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# China fuelling Abu Dhabi tourism

Abu Dhabi is establishing its status as a top global tourism destination. In an interview with **TRAVTALK**, Abdulla Yousuf, Director of International Operations, DCT – Abu Dhabi, shares details.

Dr Shehara Fernando

## How many Chinese visitors came to Abu Dhabi last year?

In 2024, we welcomed over a quarter of a million Chinese visitors, which is a 79 per cent rise compared to 2023. Flights to Abu Dhabi also increased by over 29 per cent.

## What are the plans to woo more Chinese travellers?

We focus on showcasing Abu Dhabi as a year-round destination, with a calendar full of events. Summer performance has reached around 80 per cent occupancy. We are also expanding outreach into tier II cities in China, leveraging the Etihad Airways and China Eastern joint venture.

## How has Abu Dhabi performed this summer, and which markets drove growth?

## How are you engaging travel agents in China and other key markets?

Abu Dhabi now attracts visitors year-round. Important markets include India, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia.

Our e-learning programme allows agents to learn about Abu Dhabi



Abdulla Yousuf  
Director of International Operations,  
Department of Culture  
and Tourism – Abu Dhabi

from anywhere. Tier I and tier II roadshows in China, participation in ITB China, and CVS in Al Ain help us educate agents. Tools like the WeChat mini programme keep agents updated and engaged.

## What makes Al Ain the ideal location for the China Visitors Summit?

China is our second-largest source market and strategically important. Over the past few years, we have been running initiatives to attract Chinese visitors. Last year's APAC Marketplace brought numerous Chinese buyers to Abu Dhabi. This year, partnering with CVS allows us to continue educating travel trade professionals about Abu Dhabi and its wider regions, including Al Ain and Al Dhafra. It enhances the overall visitor experience in Abu Dhabi. ➔

# Sports tourism to cross \$650 billion by 2026

According to PwC's recent report, Sports Industry Outlook 2025, we are looking at a US\$ 600 billion industry in the Middle East, set to grow by 8.7 per cent by 2026. **TRAVTALK** speaks with industry experts.

TT Bureau

Sports tourism plays a pivotal role in the Middle East's growth story, blending world-class events with broader tourism strategies. Dubai continues to attract global attention with major tournaments, such as the Dubai Tennis Championships, Rugby Sevens, and the Dubai World Cup, all of which generate significant economic impact while cementing the city's global appeal.

From Dubai's world-class events to Oman's sailing partnerships, the sector is creating jobs, boosting brand visibility, and strengthening destination loyalty, making sports tourism an essential pillar of the region's long-term development.



Muzzammil Ahussain  
Chief Executive Officer  
Almosafer (part of Seera Group)

“From logistics to hospitality, food, leisure, health, entertainment and more, sports tourism has enabled countries to diversify their economy, bringing in a steady stream of revenue. For Almosafer, it is all about crafting memorable travel experiences that keep people coming back for more. As part of Saudi Arabia's long-term strategy to diversify its economy to build a resilient ecosystem, the Kingdom has opened its gates to a wide array of sporting events.”

“Sports tourism is a powerful driver of growth, boosting arrivals, hotel stays, and international visibility. The Middle East region has been home to iconic events like the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, Formula 1 in Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, ATP tennis, world-class golf, and major athletics. Cricket has become a huge draw with tournaments like Asia Cup, while NBA's showcase games add to the sporting calendar. For agents, these events translate into high-value opportunities.”



Jyoti Panchmatia  
General Manager – Gulf  
Travco

Contd. on page 7 ➔

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# Arabian Travel Awards @Embassy Suites

Embassy Suites by Hilton Dubai Business Bay is strengthening its presence in the regional hospitality sector through its association with the Arabian Travel Awards. In an interview with **TRAVELTALK**, **Ziad Tantawi**, Cluster General Manager, Embassy Suites by Hilton, shares how this alignment enhances engagement with corporate clients and travel professionals.

TT Bureau

## How does partnering with Arabian Travel Awards align with your long-term vision?

We believe in aligning ourselves with platforms that embody innovation, excellence, and industry leadership. Partnering with the Arabian Travel Awards was a natural choice, as both forums recognise the values that define our brand — exceptional service, meaningful connections, and forward-thinking hospitality. This partnership complements our long-term vision of becoming a preferred destination for both leisure and business travellers



while reinforcing Dubai's position as a global hub for tourism and logistics.

## How will this tie-up strengthen your hotel's role in the regional hospitality sector?

The UAE sits at the heart of global travel, and our hotel benefits from this dynamic ecosystem. Partnering with the Arabian Travel Awards amplifies our visibility in the hospitality sector and positions us as more than a hotel — as a strategic partner for



Ziad Tantawi  
Cluster General Manager  
Embassy Suites by Hilton

businesses, travel professionals, and the regional tourism network.

## How does this association enhance engagement with corporate clients and partners?

Our guests and partners value meaningful engagement and premium experiences. Through this collaboration, we are creating opportunities to

**Why is aligning with platforms that promote innovation, excellence, and sustainability important?**  
Such associations are not only important — they

## Partnering with the Arabian Travel Awards amplifies our visibility in the hospitality sector and positions us as more than a hotel

host, connect, and engage with some of the industry's most influential leaders. This translates into stronger partnerships for our corporate clients and exclusive networking opportunities for our business partners.

are essential. Innovation, service excellence, and sustainability are no longer optional; they are the cornerstones to future-proof hospitality. By aligning with platforms that celebrate these values, we reinforce our commitment

towards delivering meaningful guest experiences, social responsibility, and contributing to the hospitality industry's progress.

## How will you leverage this tie-up?

We see this partnership as the beginning of a long-term journey. Our goal is to leverage the visibility to build authentic, mutually beneficial relationships with the travel trade community. ➡



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RIY	11:40	DXB	14:55	Monday
DXB	16:10	ADE	18:10	Monday

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From	Dep.	To	Arr.	Frequency
ADE	9:30	RIY	10:30	Friday
RIY	11:40	DXB	14:55	Friday
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# Adventure travel surges with next-gen

Adventure tourism is reshaping the Middle East travel landscape. Travellers are embracing both outbound escapes and homegrown thrills, from skydiving and desert safaris to diving in Aqaba or paragliding abroad. Blending culture with adrenaline, they are redefining what it means to seek authentic, experience-driven journeys. **THE TRAVEL AGENT** asks experts about their views.



Mohamed Al Rais  
Executive Director  
Al Rais Travel

“The Middle East has emerged as a vibrant hub for adventure tourism, showcasing destinations that blend dramatic landscapes with cultural richness. The region offers unique and world-class experiences like the desert safaris of Dubai.”



Samir Mehta  
COO  
Desert Adventures

“The Middle East is a rising force in adventure tourism. In the UAE, Dubai remains popular with tourists for skydiving, hot-air ballooning, and desert safaris. Ras Al Khaimah stands out with Jebel Jais. Jordan’s Aqaba offers over 20 dive sites.”



Sapna Aidasani  
Director – PR  
Pluto Travel

“Adventure is all about mindset. For some, it’s jumping off a cliff or going on a wild safari. For others, it’s learning a new culture, meeting people, or volunteering in a remote village in Africa. The truth is: adventure does not always have to be extreme.”



Sushant Pilankar  
Leisure Travel Manager  
Uranus Travel

“As we see the new consumer generation taking charge in making holiday choices, the “Bravecation” will start trending. We also see popularity among travellers — from simple ziplining to skydiving — which are indicators of the emerging trends.”



Simon Mead  
Head, Discover Saudi DMC  
(part of Almosafer)

“The Middle East — KSA in particular — has made massive strides in adventure tourism, creating unique, world-class experiences that align with the Kingdom’s ambitious tourism goals. Almosafer has become an integral part of this transformation.”



Aga El Khatib  
General Manager  
Pan World Travel

“Adventure tourism is still a niche in the GCC outbound market, but it’s growing, as travellers seek immersive, experience-driven escapes. Today’s GCC tourists are not just looking for luxury; they want excitement, authenticity, and stories to tell.”

## How ‘adventure’ is redefining tourism

Traditional adventure tourism is often perceived as travel that involves visiting locations where the traveller engages in physically challenging outdoor activities, often with some element of risk or excitement. It is also often seen as travel that combines nature and physical activity, appealing to travellers seeking unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences, but that definition is changing now.

The idea of ‘adventure’ in travel has evolved. Today, it goes far beyond physical challenges, embracing cultural immersion, personal growth, and sustainability. Adventure tourism is rapidly becoming a diverse, inclusive, and transformative force in the global travel industry.

While traditional adventure activities, such as trekking, rafting, and climbing remain popular, many travellers now seek experiences that push the boundaries of imagination, deepen cultural understanding, or connect them to the planet in meaningful ways. A food tour through the hid-

den kitchens of Hanoi, a photography expedition under Iceland’s auroras, or a sustainable farming workshop in the Andes highlight how today’s traveller perceives ‘adventure’. This adventure shift is rooted in a broader change in consumer behaviour.

Increasingly, travellers are seeking experiences that feel authentic, immersive, and transformative, rather than purely recreational. Adventure, in this sense, is about travel that goes beyond simply providing an ‘experience’, but one that has the potential to meaningfully change or transform the tourist. Another significant shift lies in who participates

in adventure tourism. Traditional stereotypes of adventure travellers, often described as ‘young’, ‘male’, ‘physically fit’, ‘outdoorsy’, and even ‘backpackers’, have evolved. Adventure tour-

**Increasingly, travellers are seeking experiences that feel authentic, immersive, and transformative, rather than purely recreational**

ism has now become a popular form of travel to wider market segments — a result of improved accessibility, a broader definition of adventure, more focus on health and wellbeing, shifting demo-

graphics, and changes in social norms. For example, there has been a rise of organisations focusing on adventure travel for women. Women-led travel initiatives are gaining momentum, offering safe

spaces for exploration and community building. From all-women trekking groups in Nepal to female-run desert safaris in the UAE, these experiences combine empowerment with adventure.

Destinations are increasingly offering ‘softer’ adventure experiences that are less physically demanding yet equally immersive. However, certain types of adventure tourism are controversial. The growing popularity of activities such as glacier trekking in Patagonia and wildlife expeditions reflect the trend known as ‘last chance travel’, where tourists visit threatened natural environments before they disappear due to climate change. This form of adventure evokes both wonder and urgency, sparking vital discussions about sustainability.

Adventure tourism, in its modern form, is about pushing boundaries, not

only physical but also cultural, emotional, and ethical. As this industry continues to grow, its future lies in striking a balance between accessibility and responsibility, ensuring that adventure remains as enriching for communities and the planet as it is for the traveller.



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



# Rewriting Jamaica's tourism story

More than 160 international buyers from the Middle East, Asia, and other regions attended JAPEX 2025 in Jamaica's Montego Bay recently. Delivering a powerful address at the premier trade event, **Edmund Bartlett**, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica, not only celebrated the success of the country's tourism recovery but also laid out a transformative vision for its future.

 Bureau

Speaking to an international audience of tourism stakeholders at JAPEX 2025 in Montego Bay, **Edmund Bartlett**, Minister of Tourism, Jamaica, introduced new strategies designed to deepen tourism's role as a key economic driver, while ensuring that local communities are placed at the heart of its benefits.

Bartlett said that tourism has always played a big role in Jamaica's economy — creating jobs, earning foreign exchange, and supporting local businesses. But



Edmund Bartlett  
Minister of Tourism  
Jamaica

now, he explained, it's time for the industry to grow in new ways.

"This is going to be a big year," he said. "A year where we bring new ideas and a new approach

to tourism, built on teamwork, innovation, and careful planning."

One of the defining features of JAPEX 2025 was its diverse international representation, with 160 buyers from across the globe, including the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Bartlett proudly acknowledged this growing global interest in Jamaica, underscoring the country's rising influence on the world tourism stage. "We are not just hosting a trade show," he noted. "We are building meaningful connections across borders and showcasing

Jamaica as a leader in redefining what modern, inclusive tourism can be."

At the same time, the minister highlighted the need

the jobs and opportunities created by tourism. This includes creating stronger links between tourism and agriculture, manufacturing, creative industries,

**We are building meaningful connections across borders and showcasing Jamaica as a leader in redefining what modern, inclusive tourism can be**

to rethink how tourism will grow in the future.

**'Local First' approach**  
A key part of the new plan is the 'Local First' approach, which focuses on making sure Jamaicans get more benefits from

and small businesses — allowing locals to participate in the industry's rich and expanding value chain. "The future of tourism must be one where it works not just for the economy, but for the people," Bartlett declared.

## PLANS & OBJECTIVES

- ❖ JAPEX 2025's prime focus was on new tourism strategies for growth and resilience
- ❖ Introduction of 'Local First' approach to benefit Jamaican communities
- ❖ Emphasis on linking tourism with agriculture, manufacturing, and creative industries



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**Nuran Kilani**  
Chief Operating Officer  
L'AZURE Hospitality



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# Al Ain emerges as Chinese travel hotspot

With its offering of adventure, culture, and family-friendly experiences, Al Ain is emerging as a key destination for Chinese travellers in the UAE. In an interview with **TRAVEL TALK**, **Alexander Glos**, CEO, China Eye-to-Eye Group, discusses evolving travel trends, the growing demand for experiential trips, and why Al Ain and Abu Dhabi are capturing the attention of Chinese tourists.

TT Bureau

## How are Chinese travel trends evolving?

China is growing rapidly. Over 200 million Chinese people now hold passports, and last year alone, 26 million first-time passports were issued. This represents a huge market for travel products. Chinese travellers increasingly seek immersive, experiential trips and destinations that are off the beaten path — making Al Ain and Abu Dhabi ideal.

## What about MICE travel from China?

Leisure tourism, combined with MICE travel,



Alexander Glos  
CEO  
China Eye-to-Eye Group

is growing, especially in Abu Dhabi. Chinese business travellers, particularly engaged in oil, gas, chemicals, and construction activities, often attend meetings and events, and then spend a few days exploring the



city. This trend is consistent across the UAE.

## What experiences are Chinese travellers looking for, especially families?

Ten years ago, Chinese family travel was rare. Today, families, including parents with chil-

dren and grandparents, travel together, seeking mixed experiences.

## Why is Al Ain an important location for the China Visitors Summit?

The China Visitors Summit has been held in the UAE since 2012, but this

is the first time in Al Ain. It's the green oasis city of Abu Dhabi and offers an exciting opportunity for Chinese inbound travellers. Many Chinese visi-

China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. They include travel agencies, tour operators, wholesalers, luxury agencies, MICE managers, corporate travel plan-

**Over 200 million Chinese people now hold passports. Last year alone, 26 million first-time passports were issued. This represents a huge market**

tors today seek adventure and experiential travel, and Al Ain perfectly fits that demand.

## How many exhibitors and buyers are taking part?

We have 154 buyers joining from mainland

ners, OTAs, and bespoke agencies focusing on adventure, culinary, and historical tours. On the supply side, there are 76 exhibitors from across Abu Dhabi, including hotel groups, DMCs, and cultural and historical sites. ➔



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# Sporting events extend tourism season

►Contd. from page 1



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

“Sports tourism significantly drives economic diversification and growth by boosting hospitality, travel, and infrastructure. It attracts international visitors, creates jobs, strengthens international branding, and stimulates investment. It helps extend the tourism season. The key events driving tourism are Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and Dubai World Cup (Horse Racing).”



**Chris Farrell**  
Director of Sales Desert Adventures

“Sports tourism is driving growth. Events like Formula 1, UFC, golf, tennis, and cricket in the UAE, along with Saudi Arabia’s growing portfolio of boxing, football, and motorsports, attract global audiences. These events boost demand for flights, hotels, tours, logistics, and F&B. For DMCs, they offer strong commercial value — from ground handling to premium experiences.”



**Zurab Pololikashvili**  
Secretary-General UN Tourism

“The Middle East stands out as one of the most exciting places for tourism right now. The region is a global leader in sports tourism, while also excelling in luxury and wellness travel. At the same time, it is at the forefront of vital work to grow investments into the sector and provide education and training for millions of future tourism workers.”



**Gabriel Escarrer**  
Chairman & CEO Meliá Hotels International

“Meliá Hotels International and LALIGA announced a pact uniting two of Spain’s most iconic global brands with a shared ambition: to strengthen their presence in the Middle East — one of the world’s most dynamic luxury markets, where passion for football and hospitality naturally converge. This sponsorship represents the union of two global ambassadors of Brand Spain.”



**Javier Tebas**  
President LALIGA

“The Middle East is a key region for LALIGA, and this partnership with Meliá Hotels International reinforces our commitment to global expansion. Joining forces with a brand that shares our roots, values, and international vision is a great opportunity to continue growing together and bring the LALIGA experience to millions of fans and travellers around the world.”



**Ayman Al Qudwa**  
General Manager Falcon Travel

“Qatar is leading a sports tourism boom in the Middle East, capitalising on its top-tier infrastructure post FIFA World Cup 2022, which generated \$2.3–4.1 billion in tourism revenue. In 2024, Qatar welcomed 5.1 million visitors, a 25 per cent increase, and aims for 6 million by 2030. The Middle East’s sports market grows at 8.7 per cent annually, surpassing the global 7.3 per cent.”



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# Cruising in ME sailing to new heights

Cruising in the Middle East is fast emerging as one of the most dynamic segments in regional tourism. It is reshaping how travellers experience the destination. Gen Z and millennials are showing keen interest in this type of vacation, says **Angelo Capurro**, Global Executive Director, MSC Cruises. Capurro shares more insights in an interview with **TRAVEL TALK**.

TT Bureau

## How do you work with travel professionals to encourage GCC travellers to take interest in cruises?

Our travel partners help shape the vision of what a holiday at sea can be and we provide them with the tools, confidence, and flexibility to bring that viewpoint to life. We have our Voyagers Club loyalty programme, dedicated travel agent packages, and flexible booking policies. Besides, we also provide our trade partners with strong after-sales support. By investing in these relationships, we



**Angelo Capurro**  
Global Executive Director  
MSC Cruises

will grow the cruise category in the region and continue to build long-lasting trust with the travel agents who guide guests toward their first, and often repeat, cruise experience with us.

## Is there an overall increase from GCC in selecting cruises?

The deployment of a modern vessel like MSC Euribia for winter 2025–26 is in response to customer demand. What we see is an alignment between the lifestyle of the region and the cruise proposition: family-focused, multi-generational, and offering a blend of leisure and luxury that is accessible and aspirational. Shorter itineraries, such as a three-night cruise, allow guests to enjoy quick escapes without extensive planning, and the growth of repeat guests is particularly encouraging.

## What is the future of cruise sales?

Guests increasingly expect personalisation that anticipates their needs before they even articulate them. With our MSC for Me app, we are already delivering on this expectation — allowing guests to navigate their

new dining concept, or planning their evening entertainment. Advanced data insights and new technologies enable us to streamline operations, reduce environmental impact, and elevate the sense of care and precision in every aspect of the journey.

demand from Gen Z and millennials. They make up nearly 40 per cent of cruise travellers around the world. They look for experiences that are dynamic, social, and memorable, and our ships are designed to deliver exactly that.

**Our travel partners help shape the vision of what a holiday at sea can be and we provide them with the tools, confidence, and flexibility**

days and nights at sea with ease, whether that means booking a spa treatment, discovering a

**Is there more interest from Gen Z and millennials in cruise vacations?**  
We have seen a surging



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# ITB Asia 2025 focuses on Middle East

ITB Asia 2025 with  as media partner will be focusing on attracting more travellers to the Middle East. Scheduled from 15–17 October 2025 at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre, this year’s edition is expected to be the biggest till date. **Darren Seah**, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific — the organiser of ITB Asia — shares details.

 TT Bureau

Covering everything from AI to sustainability, ITB Asia 2025, Asia’s leading travel trade show, will unite industry leaders from all over the world, including Frasers Hospitality, Jack Morton Worldwide, and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). From the Middle East, partners from the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Egypt will take part.

A conference will run parallel with ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia under the theme ‘Future Forward: Transforming Travel & Tourism in a Chang-



**Darren Seah**  
Executive Director  
Messe Berlin Asia Pacific

ing World’. Organised by Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, the conference will deliver three days of curated content across three specialised stages. The Knowledge Theatre, MICE Show Asia Theatre, and Travel Tech Asia

Theatre, exploring how the travel and tourism industry can build a more agile, inclusive future, and equip itself for what lies ahead.

**ITB Asia serves as an important platform for the global travel community to exchange ideas and develop strategies for the future**

**Darren Seah**, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, said, “In times of rapid change, ITB Asia serves as an important platform for the global travel community to exchange ideas, gain fresh perspectives, and develop

strategies for the future. ‘Future Forward’ highlights our focus on harnessing technology, advancing sustainability, and reimaging the traveller experience to turn challenges into opportunities.”

The event will open with **Michael Shoory**, Head – APAC Tourism Analysis, Tourism Economics, and **Nick Lim**, CEO (Asia), The Travel Corporation.

This stage brings together C-suite executives and senior leaders, including **Sarah Wang**, Regional Director – Asia, WTTC; **Todd Handcock**, Global Chief Commercial Officer & Asia Pacific Executive Chair, Collinson International, **Katrina Nicholas**, Asia Transport Team Leader & Deputy Managing Editor – Global Business, Bloomberg, and **Chew Hang Song**, CEO, Frasers Hospitality, to share their vision for the future of the travel and tourism sector. The conference is powered by strong collaborations with some of the world’s most influential travel and tourism organisations.

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# Green money & tech get priority

The Future Hospitality Summit World 2025 takes place in Dubai from 27–29 October, with **TRAVELTALK** as media partner. The event, celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, continues to be the most influential hospitality and tourism investment event in the UAE. **Jonathan Worsley**, Chairman & CEO, The Bench, and Organiser of the Future Hospitality Summit (FHS), shares details.

**TT Bureau**

## What is the focus of FHS World this year?

FHS World 2025 is a milestone event for us as we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the UAE this year. We are excited to be back at Madinat Jumeirah where it all began in 2005, and we are thrilled to have Jumeirah as our Host Sponsor again to mark this special occasion. This year's theme is 'Where Vision Leads, Investment Follows'. We will continue to focus on the global transformation of the hospitality industry. The programme will zoom in on global hospitality investment, highlighting projects, financing models



**Jonathan Worsley**  
Chairman & CEO, The Bench &  
Organiser of the Future Hospitality  
Summit (FHS)

and hotel performance, and will cover everything from investment to innovation, sustainability to staffing, and tech to tourism.

## Could you tell us about some key speakers and unique topics?

We expect to have more

than 200 speakers, many of them joining us for the first time. This year, we have joined forces with the UAE Ministry of Economy & Tourism to deliver the UAE Africa Tourism Investment Summit. The event will gather 250+ ministers, heads of states, senior officials, investors, and tourism leaders from 50+ African nations to drive partnerships and boost investment in hospitality, tourism, and related sectors. Also co-located with FHS World is the Branded Residences Forum, which takes a deep dive into the rapidly growing branded residences sector. In addition, the Country Pavilions are back again with

Albania, Cyprus, Italy, Maldives, UAE, and the Philippines among those showcasing their hospitality and tourism investment offerings.

## How is this year's edition different?

Some of the key new features at FHS World 2025 include PitchPoint. This new matchmaking

the World Branded Residences Awards, which will recognise excellence and achievement among brokerages and individual brokers operating in the global branded residences market.

## Your expectations from this year's FHS World?

After a successful event in 2024, which saw a

cilitated by the initiative of #FHSWomenPower, we are looking forward to another fantastic event.

**MORE POWER TO WOMEN LEADERS**

**550**

women leaders participated in 2024

**35%**

discount on passes for women hospitality leaders

**New features at FHS World 2025 include PitchPoint. This new matchmaking feature is an enhancement of our traditional start-up competition**

feature is an enhancement of our traditional start-up competition. Also new this year are

record 1,596 attendees representing 735 companies from 60 nations, of which 550 were fa-

# Oman Air: Spreading its wings



Oman Air hosted a special event in Dubai to highlight its expanding network, enhanced products, and strategic growth initiatives across the GCC region. From showcasing new European routes to announcing its milestone entry into the oneworld alliance, the gathering reflected Oman Air's ambition to elevate air travel across the Middle East.





# flyadeal ops to triple in 5 years

flyadeal is strengthening its presence in the UAE and exploring new international routes, cargo opportunities, and travel packages, while focusing on reliability and affordability. In an interview with **TRAVEL TALK**, **Rogier Van Enk**, Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, flyadeal, talks about the airline's growth strategy, upcoming routes, and plans to enhance services.



## How do you plan to grow in the coming years?

We are just eight years old but growing rapidly. Currently, 80 per cent of our capacity is domestic and 20 per cent international. Over the next five years, we plan to triple in size — fleet, team, and destinations. This means exploring new markets, and the UAE is a key focus. We have invested in a dedicated sales team and are collaborating with Orient Travel to make it easier for partners to do business with us. Additional initiatives include connecting to the B2B in



**Rogier Van Enk**  
Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, flyadeal

the UAE and going live on our first GDS by the end of the summer.

## What new routes are you launching this summer?

We are expanding both seasonal and permanent routes. This sum-

mer, we have launched seasonal flights to Baku, Tbilisi, and Sarajevo. For permanent routes, we added Alexandria in Egypt. In the UAE, we are exploring increased frequencies to DXB and DWC, and considering new destinations like Sharjah and Abu Dhabi.

## What is the timeline for your UAE expansion?

We are actively working towards launching additional services to Dubai, Sharjah, and Abu Dhabi. While I can't give exact dates yet, we aim to make this happen within the next 12 months.

## How do flyadeal's services benefit agents and customers?

For agents, our reliability is a key advantage — we rarely cancel flights, making us an easy partner to work with. Regarding cancellations, we issue non-refundable tickets, but in exceptional circumstances, such as regulatory limits on visas, we provide credit vouchers or shells so that agents and customers can use the value later.

## Are you planning to expand beyond the GCC?

We are experimenting with routes to Europe, exploring opportunities in the subcontinent, West Africa,

and the wider region. By 2027, with widebody aircraft, we can reach destinations like the UK, Indonesia, and Kuala Lumpur, offering higher capacity and broader reach.

## Tell us about your experience in this region?

I joined flyadeal four months ago. We are excited about the opportunities in the UAE. Currently, we fly to DXB and DWC from Riyadh. In fact, we officially opened our sales office in partnership with our GSA, Orient Travel. This expansion marks an exciting step in strengthening our presence and collaboration with the trade here.

## KEY FACTS

- ❖ flyadeal operates from three key bases in Saudi Arabia: Dammam, Jeddah, & Riyadh
- ❖ Plans to triple size over next 5 years — in fleet, destinations, and staff
- ❖ Summer routes include Baku, Tbilisi, and Sarajevo; permanent routes include Alexandria, Egypt

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-Ajaysinh (CCO-BYV)



We also want our team to have growth opportunities within our organisation for betterment for them and company

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# Abu Dhabi in focus @CVS 2025

Abu Dhabi welcomed Chinese travel professionals to the China Visitors Summit in Al Ain recently. The event showcased the emirate's culture, heritage, and regions like Al Dhafra. Travel agents took part in immersive tours, cultural activities, and explored Abu Dhabi's attractions firsthand. Over 250,000 Chinese visitors came in 2024, a 79% increase from 2023.





# Better tech access tops trade wish list

Despite 92% of travel professionals saying they are happy in their jobs, new research from RateHawk reveals that many of them still face major operational challenges. The biggest hurdles are intense competition, rising client expectations, and the time-consuming process of manually searching for the best deals. Earning higher commissions is a top priority for them.

TT Bureau

Technology is considered a comprehensive solution by every third travel professional, although desired innovations vary largely depending on the regional, generational, and company scale differences, finds the second part of RateHawk's report, titled 'What Supercharges Travel Professionals'.

RateHawk surveyed over 1,300 travel professionals across Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, and the GCC. The report highlights the sector's key demotivating factors and specific tech needs



Astid Kastberg  
Managing Director  
RateHawk

for various segments of the global community of travel professionals.

Top challenges

A quarter of travel professionals worldwide cited intense competition as

their top challenge, with increasing pressure in fast-growing markets like the GCC (49 per cent) and Asia (30 per cent).

Rising client expectations are another challenge, with 24 per cent of travel professionals struggling to keep up. Maintaining the desired level of income is the third most challenging aspect for travel professionals. Additionally, 33 per cent say that achieving higher commission levels is the desired change. "The travel industry is known for its low margins, and with constantly rising travel costs, every opportunity to earn additional



commission is crucial. Technology platforms can give this flexibility to support partners' sustainable development," says Astid Kastberg, Managing Director, RateHawk.

Tech and AI adoption

Despite its reputation as one of the most con-

servative sectors, travel industry professionals are showing greater interest in technology adoption. Nearly a third of the respondents (29 per cent) say that better access to technology for daily tasks would be the most meaningful change to their jobs.

QUICK FACTS

- ❖ 31% would like to integrate more tech solutions into their daily routine
- ❖ 50% opt for advanced analytics tools
- ❖ 47% are interested in automation
- ❖ 44% wish to have greater access to mobile tools



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# Celebrating the Maldivian spirit

Sun Siyam marks 35 years of Maldivian hospitality with its rebrand, The Home of the Maldivian Spirit. The transformation is designed to attract more Middle East travellers and stand out in the Maldives' competitive luxury resort market. All six resorts are now unified under The House of Siyam and organised into Luxury, Lifestyle, and Privé collections.





# IndiGo bullish on Middle East

IndiGo is rapidly consolidating its presence in the Middle East as part of its ambitious internationalisation strategy. In an exclusive interview with **TRAVEL TALK**, **Pieter Elbers**, CEO, IndiGo, shares how the carrier is leveraging India's geographic advantage, economic rise, and growing travel demand to cement its role as a leading regional and global player.

TT Bureau

IndiGo is expanding its wings in the Middle East, with the Indian carrier operating 79 flights per day from India to UAE on 38 routes. The region has long been integral to IndiGo's international operations.

The airline increased weekly flights from 35 to 111 over just two years. In fact, Abu Dhabi remains a major hub in its network, connected to 16 Indian cities with 222 return flights per week. Beyond Abu Dhabi, IndiGo also flies to Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah.



Pieter Elbers  
CEO  
IndiGo

## Advantage to India

**Pieter Elbers**, CEO, IndiGo, believes that India's location gives IndiGo a unique edge in building its international network. Nearly 60 per cent of the world's population lives

within five to six hours of flying time from India, making the country a natural aviation hub. Coupled with the fact that 90 per cent of India's 1.45 billion people live within 100 km of an IndiGo-served airport, the airline has unparalleled access to both domestic and global markets.

Elbers revealed that a fast-growing middle class with higher disposable income in India is driving outbound travel, fuelling demand for both leisure and business connectivity across the Middle East. "The opportunity to have an airline representing the growth,



potential, and size of India is clearly what our ambition is," he noted. India, the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest economy in 2014, is projected to become the 4<sup>th</sup> largest by 2025, shared Elbers in his presentation at the TAAI Convention in Abu Dhabi.

**Turning a new page**  
IndiGo is tailoring its of-

ferings to meet diverse traveller needs. The launch of its Stretch product provides additional comfort for business and premium travellers on short and medium-haul routes, such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi. IndiGo is also preparing to expand further with the arrival of the Airbus A321XLR (Extra Long Range).

## Moving ahead

Now, with strong foot-holds in Abu Dhabi and across the UAE, IndiGo is poised to play an even bigger role in connecting India with the Middle East and beyond. The airline is steadily building its foundations as a global airline.

## INDIGO IN THE UAE

- ❖ 79 daily flights
- ❖ 222 weekly Abu Dhabi returns
- ❖ 5 UAE cities served

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EVENT TALK		
OCTOBER 2025		
Date	Event	Venue
4-7	Connections Luxury	Madeira, Portugal
5-8	Connections Luxury Asia Pacific	Tokyo, Japan
6-9	ILTM North America	Baha Mar, Nassau, The Bahamas
7-8	Accessible Travel & Tourism International Conference (ATTIC)	Dubai, UAE
7-9	WTTC Global Summit 2025	Italy
7-9	World Aviation Festival	FIL, Lisbon, Portugal
7-9	IMEX America	Las Vegas, USA
8-9	CTW Global	Dubai, UAE
8-10	TTG Travel Experience	Rimini Fiera, Rimini, Italy
12-16	M&I Flagship Antalya	Antalya, Türkiye
13	World Travel Awards Asia & Oceania Gala Ceremony	Hong Kong
15-17	ITB Asia	Marina Bay Sands, Singapore
15-16	Business Travel Show America	New York, USA
16	Deluxe Travel Market Latvia 2025	Riga, Latvia
19-22	Global Incentive Summit	Budapest, Hungary
22-24	Cancun Travel Mart	Cancun, Mexico
22-24	Tourism Innovation Summit (TIS)	Seville, Spain
26-29	TFest	Mexico

# TK's holiday platform to woo UAE

Originally launched in 2021 for travellers from Türkiye, Turkish Airlines Holidays is changing the way UAE travels by bringing every part of the journey on this single easy-to-use platform. The platform is open to 60 countries, including the UAE.

TT Bureau

Turkish Airlines Holidays, offering integrated holiday packages for travellers, allows users to book flights, accommodations, car rentals, airport transfers, insurance, tours, and other activities in one place. The platform is open to 60 countries, with the UAE emerging as a key market.

Users based in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, or elsewhere in the UAE can now access more than 300 exciting destinations worldwide. The platform offers real value with competitive package pricing, complimentary checked baggage on every booking, and access



Turkish Airlines Holidays users based in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, or elsewhere in the UAE can now access more than 300 exciting destinations worldwide

to a vast hotel network of over 550,000 properties worldwide. On top of that, travellers earn extra 'Miles and Smiles' points across their entire itiner-

ary, turning every trip into a rewarding journey. The platform also signals a broader shift in the travel industry. Airlines are no longer just trans-

port providers; they are evolving into full-service travel partners. For busy UAE travellers, having a trusted, flexible platform to plan everything from quick city breaks to multi-stop adventures is increasingly important.

Now live in the UAE, Turkish Airlines Holidays is ready to meet the needs of modern travellers.

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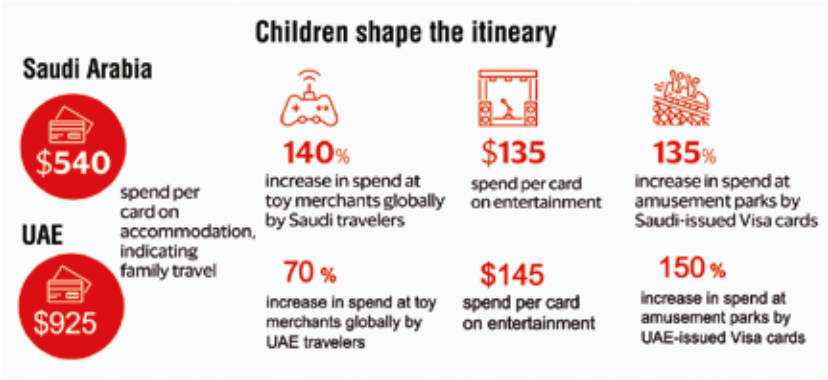
# Leisure travel doubles in Saudi, UAE

According to the latest report by Visa, children are shaping the itineraries for family travel this summer. Family travel has doubled this year in terms of outbound trips in Saudi Arabia. UAE also saw a surge in outbound leisure travel during the school holidays, with spending rising 48 per cent and 40 per cent of travellers taking multiple trips.

TT Bureau

Visa's latest Travel Pulse: Saudi Arabia — Summer Holidays Edition highlights how family travel is taking centre stage in Saudi Arabia's outbound tourism landscape, with children increasingly influencing how and where families spend their holidays. Outbound leisure travel accounted for 48 per cent of cross-border spend as Saudi residents took advantage of school holidays to combine visits to family abroad with international leisure trips.

The study also found that 25 per cent of leisure trav-



ellers took multiple trips this summer, averaging 11 days per trip. In the UAE, outbound leisure travel spend also surged 48 per cent when compared to the Rest of the Year (RoY), with 40 per cent of travellers taking multiple trips, averaging 14 days per trip.

**Outbound places** Manama remained the leading Gulf destination, with 20 per cent traveller share, followed by Dubai (13 per cent). Cairo followed with 9 per cent, alongside Istanbul (8 per cent), and London (4 per cent). Auckland, at

15,000 km away, was the farthest destination visited by Saudi travellers. On the other hand, for travellers in UAE, London remained the leading international destination, with 7 per cent traveller share, followed by Muscat (7 per cent). Riyadh

followed with 6 per cent of traveller share.

**Kids shape itinerary** The study underscores the rising influence of children on family itinerar-

ies. Outbound spend by Saudi-issued cards at toy merchants grew 140%, while amusement park spending surged 135%.

ies. Outbound spend by Saudi-issued cards at toy merchants grew 140 per cent, while amusement park spending surged 135 per cent. In the UAE, travellers' spending on amusement parks soared

Manager for UAE, Visa. **Ali Bailoun**, Regional General Manager for Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman, Visa, said families in Saudi Arabia are making travel decisions with their children's preferences in mind.



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# MOVEMENTS

## SWISSÔTEL AL MUROOJ Dubai

Swissôtel Al Murooj Dubai has appointed **ISSA JANOURA** as Director of Sales. With more than 12 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Janoura brings deep expertise in revenue management, strategic sales planning, and stakeholder engagement. He has a proven track record in exceeding revenue targets, optimising budgets, and implementing cost-effective strategies.



Swissotel Al Murooj Dubai also appointed **AHMED AWAD** as Front Office Manager, adding strength to the operational leadership team. With extensive experience in guest engagement and team management, Awad is dedicated to delivering service excellence and elevating the guest journey at every touchpoint. His leadership is expected to play a key role in enhancing front office efficiency and guest satisfaction. Awad's appointment aligns with the hotel's ongoing commitment to providing personalised, high-quality hospitality experiences.



Further strengthening the commercial division at Swissotel Al Murooj Dubai, **AMR NAGGAR** has been appointed as Director of Revenue. With over 16 years of experience, Naggar combines a strong IT background with a data-driven approach to revenue strategy. He is recognised for delivering commercial success and operational excellence. In his new role, he will focus on improving business performance, maximising revenue opportunities, and supporting long-term growth. His leadership is expected to bring valuable insights and help the hotel stay competitive in a dynamic market.



## INTERCONTINENTAL ABU DHABI HOTEL & RESIDENCES Abu Dhabi

InterContinental Abu Dhabi Hotel & Residences has appointed **ERIKA ANGGREINI** as the Cluster Assistant Director – Marketing. She will oversee the strategic marketing direction for both the iconic InterContinental Abu Dhabi and InterContinental Residences Abu Dhabi. She has 20 years of hospitality marketing experience. In her new role, Anggreini will lead the marketing strategy across both properties.



## WTM LONDON London

RX's World Travel Market London has named **CHRIS CARTER-CHAPMAN** as the Event Director of WTM London, the world's most influential travel and tourism event. The annual WTM London event returns to Excel London from 4–6 November 2025. Carter-Chapman is a business leader, having worked in the media and events industries for the past 15 years. He has held several senior roles, including Head of Content, Commercial Director, and Event Director — with experience of launching properties globally.



## EMIRATES Sub-Saharan Africa

**RASHID ALARDHA** has been promoted to the position of VP Regional Clusters Sub-Saharan Africa at Emirates Airline. He was previously Country Manager – Sri Lanka and Maldives. Alardha joined Emirates in 2009. In his new role, he will oversee commercial operations and support growth across key markets in Sub-Saharan Africa. He brings strong leadership skills and a deep understanding of regional markets to his new position.



## ANANTARA WORLD ISLANDS DUBAI RESORT Dubai

Anantara World Islands Resort has appointed **SURESH FERDINANDUSZ** as Director of Operations. With more than two decades of expertise in luxury hospitality, Ferdinandusz brings a distinguished blend of operational acumen and a passion for excellence to his new role. Having spent the last six years at Anantara The Palm Dubai Resort, Ferdinandusz played a pivotal role in elevating the property's food and beverage offering, aligning every relevant touchpoint.



## NOVOTEL DUBAI AL BARSHA & APARTHOTEL ADAGIO PREMIUM DUBAI AL BARSHA Dubai

Accor has appointed **DRISHTI MISTRY** as Cluster Digital Marketing Manager for Novotel Dubai Al Barsha and Adagio Premium Dubai Al Barsha. Mistry becomes the youngest member of the management team, spearheading the full marketing strategy for two of Accor's flagship Dubai properties. She leads campaigns and digital initiatives across over 650 rooms, four F&B venues, 11 meeting spaces, and wellness facilities.



## EMIRATES Dubai

**MATTHEW SCOTT** will lead Emirates' Network Passenger Sales Development (NPSD) team as Senior Vice President, overseeing the airline's Global Sales & Leisure teams. He was previously Vice President of Cargo Pricing and Interline at Emirates SkyCargo. Scott began his Emirates career with SkyCargo in 2018 and has more than 20 years of experience with international airlines, having held key positions in passenger commercial operations, revenue optimisation, and planning.



## ROYAL JET Abu Dhabi

RoyalJet has appointed **H.E. MOHAMMED BIN MAHFOODH ALARDHI** as Chairman, Board of Directors. A seasoned business leader, Alardhi is also the Executive Chairman of Investcorp, a leading global alternative investment firm. Under his leadership, Investcorp grew its Assets Under Management from US\$ 10 billion to US\$ 60 billion over the past six years. Since 2015, he has been leading Investcorp's activities across a global office network.



## THE NED DOHA Qatar

**ABDULLAH AL ATARI** has joined The Ned Doha as Director of Sales & Marketing. He has an extensive background in luxury hospitality, having held senior leadership roles at several world-renowned hotel brands. With over 14 years of experience in driving sales strategy, brand positioning, and marketing innovation, Al Atari leverages a strong understanding of both the luxury market and the unique demands of GCC region travellers.



The Ned Doha has appointed **RAJA BEN NACEUR** as Director of Marketing & Communications. Originally from Tunisia, Naceur has honed her marketing and communications expertise over 10 years of working with renowned luxury hospitality brands in the Maldives, the EMEA region, and Qatar. Naceur will be a valuable addition to the Sales & Marketing department, bringing a fresh perspective shaped by her love of travel and dining.



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# WTM Spotlight debuts in KSA

RX announced the launch of WTM Spotlight in Saudi Arabia. The event will take place at the Riyadh Front Exhibition & Convention Centre from 29 Sep–1 Oct 2026. WTM Spotlight is a new series of events designed to focus on a single market.

tract 150 million visitors annually by 2030, which, according to research, could see the tourism market increase in value from US\$ 53.87 billion in 2024 to US\$ 100.23 billion by 2030, a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 10.90 per cent.



# WTM London to be ‘biggest’ show

World Travel Market (WTM) London, the world’s most influential travel and tourism event, has announced that the conference programme for 2025 is now live, with 40 sessions already in place and more to follow. This year, for the first time, there is a unifying theme across all stages and sessions: Reimagining Travel in a Changing World.

The umbrella theme gives speakers the chance to share their insights on how the travel and tourism sector is evolving, from new global policies to shifting traveller behaviour. The WTM London 2025 conference programme is designed to build on the overwhelming success of last year’s event, which witnessed a 19 per cent increase in attendance across all tracks and sessions. In particular, the Sustainability Summit saw a 128 per cent increase in attendee numbers, while the dedicated Marketing



and Technology summits recorded a 75 per cent rise. The line-up so far includes many of WTM London’s well-established sessions. These include the highly anti-

cipated WTM Trends Report in association with Oxford Economics, followed by a high-profile panel discussion on the findings in the Yellow Theatre on 4 November. The WTM Ministers’ Summit, now in its 19<sup>th</sup>



year, will take place on 4 November in the expanded ICC Maritime Suites. This year’s iteration, moderated by BBC, will once again bring together global tourism leaders to shape the future of travel through dynamic discussions on policy, strategy, and investment. UK tourism minister, Sir Chris Bryant, is also part of a C-suite panel, From Fortnum to F1, looking at London’s evolution as an event destination.

Conference programme for 2025		
Event	Venue	Date
WTM Trends Report	Yellow Theatre	4 November
WTM Ministers’ Summit	ICC Maritime Suites	4 November
From Fortnum to F1	Yellow Theatre	4 November
Geo-economics Summit	Orange Theatre	4 November
Sustainability Summit	Purple Theatre	4 November
DEAI Summit	Orange Theatre	5 November
Technology Summit	Purple Theatre	5 November
Marketing Summit	Yellow Theatre	6 November

This is also scheduled to take place in the Yellow Theatre on 4 November. Conference Manager, **Brooke Gilbertson**, said: “We set the bar

really high last year, and the team have embraced the challenge of making the sessions and summits at WTM London 2025 even more appealing.”

# The next chapter of immersive events

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Cvent Accelerate Dubai, held at Atlantis – The Palm, attracted close to 500 event planners, marketers, and hospitality professionals, highlighting the growing momentum of the MICE industry. It underscored the role of tech and strategic alignment in shaping the future of events, preparing attendees to lead organisations into the future with confidence and innovation.

TT Bureau

Cvent Accelerate Dubai delivered invaluable insights and tools that enabled attendees to adapt effectively to the rapidly changing events and hospitality industry. Industry experts led sessions on how cutting-edge technologies like AI can transform event planning, marketing, and execution, offering practical guidance on integrating these tools to automate tasks, personalise experiences, and make data-driven decisions.



Gokul Bajaj  
Country Head, UAE,  
Cvent

Gokul Bajaj, Country Head, UAE, Cvent, said, “The events industry is evolving rapidly, with a focus on creating unforgettable, immersive

experiences rather than just managing logistics. Event technology, especially AI, is the driving force behind this shift, pushing the boundaries of creativity and innovation. We have seen that regions open to embracing new technology, like the UAE, are already setting new standards for what is possible.” Cvent Accelerate Dubai serves as a crucial platform for industry leaders to exchange ideas, tackle challenges, and discover new technology solutions that will shape

the future. “The growing attendance each year highlights the trust professionals have in this community and the power of innovation. We are proud to be part of this journey, helping our partners unlock new opportunities and redefine what great events can be,” Bajaj added.

The focus on innovative design approaches equipped participants with strategies to create immersive, multi-sensory experiences that deeply engage audiences and leave lasting impressions. By exploring Event-Led Growth strategies, attendees learned to align events with

broader business goals. Insights around event retention, planning, management, and technology’s role in advancing sustainability goals fostered better collaboration among stakeholders.

Events industry is evolving, with a focus on creating unforgettable, immersive experiences rather than just managing logistics





# CIMX 2026 set to debut in Beijing

The China International MICE Exchange (CIMX) 2026 was announced at the first-ever MICE Meeting Point in Beijing recently. The event will be held from 3–5 November 2026, aiming to connect China’s vibrant market with international industry players. It will create new opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and business growth, establishing Beijing as a global MICE hub.

TT Bureau

A strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between **Zheng Fang**, Deputy Director-General, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism and **David Axiotis**, Managing Director, Messe Berlin (China). The agreement formalises a long-term partnership to promote CIMX, showcase Beijing as the ‘Guest City of Honour’, and strengthen collaboration between the Chinese MICE sector and international markets.



David Axiotis and Zheng Fang sign the MoU at MICE Meeting Point in Beijing

Set to cover the full MICE value chain, CIMX 2026 will focus on “Innovation, Connection, Business Opportunities”. The event will bring together over

200 exhibitors, including destinations, hotels, airlines, cruise operators, travel agencies, DMCs, and event technology providers. More than 350 qualified buy-

ers and 5,000 trade visitors from China and abroad are expected, facilitating over 9,000 one-to-one business meetings. The CIMX Conference will feature

top industry leaders sharing insights on revenue models, sustainability, and technology, while tailored networking and social events will provide a platform for building lasting business relationships.” **Guo Huaigang**, Director General, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, said, “Beijing offers unique strengths for high-end MICE development. This partnership with Messe Berlin and the launch of CIMX provide a platform to connect globally and open channels for two-way exchange.”

## AT A GLANCE

- ❖ CIMX 2026 announced on 11 September 2025 in Beijing
- ❖ Event to take place on 3–5 November 2026
- ❖ Strategic MoU signed with Messe Berlin (China)
- ❖ 200 + exhibitors, 350 + buyers, and 5,000 trade visitors expected

# 1,400 attendees @MICE Meeting Point

The MICE Meeting Point 2025, organised by ITB China, concluded successfully in Beijing recently. The two-day show witnessed over 1,400 attendees, including 80 exhibitors and 200 buyers from around the world, as well as 100 Chinese and international conference speakers. More than 2,000 one-on-one meetings took place between buyers and exhibitors.





# AI, green aviation redefining travel

Arabian Travel Market (ATM) will be organised from 4–7 May 2026 at Dubai World Trade Centre. Under the theme ‘Travel 2040: Driving New Frontiers Through Innovation and Technology’, ATM 2026 will explore the forces reshaping the global tourism landscape and highlight how innovation is transforming every stage of the traveller’s journey.

TT Bureau

The period leading up to 2040 is expected to be one of the most transformative eras in the history of global tourism, with research from the World Economic Forum highlighting that the travel and tourism sector is projected to serve 30 billion tourists and contribute US\$ 16 trillion to global GDP by 2034.

Simultaneously, technological advancements, including AI-driven personalisation and immersive digital experiences,



Danielle Curtis  
Exhibition Director ME  
Arabian Travel Market

alongside green aviation and smart mobility, are set to redefine how, where, and why people travel. Against this backdrop, ATM 2026 will provide a vital plat-

form for the global travel community to explore new opportunities, accelerate technological adoption, and build a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive industry for the future.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said, “The next 10 years and beyond are going to be crucial for the travel and tourism industry. We are at a significant turning point where factors such as climate change, digital advancements, and evolving consumer expectations are com-



ing together to create both challenges and opportunities. By showcasing how innovation can enhance the travel

experience, improve operational efficiency, and promote sustainability, ATM 2026 will provide a key platform for the glob-

al industry to prepare for what lies ahead, while ensuring the Middle East remains at the forefront of this evolution.”

# DW & Uniglobe to uplift corporate travel

DW Travel has partnered with global travel giant Uniglobe Travel to provide businesses in the Middle East with smooth, end-to-end travel solutions. By combining DW Travel’s local expertise with Uniglobe’s international network, the partnership aims to deliver smarter, more efficient, and customised travel experiences for corporate clients across the region and beyond.

TT Bureau

The corporate travel landscape in the Middle East is set for a major transformation with DW Travel, one of the region’s leading travel management companies, announcing a strategic partnership with Uniglobe Travel, a global travel management powerhouse.

The collaboration promises to deliver comprehensive, end-to-end travel solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of businesses working



Emily Jenkins, Head of Product & Digital Solutions, DW Travel; Bader Ahli, Director, DW Travel; Patrick Hooft, President of Uniglobe BI and EMEA; Lina Kurdian, Head of VIP Accounts, DW Travel, and Hasa Al Harthi, Head of Corporate & Leisure, DW Travel

across the Middle East and elsewhere.

Uniglobe Travel has a network of independently owned and operated agencies generating more than US\$ 5 billion in annual revenue. Oper-

ating in 60 countries and serving clients in 90, Uniglobe manages travel programmes for over 10,000 organisations worldwide. Through this partnership, DW Travel becomes Uniglobe’s preferred travel partner

in the Middle East, combining regional expertise with global reach. The collaboration will enable corporate clients to benefit from seamless booking processes, cost-efficient solutions, and tailored services

that cater to both regional and international requirements. “We are excited to enter this strategic partnership with Uniglobe Travel,” said Bader Ahli, Director, DW Travel. “This collaboration not only strengthens our position in the corporate travel sector but also expands our ability to deliver world-class, tailored travel solutions to clients across the Middle East. Whilst DW Travel has experienced 37 per cent revenue growth year on year, our hope is that this partnership will provide opportunities for us to

accelerate our growth even further.” Patrick Hooft, President, BI and EMEA, Uniglobe, said, “Partnering with DW Travel is a pivotal step in strengthening Uniglobe’s presence in the Middle East.”

