unmatched; suppliers are constantly on the move, meeting with eager buyers who are actively seeking to form partnerships in Dubai and the UAE. The event is not just busy—it's a bustling hub of business activity where real deals are made, and long-term relationships are forged. ➔



# Blueberry makes waves in bespoke travel

Providing bespoke experiences for travellers across the globe, Blueberry Travel has become one of the most trusted travel curators in the United Arab Emirates. They are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide a more curated experience to its customers. **Jai Kishan Tewani**, Managing Director and Partner, Blueberry Travel, shares more with .

 TT Bureau

**C**ould you share about Blueberry Travel and the services you offer?

Blueberry Travel is more than a travel company; it is a global travel partner. In addition to tailor-made trips across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—from corporate travel management to leisure vacations—Blueberry’s services encompass corporate travel, as well as leisure vacation travel management. Our expertise in local cultures and markets enables us to create tailor-made itineraries that reflect the individuality of our clients.

**What is your expertise or Unique Selling Proposition?**

Our strength lies in combining local expertise with global reach. With offices on three continents and over 1,100 employees around the globe, our unparalleled understand-



**Jai Kishan Tewani**  
Managing Director and Partner  
Blueberry Travel

ing of regional cultures makes us unmatched when it comes to providing tailor-made travel solutions—not simply booking flights and hotels. Creating unforgettable journeys is at the core of everything we do, and we take great pleasure in exceeding client expectations at every step of the way. Our team members share this enthusiasm for travel while striving to exceed them all.

**As a travel advisor in today’s competitive world, how do technology and AI help the industry?**

Technology is revolutionising how we do business. Artificial Intelligence (AI) allows us to analyse enormous volumes of data to predict trends and personalise recommendations. AI-powered chatbots help with routine inquiries, so our agents can focus on complex itineraries while virtual and augmented reality experiences give clients a taste of their destinations before leaving home.

**Sustainability has become a key focus in the UAE and across the globe, what are the strategies that you have undertaken as a company to adapt?**

Sustainability lies at the centre of our business; we aim to mitigate environmental impact while supporting local communities. To do this, we partner with eco-friendly hotels and transportation providers, as well as offer carbon offset



options to our clients. Furthermore, our focus lies in responsible tourism, emphasising authentic yet eco-friendly experiences while leaving only positive contributions wherever our operations may lead us.

**How do you handle last-minute changes or cancellations?**

Travel plans may change unexpectedly. Our team is skilled at responding to last-minute requests efficiently using technology for itinerary alterations or finding alternative options quickly. While


and partnerships that improve how quickly these situations are dealt with.

**NDC plays a key role today; do you see it as a revenue driver?**

Absolutely, NDC is a game-changer. With the greater flexibility, transparency, and personalisation opportunities that it offers to our business clients, not to mention greater revenue potential for both of us, adopting NDC means we have access to more inventory at more attractive fares while

**Creating unforgettable journeys is at the core of everything we do, and we take great pleasure in exceeding client expectations at every step of the way**

flexibility and dedication to customer service while continuously exploring innovative technologies

creating tailored packages, creating win-win situations between ourselves and our clients alike. 





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# Accor creates board to boost MICE

Accor, together with executive travel managers and buyers from 17 leading global corporations, has launched the Accor Global Leadership Council (GLC), an innovative advisory board that aims to create a forward-looking vision for business travel and corporate meetings. The council connects business leaders responsible for corporate travel across diverse industries with senior executives from Accor.

TT Bureau

The Accor Global Leadership Council (GLC) recently discussed shifting corporate and traveller expectations; the importance of recognition, personalisation and B2B-focused loyalty; the evolving importance of sustainability; emerging traveller trends; the role and impact of distribution and pricing; and a deep-dive on Accor's business and brands. The Global Leadership Council delegates, who have a combined employee base of over 2.7 million travellers, unanimously agreed that the top three priorities for business travel are:

- ❖ Traveller experience and well-being – including corporate employee engagement, wellness, traveller security and digital efficiencies.

- ❖ Cost management and optimisation – including programme



**Antony Meguerdijian**  
SVP Sales, Middle East, Africa  
Asia-Pacific, Accor

compliance, pricing, cost-reduction and cost avoidance.

- ❖ Sustainability – including sustainable action, carbon budgets and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion).

**Antony Meguerdijian**, SVP Sales, Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, Accor, said: "The dynamics of international and corporate travel in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific



**Kerry Healy**  
Chief Commercial Officer, Middle East  
Africa and Asia Pacific, Accor

region are evolving rapidly. It is essential for both our clients and hospitality businesses to adapt to new demands and priorities. The new GLC, and the programme of client and commercial partner events we host across the region, are critical forums for sharing insights and collaborating on solutions that meet the changing needs of travellers and delegates. Travel and tourism is undergoing a profound transformation,

driven by an increased focus on flexibility, sustainability, cost and personalisation. At Accor, we are committed to not only meeting these needs but also anticipating them, ensuring that every journey is as enriching and impactful as the destination and travel intent itself."

Highlighting the group's commitment to thought leadership in the leisure and business travel sectors, Accor has been actively involved in several key events in the Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific regions. The Group recently hosted a private dinner at the new Banyan Tree in Dubai during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) event, bringing together 50 industry leaders from top travel firms around the world. Additionally, Accor has demonstrated its expertise in the business travel sector by hosting the prestigious Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) conference at Swissôtel Singapore

from 13-15 May. This significant event attracted over 800 top travel buyers from leading companies worldwide. The GBTA board was also hosted for dinner at the iconic Raffles Singapore, where a customer advisory meeting was held to capture key business travel insights, further cementing Accor's role as an industry leader.

Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Tokyo, with upcoming events in Seoul, Singapore, Bangkok, Hanoi, Jakarta, and Abidjan this month. This initiative reflects Accor's dedication to recognising and celebrating its diverse global clientele.

**Kerry Healy**, Chief Commercial Officer, Middle East, Africa

**It is essential for both our clients and hospitality businesses to adapt to new (corporate travel) demands and priorities**

Accor's partner interactions have been elevated through the expansion of the "All Thanks To You" appreciation weeks, hosted from Africa to Australia. Events have been held in Riyadh, Dubai, Istanbul, Sydney,

and Asia Pacific, Accor, added: "Our recent events in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific underscore Accor's unwavering commitment to fostering strong relationships with our partners and communities." 📌

## OMRAN lists record profit

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) announced a record-breaking financial and operational performance in 2023, achieving a net profit of OMR 31.6 million.

TT Bureau

The record growth announced by the Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) underscores the continued support from the Group's Board of Directors and Executive Management, as well as the strategic partnership with the stakeholders and partners in the tourism sector. The OMRAN Group's achievement comes amid the steady and comprehensive economic growth the country is experiencing, resulting in positive outcomes in the sector. The Group witnessed an 8 per cent growth in the occupancy rate of its resorts and hotels compared to 2022. This rise was reflected in the number of guests, with a total of 774,881 guests, representing an 11.5 per cent increase compared to 2022.

These achievements were highlighted during the recent Board of Directors meeting. The board reaffirmed the Group's commitment to strengthening its role in



**OMRAN Group's achievement comes amid the steady and comprehensive economic growth the country is experiencing**

driving economic diversification and significantly increasing its impact as a leading catalyst for development and investment in the tourism sector.

This record performance translates the success of the efforts made and the efficiency of the implemented plans. The high revenue rates from resorts, hotels, existing projects, and new tourism experiences and products contributed significantly, alongside continued efforts to improve spending efficiency and operational performance in its subsidiaries and assets. The total book value of the Group's assets amounted to 671 million Omani Riyals, and equity exceeded half a billion Omani Riyals, reaching 539 million Omani Riyals, a substantial increase from 379 million Omani Riyals in 2020. 📌

## Dubai wins 175 biz events in H1

Dubai continues its momentum as the business hub of the region by winning 175 bids in the first six months of 2024, an increase of 24 per cent compared to the same period last year.

TT Bureau

Business events continue to strengthen Dubai's knowledge economy and contribute to tourism growth to host events through 2024 and beyond. The successful bids position the city to host several prestigious international conferences, congresses, and incentive meetings over the coming years. This achievement underscores the importance of business events to the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, which aims to double the size of Dubai's economy over the decade leading up to 2033 and reinforcing its position among the world's top three cities to visit, live and work in.

Dubai Business Events (DBE), part of Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism and the city's official convention bureau, worked with stakeholders and industry experts, including Al Safer Congress Ambassadors, to bid for and capture marquee business events. In addition to



**Ahmed Al Khaja**  
CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail  
Establishment

successful bidding activity, recent months have seen further global recognition for Dubai's status as a leading business events hub. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) ranked Dubai the top city in the Middle East for the number of association meetings hosted in 2023, while Cvent ranked it number one in its 'Top Meeting Destinations in the Middle East and Africa'.

**Ahmed Al Khaja**, CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establish-

ment, said: "In line with the vision and leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, business events continue to play a critical role in driving tourism and economic prosperity. High-impact conferences, congresses and meet-

**High-impact conferences not only boost economy, but also make vital contributions to Dubai's status as a knowledge hub**

ings not only boost economic progress, but also make vital contributions to Dubai's status as a knowledge hub, and centre of expertise across key sectors. 📌



# Saudi to develop astro-tourism

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's the Royal Commission of AlUla and SETI Institute announced their collaboration to develop AlUla Manara Observatory as a leading destination of the future for space research, discovery and astro-tourism. As part of the agreement, the SETI Institute will facilitate installation of a Laser SETI instrument the observatory.

TT Bureau

AlUla is an ancient desert oasis located in North-West Saudi Arabia with more than 200,000 years of recorded human history and ancient heritage sites with 7,000 years of successive civilisations. The AlUla Manara Observatory is part of an ambitious plan to develop AlUla into a premier destination with a focus on sustainability, community, and cultural and knowledge enrichment.

As part of the agreement, the SETI Institute will facilitate installation of a Laser SETI instrument at AlUla Manara Observatory. LaserSETI, an optical SETI project, monitors the sky for laser flashes that could indicate the presence of extra-terrestrial technology. The LaserSETI station would be part of a broader network scanning the entire northern hemisphere night sky from various locations.



**Naif Almalik**, Executive Programme Director, AlUla Manara Observatory, said, "This collaboration enhances AlUla's evolving role as a dynamic hub for science and knowledge exchange. It will equip AlUla Manara with the instruments needed to observe the cosmos in extraordinary detail and establish AlUla as a premier destination for research and astro-tourism. Just an hour's drive from AlUla's centre, the

observatory will inspire local youth to pursue diverse careers in advanced STEM fields, supporting the growth and economic diversification of Saudi Arabia in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 ambitions." Additionally, the SETI Institute will support in developing data analysis systems for some of the telescopes housed at AlUla Manara Observatory and provide

expertise in hardware and instrument development. The SETI Institute's Centre for Education plans to support training teachers and students using virtual reality tools to enhance local astronomy and space science capabilities. The outreach centre will also create communication resources to engage visitors at AlUla Manara Observatory in astronomy, astrobology, and SETI, aligning with RCU's vision for AlUla to become

a regional hub for research, innovation, and education. **Bill Diamond**, CEO, SETI Institute, said, "Embedded in the SETI Institute's mission statement is the importance of sharing our research with the world. We are excited about this collaboration with RCU where we see the opportunity to bring the fascination of space science and education

research projects and contribute to the growing astro-tourism initiatives already recognised and popular in AlUla. It will also provide educational and upskilling opportunities for students from AlUla and across the Kingdom. **Franck Marchis**, senior astronomer and Director of Citizen Science for Unistellar at the SETI

**The AlUla Manara Observatory is part of an ambitious plan to develop AlUla into a premier destination with a focus on sustainability**

to a part of the world where there is far too little joint engagement in research, education and technology development." The collaboration will also facilitate a diverse range of joint

Institute, said: "We envision the AlUla Manara Observatory as a beacon of discovery, equipped with advanced and cutting-edge telescopes to unveil new celestial bodies and propel astronomical research to new heights."

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# Langham to open in Saudi Arabia

Langham Hospitality Group, a leader in luxury hospitality, will be venturing into the Middle East with its first property slated to open in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With 32 hotels around the globe, the group operates a portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts under the Langham, Cordis, and Eaton brands. **Bob van den Oord**, CEO, Langham Hospitality, shares with  their plans for the region.

 TT Bureau

The Middle East is an important market for Langham, especially because there are many guests traveling to their key hotels in the gateway cities, such as London, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Sydney. Langham currently has 32 hotels around the world, four brands over four continents. Langham Hotels is positioned at the luxury end of the market, Cordis is their upscale brand where when you check into a Cordis hotel you check into the local neighbourhood, they say, then Eaton is their lifestyle brand and finally the recently introduced Yingn'Flo brand is mid-tier brand growing predominantly in China. The biggest news for discerning guests from the Middle East is that the first Langham will be opening in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



**Bob van den Oord**  
CEO  
Langham Hospitality

of Riyadh, adjacent to the new Opera House. The hotel will have a little over 200 keys with some great restaurants, and this is slated to be their flagship brand in Riyadh. **Bob van den Oord**, CEO, Langham Hospitality, reiterated, "We are looking to expand into other GCC countries. As a matter of fact, we are in discussions for setting up hotels in Jeddah, but the UAE, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are on our horizon for opening new hotels,

**The biggest news for discerning guests from the Middle East is that the first Langham will be opening in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

Diriyah Gate is a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Langham will be constructed adjacent to what they call the new Champs-Élysées

and indeed Qatar. We are yet to sign other deals, but the ambition is very much there for us to open new Langham hotels throughout the GCC."



He further spoke on the programme especially designed for the travel agents and corporate bookers. "We have an agency programme called 'Couture by Langham' and it's an invitation programme for agents that are supporting us. And basically, the idea there is that we want to make sure that we make the

agents look good. So, for example, when someone books a room in one of our Langham hotels and through a Couture agency, we make sure there is an amenity in that room from the agent with a personalised note. We have other special facilities for those agents if they book our suites. From late checkouts

to free upgrades, etc. So, it's a range of benefits that we are giving our Couture agents, and this is very much for the agents that are working closely with our Langham hotels around the world. And it forms a very large part of our total business. The percentage varies from hotel to hotel," he said. 

# Siyam World's family sparkle

Adding that extra sparkle for a family vacation to make it an interesting and bespoke experience for kids, Siyam World unveiled 'Carnival Capers and Campfire Chronicles', which includes night out for the kids with an adventurous night camping and star gazing experience in addition to the carnival specially curated for them. They expect that the new offerings would add to the footfall.

 TT Bureau

Siyam World Maldives, the ultimate playground for travellers of all ages, is excited to unveil two brand new experiences designed especially for kids: the Kids Carnival and Night Camping with Star Gazing. Committed to making sure every guest, big or small, has a blast, Siyam World continues to up the ante with fresh, fun-

filled activities for families to enjoy together. Twice a month, the Kids Carnival rolls into town, bringing bursts of joy and laughter! Packed with games, surprises, and non-stop excitement, this carnival extravaganza promises to light up young faces with pure delight.

In addition to the non-stop fun carnival, Siyam World introduces the Kidz Camping Night,

not once, but twice a week, where little adventurers can camp out under the stars. Sundays mean 'Under The Starz Night', a complimentary event from 8 pm to 9:45 pm, while Wednesdays offer 'Star Gazing Night' from 7 pm to 9.45 pm. It's an evening of nature, entertainment, and tasty treats that is sure to leave kids wide-eyed with wonder. With just a minimum of 10 kids needed to




start the fun, there is no shortage of friends to share the excitement with.

"Our goal is simple: to make every family vacation unforgettable," said Ausy Waseem, Resort Manager, Siyam World, Maldives. "With the Kids Carnival and Night Camping adventures, we are turning ordinary moments into extraordinary memories, one happy camper at a time," Waseem added.

**With the Kids Carnival and Night Camping adventures, we are turning ordinary moments into extraordinary memories, one happy camper at a time**

To snag a spot at these must-do events, simply hop onto the Siyam World app, click on 'Celebration', and book your child's place at least 48 hours

in advance. And at just \$40 per kid for the Kidz Camping Night, it's an affordable way to sprinkle some magic into your holiday. 





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# Malaysia welcomes 165k GCC visitors

Last year, Malaysia welcomed 164,568 visitors from the GCC region, representing a substantial increase of 85.88 per cent compared to 88,534 tourists in 2022. In an interview with **TT Bureau**, **Nuwal Fadhilah Ku Azmi**, Director International Promotion Division, North and East Asia, Tourism Malaysia, shared that they expect that the number of tourists from the GCC region would double this year.

**TT Bureau**

**How has Malaysia tourism been performing this year in terms of visitor numbers? Could you give us a breakdown? How has it been from ME?**

In mid-2024, Malaysia's tourism sector showed strong recovery and growth in tourist numbers compared to previous years. Malaysia experienced a significant increase in international arrivals in 2024, with a 28.9 per cent growth from January to June compared to the same period in 2023. Specifically, the West Asia market saw a rise from 56,592 tourists in the first half of 2023 to 85,559 tourists in 2024, an increase of 51.2 per cent.

**What are the new strategies to attract visitors from the ME? Do you have any set target in terms of the visitor numbers?**

Malaysia has been actively refining its strategies to attract visi-

tors from the West Asian market. Tourism Malaysia will continue to collaborate with national carriers and foreign airlines through the Charter Flight Matching Grant (GSPC) to increase air traffic from the West Asian market to Malaysia. As of now, the number of flights for the year 2024 is 138 per week with a seating capacity of 41,956 from the UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman. Leveraging air connectivity to increase arrivals to Malaysia and rejuvenating offerings will further enhance Malaysia's appeal as a preferred tourist destination in this region. Tourism Malaysia and Emirates signed a Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) for a joint promotion campaign at the Arabian Travel Market 2024.

In general, our marketing approach for 2024 is geared towards high-impact and fast conversion strategies by intensifying the business-to-business



**Nuwal Fadhilah Ku Azmi**  
Director International Promotion Division  
North and East Asia, Tourism Malaysia

programme, especially for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market. Last year, Malaysia welcomed 164,568 tourists from the region, representing a substantial increase of 85.88 per cent compared to 88,534 tourists in 2022. Therefore, we are optimistic that the arrivals from this region will increase by 100 per cent compared to last year.

As we gear up for Visit Malaysia 2026, Tourism Malaysia also

plans to collaborate with other Middle Eastern airlines, including Qatar Airways.

**Are there new connections to the Middle East? How will this drive traffic?**

Batik Air has launched a new route starting from November 10, 2023, with flights from Dubai to Kuala Lumpur four times a week, offering a total flight capacity of 648 seats

weekly. Responding to increased demand, Oman Air has doubled its flights to Kuala Lumpur from four times a week to eight times a week for the summer season. This year Emirates and Tourism Malaysia worked together to promote tourism and boost visitor traffic into Malaysia from the airline's global network. Last year, Emirates and Batik Air Malaysia launched a codeshare agreement, allowing Emirates'

demand for travel between Malaysia and the Middle East.

**Will you be looking at any joint promotions with the Travel Agents Association of Malaysia and the ME travel agents?**

Joint promotions between Malaysian and Middle Eastern travel agents play a crucial role in increasing tourism and attracting more tourists. These partnerships enable collaborative marketing efforts and provide mutual benefits. Establishing strategic alliances with travel industry players through Joint Promotion (JP) and targeted campaigns with travel agents and leading tour operators in West Asia will align with the goals of Visit Malaysia 2026, which emphasises high-impact and fast conversion strategies. It is important to form partnerships involving both private and public sectors in order to offer new packages and improved service quality. ➔

**In general, our marketing approach for 2024 is geared towards high-impact and fast conversion strategies by intensifying the B2B programme**

weekly. Additionally, Flydubai commenced its flights on 10 February 2024 from Dubai to Penang and Langkawi, also operating four times a week, with a flight capacity of 664 seats

customers to easily access five domestic Malaysian cities and three regional Southeast Asia points via Kuala Lumpur. These new routes and increased frequencies highlight the strong

# AI-powered tool to stir up medical tourism

HealthStay.io, a member of Mohammed Bin Rashid Innovation Fund (MBRIF) Cohort 7 Accelerator, has launched world's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered sales and booking management solution to revolutionise medical tourism in the United Arab Emirates and beyond. HealthStays solution automates entire UAE medical tourism's customer experience.

**TT Bureau**

The white label solution – hosting a strategic partnership with Dubai Health Experience (DXH), part of Dubai Health Authority (DHA) – will act as the link between medical tourists and healthcare in Dubai, automating the entire process, enabling medical tourists to select their procedure and make all necessary bookings to facilitate their visit via the international patients section of a hospitals website.



**Fatima Yousif Alnaqbi**  
Acting Assistant Undersecretary for  
Support Services Sector, CIO at the  
Ministry of Finance

Commenting on the launch, **Fatima Yousif Alnaqbi**, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Support Services Sector, Chief Innovation Officer at the Ministry of Finance, and MBRIF representative, said: "We are pleased to support innovative initiatives that contribute to strengthening the UAE's position as a global centre of excellence. It always gives us great pride to see an innovation

supported under our Innovation Accelerator programme succeed. The launch of HealthStay.io, which offers solutions to enhance the medical tourism experience in our country, highlights the importance of such programmes and underscores the invaluable contribution a customised accelerator can have on our innovation ecosystem, creating positive impact on our economy."

HealthStay.io's solution streamlines the many processes involved in medical tourism into a single automated system for patients, from selecting a practitioner to finalising flights, visas and accommodation bookings. For hospitals, with the use of HealthStay.io's interconnected custom built CRM tool they now have a new automated system to acquire new customers, qualify leads and maximise efficiency throughout.

**Sean Conaty**, Co-founder & CEO, HealthStay.io said: "HealthStay is an exciting example of how AI can play a key role in advancing medical tourism in the UAE, ena-



bling innovation to turn ambition into reality. With some 674,000 medical tourists visiting Dubai in 2022, and AED992 million paid

by patients across the globe towards Dubai-based medical services, we believe there is tremendous potential in the industry and that our solution makes it quicker, easier and more efficient for all involved." **Ruairi Tubrid**, Co-founder & COO, HealthStay.io concluded: "We would like to thank DXH and DHA, for their unwavering support and shared vision of cementing Dubai's reputation as a global leader in health-


care tourism. We also extend our gratitude to the MBRIF for giving us the opportunity to be incubated under the MBRIF Innovation Accelerator, enabling us to bring this solution to life."

HealthStay recently graduated from the MBRIF Accelerator Cohort 7 and were awarded Best UAE Homegrown Business by distinguished investors at the event. ➔

**We are pleased to support innovative initiatives that contribute to strengthening the UAE's position as a global centre of excellence**



# ITB Asia to focus on leisure, MICE

ITB Asia, scheduled at Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore from 23 to 25 October this year, will have  as the media partner. The event will see Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Oman as key exhibitors from the Middle East this year. **Joyce Wang**, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, Organiser of ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia, shares details.

 Dr Shehara Rizly

## What is the theme and focus of ITB Asia this year?

The 17<sup>th</sup> edition of ITB Asia will take place from 23 to 25 October 2024 at Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore, covering key verticals such as Leisure, Corporate Travel, MICE and Travel Technology. Alongside the trade show, the ITB Asia Conference will provide a unique platform for travel and tourism professionals to debate, interact and discuss business. Under this year's theme 'Innovating for Tomorrow: Shaping the Resilience of Travel & Tourism', the conference will focus on key topics such as adapting to changing consumer expectations, improving operational efficiency and creating more sustainable and immersive experiences.

## Could you share the total exhibition area this year? Are there any ME exhibitors? Will you be able to share the total number of exhibitors this year?

Four exhibition halls and conference rooms, spanning three floors at Sands Expo and Convention Centre will provide an ideal platform for travel industry professionals at ITB Asia 2024. As preparations for this year's three-day event are still in full swing, the total number of exhibitors is not yet finalised. We can, however, already confirm that exhibitors from the Middle East include the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman, Visit Jordan, the Palestine Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Visit Saudi.

## Who are the new exhibitors?

We are delighted to welcome a number of new exhibitors to this year's event. These include The Ascott, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman, Israel Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Armenia, Bangladesh Tourism Board, Hokkaido Tourism Organisation and Visit Anchorage.

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

About 24.5 per cent of our exhibitors are travel agents, tour operators and DMCs, 22.3 per cent are hotels and accommodation providers. Tourist Attractions represent 8.2 per cent, showcasing a wide range of experiences for travellers. Business Travel and MICE make up 9.6 per cent, airlines 8.3 per cent, National Tourist Organisations (NTOs) 6.8 per cent and Travel Technology exhibitors 11.8 per



**Joyce Wang**  
Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, Organiser of ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia

continue to be the pinnacle of business, networking and innovation. One of several highlights include the keynote speech from Liz Ortiguera, Managing Director Asia-Pacific and Sr Advisor to CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), titled 'Global Trends for Sustainable Travel and Tourism', where attendees will gain an economic

into the transformative impact of technology in the industry.

We also welcome several new and long-standing conference partners in the travel, tourism and MICE sector at this year's conference, including Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), Global Destination Sustainability – Movement, Global MICE Collaborative, STR, Tourism Economics and World Tourism Cities Federation (WTTCF). These strategic conference partner-

Travel Tech Asia Theatre. The Knowledge Theatre is a must-attend for those looking to gain key industry insights from leading C-suite and industry experts. A highlight will be the presentation by Ananth Ramchandran, Head of Advisory & Strategic Transactions, Hotels & Hospitality, Asia, CBRE, who will share strategies for delivering authentic experiences to travellers and growth strategies for sustainable transformation in the session 'Adapt and Pivot: Delivering Au-

thentic experiences into events, are advised to visit the MICE Show Asia Theatre. On stage at the Travel Tech Asia Theatre, renowned experts will discuss key digital trends, including the role of technology in the future of tourism and its transformative impact on the future of travel, overcoming the challenges of travel tech adoption, the role of AI in the travel landscape and much more. Here, Brett Henry, President Director, MG Group, and Kei Shibata, Co-Founder &



## Under this year's theme 'Innovating for Tomorrow: Shaping the Resilience of Travel & Tourism', the conference will focus on important topics

cent, presenting innovations and digital solutions for the industry.

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

The quality of exhibitors, the wealth of insights shared and the opportunities for collaboration make ITB Asia the premier event for the travel industry in the APAC region. We are confident that this year's event will surpass expectations and

outlook on the travel and tourism industry in Asia-Pacific, as well as global and regional trends that are influencing the sector's transition towards a more sustainable future.

In the session 'Navigating the Future of Travel: Embracing Technological Innovation', Kevin Goh, Chief Executive Officer, Lodging, CapitalLand Investment and Chief Executive Officer, The Ascott, will offer unique insights

ships will further facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ensure the delivery of the latest data to attendees across all three conference tracks.

## How many visitors do you expect this year? Which will be the main stage discussions that are must attend?

We are expecting over 13,000 visitors to attend ITB Asia in October. The conferences will feature three focused tracks at three different theatres - the Knowledge Theatre, the MICE Show Asia Theatre and the

thentic Experiences While Prioritising Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Growth'. Those

CEO, Venture Republic & Trip 101, will give an interactive discussion, titled 'Superrapps: The

## The quality of exhibitors and opportunities for collaboration make ITB Asia the premier event for the travel industry in the APAC region

interested in gaining insights into the transformative impact of artificial intelligence and digital innovation, and integrating expe-

Unstoppable Force Redefining Travel Distribution'.

## If you can share about MICE and Luxury presence this year?

MICE leaders from BCD Meetings & Events, Live Group, Uni-globe Travel International and others will share key trends and industry outlook on the MICE industry. We have also partnered with key MICE associations, such as the China Business Event Industry Committee, the Global Destination Sustainability Movement, the Global MICE Collaborative, the International Association of Exhibitions and Events, Meeting Professionals International, SITE Global and Tourism Economics to facilitate the exchange of expertise and ideas. 





# MOVEMENTS

## TOURISM MALAYSIA Malaysia

**NUWAL FADHILAH KU AZMI** has been appointed as the Director International Promotion Division, North and East Asia, covering Asia and Africa for Tourism Malaysia. She has more than two decades of experience in the tourism industry working with Tourism Malaysia and the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB). Her area of expertise are business events (MICE), analysis of tourism data and human resources development. She will be the lead to execute strategic promotional campaigns aimed at positioning Malaysia as a top destination across Asia, Middle East and Africa. She will provide expert guidance and up-to-date information to international agents and industry partners to support the promotion and attraction of foreign tourists, aligned with departmental objectives.



## COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT NORTHERN RING ROAD RIYADH Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Courtyard by Marriott Northern Ring Road Riyadh has appointed **NADA SOLIMAN** as the PR & Marketing Manager. Soliman brings a dynamic and result-driven approach to her new role, backed by a distinguished career in luxury brands and hospitality. With proven expertise in brand elevation, client relationship management, and innovative campaign execution, she is poised to enhance Courtyard by Marriott Northern Ring Road Riyadh's reputation as a leader in luxury hospitality. In her last role, she worked as PR & Marketing Manager at Ajman Saray, a Luxury Collection Resort, where she has excelled since 2023. Prior to that, she served as Marketing Executive at The Nile Ritz-Carlton in Cairo, Egypt, from 2022 to 2023.



## DESTINATION MINA SEYAH DUBAI

Destination Mina Seyahi, the famed hotel resort featuring three Marriott International brands: W Dubai - Mina Seyahi, The Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi Beach Resort & Marina, and Le Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort & Waterpark, has appointed **UGUR LEE KANBUR** as the new Cluster General Manager. Known as Lee, Kanbur will oversee the operations and customer experience across each brand with a strong focus on delivering an exceptional guest experience and a place for employees to thrive. With 35 years of experience in operational and management roles across Asia for Marriott International, Kanbur has spent 16 years in China where he worked as the General Manager of the W Suzhou and served for some time at The Westin Tianjin and The Westin Wuhan. Kanbur comes from Australian/Turkish origin and speaks English, Turkish and basic Chinese.



## MANDARIN ORIENTAL INTERNATIONAL Corporate Office

Mandarin Oriental International has appointed **CRISTINA DIEZHANDINO** to its Board as an Independent Non-Executive Director. Diezhandino joins the Board with a distinguished track record as the Chief Marketing Officer and a member of Diageo's Executive Committee. She has worked at Diageo for over 18 years. In her new role, Diezhandino is responsible for the marketing, innovation, and digital transformation of some of the world's most iconic brands, including Diageo's luxury division. Since being appointed as Chief Marketing Officer in July 2020, she has led the transformation of Diageo's portfolio, elevating and embedding its brands into premium consumer spaces and developing Diageo's offering of luxury experiences and Brand Homes around the world.



## ROTANA CORPORATE OFFICE Abu Dhabi

Rotana has appointed **KARIM EL HERR** as the Corporate Director of Operations. In this pivotal role, El Herr will oversee the operational strategies across all Rotana properties in the region and beyond, ensuring the highest standards of service and guest satisfaction. In line with Rotana's tenacious growth plan, he will work closely with the wider Operations team on critical areas, such as hotel pre-openings, customer relationship management, and revenue management. El Herr brings with him over two decades of experience across hospitality operations covering property level and corporate management. Most recently, he served as Director of Asset Management and Special Projects at Roya International Hospitality & Leisure Consultants LLC where he developed comprehensive asset management plans to optimise property performance and profitability.



## GEWAN HOTELS AND RESORTS Dubai

Gewan Hotels and Resorts has appointed **DAMIR BAGDALOV** as the Director of Sales - Leisure. Bagdalov brings over 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry, with a robust background in project management, sales planning, account development, and client retention. Having held key positions with prestigious international companies across the Middle East and Africa, he has consistently demonstrated his ability to drive sales growth and enhance customer experiences. In his new role, he will lead the leisure sales division, focusing on developing innovative strategies to attract and retain leisure guests, fostering strong global partnerships, and ensuring exceptional service delivery. Bagdalov's expertise and dedication will be instrumental in elevating Gewan Hotels and Resorts' leisure offerings to new heights. Bagdalov will be based at Gewan's flagship property.



## MANDARIN ORIENTAL INTERNATIONAL Dubai

Mandarin Oriental International has also appointed **FABRICE MEGARBANE** to its Board as an Independent Non-Executive Director. This appointment will support Mandarin Oriental's new strategy as a brand-led, guest-centric, global luxury hospitality group. Megarbane brings equally extensive expertise from his role as Chief Global Growth Officer of L'Oréal and as a member of L'Oréal's Executive Committee. In his new role, he will oversee directly the eight regions, as well as retail and e-commerce and all cross-functional business transformation projects of the group. He was previously President and CEO of L'Oréal North Asia and CEO of L'Oréal China, leading an organisation of 20,000 people.



## TAJ JUMEIRAH LAKES TOWERS Dubai

Taj Jumeirah Lakes Towers, Dubai, has appointed **ELENA SCHWARTZ** as its new General Manager. With over 20 years of distinguished experience in the hospitality industry, Schwartz is poised to bring exceptional expertise and innovative leadership to her new role. Her illustrious career began at The Oberoi Beach Resort Sahl Hasheesh, and she has since held pivotal positions at renowned hospitality groups, including Shangri-La Group, Rixos Hotels, Deutsche Hospitality and Radisson hotels. Her career is marked by exceptional team engagement, operational optimisation, and notable revenue growth. In her new role, Schwartz is committed to propelling the hotel to the forefront of the city's business hospitality sector. Her vision includes fostering community-driven experiences, enhancing F&B offerings, and improving service quality.



## WYNDHAM HOTELS AND RESORTS Dubai

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has appointed **CHARL NEL** as Development Manager for the Middle East & Africa. He will be based at Wyndham's regional headquarters in Dubai, UAE. His extensive experience and unique skill set in hospitality will help Wyndham grow in the region. Nel brings a wealth of knowledge from previous industry roles in development. He has more than 15 years of experience in hospitality and real estate across Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Having held previous roles in companies like Hilton, Radisson Hotel Group, and TUI Group, he was responsible for driving multiple hotel growth through management and franchise agreements across various regions. His focus areas will include Southern, Eastern and Central Africa, in addition to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.



## MARRIOTT, NEOM Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**BELAL AL KADRY** has been appointed as the Cluster General Manager for Marriott's anticipated portfolio within the Sindalah Island project by NEOM – which includes four properties across the Luxury Collection, Autograph Collection and Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy brands. Kadry holds nearly 25 years of hospitality experience across the Middle East with Marriott International, and has driven exceptional results through delegations, events and conventions with iconic properties. Marriott's portfolio on Sindalah will comprise a 70-key Luxury Collection Resort; a 66-key Autograph Collection Resort; a 115-key Luxury Collection All-Suites Hotel and a 218-key Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy.



## ROTANA Abu Dhabi

Rotana has promoted **NADIM JAMOUS** as the Corporate Vice President, Architecture and Design. In his new role, Jamous will lead a team of architects, interior designers and engineers, ensuring Rotana's existing and upcoming projects are aligned with the brand's standards, vision and aspiration. Additionally, Jamous will coordinate project management efforts with both internal and external stakeholders for timely completion of projects at the highest standards. He will also develop and implement the overall design and architectural strategy, aligned with the company's goals. Under his leadership, Jamous will continue to promote a culture of creativity and continuous improvement within the architecture and design team. Jamous joined Rotana in 2015 as Director of Projects.



Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has appointed Jean-Claude **ABI KHALIL** as Development Manager for the Middle East & Africa. He will be based at Wyndham's regional headquarters in Dubai, UAE. His extensive experience and unique skill set in hospitality will help Wyndham grow in the region. Abi Khalil has a robust background in hotel operations, sales and asset management. With over 24 years of experience in hospitality, he has a proven track record of transforming operations and leading strategic rebranding initiatives to enhance market positioning and guest experience. Abi Khalil's focus will include Western and Northern Africa, in addition to the GCC region, where his operational experience will be invaluable. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is one of the world's largest hotel franchises with 9,200 hotels in more than 95 countries.





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## LUXURY ON SAIL

**BOOKING PERIOD**  
12<sup>th</sup> Aug – 13<sup>th</sup> Sep 2024

**DEPARTURE PERIOD**  
1<sup>st</sup> Nov – 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

### REGULAR SAILINGS

CABIN CODE	CABIN DESCRIPTION	ITINERARY		
		2N WED	2N FRI	3N SUN
ISS/ISA	INTERIOR STATEROOM	150	200	275
OSS	OCEANVIEW STATEROOM	250	300	375
BSS	BALCONY STATEROOM	350	400	475

### SPECIAL SAILINGS

CABIN CODE	CABIN DESCRIPTION	ITINERARY		
		25 Dec 2024 & 29 Jan 2025	31 Jan 2025	1 Dec 2024 & 29 Dec 2024
ISS/ISA	INTERIOR STATEROOM	225	300	413
OSS	OCEANVIEW STATEROOM	375	450	563
BSS	BALCONY STATEROOM	525	600	713

\*Above rate is per person on twin share in USD.

#### Terms & Conditions:

- Single occupancy is not applicable for this offer
- 3rd /4th Guest pays 50% off 1st Guest promotional rate
- This offer is applicable for FIT bookings ONLY
- Booking is subject to cabin availability and capacity controlled.
- Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional offers, partial/full redemption of points, gift vouchers or travel industry rate and etc.
- Offer is exclusive of Port charges, Gratuities, holiday surcharge (where applicable), visa charges (where applicable), shorex fee and any other incidental charges



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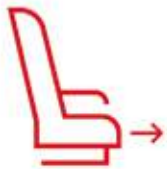


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\*Select flights only