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GCC travellers flock East this summer, Asia reigns

Asia has firmly claimed the crown as the most sought-after destination for GCC travellers this summer. From the vibrant street life of Bangkok to the serene landscapes of Kyoto, Southeast Asia is capturing the imagination of globetrotters like never before.

Dr Shehara Fernando

A mix of affordability, accessibility, rich cultural experiences and favourable weather patterns have made countries like Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and even Australia prime picks for vacationers across the Gulf. These destinations offer a compelling contrast to the summer heat in the

Middle East, providing not just cooler climates, but immersive adventures filled with exotic cuisine and dynamic city experiences. This year, an extended series of public holidays scattered across the summer months has created perfect windows for travel, driving a notable increase in outbound bookings from cities like Dubai, Riyadh, Doha and Manama.



Jaal Shah
Group Managing Director
Travel Designer Group

prioritising culturally rich, accessible destinations that offer both leisure and luxury.”

“From the UAE market, we are seeing outbound travel rebounding strongly this summer, with high demand for Asian destinations like Thailand, Malaysia, Japan and Singapore — and a growing interest in Europe, especially countries like Italy, Switzerland and France. UAE travellers are



Ahmed Soliman
Managing Director
Travel Connections Arabia

“This summer, we are noticing an exciting shift in outbound travel preferences. While staycations remain popular for their convenience, there is also a strong resurgence in interest for Asian destinations, especially Japan, Thailand and Vietnam. Travellers are craving immer-

sive cultural experiences and culinary adventures, and Asia delivers both with value and variety.”



Elmira Heshmati
Chief Executive Officer
Elaxiom Travel and Tours

Australia, alongside Europe and the US.”

“Travellers are splitting summer plans between staycations and outbound trips. Demand for wellness retreats within the UAE and across GCC drives the domestic market. However, outbound travel remains robust. Over 80 per cent of GCC residents plan global holidays, favouring Southeast Asia and

Contd. on page 9 ►

Seychelles calls on UAE trade

Tourism Seychelles together with showcased its strategy and growth plans to key stakeholders from the UAE's travel trade at an exclusive Power Breakfast.

TT Bureau

Tourism Seychelles Middle East, along with , recently hosted an exclusive Power Breakfast at Pullman Hotel Deira Dubai, bringing together key figures from the UAE's travel trade to discuss destination updates, market strategies and growth opportunities. This high level, invitation-only event gathered 24 senior travel industry professionals, including CEOs, product and holiday managers and top decision makers from leading travel companies actively promoting Seychelles in the region.

The session was led by **Ahmed Fathallah**, Tourism Seychelles' Middle East Representative, who presented the latest visitor arrival trends, shared forward-looking strate-

gies and outlined new developments designed to enhance the visitor experience and sustain growth from the UAE and broader GCC region.



Ahmed Fathallah
Regional Manager
Tourism Seychelles

The majority of attendees have previously visited the islands themselves, lending the discussions a deeper level of insight and showcasing a strong foundation of existing familiarity and enthusiasm for the destination.

Contd. on page 16 ►

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A consortium, comprising Air Arabia, Nesma Group and KUN Holding, announced it has won the General Authority of Civil Aviation's (GACA) competition to establish and operate a new national low-cost airline, which will be based at King Fahd International Airport in Dammam. The airline aims to enhance domestic and global connectivity for the Eastern Province.



The consortium's win marks the culmination of a shared vision and strategic partnership among the three parties focused on delivering an efficient operating model that supports the objectives of the Aviation Programme goals, improves service quality for travellers and contributes to driving national economic growth.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer, Air Arabia, said, "We are proud to have been selected by the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) to launch a



The GACA has selected a consortium of Air Arabia, Nesma Group and KUN Holding to launch a new national low-cost airline in Dammam

new national low-cost airline headquartered in Dammam. We extend our sincere gratitude to the authority for its trust in us. As a leading low-cost airline operator in the region, this achievement represents a key milestone that reaffirms our commitment to

supporting the growth and development of the Kingdom's aviation sector. Through our proven economic model and regional expertise, this new partnership will deliver a reliable and value-driven travel experience for passengers and will contribute to economic

growth and job creation in the Eastern Province and beyond.”

Faisal Bin Saleh Al-Turki, President, Nesma Group, and **Mohamed Bin Nabil Hefni**, CEO, KUN Holding, stated, "At Nesma and KUN, we are proud to be part of this

ambitious national initiative, which is the result of a strategic partnership with Air Arabia Group. This initiative aligns with the impressive developments in the Kingdom's tourism and aviation sectors. Launching a new low-cost carrier from Dammam is not merely an air transport project, but a direct contribution to strengthening the tourism infrastructure and stimulating the local economy of the Eastern Province. This includes creating high-quality jobs, empowering national talent and supporting aviation-related commercial activities. We believe this project

reflects the private sector's role in supporting Saudi Vision 2030."

PROJECT DETAILS

✦ The new national low-cost carrier plans to serve 24 domestic and 57 international destinations

- ❖ To deploy 45 aircraft by 2030

❖ To serve 10 million passengers annually





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'Luxury remains top pull for UAE'

The Middle East's tourism sector is undergoing an exciting transformation driven by visionary strategies, significant investments and shifting traveller preferences. **Mohamed Awadalla**, Chief Executive Officer, TIME Hotels, explains how the region's hospitality sector is embracing these global tourism shifts and why hotel operators adapt to evolving tourism trends.

According to new research by Tourism Economics, compiled on behalf of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), tourism spending in the Middle East region is projected to rise more than 7 per cent annually, reaching nearly \$350 billion by 2030. This impressive growth, which is over 40 per cent higher than global averages, underscores the Middle East's remarkable resilience and adaptability.

Particularly exciting is the expected 13 per cent annual growth in international inbound travel, highlighting vast opportunities in business travel,



el, luxury experiences, sustainable tourism and event-driven trips.

We have noticed a significant upswing in business travel, particularly the rise of the 'bleisure' trend. The flexibility of remote work and digital nomad lifestyles has

fuelled this growth, with spending on business travel in the Middle East anticipated to outpace the global average by around 1.5 times.

To address this, TIME Hotels & Resorts offers sophisticated spaces that seamlessly blend

state-of-the-art meeting facilities with luxurious leisure amenities, ideal for both professional and personal stays.

The luxury travel sector remains exceptionally strong, driven by the region's growing appeal to

Responding to this demand, our new luxury brand, Rotella, focuses on exclusivity, elegance and personalised experiences.

Sustainability is now a crucial factor influencing travel decisions. The sustainable tourism mar-

eco-friendly practices. At TIME Hotels, sustainability is a core principle.

Our forthcoming projects in Tanzania and Morocco, known for their eco-tourism potential, embody this philosophy.

We (at TIME Hotels) have noticed a significant upswing in business travel, particularly the rise of the 'bleisure' trend

high-net-worth individuals (HNIs). Visitors from Europe and the Asia-Pacific regions are projected to boost inbound travel.

ket is projected to grow by over 11 per cent annually through 2029, reflecting travellers' increasing commitment to



Mohamed Awadalla
CEO
TIME Hotels
(The views expressed are solely of the author.)

Tourism powers 8.5% of Egypt's economy

Developed in collaboration with Oxford Economics, WTTC's latest Economic Impact Research (EIR) report states that the Travel & Tourism sector contributed EGP1.4tn to Egypt's GDP in 2024, accounting for 8.5 per cent of the national economy. This was the highest-ever contribution from the sector to the national economy, with 2025 expected to be better than last year.

TT Bureau

The Economic Impact Research (EIR) report forecasts an annual growth of 4.9 per cent for Egypt's GDP in 2025, including a new all-time high of 8.6 per cent contribution from the Travel & Tourism sector. This underlines the central role of Travel & Tourism in Egypt's economic development.

Visitor spending over 2019 records

2024 also marked the strongest year on record for visitor spending. International visitor expenditure reached EGP726.9 billion, up 36.1 per cent compared to 2019, while domestic visitor spend-



Julia Simpson
President & CEO
WTTC

ing rose to EGP449.9 billion, 31.8 per cent above pre-pandemic levels. This upward trend is set to continue. In 2025, international visitor spending is projected to increase to EGP768.2 billion, and domestic spending is expected to reach EGP460.6 billion, maintaining the



country's strong recovery and sustained demand across both international and local travel.

Employment growth also exceeds

In addition to record-breaking economic contribution and visitor

spending in 2024, the sector supported 2.7 million jobs, exceeding the 2019 peak. This growth is set to continue, with 2025 employment forecast to rise to 2.9 million, marking a 22.3 per cent increase compared to 2019. **Julia Simpson**,

President & CEO, WTTC, said: "Egypt's Travel & Tourism sector is experiencing a powerful resurgence, with record-breaking economic contribution and a sustained surge in visitor spending. These numbers reflect a sector on the rise."

GROWTH OF TOURISM

- ❖ 2025 projected to grow by 4.9%
- ❖ Employment projected to reach 3.8 million jobs
- ❖ 10.5% of total employment
- ❖ International visitor spending to rise to EGP1.1 trillion
- ❖ Domestic spending forecast to reach EGP627 billion

DTTAG, WingsWay tie up to upskill

Dubai Travel & Tour Agents Group (DTTAG) has partnered with WingsWay Training Institute to introduce a series of monthly Skill Enhancement Programmes. The programmes, tailored exclusively for DTTAG members and free for them, aims to enable travel professionals with skills and insights that will keep them at the forefront of the competitive travel and tourism industry.

TT Bureau

The inaugural session, 'Top 5 Keys to Delight Your Customers', is being followed by a programme on 'Strategic Negotiation Skills'. Both have received an enthusiastic response from attendees. The interactive workshops provide actionable strategies to the participants to elevate customer service and foster client loyalty.

Mohamed Jassim Al Rais, Honorary Chairman, DTTAG, said, "DTAAG has signed a three-year, renewable MoU with WingsWay Training Institute that



Mohamed Jassim Al Rais
Honorary Chairman
DTTAG

makes professional training entirely free for staff of DTTAG member travel agencies across Dubai. WingsWay supplies the trainers, venues and KHDA-recognised certificates, while DTTAG promotes the ses-

sions and opens them to its members."

Citing the reasons behind the partnership, he added, "We launched it now because travel is roaring back, yet technology and customer expectations are moving even faster. So, agencies need agile, digitally savvy teams who can upsell, solve problems and delight travellers. Front-line agents, team leaders and fresh graduates all benefit — and ultimately so do Dubai's visitors."

The programme delivers 12 bite-size masterclasses a year. "It will help to deliver exceptional



Travel professionals undergoing training under the Skill Enhancement Programme

experiences to your clients with programmes covering leadership and customer-experience excellence, each lasting just 2–3 hours, so they fit neatly into a working day. Any employee of a DTTAG-member agency can attend by registering through our monthly circular. Graduates leave

with practical skills they can use the very next morning and priority access to up to 500 paid internships at member firms," he added.

Asim Arshad, President, DTTAG, said, "DTTAG continues SSits effort to bring value for its members and hence have

collaborated with the award-winning team of WingsWay Training Institute." **Shakir Kantawala**, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, WingsWay Training Institute, said, "This collaboration with DTTAG is a significant step towards our shared vision of continuous professional development."

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Art & culture beat attractions in GCC

Art and culture emerges as the top segment attracting visitors to Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, indicating a shift in visitor expectations across the GCC, according to the latest research carried out by PwC Middle East and Mabrian Technologies. The three countries enjoyed equal status in terms of surpassing more conventional attractions, such as retail and coastal leisure.

TT Bureau

Visitor preferences across the Gulf region are undergoing a fundamental shift as visitors are increasingly drawn to destinations that offer cultural meaning and emotional resonance. In response to these findings, PwC Middle East developed a strategic framework detailed in their latest report — Stay Play Shop: Shaping Integrated Destinations for Connected Visitor Experiences. The report presents a clear approach for destination development companies, tourism authorities, destination managers and operators across the Gulf Cooperation Council



Nicolas Mayer
Destinations Consulting
Lead Partner, PwC Middle East

to accelerate the evolution of destination strategies. It advocates a shift away from static, asset-led development towards dynamic, visitor-centric ecosystems that drive longer stays, deeper engagement and increased economic impact.



Sonia Huerta
Vice President – Advisory
Mabrian Technologies

Nicolas Mayer, Destinations Consulting Lead Partner, PwC Middle East, said, “This thought leadership aims to reframe how we think about destination value by integrating visitor behaviour with the realities of destination planning and

placemaking. Stay Play Shop is more than a slogan. It is a robust framework backed by visitor insights and evolving needs offering development companies a strategic framework to drive visitation spending and loyalty.”

Building on this idea of re-defining destination value, **Philippe Najjar**, Destinations Consulting Partner, PwC Middle East, added, “By embracing the Stay Play Shop model, leaders can shape not just where people go but how deeply they connect with and experience places. This goes beyond destination development to crafting generational legacies that

fuel cultural pride, visitor loyalty and sustained economic returns.”

Sonia Huerta, Vice President – Advisory, Mabrian Technologies, highlighted, “Public-private partnerships among destination management offices, hoteliers, destination management companies, retailers and operators will be a key enabler of the Stay Play Shop model. Equally important is the ability to gauge sentiment and satisfaction across this journey to measure success. This region stands to gain exponentially from enhancements in these metrics making the value delivered even more impactful.”

TOP RANKINGS IN GCC

❖ Arts and culture now rank as the top visitor motivators across Qatar (28.5%), the United Arab Emirates (26.6%) and Saudi Arabia (24.5%)

❖ In Qatar, hotel apartments lead occupancy at 74.6%, reflecting growing demand for flexible extended-stay options

OMRAN's 16 hotels go 'green'

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) has secured international verification for its 16 hotels and resorts under the WTTC's Hotel Sustainability Basics programme.

TT Bureau

This milestone reflects OMRAN Group's steadfast commitment to sustainability, aligning with internationally recognised best practices in the hospitality sector. On the environmental front, the verified hotels have implemented effective measures to optimise energy and water consumption, reduce carbon emissions and minimise plastic waste. **Hashil Obaid Al Mahrouqi**, CEO, OMRAN Group, commented on this achievement, stating: “We take great pride in our hotels receiving this esteemed verification, a testament to OMRAN Group's unwavering commitment to integrating sustainability

as a fundamental pillar across all its operations and projects. Guided by our vision for the tourism sector, we have adopted a comprehensive sustainability framework centred on four key pillars — environ-

ensuring the long-term sustainability of Oman's tourism sector.”

Julia Simpson, President & CEO, WTTC said, “We are delighted to see OMRAN Group leading the way in sustain-



ment, society, economy and cultural heritage. Through this approach, we strive to strike a balance between economic growth and the preservation of natural resources,

able hospitality in Oman. By achieving verification under the WTTC Hotel Sustainability Basics, OMRAN is setting a powerful example for the region.” ▶

TK's one-stop shop for UAE

Turkish Airlines Holidays has opened its platform to more than 60 departure countries. UAE travellers, including those from Dubai and Abu Dhabi, can access over 300 exciting destinations worldwide.

TT Bureau

Turkish Airlines Holidays is changing the game for UAE travellers by bringing every part of the journey together on one easy-to-use platform. Originally launched in 2021 for travellers from Türkiye, the platform has quickly expanded. Now, it is open to over 60 departure countries, with the UAE emerging as a key market. Whether based in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, or elsewhere in the Emirates, users can now access more than 300 exciting destinations worldwide.

What sets the platform apart is its seamless integration of all travel needs into one easy booking experience.



Flights, hotels, tours, transfers, car rentals and travel insurance can all be bundled effortlessly. Beyond convenience, the platform offers real value with competitive package pricing, complimentary checked baggage on every booking, and access to a vast hotel network of over 550,000 properties worldwide. Travellers can also earn extra ‘Miles and Smiles’ points across their entire itinerary.

GREATER ACCESSIBILITY

❖ Seamless integration of all travel needs into one easy booking experience

❖ Access to a hotel network of over 550,000 properties worldwide

Marketing mindset shapes Saudi hotels

As Saudi Arabia’s hospitality landscape undergoes an unprecedented transformation under Vision 2030, industry leaders are redefining what it means to deliver excellence. **Nuran Kilani**, COO, L’azure Hospitality Saudi Arabia brings a guest-centric, brand-driven perspective to scaling hospitality in a Kingdom where cultural authenticity meets global ambition.

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When Kilani stepped into her new role as Chief Operating Officer at L’azure Hospitality Saudi Arabia, she carried with her more than just operational acumen. She brought a marketer’s instinct for storytelling and connection adding qualities increasingly vital in the Kingdom’s fast-evolving hospitality ecosystem. “Today, operations is not just about systems, it’s about soul,” Kilani says. “A marketing mindset helps us shape every guest touchpoint into a narrative that aligns with Saudi’s cultural aspirations and global standards.”



Nuran Kilani
COO
L’azure Hospitality Saudi Arabia

This philosophy is especially relevant as Saudi Arabia doubles down on its tourism ambitions, with Vision 2030 setting the stage for a diversified economy and a booming hospitality sector. For B2B stakeholders, wheth-

er travel agents curating new Saudi itineraries, or hoteliers preparing to scale, Kilani’s focus areas offer a roadmap for navigating this next chapter.

Scaling with sensitivity
With multiple properties set to open across diverse geographies in the Kingdom, L’azure’s strategy under Kilani prioritises localisation, talent readiness and brand agility. “Each Saudi city has its own story. Jeddah’s cosmopolitan energy differs from AlUla’s ancient mystique. Success lies in adapting global standards to local contexts and not in copy-pasting a one-size-fits-all model,” she explains. To achieve this, the

brand is investing in robust training programmes and decentralised leadership, empowering teams on the ground to deliver consist-

For travel agents, hoteliers and tour operators, the message is clear — collaboration, innovation and localisation are the cornerstones

ency while infusing operations with local flavour.

Vision 2030: Beyond beds and buildings
Kilani sees the Kingdom’s ambitious tourism roadmap as a call to elevate experiences from transactional to transforma-

tional. “Guests do not just want luxury, they want meaning. We are creating culinary stories rooted in regional ingredients, art-

driven spaces that reflect Saudi’s creative pulse, and partnerships that allow visitors to truly engage with local communities.”

Tech, sustainability, and hospitality future
Innovation, Kilani believes, is no longer optional, it’s

expected. From AI-powered personalisation to contactless service technology and sustainable design, L’azure is weaving future-readiness into its operational DNA.

Takeaway for the trade
Kilani’s rise from marketing to operations reflects a growing recognition in hospitality leadership: the guest journey is as much an emotional narrative as it is an operational process.

For travel agents, hoteliers and tour operators, the message is clear — collaboration, innovation and localisation are the cornerstones of Saudi’s tourism success story. ▶



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Diriyah eyes 5 mn Chinese visitors

Diriyah, a heritage-rich cultural destination of Saudi Arabia, made its debut at ITB China this year, underscoring the Kingdom's strategic push to diversify its visitor base and attract international travellers from key source markets. **Naif Hassan Awlia**, Tourism and Engagement Director, Diriyah, highlights the destination's growing appeal to Asian travellers.

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Naif Hassan Awlia, Tourism and Engagement Director, Diriyah, participating at ITB China 2025, emphasised the importance of China as a vital component of Saudi Arabia's tourism growth. "As part of Diriyah's tourism ecosystem, we closely follow the National Tourism Strategy," Awlia said. "China is one of our priority markets. With the Kingdom targeting 150 million visitors annually by 2030, 5 million of those are expected to come from China — and we aim to be a major contributor toward reaching that figure."



Naif Hassan Awlia
Tourism and Engagement Director
Diriyah

Awlia stressed that Diriyah's participation at ITB China was not merely symbolic but part of a carefully calibrated plan to deepen engagement with the Chinese market. "This is not just about visibility — it's about alignment.

We are here to listen, to learn and to fine-tune our offerings so that they resonate deeply with Chinese travellers," he said.

Awlia revealed that one of the core objectives during the event was to build strong partnerships with leading digital travel platforms, such as Alibaba and Trip.com. "These platforms are not only gateways to millions of potential travellers, but they also provide critical data and insights into consumer behaviour, preferences and expectations," he explained. "By collaborating with them, we can tailor immersive experiences, offer multi-lingual sup-

port, and create seamless digital journeys for Chinese tourists."

As one of Saudi Arabia's most significant heritage developments, Diriyah is home to At-Turaif, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the birthplace of

cultural tourism, blending traditional Najdi architecture, heritage attractions, museums, fine dining and luxury hospitality — all designed with sustainability and authenticity at the core. "Diriyah is more than just a destination, it's a symbol of Saudi

ingful experiences, will find Diriyah a compelling destination that speaks to both their curiosity and comfort."

Diriyah, with its deep historical roots and visionary development plans, is expected to be a flagship contributor to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plans.

We are here (at ITB China) to listen, to learn and to fine-tune our offerings so that they resonate deeply with Chinese travellers

the first Saudi state. The destination is currently undergoing a major transformation that will see it become a global hub for

Arabia's rich past and dynamic future," Awlia said. "We believe Chinese travellers, who value culture, history and mean-





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Oz, NZ & SE Asia top pick for GCC

►Contd. from page 1



Saleem Sharif
Deputy Managing Director
ATS Travel

“With rising geopolitical tensions in our neighbourhood, we have seen a significant dip in holiday bookings to CIS countries, along with a noticeable slowdown in travel to parts of Europe and the US. On the other hand, there has been an uptick in interest for destinations like Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Japan and Korea.”



Aga El Khatib
General Manager
PanWorld Travel UAE

“It’s no surprise Asia is taking the crown this summer — GCC travellers are chasing cooler weather, great food and real cultural experiences, and places like Japan, Korea and Thailand are delivering just that. From what I’m seeing, staycations are not a big thing during the summer. This year, there is a clear shift towards Asia.”



Ayman Qudwa
General Manager
Falcon Travels Qatar

“Qatari travellers are embracing both staycations and outbound travel this summer. Domestic tourism thrives, with luxury resorts and cultural experiences in Doha attracting families. However, outbound travel remains strong, with Europe (UK, France) and Southeast Asia (Thailand and Malaysia) leading as top destinations.”



Dinkar Dasaur
General Manager UAE
Satguru Travel

“This summer, many UAE residents are leaning towards staycations, with a noticeable rise in enquiries. It’s easy, relaxing and avoids the stress of airports and long flights. But that does not mean outbound travel is off the table. Short getaways to Southeast Asia are still popular, especially for families.”



Sanai Rahman
Travel Consultant
Aldar Travel & Tours Kingdom of Bahrain

“Many travellers are striking a balance this summer. While a segment of customers, especially families and budget-conscious groups, are opting for staycations and nearby domestic retreats, there is a clear surge in outbound travel as well. Destinations in Southeast Asia like Thailand are in high demand.”



Cashio Vettom
General Manager, tripsnstay.com & Khimji's House of Travel Oman

“With soaring airfares to Europe and Schengen visa delays, GCC travellers have turned to Asia’s accessible, value-rich alternatives. Thailand and Malaysia remain favourites due to affordability and the availability of Arabic-friendly services. However, the stars this year are Japan and South Korea.”



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AUGUST 2025 **9**

Emirates MoU to prepare youth for future

The Emirates Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal Youth Authority to set up a framework that further develops the group's youth community. The MoU was signed by **Yousuf Bin Lahej Al Falasi**, Vice President Emiratisation and Government Partnerships, The Emirates Group and **Khalid Mohammed Al Nuaimi**, Director, Federal Youth Authority.

TT Bureau

Yousuf Bin Lahej Al Falasi, Vice President Emiratisation and Government Partnerships, Emirates Group and **Khalid Mohammed Al Nuaimi**, Director, Federal Youth Authority recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a strategic framework that will further develop the Emirates Group's youth community, inspiring generations of aviation and travel professionals. The MoU was signed in the presence of **His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum**, Chairman and



(From L-R) Capt Abdulrahman Al Hamez, Deputy National Cadet Pilot Manager; Michael Doersam, Chief Financial & GS Officer; Khalid Mohammed Al Nuaimi, Director of the Federal Youth Authority; His Excellency Dr Sultan Al Neyadi, UAE Minister of State for Youth Affairs; HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive Emirates Airline and Group; Yousuf Bin Lahej Al Falasi, Vice President Emiratisation and Government Partnerships at the Emirates Group; Fatima Almahri, Key Accounts Development Controller, Global Sales; Oliver Grohmann, EVP Human Resources; and Ahmad Almutawa, Manager IT Product Delivery.

Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group and **His Excellency Dr Sultan Saif Al Neyadi**, Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

The strategic partnership was led by first cohort of The Emirates Group

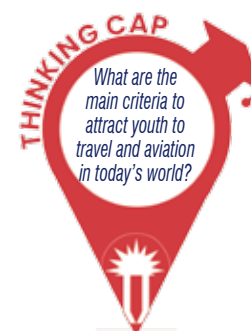
Youth Council. Throughout their tenure, 11 members of the council were actively involved in working towards the objectives of the UAE's National Youth Strategy, from organising a Youth Summit to supporting Aviation Future Week

2024 and a host of other events and initiatives.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum emphasised the importance of empowering the youth, recognising the need to forge partnerships with like-minded entities:

"This strategic partnership with the Federal Youth Authority reflects our Emiratisation team's ongoing commitment to empowering youth, in line with the UAE's National Youth Agenda 2031. We hope it will motivate our entire community to

keep innovating, dream big and further build on the successes of the group." His Excellency Dr Sultan Al Neyadi said: "This partnership reflects the enduring vision of the UAE's leadership, which recognises youth as the driving force behind the nation's future growth and progress."



KSA crosses 100 mn tourist mark again

The Ministry of Tourism has released its 2024 Annual Statistical Report on the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia, highlighting key indicators of tourism activity and underlining the sector's continued growth following the significant progress recorded in 2023. For the second consecutive year, the Kingdom crossed the 100 million tourist mark, reveals the report.

TT Bureau

His Excellency **Ahmed Al Khateeb**, Minister of Tourism, Saudi Arabia, said the tourism numbers reflected in the 2024 report were achieved with the guidance and support of the Kingdom's leadership. His Excellency added that tourism has become a key enabler of Saudi Vision 2030, with the report showcasing the sector's accelerated growth, driven by the efforts of the ministry and all stakeholders of Saudi Arabia's tourism ecosystem.

According to the report, the Kingdom welcomed around 116 million domestic and inbound



His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb
Minister of Tourism
Saudi Arabia

tourists in 2024, a 6 per cent increase compared with 2023. Total tourism spending — for domestic and inbound tourism — reached approximately SAR284 billion, reflecting an 11 per cent growth year-on-year. The ministry noted that Saudi Arabia

achieved its highest-ever number of inbound tourists, receiving about 30 million inbound tourists in 2024, marking an 8 per cent rise versus 2023. Inbound tourism spending in 2024 totalled SAR168.5 billion, up 19 per cent from 2023. Domestic tourism also experienced solid growth with 86.2 million domestic tourists in 2024, marking a 5 per cent increase compared with 2023. Moreover, domestic tourism spending reached SAR115.3 billion in 2024.

Saudi Arabia ranked first globally in growth of international tourism receipts in the first quarter of 2025 compared with the first quarter of 2019, accord-



ing to the World Tourism Barometer published by UN Tourism. As outlined in the report, the Kingdom placed third worldwide in growth of international tourist arrivals and second in the Middle East in Q1 2025, compared to Q1 2019. During the first quarter of 2025, the Kingdom recorded a remarkable 102 per cent increase in international tourist arrivals, as com-

pared to the same period in 2019 — far exceeding the global average of 3 per cent and the Middle East average of 44 per cent. This outstanding growth underscores Saudi Arabia's position as a key player in both regional and global tourism and underlines the Kingdom's unwavering commitment to advance the sector and realise its objectives set in Saudi Vision 2030.

TOURISM IN NUMBERS

❖ 116 million domestic and inbound tourists in 2024

❖ 6% increase compared with 2023


❖ Total tourism spending reached SAR284 billion

❖ 11% growth year-on-year

❖ 86.2 million domestic tourists recorded in 2024

❖ 5% increase compared to 2023

KSA in demand for experiential luxury

With Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is on its way to establish itself as one of the key destinations that bring in luxury experiences for its valued travellers. Blending infrastructure development with its natural beauty and rich heritage, the Kingdom is emerging as a premier destination for experiential luxury travel.  speaks to the industry experts on the issue.



Saad Audeh
Chairman
Campbell Gray Hotels

“ Saudi Arabia is quickly emerging as a premier destination for experiential luxury travel, blending futuristic development with natural beauty and rich heritage. Landmark projects like Sindalah are redefining high-end tourism. ”



Simon Mead
Head, Discover Saudi DMC
part of Almosafer

“ Saudi Arabia is becoming the pinnacle of luxury travel embracing rare experiences. It’s about being among the first to discover a destination still largely untouched, where exclusivity is not manufactured, but inherent. ”



Reji Kurup
Head of Leisure
ATS Travel

“ Saudi Arabia is witnessing a significant rise in experiential luxury tourism, driven by Vision 2030 and a growing demand from discerning travellers. Beyond opulent hotels, visitors now seek personalised experiences. ”



Moaid Mahjoub
Board Member
Frontline Solutions

“ Saudi Arabia is becoming the next frontier for discerning travellers. From the untouched serenity of the Red Sea’s private islands to bespoke cultural immersions in AIUla, it offers access to heritage, nature and indulgence. ”



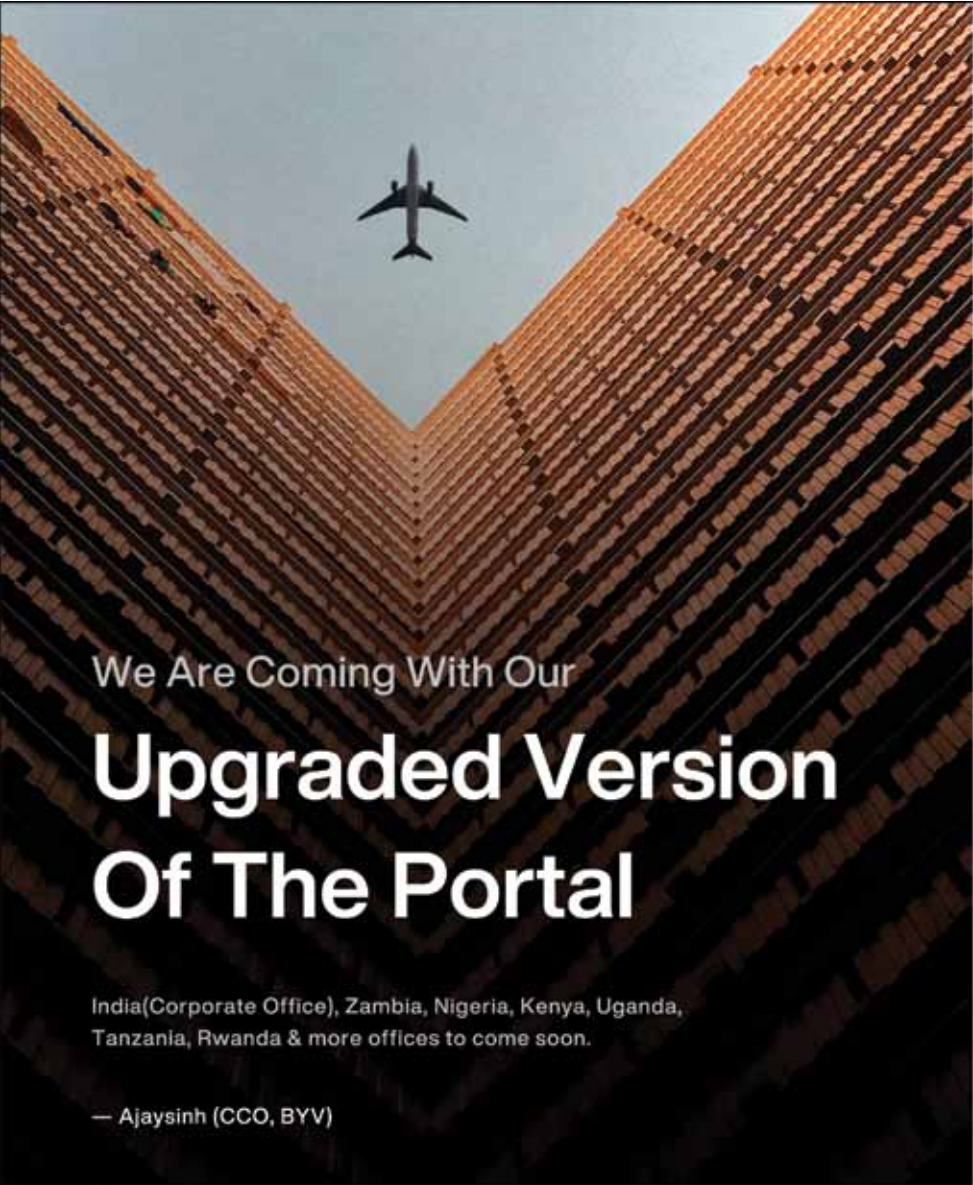
Sapna Aidarani
Director
Pluto Travel

“ Saudi Arabia offers an unmatched diversity of high-end experiences. Brands like Banyan Tree and Sofitel are anchoring the luxury landscape. Global concerts, elite sporting events and focus on sustainable add to the allure. ”



Benjamin Kreuz
General Manager, Six Senses
Southern Dunes, The Red Sea

“ We are witnessing a clear shift; travellers are no longer just seeking luxury, they are seeking meaning. Saudi Arabia is emerging as a destination for experiential luxury, where exclusivity is defined by authenticity and purpose. ”



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GCC wedding tourism in uptrend

Destination weddings have become a key trend in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region in the past few years. Dubai and Ajman in the UAE, the Red Sea in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Doha, Qatar have been at the forefront of this trend. **TRAVEL** interacts with some of the key stakeholders in the industry about their views on the business opportunities.



Noor Al Geziry
Associate Vice President
DCTCM, a part of DET

“Dubai has established itself as one of the world’s most sought-after destinations for weddings and milestone celebrations, attracting couples from across the globe. With over 800 hotels and resorts, diverse cultural experiences and an ecosystem of highly skilled planners, suppliers and creatives offering all types of services, Dubai caters to all requirements.”



Itikhar Hamdani
Area General Manager – Northern
Emirates, Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel
and Coral Beach Resort Sharjah

“Destination weddings in Ajman and Sharjah are gaining popularity for their unique blend of tradition, affordability and picturesque venues. Coral Beach Resort Sharjah offers a serene garden and beachfront setting, ideal for romantic outdoor ceremonies. It also offers indoor ballroom setting. Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel caters to grandeur.”



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

“Wedding tourism in the region is booming, with the Middle East, particularly the UAE and destinations like Ras Al Khaimah, attracting couples seeking culturally rich, luxurious celebrations. At Taj, we bring the essence of Tajness to every wedding: timeless elegance, heartfelt service and a royal touch reminiscent of India’s extravagant traditions.”



Ahmed Gaafar
Director of Operations – Acting
General Manager, Fairmont Ajman

“Wedding tourism is a growing segment in the region, with couples seeking bespoke, beachfront experiences in luxurious settings. Fairmont Ajman has become a favoured destination for both intimate and large-scale celebrations, offering stunning venues like our beachfront lawn and sea-view ballrooms. Our property continues to inspire couples from around the world.”



Vivek Braganza
Director of Ops & In-charge of
Sales & Marketing, Sofitel Bahrain

“Destination weddings in the region, especially at venues like Sofitel Bahrain, are increasingly popular, particularly among Indian families seeking culturally rich, luxurious, and flexible experiences. Couples look for exceptional hospitality, authentic cuisine, unique venues like private islands and a partner who can manage complex, multi-day events.”



Rob Arrow
Senior Director – Luxury Travel
Almosafer, part of Seera Group

“Destination weddings are on the rise, driven by evolving cultural dynamics, global awareness of unique locations, and a growing appetite for lavish, experience-led celebrations. For many Saudi couples, weddings are no longer just ceremonies — they are immersive events that reflect personal style, heritage and a love for the extraordinary.”



Nayan Seth
General Manager, Taj Exotica
Resort & Spa The Palm Dubai

“The UAE has become a preferred destination for weddings, not only from across the region but also from international markets. Couples today are looking for more than just a beautiful location — they seek a meaningful, luxurious experience. At Taj Exotica, The Palm, we have witnessed a strong demand for destination weddings.”



Sona Rawal
Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing
Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek

“The UAE continues to flourish as a highly sought-after destination for wedding tourism, with couples captivated by its iconic skyline, diverse venues and dining offerings, renowned safety and world-class hospitality. At Radisson Blu Hotel Dubai Deira Creek, we witness steady demand for weddings, particularly from South Asia and GCC.”



Rishabh Sahney
Resort Commercial Director, Hilton
Salwa Beach Resort & Villas Qatar

“We attract destination weddings, particularly Indian weddings, by showcasing Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas as a self-contained celebration ecosystem that can host big weddings with minimal logistical coordination, ensuring the focus remains on the grand celebrations and special moments that make a wedding special.”



Anna Olsson
Executive Commercial Director
Raffles and Fairmont Doha

“Being a destination landmark and key wedding venue, we use a 360-degree approach including Sales, Marketing and PR to attract destination weddings. We have a close collaboration with our tourism board, Accor regional offices, attend wedding planner tradeshows, in market activation with both planners and families direct.”



Stephanie Timsit
Director of Operations
Fairmont Hotel Riyadh

“Destination weddings in the GCC are on the rise, with Riyadh becoming an unexpected yet captivating choice for couples seeking elevated luxury. At Fairmont Hotel Riyadh, we craft celebrations that blend grandeur with intimacy, from Zaffa entrances and gold adorned ballrooms to culinary journeys rooted in Saudi tradition.”



Laura Nicli
General Manager
Pullman Deira Creek City Centre

“I see the wedding segment as a key pillar within the broader MICE and events industry in the UAE, especially in Dubai. With DET’s ongoing efforts to position Dubai not only as the world’s top city to visit but also as a long-term home for many, there is a rise in demand for milestone celebrations like weddings, particularly among expats.”

Oman Air enters oneworld alliance

oneworld welcomes Oman Air as its 15th member airline. The tie-up strengthens oneworld’s presence across the Middle East and unlocks new opportunities for global travel. Now, oneworld customers can access an extended network of destinations across Oman Air’s growing global schedule, including the launch of a new non-stop Muscat–Amsterdam service.

TT Bureau

Oman Air, after becoming a oneworld member airline, will provide oneworld Emerald, Sapphire and Ruby customers with benefits, including earning and redeeming miles, earning status points, priority check-in and boarding and lounge access. Likewise, Oman Air’s top tier customers will gain access to oneworld priority benefits, including a network of nearly 700 premium airport lounges globally, as well as newly opened oneworld branded lounges in Amsterdam’s Schiphol and Seoul’s Incheon Airports.



Nat Pieper
CEO
oneworld

Commenting on the development, **Nat Pieper**, CEO, oneworld, said, “We are proud to welcome Oman Air to the oneworld family. Oman Air brings valuable strategic reach and award-winning product and service to



Con Korfiatis
CEO
Oman Air

the alliance. This partnership opens up exciting new connections for our customers, particularly across the Gulf and South Asia, and reinforces oneworld’s position as the premium alliance for international travellers.”

Con Korfiatis, CEO, Oman Air, said, “Oman Air is honoured to be joining the oneworld alliance, whose members and global footprint represent the best of what international travel-



lers want to experience. We are thrilled to be able to welcome oneworld customers to the Sultanate of Oman to experience our unique culture, stunning mountain excursions, beautiful beaches, and

above all, the warm hospitality of the Omani people.”

Oman Air, with its hub at Muscat International Airport, serves 42 destinations across 22 countries and territories globally, including key oneworld hubs around the world. The airline offers three cabins, including its exclusive Business Studio with private suites on select longer-haul flights. Known for its exceptional in-flight hospitality, the airline has received several international awards, including most recently Best Food & Beverage and Best Cabin Service in the Middle East at the Apex 2025 Awards.

NETWORK EXPANSION

- ❖ oneworld customers can have access to Oman Air’s unique route network throughout the Middle East, Far East, Africa and Europe
- ❖ Oman Air customers can also access oneworld benefits across 900 global destinations




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ONE BRAND, LIMITLESS EXPERIENCE

Tourism Seychelles hosts trade

Tourism Seychelles Middle East, along with , brought together the UAE's travel trade to discuss destination updates, market strategies and growth opportunities at Pullman Dubai Deira. In all, 24 senior travel industry professionals, including CEOs and top decision makers from leading travel companies, participated in the event, actively promoting Seychelles in the region.



Amadeus elevates its AI game

With decades of research behind it, Amadeus is now harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enrich the traveller's journey and the agent's role. In an exclusive conversation with **TRAVEL TALK**, **Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont**, MD, Amadeus Gulf, sheds light on how AI is being layered into existing systems, improving efficiency and redefining how agents interact with travellers.

TT Bureau

How is AI reshaping the role of travel distribution platforms like Amadeus?

AI is becoming a smart layer that enhances travel distribution platforms rather than replacing them. It allows us to automate tasks, personalise results and support agents in offering better, faster services to travellers.

In what ways is Generative AI improving travel agency workflows?

GenAI enables natural language interactions with systems like the PNR, and tools like fare rules analysers help

agents find optimal pricing instantly. This boosts productivity and customer satisfaction.

What impact is AI having on the relationship between agents and travellers?

It makes the experience more personalised and efficient. Agents can spend less time on manual searches and more time offering expert advice and customised recommendations.

Will AI eventually replace the need for travel agents?

Absolutely not. AI supports and enhances the agent's role. By auto-



Ernesto Sanchez Beaumont
Managing Director
Amadeus Gulf

mating routine tasks, it allows them to focus on creative and strategic service delivery.

How does Amadeus ensure AI solutions remain aligned with its core GDS infrastructure?

We build AI as an added intelligence layer on top of our existing platforms. It integrates seamlessly, adding value without disrupting the trusted systems agents rely on.

How is AI helping airlines and travel brands tailor their offerings?

AI powers dynamic pricing models and personalised landing pages, offering travellers more relevant content and pricing based on real-time behaviour and preferences.

What is next for AI in the travel distribution ecosystem?

We will see greater traveller-centric solutions



— smarter searches, deeper trip insights and more seamless post-trip engagement. The future lies in AI-powered, human-driven travel experiences. We at Amadeus are constantly exploring GenAI possibilities. We

have research teams of AI specialists and data scientists implementing and experimenting with different use cases, as well as product development groups applying this evolving technology. ▶

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EVENT TALK		
AUGUST 2025		
Date	Event	Venue
31 Jul - 02 Aug	Travel & Tourism Fair - Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad, India
1	Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition 'Americans'	Wellington, USA
01 - 03	MATTA Fair Johor Bahru	Johor Bahru, Malaysia
01 - 03	Diving Resort Travel Show (DRT Show)	Beijing, China
05	Annual Celebrate Tourism Summit	Wytheville, USA
05 Aug	Woodford County Tourism Stakeholder Meeting	Midway, USA
05 - 08	Global Sustainable Tourism Conference (GSTC)	Nadi, Fiji Islands
06 - 07	The Grand Tourism Expo (TGT Expo) 1 st edition	New Delhi, India
07 - 10	Corporate Travel Workshop	Cape Town, South Africa
12 - 13	Digital Travel Summit APAC	Singapore
14 - 17	Travel Writers & Photographers Conference (TWPC)	Corte Madera, USA
15 - 17	Matta Fair	Malacca, Malaysia
24 - 26	International Conference on Sustainable Tourism Management (ICSTM)	Paris, France

Important AI tools for business

DeepL: Translate, connect better

Whether you are running a boutique resort, planning group tours, or marketing a destination, DeepL turns complex translation tasks into quick wins. Upload documents, use glossaries for brand consistency, and rest easy with built-in privacy protection.

What makes DeepL a game changer for the travel industry?

Natural-sounding, context-aware translations: Unlike traditional tools, DeepL captures subtle nuances, ensuring your brochures, websites and itineraries read like they were written by a native speaker.

Lightning-fast document translation: Upload entire PDFs, Word files, or PowerPoint decks



and get instant, accurate translations, saving hours of manual editing and localisation work.

Confidentiality & security: DeepL offers enterprise-grade encryption and a dedicated DeepL Pro version, ensuring

that sensitive business documents stay private and secure, essential for hotels and airlines handling guest data.

Custom glossary: Define key brand terms or tourism-specific jargon to ensure consistent

translations across all languages and platforms.

Cross-platform access: Available on web, desktop and mobile apps, DeepL empowers you to translate and communicate on the go, ideal for tour guides, airport staff, or travel advisors working in real time.

Pro Tip: Use DeepL to translate online reviews or social media messages in multiple languages, helping you improve service quality.

16% rise in GCC visitors in H1 2025

Contd. from page 1

During his speech, Fathallah highlighted that “the GCC region has recorded an increase of 16 per cent in visitor numbers dur-

in collaboration with , a respected travel media platform in the region. This approach reflects Tourism Seychelles’ focus on meaningful, targeted en-

The event emphasised Tourism Seychelles’ ongoing commitment to supporting its trade partners and cultivating long term collaboration

ing the first half of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024,” underlining the positive momentum and growing interest in Seychelles as a preferred destination.

The event also emphasised Tourism Seychelles’ ongoing commitment to supporting its trade partners. The initiative was organised

gement with the trade, and its strategy to align with platforms that provide credibility, efficiency and lasting visibility. “We are extremely pleased with the outcome of this engagement,” said Fathallah. “The turnout exceeded expectations and demonstrated the strong interest and commitment of our partners in the UAE market.”

flyadeal appoints Orient Travel as GSA

flyadeal opened a dedicated sales office in Dubai to support customers and the travel trade in the latest move to increase its presence in the UAE. The company also appointed Orient Travel as the airline’s new GSA to oversee its sales in Emirates.



Qatar eyes Nigerian 'leisure' market

Visit Qatar, in association with Discover Qatar and Qatar Airways, recently organised a strategic roadshow in Nigeria to promote leisure tourism and stopover packages in Doha. The NTO has been reaching out to new and diverse markets to cash in on the rising popularity of Qatar as a travel destination, especially after it hosted FIFA World Cup 2022.

TT Bureau

Visit Qatar recently concluded a high-impact tourism promotional initiative in Nigeria, underscoring the country's growing importance as a key source market in West Africa.

The campaign brought together more than 120 key business partners and travel professionals at a major event held in Lagos, which welcomed more than 100 influential guests. This was followed by an exclusive Business Networking Luncheon in Abuja, which hosted 20 senior stakeholders from Nigeria's tourism sector.



Winner of Qatar Airways ticket at the event

These events were designed to spotlight Qatar's unique and diverse tourism offerings while fostering stronger commercial ties with the Nigerian travel trade. The events served as platforms to enhance B2B collaboration, educate partners on Qatar's leisure travel appeal, and

position the country as a top-tier destination for West African travellers.

Led by Visit Qatar and supported by key tourism and hospitality stakeholders, the initiative focused on promoting Qatar's world-class attractions, cultural experiences, luxury accommodation

options and popular stopover packages. Nigerian travel agents had the opportunity to connect directly with Qatari destination management companies, hotels and service providers, laying the groundwork for long-term partnerships and shared commercial success.

Central to the discussions was the strategic connectivity offered by Qatar Airways, whose extensive global network provides convenient access to Qatar from Nigeria and beyond. This connectivity, combined with the country's visa facilitation, rich cultural tapestry and modern

hospitality infrastructure, reinforces Qatar's appeal as an ideal leisure and stopover destination for Nigerian travellers.

The Lagos and Abuja engagements reflect Qatar's broader efforts to deepen its presence in emerging African markets and to align with Qatar Tourism's vision of welcoming six million visitors annually by 2030.

By cultivating strong trade relationships and driving awareness in high-potential markets, Visit Qatar aims to unlock new opportunities in outbound travel from West Africa.

QATAR'S VISION

❖ **6 million** visitors nation aims annually by 2030

Special B2B engagement: Gathered 120 key business partners at a roadshow in Lagos

Hosted 20 senior stakeholders at an exclusive Business Networking Luncheon in Abuja



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MOVEMENTS

HILTON DUBAI JUMEIRAH AND HILTON DUBAI THE WALK

Dubai

Hilton Dubai Jumeirah and Hilton Dubai The Walk has appointed **MELVILLE GRACIAS** as Cluster Director of Sales. Gracias brings with him more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has held key sales and marketing roles across prestigious hotel brands in the UAE and beyond. From luxury boutique properties to towers with over 1,000 suites, his background includes successful pre-openings.



MAURITIUS TOURISM PROMOTION AUTHORITY (MTPA)

Mauritius

The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) has appointed **AVINASH KANTI TEELock** as Director. Teelock has more than 10 years of experience in the tourism and hospitality industry and brings a strategic vision and dynamic leadership style. He has held senior roles in some of Mauritius's most prominent hospitality groups, including Attitude Hotels, where he served as Key Account Manager.



NOFA RIYADH, A RADISSON COLLECTION RESORT

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Nofa Riyadh, a Radisson Collection Resort appointed **QUINTUS SWART** as Director of Operations. He brings in 25 years of global experience to the luxury property. Having worked across 12 countries and visited over 100, Swart brings a global lens to every operation he leads. With more than two decades of hospitality experience, he has built a career on driving operational excellence and crafting elevated guest journeys.



KIMPTON KAFD RIYADH

Saudi Arabia

Kimpton KAFD Riyadh appoints **RABIH BEAINO** as General Manager. With a strong focus on people-first culture and guest experience, Beaino has led teams to deliver meaningful impact across all facets of hotel operations. He brings more than 25 years of IHG experience across Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon. From pre-opening Inter-Continental Phoenicia Beirut to leading guest experience transformations, his leadership is rooted in trust, collaboration and empowerment.



THE CHEDI MUSCAT

Oman

MAHMOUD SAKR has been appointed as General Manager of The Chedi Muscat. Sakr brings over 30 years of experience, leading some of the region's prestigious luxury hotels. Known for his operational precision and guest-centric approach, he combines tradition with innovation to deliver exceptional results. He transitions from his role as General Manager of The Chedi Hegra, where he leads the launch of Saudi Arabia's first hotel within a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



JA RESORTS & HOTELS

Dubai

SHANADI LIYANAGE has joined JA Resorts & Hotels as Cluster Director Marketing. As a lifestyle marketeer with over a decade of experience, Liyanage aims to further elevate the brand's positioning in her new role, overseeing JA Ocean View Hotel and The Manor by JA. Now leading the marketing strategy for two of the group's most dynamic properties, she brings a creative edge to brand positioning and strategic planning.



ABDULLAH AL OTHMAN joins Kimpton KAFD Riyadh as Hotel Manager following a 20-year career spanning IHG's leading Saudi properties. He has spearheaded guest experience programmes and supported national events with precision and vision. His responsibilities at Kimpton include operational execution, team leadership and guest engagement. Othman is expected to uphold Kimpton's high standards while fostering a culturally rooted and progressive hospitality experience. He is a seasoned hospitality leader with over 20 years of operational experience in Saudi Arabia.



QUEEN ELIZABETH 2 HOTEL

Dubai

Queen Elizabeth 2 Hotel, managed by Accor, has appointed **SHAILEEN JIWA** as General Manager. With more than two decades of global hospitality experience and a strong track record in operational excellence and people-centric leadership, Jiwa will lead the hotel's next growth chapter as one of Dubai's most iconic heritage destinations. Prior to this, Jiwa was General Manager at MGallery Gem Forest Nairobi. Her career spans senior leadership roles at world-class properties.



KHALIDIA PALACE HOTEL

Dubai

Khalidia Palace Hotel appoints **SHAFIEKA HUYNH** as Front Office Manager. With over 10 years of experience in hospitality, including brands like Marriott, Sheraton and Aloft, Huynh brings expertise in guest services and front office leadership. Her impressive career includes leading pre-opening operations at Aloft Muscat and enhancing front office performance at Knight Castle Hotel. She is known for her calm leadership and operational precision.



DALIA ZEAIT has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing at Kimpton KAFD Riyadh, bringing a career shaped by leading roles with top luxury brands across Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Lebanon. Known for securing multi-million-dollar partnerships and leading high-impact campaigns, she now oversees the hotel's commercial performance, brand visibility and collaborations. Zeait is expected to grow market share and deliver guest-driven campaigns that reflect Kimpton's human approach to hospitality.



RADISSON HOTEL GROUP

Dubai

Radisson Hotel Group has promoted **ELIE MELKI** as Chief Development Officer for the Middle East, Cyprus and Greece, demonstrating its commitment to doubling its regional portfolio to more than 150 hotels and 50,000 rooms under operation and development by 2030. Malki celebrated 15 years of joining the Group and is one of the key drivers behind strategic deals in Saudi Arabia and the GCC, cementing the region as a key driver of Radisson brand growth.



Khalidia Palace Hotel appoints **IRFAN AHAMAD** as IT Manager. With over 11 years of experience in hospitality IT, Ahamad has led technology transformations across renowned hotel brands, including Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Kempinski, Louvre Hotels Group and FIVE Hotels and Resorts. In his previous role as Cluster Assistant IT Manager at FIVE Hotels, he drove advancements in cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity and systems integration. His expertise spans VMware, Azure, Active Directory, Opera PMS, Micros Symphony and SUN Systems.



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Ph.: +971 6 5528954, Fax: +971 6 5528956
E-mail: uae@ddpl.com

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