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21

Years & Counting

Sharjah marks 25 years @ arabian travel market DUBAI

Arabian Travel Market returns from 28 April to 1 May this year, convening professionals from travel, tourism and hospitality in one platform. Sharjah Tourism returns for its silver jubilee participation with more than 20 key partners.

Dr. Shehara Fernando

“ATM is one of the most significant events in the global tourism calendar and SCTDA is proud to participate for the 25th time this year. ATM provides us to showcase Sharjah’s offerings, including its rich cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes, and family-friendly attractions appealing to global travellers. Our participation reflects our commitment to positioning Sharjah as a leading destination for sustainable tourism. ATM allows us to engage with industry, exchange ideas, and explore solutions that contribute to the sector’s growth and development. Sharjah has been known for its dedication to preserving its identity, while embracing progress.”

Contd. on page 4 ▶



His Excellency Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

AED 45 billion revenue signals UAE’s tourism strength

Last year, hotel revenues in the UAE marked a 3% YoY increase. Occupancy rates rose to 78%, positioning the country among the top performers both regionally and globally, says **H.E. Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy, UAE.**

TT Bureau

His Excellency Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy and Chairman, Emirates Tourism Council, highlighted the continued growth and robust performance of the UAE’s tourism sector. He said “Hotel revenues in the UAE reached AED 45 billion in

Occupancy rates climbed 78% last year to rank the highest regionally and globally

2024, reflecting a 3 per cent year-on-year growth. Hotel occupancy rates

climbed to 78 per cent last year to rank among the highest regionally and internationally. This growth was supported by the opening of 16 new hotels across the seven emirates last year, taking the total number of hotels in the country to 1,251 by the year-end. Hotel rooms increased reaching 216,966, up 3 per cent, he added. ▶



His Excellency Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri
Minister of Economy and Chairman, Emirates Tourism Council



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AC79	Dubai (DXB)	02:05	Vancouver (YVR)	05:55	Mon, Wed, Thur, Sat	Effective Oct. 27, 2025, until March 31, 2026
AC78	Vancouver (YVR)	21:05	Dubai (DXB)	00:05+2	Mon, Tue, Thur, Sat	Effective Oct. 27, 2025, until March 31, 2026



Rezlive debuts cruise & rail deals

Returning to ATM, Rezlive.com continues to redefine seamless booking experiences with its extensive portfolio of hotels and a range of transfer services accessible through one user-friendly platform. They would be showcasing its innovations, strategic partnerships, and commitment to empower travel agents with real-time access to best travel deals worldwide.

TT Bureau

Could you share about your presence at ATM this year?

We are excited to return to ATM this year with a strong presence, showcasing Rezlive.com as a global B2B booking platform with a growing footprint in the Middle East. Our focus is on engaging with partners, unveiling our latest product inno-

vations, and reinforcing our commitment to supporting travel agents, DMCs and suppliers with seamless technology and expansive content.

What will you be showcasing at ATM 2025?

At ATM 2025, we are highlighting developments such as Smart-Match: Seamless Room Mapping Powered by AI, The launch of Rail



Jaal Shah
Founder and Managing Director
Travel Designer Group

Europe on our platform, our premium cruise offering, Cruise Resort World, sailing from Dubai, An upgraded mobile app experience for travel agents, expanded hotel content, especially in secondary

cities across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and our new Supply Partner Programme (RezHub), inviting DMCs to upload their direct hotel content and benefit from Rezlive's global distribution reach.

Share your expectations and biz goals from ATM this year?

We expect ATM to be a major growth opportunity. With demand for regional and domestic travel, we expect 20 to 25 per cent surge in inquiries. Our goal is to onboard new partners, strengthen collaborations, and display how Rezlive can be an engine for B2B travel biz in evolving landscape.

REGIONAL TRENDS

❖ 20 to 25% surge in business inquiries

❖ Aligning with 2030 vision of KSA

❖ Educating partners on responsible tourism

able travel, demand for tailor-made itineraries to offbeat destinations, digitisation of B2B booking process across all segments and surge in domestic and regional travel within KSA, among family and youth sections.

Can Rezlive integrate with existing property management or booking systems?

Rezlive offers integration via API/XML with existing PMS and booking engines. We provide: An onboarding team, Sandbox and testing environments, full documentation and technical support, post-live optimisation and issue resolution. ➔

Can you share travel trends witnessed in the region?

Some of the trends we are seeing include, interest in experiential and sustain-

Our goal is to onboard new partners, fortify collaborations, and display how Rezlive can be an engine for B2B businesses

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ATM means deals, dollars & growth

► Contd. from page 1



Ahmed Ibrahim
Commercial Director
The Tower Plaza Hotel

“The ATM plays a key role in networking, trendspotting, and elevating brand presence. We are excited to showcase our hotel’s unique experiences, culinary offerings, and award-winning team, highlighting our commitment to innovation, service excellence, and sustainability. We will present our latest achievements, link with stakeholders, and reinforce our position as a top destination.”



Freddy Farid
Managing Director,
Two Seasons

“The ATM is a platform that enhances business opportunities for the industry covering MICE, leisure, and corporate travel. It provides unparalleled connections with partners from the GCC and Asia, as we offer our summer campaigns to existing and potential clients leveraging Dubai’s position as a global hub. Use of AI continues to play a crucial role in the hospitality industry.”



Mohammed Iqbal
General Manager, Khalidia Palace Hotel
Dubai by Mourouj Gloria

“ATM increases visibility, provides a platform to showcase our hotel to the targeted audience of travel professionals, tour operators, and industry experts at global level. Being one of the few pet-friendly hotels in the region we plan to spread awareness. As a hotelier, I expect increased bookings, revenue expanded network and connections and enhanced brand awareness.”



Moussa El Hayek
Chief Operating Officer
Al Bustan Centre & Residence

“ATM serves as a vital platform for us to connect with global travel professionals and the wider hospitality industry. This year, we will present our newly renovated, ultra-modern rooms, thoughtfully redesigned to cater to the needs of today’s travellers, with a focus on comfort. We aim to highlight the property’s transformation, while reinforcing our loyalty to delivering unique hospitality.”



Ravi Santiago
Cluster GM, Ramada Hotel & Suites and Wyndham Hotels Ajman

“Our anticipated outcomes from ATM this year include strengthening existing partnerships and engaging with key partners from our current network from various global locations. We aim to enhance ties with counterparts of our existing allies, while seeking opportunities to link with new potential partners. ATM is an ideal platform to exchange insights and stay updated on market trends.”



Amro Nagah
General Manager
Swissotel Al Murooj

“ATM is a cornerstone event for building partnerships, connecting key players and decision-makers, showcasing the latest trends and innovations, and facilitating networking opportunities. This event is known for bringing together experts to discuss, collaborate, and shape the industry’s future. This year, we aim to fortify our partnerships and expand our reach into new markets.”



Suresh Kirplani
President
Blueberry Travel

“The Arabian Travel Market has always been a cornerstone for travel industry connections and innovations. This year, the Blueberry Travel is proud to present bespoke travel solutions, which are tailored for today’s modern explorers. Blueberry Travel is here for the curious explorers and those of whom are ready to create lasting memories through meaningful travel.”



Ivan Mavrov
Business Development Manager,
Concierge ONE Tourism

“We are excited to announce that Concierge ONE Tourism, a part of Palms Travel, is evolving into a DMC specialising in luxury, exotic, and off-the-beaten-track experiences. With offices in Dubai and Bulgaria, we are positioned to deliver unforgettable journeys worldwide. Our portfolio is expanding with new destinations—Japan, South Korea, Antarctica, Finland, among others.”



Mohamed El-Aghoury
Multi-Property GM, Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort & Aloft Palm Jumeirah

“ATM 2025 is incredibly important to our industry. It has evolved into one of the top three trade shows globally and based on my personal experience attending several shows and speaking with global partners, that perception is only solidifying. This year’s ATM is vital as it marks the first edition following the completion of Sheraton JBR’s renovation; it will be our discussion point.”



Saurabh Tiwari
Area Director, Middle East & CIS
Taj Hotels part of IHCL

“ATM brings together the influential industry leaders under one roof, with partners travelling from across the globe to be part of one of the region’s vital business and social gatherings. It showcases our brand, celebrate key milestones, and connect on a global stage. Arabian Travel Market serves as a platform to reaffirm Taj’s position as a global icon of luxury & Indian hospitality.”



Pradeep Kishnani
Vice President
Next Holidays

“Our significant expectations from ATM 2025 is to build meaningful partnerships and explore forward-thinking travel trends. At Next Holidays, we are here in order to spark fresh conversations and create innovative journeys that redefine how people experience the world, which is powered by our seamless, user-friendly digital platform designed for modern explorers.”



Jai Kishan Tewani
Managing Director
Book Your Voyage

“The 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market offers us an international platform in a bid to showcase how Book Your Voyage blends advanced technology with personalised services. This year, Book Your Voyage is focused on precision travel planning—creating dream and innovative journeys, which are accessible, effortless, efficient and safe for every type of travellers or groups.”

Empirical travel lures ME tourists

Travellers are redefining essence of travel industry, moving beyond mere luxury accommodations to seek transformative and immersive experiences. They desire journeys beyond high-end resorts and 5-star amenities, yearn for authentic interactions and curated adventures that resonate with their passions .

TT Bureau

Whether diving deep into local cultures, exploring untouched natural wonders, or indulging in bespoke culinary tours, today's travellers desire exclusivity with authentic-

rooted in meaningful human connections. Luxury, for today's traveller, is no longer about extravagance alone, they seek discovery, enrichment, and crafting unforgettable moments. As destinations strive to meet these evolving expectations,

GCC nations' outbound tourism market is projected to grow from US\$ 81.89 billion in 2025 to US\$ 139.53 billion by 2032

ity. They seek seamless experiences that combine the opportunity for technology facilitated personalisation that remains

they must focus on designing experiences that speak to these motivations, co-creating stories and sensations that lin-



ger long after the journey comes to an end.

As per a Market Insights report, the GCC nations' outbound tourism market is poised for growth, projected to surge from US\$ 81.89 billion in 2025

to US\$ 139.53 billion by 2032. This trend highlights the increasing demand for unique and premium travel experiences among the Middle Eastern tourists, presenting lucrative opportunities for destinations worldwide.

Tourists are known for their affinity for luxury, comfort, and family-oriented travel. A shift towards experiential and adventure tourism has become evident, especially by Gen X and affluent families seeking connections with new cultures. Perhaps this cultural curiosity is stimulated by the multi-cultural nature of GCC nations, and the traditions of the region regarding global trade and cultural exchange. Offering guided experiences with locals who can share stories of heritage and culture can create a meaningful connection. For instance, Bedouin-style desert

tours in Jordan offer adventure and a peek into traditional lifestyle. Switzerland combines luxurious experiences, attracting ME tourists to its picturesque landscapes.



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



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Balancing demand and supply gap

Occupancy remains the issue in hotels but for beach properties in Ajman and Sharjah has been balancing supply and demand over the past few months. **Ittikhar Hamdani, Area Manager, Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel and Coral Beach Resort Sharjah** spoke about the two hotels, which increased its occupancy and gained traction from various new markets.

 Dr Shehara Fernando

How were the past few months for the two properties?

We had a good start in both hotels, occupancy was high in both hotels. My problem was not occupancy, but when partners used to call me for more rooms; our revenue manager was requesting to stop selling as we were already full. So, it was more a problem with supply than demand. We are thankful to all the partners who were supporting us throughout this quarter.

And now we are looking ahead for Q2 and Q3 wherein business on books looks strong and I am sure that our Q2 and Q3 will be stronger than last year. As you know



Ittikhar Hamdani
Area Manager, Bahi Ajman Palace
Hotel and Coral Beach
Resort Sharjah

this momentum on with a healthy contribution towards the GDP as well, so that we keep all stakeholders, owners, staff and guests happy.

How do you see sustainability going to the next level?

As you know sustainability has always been a key focus, incorporating

Our strategy is a different, as we go in the opposite on REVPAR than ADR, so this is an edge, which we enjoy over other hotels

our strategy is a little different, as we go in the opposite direction on REVPAR than ADR, so this is an edge, which we enjoy over other hotels as we drive towards occupancy. Our revenue has been healthy throughout, and we intend to keep

it to the two properties. One of the case studies I must share here is about the water bottling plant, which we introduced. This state-of-the-art plant enables us to extract water from air and this has become an important aspect as we are providing a



An aerial view of Bahi Ajman Palace

sustainable way of living as opposed to spending money on plastic bottles. You know where we are getting water from the air. Sometimes things look difficult, but once you start taking the initiative it becomes much easier. As you know, we recently implemented AirOWater Global, the region's first 100 per cent water from air sustainable water bottling plant. Pioneering Eco-Friendly Innovation with Atmospheric Water Generation Technology.

Coral Beach Resort Sharjah has implemented a compost machine and so we are diverting 90 per cent of our waste from the landfill. And as a matter of fact, we are paying less to the waste collectors. So sometimes these

strategies have a winning edge rather than spending more, but perception is that once you implement such kind of things it becomes more of a burden on your profit & loss, but it is a more positive change. As I look at the amazing beach properties my strategies and clientele are way more different than a city or business hotel.

Who are your key clientele?

As beach properties, we thrive on leisure guests hence our numbers have increased from different parts of the world. Our key source markets are CIS countries, Balkans and GCC, among others. Our booking strategies are also different as they begin from seven nights to 10 nights minimum stay and the type of tourists we receive are family oriented. We do receive a major part of sports travellers as well, from football to cricket. We hosted the Russian national women's team this February. Whenever there is a gap in shoulder season, we are always getting one of the other sports teams either cricket or football. These are our stronghold segment, but we are depending on our partners who are bringing the leisure business from differ-

ent parts of the world and of course major share is coming from Russia and CIS countries. Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have become our key markets in terms of GCC. Along with Ajman Tourism, we recently conducted aggressive road shows in the UK, Germany, and Scandinavia and now we are going to Latin America. Our plan this year is to reach out to new markets such as Latin America.

The good news is that the Polish market is very active in both hotels in Sharjah and Ajman and Baltic is also playing a significant role. Our focus is more towards the Eastern European side because the booking flow is coming more from the Eastern Europe and Germany is our second biggest customer after Russia.

How do you see AI transforming hospitality sector?

AI is transforming customer experience and there is no doubt that AI is getting some new techniques—chatbot is one of the examples, dynamic booking systems is another area and above all AI is empowering the staff because they can be more closer in terms of interaction. It

is balancing to enhance the customer experience and because of this enhancement we are getting repeat customers and good reviews, and this is really helping the hospitality industry.

Could you share your presence at ATM?

ATM is a great platform where we meet our existing partners and could meet with some new partners. During the years at ATM, we have been improving and getting it better, so we are showcasing new packages. Since summer is here, we have our special summer packages for the agents and are awarding our existing partners who are supporting us and making the success possible for both properties.



A view of the Coral Beach Resort Sharjah

SOURCE MARKETS

- ❖ Russia, CIS, Balkans and Eastern Europeans
- ❖ Oman and KSA in GCC
- ❖ Supply less than demand
- ❖ 17 to 10 days stay

Air India hosts agents for networking

Air India hosted leading travel agents from the UAE for an evening of networking. The new team of Air India was introduced to the travel trade so that they could liaise with them going forward. With the new branding in place, Air India is looking at a productive year to serve more customers and destinations across the world with their new products and services.



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BRF Asia 2025 to open on 25 June

The branded residences sector is experiencing unprecedented global growth, with Asia emerging as a dominant force. In response to the increasing demand for insights, partnerships and investment opportunities in this thriving market, The Bench, organisers of Future Hospitality Summit, in collaboration with C9 Hotelworks, are launching the BRF Asia.

TT Bureau

Taking place on 25 June 2025 at The Athenee Hotel in Bangkok, the inaugural of

BRANDED RESIDENCES FORUM ASIA

the Branded Residences Forum Asia 2025 (BRF Asia) will bring together the world's hospitality brands, real estate developers, investors, and industry professionals for a day of high-level discussions, including

data insights, and strategic networking.

Branded residences have become one of the most lucrative sectors in real estate, growing at 176 per cent since 2014, with 687 projects currently in operation and 617 more expected by 2030.

While historically tied to ultra-luxury hotel brands, the concept is evolving. lifestyle, fashion, and now, even automotive brands are entering the space, further expanding the market's reach. Asia, which boasts a market value of over US\$ 26.6 billion, is at the forefront of this trans-



Branded residences have become most lucrative in the real estate sector

formation, with Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines leading the regional growth.

Jonathan Worsley, Chairman & CEO, The Bench believes this is the moment to bring a forum to Asia. "Branded residences

are redefining luxury and investment, and Asia is at the heart of this shift. The forum will serve as a critical platform for the industry's decision-makers to explore new opportunities, navigate challenges, and forge partnerships," he added.

With Accor One Living as the Founder Sponsor, the event is supported by GBR Consulting, Marriott International, QUO Global and Sectorlight. **BRF Asia** is one of the official media partners for Future Hospitality Summit, KSA.

GROWING SECTORS

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growth since 2014

687
projects in operation

617
more expected by 2030



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Travel agents key for biz growth

Bulk of bookings in the Gulf Cooperation Council nations still come from the traditional travel agents with the support of OTAs as well. **Ahmad Ghosheh, Director, Sales & Marketing, Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach**, shares with **TRAVEL** their importance and some of the key source markets, which have been making waves in Dubai.

TT Bureau

Share about the property's occupancy and general status over the past year?

Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach has experienced occupancy

Our location in JBR, has consistently contributed to higher-than-average occupancy levels, attracting a healthy mix of leisure and corporate guests.

How important are travel agents and

Western Europe, the UK, Germany and France, are important markets, with the travellers seeking sunny getaways and high-quality services

growth levels, driven by the status of Dubai as a premier destination for leisure as well as business travellers.

what percentage of business do you get from them?

Travel agents are a key part of our business



Ahmad Ghosheh
Director, Sales & Marketing
Mövenpick Hotel Jumeirah Beach

strategy, providing access to diverse traveller segments, particularly from markets where we may not have a direct presence. While specific percentages are proprietary, we rely heavily on

agents, particularly in Russia, Europe, CIS, and GCC markets, to help curate and guide travel experiences. OTAs play a role, but traditional agents remain a valuable source.

Who are your key source markets? What is your USP to attract travellers?

Our key source markets are the GCC nations, which show strong demand, particularly for family vacations. Western Europe, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, are important markets, with the travellers seeking sunny getaways and high-quality services. There is con-



sistent demand from Russia and CIS countries.

Our Unique Selling Proposition lies in our exceptional personalised services that translates in reputation scores on online travel aggregators, which make us the top ranked choice for many travellers. Also,

our prime location situated in one of Dubai's most vibrant areas, surrounded by a public beach, a beach mall, and a range of restaurants. As an urban lifestyle hotel, we lay emphasis on sustainability, earning recognition from DET and Green Globe, and several accolades. **D**



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Forging partnerships at ATM

Participating for the first time at the Arabian Travel Market 2025, **Ivan Mavrov, Business Development Manager, Concierge One Tourism**, shared with  their expectations. Middle Eastern clientele will be able to explore various historical, cultural and natural sites that have made them a novel 'must visit' destination.

 CT Bureau

Will you be participating at ATM? If so, provide us details of your participation and expectations?

Yes, Concierge ONE Tourism is excited to confirm our participation again this year at ATM. You can find us at stand ME0760. We always value ATM and anticipate a strong event, offering fantastic opportunities to connect with esteemed partners and forge new, mutually beneficial collaborations.

What cultural experiences and historical landmarks in Bulgaria do you think resonate most with the GCC travellers?

Bulgaria captivates with a blend of ancient history and stunning nature. Travellers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) can explore Plovdiv, Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, or discover Sofia, nestled beside Vitosha mountain.

The lush green mountains offer a perfect summer escape, while numerous spa resorts featuring mineral waters provide relaxation. It is a destination offering 24x7 entertainment or complete tranquility.

How does Bulgaria's rich history and tradition, from Thracian settlements to medieval fortresses, cater to the curiosity of GCC tourists?

Like many European countries, Bulgaria boasts a deep and accessible history. For curious GCC tourists, it is rich with intriguing stories, well-preserved ancient Roman and Thracian sites, and medieval remnants, allowing them to

visit, offering a unique lifestyle and exceptional luxury amenities, including prestigious properties, such as Grand Hotel Millennium and Palms Royale Sofia, all complemented by the adjacent Vitosha mountain. For nature lovers seeking exclusivity, the Pirin mountain area, featuring unique properties like Vaia Heights Villas with complete privacy amidst endless greenery, is highly recommended.



Ivan Mavrov
Business Development Manager
of Concierge One Tourism

In what ways do Bulgarian cities such as Sofia and Plovdiv offer a mix of contemporary amenities and historical charm appealing to GCC visitors?

Sofia and Plovdiv blend the ancient and modern. Plovdiv, an open-air museum, showcases 6,000-year-old ruins alongside contemporary buildings. This unique juxtaposition offers GCC travellers' modern comforts and luxury amenities right next to fascinating historical exploration.

easily explore and significantly enrich their travel experience with historical discovery.

Which top destinations in Bulgaria (such as the Rila Monastery, Nessebar, or the Black Sea coast) are must-visits for visitors from the GCC?

Sofia is certainly a must-

How would you describe the culinary delights available in Bulgaria, and how do they relate or contrast to the tastes and preferences GCC visitors?

Bulgarian cuisine is di-



verse, influenced by its Balkan neighbours, Turkish heritage (reflecting a significant Muslim population), and Mediterranean proximity. Visitors can savour a delightful mix of familiar Oriental flavours alongside unique Eastern European dishes and international cuisine, catering well to GCC palates. Halal options are readily

and bespoke experiences, our speciality is crafting luxury journeys for the discerning GCC traveller.

How accessible is Bulgaria from GCC in terms of flights, visa and travel logistics?


Accessibility is straightforward. UAE nationals benefit from visa-free entry. Following Bulgaria's

What is the best time of the year for GCC visitors to visit Bulgaria?

Late spring and summer (May to September) are ideal for the GCC travellers seeking pleasant weather to explore cities, enjoy the Black Sea coast, and escape the heat in the cool, green mountains. Autumn offers beautiful colours, while winter presents opportunities for skiing and festive experiences.

Could you share success stories or testimonials from previous GCC visitors that highlight their most memorable experiences in Bulgaria?

We recently hosted a group of ladies from the UAE in Borovets who enjoyed an authentic cultural immersion activity, learning traditional Bulgarian crafts and preparing a classic Bulgarian dish, Banitsa.

Another trip involved crafting a bespoke honeymoon for a couple from the Abu Dhabi. They desired a blend of cosmopolitan city life and secluded nature. We arranged a stay combining cosmopolitan energy of Sofia, where they indulged in world-class shopping and diverse culinary experiences. 

For nature lovers, the Pirin mountain area, featuring properties such as Heights Villas and endless greenery, is highly recommended

available in most cities and better restaurants, and Concierge ONE Tourism ensures Halal food can be provided across all the properties we partner with, guaranteeing dietary needs are met.

What travel packages or luxury experiences have you developed combining Bulgaria's cultural, historical, and attractions for the GCC audience?

We are excellent at creating tailor-made itineraries based on individual preferences. While we offer ready-to-book packages combining significant destinations, such as Sofia and Plovdiv, or Sofia and the Pirin Mountains, all featuring 5-star hotels

Schengen accession in 2024, residents from other GCC countries holding a valid Schengen visa can also easily enter, simplifying travel logistics significantly. They can also benefit the daily direct flights between Dubai-Sofia and Abu Dhabi-Sofia.

What are Bulgaria's safety standards and local hospitality assuring GCC tourists a secure and welcoming travel experience?

Bulgaria is a welcoming European destination with security standards. Known for their warmth and hospitality, Bulgarians ensure visitors, including families from the GCC, feel comfortable during their stay.



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SHARJAH

Showcasing visionary destinations @ATM 2025

At this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM), between 28 April and 1 May 2025, Sharjah will again take centre stage, showcasing its unique offerings, while emphasising its commitment to sustainable tourism development. Known as the 'hidden gem' of the UAE, Sharjah is home to rich culture and heritage, receiving discerning travellers across the globe.



As one of the most culturally rich and naturally diverse

emirates in the UAE, the Emirate of Sharjah continues to make strides in positioning itself as a global destination for

travellers seeking authentic experiences.

Destination without equal

The Emirate of Sharjah has long been celebrated for its ability to seamlessly blend tradition with modernity. From its UNESCO-recognised heritage sites to its pristine beaches and family-

friendly attractions, the emirate offers something for every type of traveller. Whether it is exploring the historical Heart of Sharjah, marvelling at the biodiversity of the Mleiha Archaeological Centre, or enjoying the serene beauty of Kalba's mangroves, visitors are treated to an array of experiences that reflect the

emirate's rich cultural and natural heritage.

At ATM 2025, Sharjah through Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) and the delegation comprising government and private entities aims to shine a spotlight on these offerings, highlighting how the emirate

provides an alternative to the high-energy urban landscapes of neighbouring cities. The focus remains on authenticity, sustainability, and creating memorable experiences that resonate with visitors long after their journey ends.

Commitment to sustainability

One of the defining pillars of the emirate's tourism strategy is its dedication to sustainability. In line with global trends and the UAE's vision for sustainable development, the Emirate of Sharjah has implemented various initiatives to ensure that tourism growth aligns with environmental preservation and community well-being. From eco-tourism projects such as the Kingfisher Retreat in Kalba to conservation efforts at the Wasit Wetland Centre, Sharjah is leading by example in promoting responsible tourism practices.

ATM provides an ideal platform for the SCTDA to share its success stories

ATM provides a platform for SCTDA to share its success stories in sustainable tourism and inspire other destinations to adopt them





in sustainable tourism and inspire other destinations to adopt similar practices. By fostering dialogue and collaboration, the Emirate of Sharjah hopes to contribute to a responsible and inclusive global tourism industry.

Strengthening global connections

Beyond showcasing its attractions, Sharjah's participation at the ATM is about building relationships. The event brings together tourism professionals, investors, and decision-makers from across the world, offering a unique opportunity



to explore partnerships and exchange ideas. For SCTDA, this means engaging with stakeholders who share its vision for sustainable and impactful tourism. The emirate's location, combined with its world-class infrastructure and connectivity, makes it an attractive destination

for leisure and business travellers. Through its presence at ATM, SCTDA aims to strengthen Sharjah's reputation as a hub for culture, nature, and innovation.

Looking ahead

As the global tourism industry continues to recover and evolve in the wake of recent challenges, Sharjah remains steadfast in its commitment to growth and resilience. The emirate's forward-thinking approach, coupled with its deep respect for heritage and sustainability, positions it as a model destination for the future. In addition to its participation at ATM, SCTDA is working on initiatives to enhance the overall visitor experience in the Emirate of Sharjah. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to ensure that Sharjah remains competitive in an increasingly dynamic international market.



SHARJAH'S KEY MILESTONES

- ❖ Russia leads as the top source market, representing 21% of market share
- ❖ India, and Oman follow with 10%, and 6%, respectively
- ❖ Sharjah's domestic tourism share from the UAE is 11%
- ❖ First eight months of 2024 hotel guest numbers increased by 3.07% to reach 1.057 million, up from 1.025 million during the same period in 2023
- ❖ Sustainable Tourism AI Assistant in over 40 languages to drive sustainability in the sector

‘Air connectivity grows in UAE, KSA’

Mabrian, the international travel intelligence platform, analysed seats availability data on flights scheduled in international, one-way, direct flights linking to nine Middle East destinations—Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, UAE, KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. It provides insights into how air connectivity has evolved over the past five years across the nine Middle East countries.

TT Bureau

Mabrian’s analysis of 2025 international air seat availability reveals key shifts in the Middle East’s aviation landscape, underscoring the need for route development, airline partnerships, and network optimisation to strengthen the region’s position as a global aviation hub.

Mabrian, the global travel intelligence platform, analysed seats availability data on flights scheduled in international, one-way, direct flights connecting to nine Middle East destinations (Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, UAE, KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain), that collectively

Key takeaways of this study indicate that the UAE and Türkiye maintain their positions as top global connectivity hubs; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emerges as a fast-growing competitor; Qatar stabilises after sustained expansion; Egypt and Jordan are set to outpace global growth rates, and Oman, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Kuwait face declining inbound connectivity.

KSA connectivity soars

The UAE (ranking 7th worldwide with 88.9 million seats available on international flights) and Türkiye (on 9th position with 75.6 million seats) are among the top 10 countries with the strong-



per cent year-on-year and Türkiye with 6.3 per cent growth is close to the global average of 6.5 per cent. The full-year increase in inbound seats for 2025 in the UAE with 3.4 per cent and Türkiye with 4.2 per cent is likely to be slightly lower than the global average of 6 per cent.

“The UAE and Türkiye have solidified their positions as global hubs for the Middle East—due to their geographic locations and because of smart route development strategies. These include leveraging stopovers and enhancing holiday itineraries as well as the strength of their flagship airlines,” explained Carlos Cendra, Partner and Director, Marketing and

Communications, Mabrian. “The next step is to take a quantum leap in tourism product development, as many of them are already doing, to capture and retain a greater share of these travellers in their own destinations.”

Mabrian is part of The Data Appeal Company, Almadaw Group and will be involved in a range of activities during the 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market. These include speaking opportunities, executive roundtables, and an extensive meeting agenda with tourism and travel technology leaders attending the 32nd edition of ATM 2025.

Growth trajectories for 2025

Mabrian’s travel intelli-

gence provides valuable insights into how air connectivity has evolved over the past five years across the nine ME countries, based on consolidated international seat availability data from 2019 to 2024. The data highlights opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed in the coming years, including route development, airline partnerships, and the expansion of global connectivity networks.

Oman, which has seen a reduction of 19.6 per cent in global air seats since 2019, has choices to enhance its inbound connectivity strategy. Strengthening its approach to retaining travel demand could be key to reversing this downward trend. A similar strategy could benefit Bahrain, which has recorded a growth of 2.3 per cent in inbound air seats over the same period. At an advanced stage of connectivity development in the region, Qatar has witnessed a growth of 13.6 per cent since 2019 and the UAE, which has risen by 14.5 per cent, are projected to reach 32 million and 88.9 million international seats, respectively, this year. This sustained growth presents oppor-

tunities to increase global visitation and enhance routes to underserved destinations. In addition to being the third-best connected Middle East country, KSA ranks the top 20 worldwide in terms of international air connectivity.

RISE IN CAPACITY

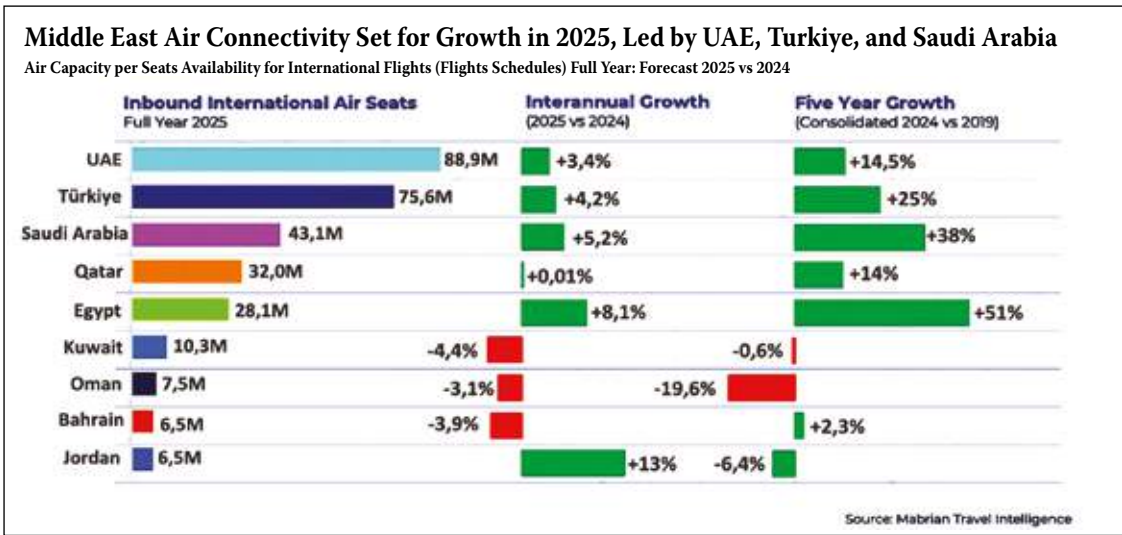
- ❖ UAE with a growth of 14.5% is projected to reach 88.9 million international seats in 2025
- ❖ Qatar records 13.6% growth since 2019 and projected to reach 32 million seats in 2025
- ❖ Jordan: 13% year-round increase in inbound air seats
- ❖ Egypt: To increase air seat capacity by 11.4% over the next six months and by 8.1% throughout 2025
- ❖ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is expected to grow by 8% over the next six months
- ❖ Türkiye: Grew by 6.3 per cent growth in seat capacity
- ❖ Bahrain records growth of 2.3% in inbound air seats
- ❖ Oman: International air seats reduced by 19.6% since 2019

The UAE’s global air seats have grown by 6.1% YoY and Türkiye with 6.3% growth is close to the global average of 6.5%

account for 12 per cent of the total global inbound air seats scheduled for the full year 2025. This study is part of a series of Middle East market insights Mabrian will release in the lead up to ATM 2025, aiming at sparking discussions on significant trends shaping the travel and tourism in the region.

est global air connectivity worldwide in 2025, based on scheduled air seats. This solidifies their status as key connectivity hubs for the region.

When considering the forecast for the next six months compared to the same period in 2024, the global air seats for the UAE has grown by 6.1



'2.65 mn attendees, 58k exhibitors'

DWTC, the region's leading business enabler and international events powerhouse, has welcomed 2.65 million event participants in 2024, marking a 7% increase compared to the previous year. Its last year results were driven by a robust calendar of 378 Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions, business and consumer events reflecting 26% year-on-year growth.

TT Bureau

Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) flagship Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment experienced significant growth, increasing from 107 events in 2023 to 135 MICE events in 2024. These events collectively attracted 2.03 million attendees, reflecting an impressive 30 per cent year-on-year growth. International participation at MICE events soared to 942,000 attendees, representing 46 per cent of the total MICE attendees, reinforcing Dubai's appeal as a top global business destination.

These sector-leading exhibitions and events saw participation of 58,665 exhibiting companies, representing a 9 per cent increase over last year. A significant



His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri
Director-General
Dubai World Trade Centre Authority

cities for business and tourism, globally.

Commenting on the outstanding results, His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director-General, Dubai World Trade Centre Authority, said, "Our 2024 achievements reflect growth—not just in numbers, but in strengthening Dubai's global market position. The remarkable increase in international participation underscores growing confidence in

ward with our ambitious venue expansion strategy to meet increasing global demand."

Impressive performance

In 2024, DWTC organised 20 flagship exhibitions and events, attracting an 590,000 attendees, a 14 per cent year-on-year increase. Of these, 242,000 were international attendees, representing 41 per cent of total participation. The number of exhibiting companies at DWTC's exhibitions increased by 9 per cent to 19,062, with 15,000 international exhibitors, accounting for an impressive 79 per cent of the total number of exhibitors. KAOUN International strengthened DWTC's global footprint by expanding flagship events beyond Dubai, with standout performances of GITEX AFRICA in Morocco and the launch of GITEX DIGI HEALTH 5.0 Asia in Singapore.

Top-performing sectors

The Healthcare, Medical, and Scientific sector remained the top performing industry sectors at DWTC, with 25 events that attracted 465,000 attendees, accounting for 23 per cent of the total MICE participation. This marks a remarkable 69 per cent increase in attendance compared to 2023. Key events included WHX Expo Dubai (formerly Arab Health), AEEDC, DUPHAT, WHX Labs Dubai (formerly Medlab) and Dubai Derma. The Food, Hotel, and Catering sectors se-



cured second position, attracting over 283,000 attendees, a 14 per cent share of the total MICE participation. Led by Gulfood and Gulfood Manufacturing, this sector experienced a substantial 25 per cent increase in participation compared to 2023.

The Information Technology (IT) sector followed closely in third position, attracting more than 281,000 attendees, a 14 per cent share of the total MICE participation. This sector, primarily driven by GITEX Global and its associated events, saw participation increase by 8 per cent year-on-year. The top five sectors are rounded out by the Consumer Goods sector, which attracted 112,000 attendees, driven by events such as The Baby Expo, Middle East Organic and Natural Products Expo, World Vape Show and China Home Life, and the Leisure, Sport and Travel sector, with nearly 110,000 attendees, led

by the Arabian Travel Market, Dubai International Boat Show and Dubai Muscle Show. Additional high-performing exhibitions included The Big 5, Beauty World, WETEX, Automechanika and Intersec.

Events calendar

DWTC made significant strides in its conferences and associations events calendar, hosting 25 conferences, double the number from the previous year, which attracted nearly 90,000 participants, a three-fold increase from 2023. Of these, 17 were new additions, diversifying the event lineup. Key events included AYUSH Conference, Arab Media Forum, Global Freight Summit, and MEIDAM.

Fourteen global association meetings welcomed 104,000 participants. These events included Global Conference, WCA World, World Congress on Intelligent Transport Systems, IFCC WorldLab, and International Con-

gress of Endocrinology. Dubai Exhibition Centre played a vital role in 2024, hosting 24 events and attracting 128,000 participants. As DWTC progresses with its AED 10 bn expansion of DEC, the venue is set to play a vital role in Dubai's MICE ecosystem.

In 2024, DWTC held 20 flagship events, attracting an 590,000 attendees, reflecting 14% year-on-growth

77 per cent of these exhibiting companies were international, reinforcing Dubai's ability to consistently draw international companies and businesses.

The surge in foreign business participation to MICE events in Dubai furthers the aspirations of Dubai Economic Agenda 'D33', to cement Dubai's position as one of the top three

Dubai's dynamic business ecosystem and DWTC's role in fostering meaningful commercial connections.

Our continued success in attracting new-to-market events across diverse sectors reaffirms Dubai's unique appeal as a global hub where innovation meets opportunity. This momentum fuels our confidence as we drive for-

DWTC FORTIFIES POSITION

- ❖ DWTC hosted 378 exhibitions and events in 2024, rose by 26% year-on-year
- ❖ DWTC expanded its events calendar in 2024 with 40 new additions, including 10 exhibitions, 17 conferences, and 13 association conventions
- ❖ Exhibitions and conferences attracted nearly 59,000 exhibiting companies, with 77% being global
- ❖ Global participation at MICE events rose by 30% year-on-year

India's outbound market booming

India's tourism industry is experiencing growth, fuelled by rising disposable incomes, a widening middle class and improved international connectivity. Reflecting the country's growing influence in international travel and hospitality, India's inbound and outbound offerings will be in focus during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) to be held in Dubai.

TT Bureau

India's outbound tourism market is projected to reach US\$ 55 billion by 2034, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 11.4 per cent over the next decade. This growth is driven by increasing demand for global travel, particularly among millennials seeking diverse experiences abroad, according to Future Market Insights. Also, research from STR suggests India has

visitors from South Asia, with India factoring predominantly, significantly contributing to the overall 18.72 million international visitors who made a trip to the city, representing 9 per cent year-on-year increase.

STR's findings reveal hotel supply in India has increased by a CAGR of 3 per cent in the past decade, with 114,000 new keys added since 2014. Developer interest remains high, with occupancy rates rising

Union Ministry of Tourism, airline carriers Air India and Air India Express, and an expanding representation from the regional tourism boards of Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

"India's larger showcase at ATM highlights its rich and diverse travel offerings, from luxury experiences and wellness retreats to cultural destinations and adventure tourism, but serves as a platform for global travel exchange, enabling the global travel industry to tap into this lucrative market," said Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director Middle East, Arabian Travel Market.

India will be under the spotlight during ATM conference programme, which will feature 68 sessions across three content stages—the Global Stage, Future Stage and the new Business Events Stage. On 30 April, a panel of marketing leaders will discuss Multimedia:



Connecting Global Audiences & Unlocking Hyper-Localised Campaigns, diving into the behaviours of markets such as India and China.

The Big Ticket Events: Global Impact and Learnings session will explore two thriving sectors—sports tourism and events tourism—and will address how recent developments such as the KSA securing the rights to host IPL matches, will promote tourism between India and the Middle East.

On the final day of ATM, Euromonitor will offer global market insights into the Asia-Pacific region, unpacking the leading trends influencing the region and providing a comprehensive overview of the trends that are leading the transformation of traveller profiles in APAC.

Shivani Gupta, Managing Partner, SPAG-A FINN Partners Company, will provide insights into India's Next Gen Traveller, examining the key trends and strategies for capitalising on the world's fastest-growing tourism market.

For its 32nd annual event, ATM will focus on the theme, "Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow's Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity", across all show verticals. The theme underscores the importance of interlinking borders, industries, and communities to redefine the tourism landscape and drive sustainable practices that are a must for future of travel. ATM 2025 will welcome

2,600 companies with a expected attendance of 47,000. Organised jointly with the DWTC, the event's partners include Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism, Destination Partner, Emirates, Official Airline Partner, IHG Hotels & Resorts, Official Hotel Partner, and Al Rais Travel, Official DMC Partner.

Last year, India significantly contributed to the overall 18.72 international visitors who made a trip to Dubai

increasingly become one of the most targeted source markets internationally, with many destinations intensifying their efforts to attract Indian travellers.

Last year, Dubai welcomed as many as 3.14 million overnight

in eight of the last 10 years, reflecting sustained demand.

This will be underscored by India's participation at the ATM this year, likely to grow at 41 per cent year-on-year, driven by a presence from exhibitors such as the Indian



INDIA EXPANDS PRESENCE

❖ India's outbound tourism market is projected to reach US\$ 55 billion by the year 2034

❖ Domestically, 114,000 rooms have been added in the past decade as hotel supply has grown at a CAGR of more than 3%

❖ Participation of India at ATM 2025 has increased by 41% year-on-year, with the event showcasing leading Indian airlines and tourist destinations along with the country's significant tourism boards

Rise in luxury & tourism hospitality

Bringing together top-tier hospitality brands, influential industry figures, and innovative travel destinations, the event will showcase the latest trends shaping the high-end travel segment. According to McKinsey and Company research, luxury tourism and hospitality will reach US\$ 391 billion by 2028 with Asia advances in the market segment.

TT Bureau

Demand for luxury tourism and hospitality is likely to grow faster than any other industry. This is mainly due to the rising number of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) globally, and a growing segment of aspiring luxury travellers willing to allocate larger proportions of their income to premium experiences, according to McKinsey and Company.

The research suggests luxury tourism and hospitality will reach US\$ 391 billion by 2028,

To meet demand, GCC nations are on track to add 400,000 hotel rooms by 2030, following 35,000 rooms in last decade

up from US\$ 239 billion in 2023, with Asia gaining significant ground in the Middle East luxury market segment. Data recently issued by Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab countries of the Gulf revealed GCC nations earned US\$ 110.4

billion in global tourism revenues in 2023. The largest share of tourists came from the Asia-Pacific region (38%), followed by the Middle East (25.1%), Europe (22.9%), Africa (8.8%), and Americas (4.3%).

“The increase in inbound tourism from Asia and the growing wealth in this region created a major opportunity for Middle Eastern tourism, especially in the luxury sector. Asia is among the fastest-growing markets, boasting a 27 per cent increase in exhibitors from the Middle East region this year. NTOs from Japan,

focus on luxury travel,” said Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director, Middle East, Arabian Travel Market. The GCC is positioned to cater to high-net-worth travellers seeking leading hotels and exclusive experiences. To meet rising demand, GCC nations are on track to add 400,000 hotel rooms by 2030, following the addition of 35,000 rooms in the last decade.

The travel show will feature top-rated luxury destinations of the world’s, such as the Maldives, Mauritius, and Peru, which will return to the ATM fold after 10 years. Travellers will be able to discover the country’s luxury offerings, including glamping in the Ica Desert and the Sacred Valley, luxury Amazon cruises, and train journeys across the Andes, where beautiful landscapes meet world-class service.

Famous hospitality brands will also be showcased, including Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, Jumeirah International, One & Only, Kempinski Hotels, The



Address Hotels & Resorts and the leading hotels of the world.

Luxury travel is changing in terms of consumer preferences, with travellers prioritising luxury cultural, artistic, and adventure-driven experiences. Sustainability has become a key focus, particularly in the GCC, where hotels are implementing eco-friendly initiatives to align with the growing preference for responsible and high-end travel.

Accessibility is reshaping luxury travel, with emerging destinations benefitting from improved connectivity and development of boutique hotels, eco resorts and exclusive retreats. This trend is reflected in the theme for ATM 2025: Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow’s Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity, which focuses on how better connectivity enables more sustainable, inclusive, and globally integrated travel and tourism industry.

Last year at ATM, Mastercard unveiled its Affluent Travel Report,

GCC travellers are among the world’s highest spenders, with Kuwaiti tourists to Paris spend five times more than Americans

which highlighted the MENA as the leading market for luxury outbound travel, with KSA and the UAE emerging as the top source markets. Research from Mastercard in 2023 suggests GCC travellers are among the world’s highest spenders, with Kuwaiti travellers to Paris spend five times more than American tourists.

“MENA has set the pace for luxury outbound travel, making it a priority market for high-end travel and tourism providers. ATM 2025 will offer in-depth insights into luxury travel preferences, networking opportunities with stakeholders. For anyone looking to capitalise on this market, ATM 2025 is an unmissable event,” said Curtis. ATM is the leading global event for the inbound and outbound travel industry in the Middle East and is set to host 47,000 attend-

ees this year. Uniting a global experts from leisure, luxury, biz events and corporate travel, the event generates US\$ 2.5 billion in deals annually. For 30 years, ATM has linked products and destinations with buyers and travel trade visitors.

RISE OF LUXURY TRAVEL

- Recent figures suggest the luxury tourism industry will reach US\$ 391 billion by 2028
- The APAC region is a leading source market for GCC tourism, with ATM showcasing 27% increase in exhibitors from Asia this year
- The trade show will feature top luxury hospitality brands, including Mandarin Oriental, One&Only and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts



27% increase in season bookings

Celestyal launched four new 14-night repositioning cruises, as part of its winter season in Arabian Gulf. The sailings feature two new countries for the brand, Jordan and KSA, and four maiden calls: Aqaba in Jordan, Jeddah in the Kingdom, Muscat in Oman and Sharm El Shiekh in Egypt. The itineraries mark the cruise line’s return to Egypt after a two-year break.

TT Bureau

A new 14-night ‘Ancient Athens to Amazing Abu Dhabi’ itinerary will be available across the two-ship

bi on 6 December in time for the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix weekend. She then departs on her ‘Desert Days and Abu Dhabi Grand Prix’ sailing on 7 December, taking in

She will depart Athens on 22 Nov, calling at Port Said and other ports and arrive back in Abu Dhabi in time for F1 Abu Dhabi Prix Grand Prix

fleet. Celestyal Journey will depart Athens on 22 November 2025, calling at Port Said, with maiden calls to Sharm El Shiekh, Aqaba, Jeddah and Muscat, followed by Dubai, arriving back in Abu Dha-

the race weekend before embarking on the first ‘Desert Days’ itinerary of the season. Celestyal Discovery will depart Athens on 28 November, charting the



same course with an additional call at Kusadasi in Turkey, arriving for her maiden call into Abu Dhabi on 13 December, ahead of its inaugural winter season sailing the new-to-2025 seven-night ‘Iconic Arabia’ itineraries

and homeporting in the Arabian Gulf for the next three years. The two returning 14-night ‘Amazing Abu Dhabi to Ancient Athens’ cruises will also feature both ships. Celestyal Dis-

covery will cruise from Abu Dhabi on March 6, 2026, chart the same return course and arrive back into Athens for the summer Greece and Mediterranean season. Celestyal Journey will depart Abu Dhabi on 21 March next year. All four cruises will feature several bookable segments ranging between four and 13-nights. The announcement comes following Celestyal Journey’s return into Athens recently, following a maiden season in the Arabian Gulf. Bookings were 27 per cent above target for the first season, which saw the ship

homeport in Doha, Qatar, as part of a three-year ties with the state.

WINTER SUN SEASON

❖ Four new 14-night cruises for 2025/26 Gulf season

❖ Maiden calls to four new ports and two countries

❖ The line will return to Egypt for the first time in two years

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Platform to change hotel distribution

Avvio Founder announced establishment of The roomangel Foundation, an initiative hailed as biggest change in history of hospitality industry. Based in London, roomangel is a newly established non-profit organisation on a mission to transform hotel distribution. Structured as a Company Limited by Guarantee, the foundation invites hospitality stakeholders to join.

TT Bureau

This groundbreaking initiative unites booking engine providers and lodging establishments for the first time, creating a fairer market by restoring distribution power to

compare accommodation options, which has historically given Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) a competitive edge.

While the hotels prefer direct bookings, they have struggled to compete with OTAs' convenience,

The foundation also provides a reliable verification system, including an independent value-for-money calculation

the industry and booking power to travellers.

The travellers rely on centralised search to

marketing budgets, and loyalty programmes. The roomangel Foundation seeks to address this longstanding challenge



Brian Reeves
Founding Member
roomangel Foundation

by providing a platform that offers centralised hotel search designed for the customer, while delivering reservations via the hotel's direct channel, eliminating the need for third-party agents.

"This is the first global initiative in our industry's history to present a viable solution to a decade-old problem," said Brian Reeves, Founding Member, roomangel Foundation. "It aggregates inventory intelligently in one place, removes the influence of commissions and persuasion, and instead ranks results by best value for travellers' convenience. The foundation also provides a reliable verification system, including an independent value-for-money calculation, reinforcing trust in direct hotel bookings."

To achieve this, the foundation is launching a new



hotel search and booking platform that will be directly connected to its hotel partners' booking engines. This pioneering partnership with industry-leading direct distribution providers was introduced during the inaugural Booking Engine Summit held in Dubai in October 2024. At the

event, a select group of industry leaders hailed the initiative as "the biggest change in the history of our industry".

The roomangel Foundation is inviting hospitality stakeholders to join this movement and reshape the future of the hotel booking.



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- Our expertise in the GCC market, combined with our deep-rooted connections in Bulgaria, guarantees an exceptional travel experience tailored to your preferences.

Discover the magic of Bulgaria with Concierge One Tourism. Contact us today to curate your dream getaway."



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www.concierge1dubai.ae

New ties power tourism growth

Middle East clientele craves for new experiences and exciting getaways with their vacations every year. Middle East tourism boards, in partnership with local biz, cultural institutions, and global travel partners, are leading charge in promoting this new wave of tourism. These collaborations aim to preserve cultural heritage, while creating sustainable economic opportunities for local communities.



Mohamed Al Rais
Managing Director
Al Rais Travel

“ We have developed targeted marketing campaigns through established travel agents specialising in Middle Eastern markets. Initiatives include culturally tailored training for agents, exclusive promotions, and collaborative FAM trips that showcase the destination’s attractions and luxurious hospitality offerings, ensuring representation. ”



Dinkar Dasaur
General Manager, UAE
Satguru Travel

“ To attract Middle East travellers, we collaborate with travel agents through exclusive packages, halal friendly experiences, Arabic-speaking guides, and tailored marketing campaigns. We introduce experiences such as luxury desert safaris, cultural heritage tours, and exclusive shopping getaways by partnering with agents. ”



Jyoti Panchmatia
General Manager
Gulf Region, Travco LLC

“ We work closely with travel agents and tour operators to create customised travel packages that cater to the preferences of luxury-seeking travellers. We host FAM trips for agents and participate in regional trade events to showcase our destination’s appeal. We stay relevant by adapting to the preferences of Middle Eastern travellers. ”



Yamina Sofo
Director, Marketing & Sales Office
GNTO GCC

“ German National Tourist Office (GNTO) engages with travel agents through trade fairs such as ATM and its own initiatives, such as Discover Europe Travel Summit and annual roadshows. GNTO conducts special training sessions, co-marketing campaigns, and FAM trips to equip agents with the tools to promote Germany to GCC travellers. ”



Divya Nanda
Travel Counsellor
Travel Counsellors

“ Many destinations collaborate with travel agents through FAM trips, roadshows, and incentive programmes to promote experiences tailored to the travellers. Destinations attract Middle East tourists by offering immersive experiences such as private luxury tours, adventure activities, and authentic culinary experiences, catering to their preferences. ”



Dominique Maulin Diabira
RD, UAE, ME, Turquia, Israel and
South Africa, Atout France

“ Atout France is promoting its destinations to Middle Eastern travellers through digital marketing, B2B strategies, and partnerships with travel agencies. To attract ME tourists, France is offering tailored experiences, promoting winter destinations, such as Courchevel, and highlighting Nantes, Bordeaux, and Marseille regions and Lyons. ”



Livio Goetz
Director GCC
Switzerland Tourism

“ Switzerland Tourism hosts engaging roadshows and events in Switzerland and the GCC region, providing travel agents with in-depth training and insights to enhance their knowledge and promote Switzerland as a top travel destination. We remain active through marketing efforts, social media, B2C marketing etc. ”



Ayman Al Qudwa
General Manager
Falcon Travel

“ In 2025, Qatari travellers are embracing outbound experiential tourism and seeking culturally-rich adventures. With rising disposable incomes and an appetite for unique experiences, destinations offering adventure sports, eco-tourism, and cultural exchanges are in demand. Popular are Japan, South Korea, Russia and Europe. ”



Aga Pytlík Elkhatab
Founder, Aga Khatib
Marketing Services

“ As a travel agency, we promote the destination by partnering with tourism boards and local suppliers to create packages for ME travellers. We run campaigns, and provide tailored experiences through local agents. We stay relevant by updating our offerings, partnering with influencers, and training our team. ”



Elmira Heshmati
Founder and CEO, Elaxiom Travel
and Tourism Agency

“ To promote the destination among Middle East travellers, ties with regional tour operators in each destination and organising FAM trips for agents or top clients and conducting marketing campaigns would play role in familiarisation with cultural experiences and highlighting attractions of the target destinations. ”



Sanaf Rahman
Travel Consultant
Aldar Travel and Tours, Bahrain

“ We collaborate with regional travel agents through FAM trips, Arabic-language brochures, cultural training, and JMPs. Participation in ME travel fairs and offering commission-based parks fortify destination visibility. We curate halal-friendly packages, desert adventures and als Arabic-speaking guides. ”



Sapna Aidasani
Director, PR and Marketing
Pluto Travel

“ Dubai’s initiatives such as visa on arrival, seamless flight connectivity, halal-friendly services, and introduction of the 10-year influencer visa make it a standout destination. We have a product called ‘7 gems of Emirates’, serving as a key tour for ME tourists. It has positioned itself as a hub for business and leisure. ”

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Special celebration was held during Holy Month of Ramadan to honour achievements of women leaders in travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. Held by Aga Khatib Marketing Services in collaboration with Spain Tourism, with Pullman Downtown as the host and **FAMILYALBUM** as the media partner, the vibrant platform brought together a diverse group of inspiring women.





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Discover charming Green Spain

The northern regions of Spain offer an entirely unique and different adventure for travellers who prefer breathtaking landscapes, charming coastal villages, and an outstanding culinary scene. Stretching across Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, and the Basque Country, it boasts UNESCO World Heritage sites, protected natural areas and vibrant cities. It entails rugged mountains, lush forests, or exquisite seafood, Green Spain promises an unforgettable journey.

TT Bureau

Green Spain is a world apart from the sun-drenched landscapes of southern Spain. This verdant northern region, stretching from Galicia to the Basque Country, is defined by its deep forests, rolling green hills, dramatic cliffs, and stun-

ning beaches. With more than 2,500 kilometres of coastline and numerous national parks, the region is a paradise for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike.

Highlights

Green Spain is a treasure trove of cultural and historical landmarks. Among its most renowned sites

With 2,500 km of coastline and numerous national parks, the region is a paradise for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike

is the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture and the destination of the famous

Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. The region boasts remarkable examples of contemporary architecture, such as the

Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Kursaal in San Sebastián, and the Centro Niemeyer in Avilés. These avant-garde structures blend seamlessly with the region's historic magnetism.

For history enthusiasts, the region is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In Galicia, must-visit sites include the historic centre of Santiago de Composte-

into prehistoric times with the famous Altamira Cave, featuring some of the best-preserved Paleolithic cave paintings in the world. The Basque Country is home to the Vizcaya Suspension Bridge and prehistoric cave paintings in Altxerri, Ekain, and Santimamiñe.

Charming cities

Each city in Green Spain has its own unique identity. Bilbao, with its blend

Bilbao, with its blend of industrial heritage and modern design, is the most cosmopolitan, while Avilés has undergone a cultural revival

la, the ancient Walls of Lugo, and the Tower of Hercules, the world's oldest functioning lighthouse.

Asturias is famous for its pre-Romanesque churches, such as Santa María del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo. Cantabria offers a glimpse

of industrial heritage and modern design, is the most cosmopolitan. Santander and San Sebastián are known for their elegant promenades and stunning coastal views. Avilés has undergone a cultural revival, while Santiago de Compostela remains a legendary pilgrimage site.





hiking, surfing, or even cave exploring in the region's spectacular underground formations.

Travelling to Green Spain is easy, thanks to a good transportation network. Bilbao Airport and Santiago-Rosalía de Castro Airport are the main international gateways, while smaller airports in Vitoria, San Sebastián, Santander, Vigo, A Coruña, and Asturias provide additional access.

Experience the magic
Whether you are a nature enthusiast, a history buff, or a food lover, Green Spain has something special to offer. From its lush landscapes and medieval cities to its world-class cuisine and stunning coastline, this region is a hidden gem waiting to be explored. Plan your trip and uncover the beauty, culture, and flavours of Spain's northern paradise.

The charm of Green Spain extends beyond its cities to its picturesque fishing villages. In Asturias, towns such as Llanes, Luanco, and Cudillero offer a glimpse into traditional maritime life. Their colourful houses, scenic harbours, and fresh seafood make them an essential stop on any journey through the region.

Culinary paradise
Food is at the heart of Green Spain's identity. The region's cuisine is shaped by the abundant seafood from the Cantabrian Sea and the rich produce from its fertile valleys. Each region boasts its own specialties:

Galicia is famous for its fresh seafood, including octopus (pulpo a la gallega) and barnacles.

The Basque Country is known for its innovative gastronomy, including pintxos (a small tapas-style dishes) and

The cuisine of Green Spain is shaped by the abundant seafood from Cantabrian Sea and the produce from its fertile valleys

bacalao al pil-pil (a cod in garlic sauce).
Asturias offers hearty dishes such as fabada (bean stew) and Cabrales cheese.

Cantabria is renowned for rabas (fried squid) and cocido lebaniego (a rich stew).

For a truly exceptional dining experience, Green Spain is home to some of the most Michelin-starred restaurants in Spain, making it a dream destination for food lovers.

Unique landscapes
The region's diverse landscapes provide endless opportunities for outdoor activities. With two national parks, 15 biosphere reserves, and 200 protected natural

areas, nature lovers can explore everything from soaring mountain peaks to wild coastal cliffs.

The Picos de Europa National Park is a must-visit, offering dramatic limestone peaks, deep valleys, and unique wildlife, including brown bears.

Birdwatchers would enjoy spotting migratory species along the coastal wetlands, while adventure seekers can go



Transport options

Luxury sleeper trains such as the Transcantábrico and Costa Verde Express offer a scenic and comfortable way to explore the Green Spain. Car rentals allow for flexibility, making it easy to visit small villages and off-the-beaten-track places. Renfe's Spain Pass offers rail travel between cities and towns.

KEY FACTS

- 2,500 km coastline
- 2 national parks
- 15 biosphere reserves
- 200 protected natural areas

Redefining customer relations with AI

AI is transforming CRM in travel and hospitality by enabling personalised experiences, predictive service, and real-time engagement. From chatbots handling inquiries to AI-driven insights predicting guest preferences, businesses can deliver tailored interactions at scale, say Future Hospitality Summit speakers, while speaking to **TRAVEL**.



Alaa Alfarran
Director, Marketing Communication,
Al Khozama Investment Company

“AI is quietly reshaping the way brands respond to customer behaviour. As marketers, the challenge is no longer collecting info, it is designing frameworks that turn signals into relationships.”



Carlos Díez de la Lastra
CEO
Les Roches

“At Les Roches, we prepare future leaders to harness AI for next-level CRM enabling seamless operations. We don't teach innovation, we embed it into students' mindset to meet expectations.”



Benoît-Etienne Domenget
CEO
Sommet Education

“The skill gaps in hospitality we see are in technology and customer experience. These two areas are intrinsically connected. AI has the power to revolutionise CRM by bridging that gap.”



Ron Pohl
President, WorldHotels & International Operations, BWH Hotels

“AI is revolutionising CRM in hospitality by allowing to create personalised and seamless experiences for our guests. With AI, we are not just enhancing hospitality; we are redefining it for the future.”



Mouna Ouni
Director, Sales and Marketing,
Swissotel Al Murooj

“AI enhances customer feedback and service recovery by analysing reviews in real-time. While chatbots handle quick enquiries, guests still prefer human staff for requests or complaints.”



Jan Hanak
MD, UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar
and Egypt, Radisson Hotel Group

“Guest experiences are boosted by providing hyper-personalised interactions like RHG's AI-generated avatars and virtual hotel replicas, and boost guest satisfaction and fortify brand loyalty.”

Group Vintage signs with Marriott

The Group Vintage announced it has signed a pact with Marriott International Inc. to open a dual-branded Marriott Hotel and Marriott Executive Apartments in Dubai Production City, a fast-growing business hub in the city. The hotel will be a conversion of an existing property operating as The Vintage Grand Hotel.

TT Bureau

The property will be located just 30 minutes away from Al Maktoum Airport and Dubai International Airport, with connections to every part of the city. “We are delighted to part-

in UAE—will bring, new F&B experiences to this location which is rapidly emerging as the heart of the New Dubai corridor, catering to both our guests and the surrounding vibrant communities,” said Kunal Bansal, Owner, The Group Vintage.

Projected to open next year, the hotel will feature several dining outlets, the brand's signature M Club lounge, pool & fitness centre

ner with Marriott International as we continue to expand in hospitality. Our dual-branded Marriott Hotel and Marriott Executive Apartments—set to be the largest Marriott Executive Apartments

“We look forward to working with The Group Vintage to grow our footprint in the city where we continue to see opportunities to further diversify our portfolio. The conversions of the said proper-



ties are also a testament to the trust owners have in Marriott International and the reputation of our world-class brands,” commented Saahil Lalit, Vice President, Development, Middle East, Marriott International. The opening of Marriott Hotel

Production City, Dubai is likely to mark the fifth hotel under the Marriott Hotel's brand in Dubai.

The hotel will exemplify the brand's continued evolution and feature contemporary and intuitive spaces. Projected

to open in 2026, the 345-room hotel will feature several dining outlets, the brand's signature M Club lounge, a pool, fitness centre and tennis courts.

Marriott Executive Apartments continues to cater

to the rapidly growing demand for extended stay accommodations in the UAE. Marriott Executive Apartments Production City, Dubai is anticipated to offer 420 apartments that provide home comforts for both business and leisure travellers. **D**

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MOVEMENTS

RWANDAIR UAE

MUHAMUD WAYIGA has been appointed as the Country Manager for UAE E for RwandAir. He will be overseeing commercial performance, market expansion, and stakeholder engagement across passenger and cargo ops. His experience spans over a decade in the airline industry, having held leadership roles in Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria, where he focused on route development, revenue growth, and strategic partnerships. These markets have shaped his understanding.



ROYAL M HOTEL BY GEWAN Abu Dhabi

ELIAS SAAD was promoted as the General Manager of Royal M Hotel Abu Dhabi by Gewan Hotels & Resorts. In his new role, he will spearhead the hotel's growth and operational excellence, enhancing its reputation as a luxury destination. With 25 years of experience, Saad has built a distinguished career, having held leadership positions at Le Royal Méridien, Emirates Palace, Fairmont Bab Al Bahr, and Bab Al Qasr Hotel. His expertise has earned him industry accolades.



SOFITEL DUBAI DOWNTOWN Dubai

AMELIA MEJIA-TAGON has been promoted as the Director, Sales, Corporate & MICE, at Sofitel Dubai Downtown, reinforcing its commitment to advancing gender diversity and fostering the next wave of leadership. The promotion came as part of the hotel's dedication to developing female talent, with a focus on breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for women in high-level roles. These promotions also align with Accor's Riise programme



KHALIDIA PALACE HOTEL Dubai

HADI ABBAS has been appointed as the Director, Sales & Marketing by Khalidia Palace Hotel Dubai. He is an accomplished and results-driven professional with experience in leading high-performance sales and marketing teams in the hospitality industry. Having been appointed as the Director, Sales and Marketing, at The Canvas-M Gallery Hotel by Accor, Abbas has demonstrated his ability to drive profitability and business growth through leadership and a focus on quality and performance.



CHEDI HOSPITALITY Sharjah

STEPHAN SCHUPBACH has been appointed as the CEO by Chedi Hospitality. He will take over the helm at Chedi Hospitality, is recognised for his ability to drive strategic growth and pioneer brand direction. He has played a pivotal role in shaping high-profile hospitality ventures worldwide. His vision for Chedi Hospitality is to build on its legacy of excellence, while expanding into new market segments, ensuring the company remains at the forefront of the evolving luxury landscape.



SOFITEL DUBAI DOWNTOWN Dubai

YASMINA LALOUN has been promoted as the Director, Marketing, at Sofitel Dubai Downtown. With a decade of experience across four countries and three continents, she has carved a reputation as an innovator in luxury branding, digital transformation, and immersive storytelling. Laloun's leadership has redefined the hotel's brand presence and set standards in guest engagement and market influence. She is a force in the industry.



KHALIDIA PALACE HOTEL Dubai

MASHOOD AHMAD has joined as Reservation/Revenue Manager at Khalidia Palace Hotel Dubai. He specialises in maximising hotel revenue through effective forecasting, pricing strategies, and distribution channel management. Starting as a Reservation Executive at Fortune Park ITC Hotels, Ahmad has progressively taken on more responsibilities, including managing room inventory, overseeing revenue systems, and conducting detailed analysis of market patterns to support business growth.



FRASER SUITES RIYADH Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

HAZEM EL BAHNASY joined as been appointed as the new GM, Fraser Suites Riyadh, stated Frasers Hospitality. With a background in leadership and project management, he brings a wealth of experience to his new role, fortifying the brand's commitment to excellence in hospitality in the Middle East and around the globe. Prior to joining Frasers, El Bahnasy served as the Executive Asst Manager at InterContinental Durrat al Riyadh Resort & Spa, where he played a pivotal role in driving operational efficiency.



INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL AND RESIDENCES Abu Dhabi

KHATTAB MOHAMED has been appointed as the Cluster Director, Sales by InterContinental Abu Dhabi and InterContinental Residences Abu Dhabi. He will leverage his experience in sales and business development to craft strategies driving revenue and enhance partnerships. He is a leader with a proven track record in driving revenue growth and expanding market share, and forging strategic partnerships.



HILTON DUBAI JUMEIRAH AND HILTON DUBAI THE WALK Dubai

SHAMALA KRISHNAN joined as the Director, HR with 25 years of experience in workplace cultures and HR initiatives. She served as the Director, Pre-Openings HR, Hilton APAC, overseeing HR strategies during pre-opening phases for many properties. She was earlier the Regional Director, HR for Hilton Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka, she was instrumental in upholding diversity, equity and inclusion programmes.



HILTON DUBAI JUMEIRAH AND HILTON DUBAI THE WALK Dubai

BISHOUI KHAMIS has been appointed as the Cluster Commercial Director by Hilton Dubai Jumeirah and Hilton Dubai The Walk Cluster. With 15 years of expertise, he will oversee sales, marketing, groups & events, reservations and revenue management for the two beachfront properties. Previously, he led the commercial division for DoubleTree by Hilton Kuala Lumpur and Hilton Garden Inn Kuala Lumpur North & South Towers.



INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL AND RESIDENCES Abu Dhabi

SHAMIL SAMSUDEEN has joined as the Cluster Director, Revenue, by InterContinental Hotel and Residences Abu Dhabi. Samsudeen's data-driven approach and deep market insights will be enough in strengthening the cluster's competitive edge and driving sustained profitability. In his new role, he will lead data-driven revenue plans, leverage analytics and functional collaboration to maximise market share.





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