

TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

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‘Hand in Hand, We celebrate 50 years’

Emirati Women’s Day 2025 proudly marks 50 years of progress, celebrating women who have been at the forefront of shaping the UAE’s journey. Under the theme “Hand in Hand, We Celebrate 50 Years”, this milestone highlights the remarkable achievements of Emirati women in travel, tourism and hospitality - driving growth, innovation and cultural pride across the nation and beyond.

Emirati women pivotal to tourism

“Emirati women have played a crucial role in our comprehensive development. Thanks to the UAE’s exceptional efforts, Emirati women have become key players in the national business, investment and SME sectors. By the end of July 2025, a total of 128,482 commercial licenses across the country are held by Emirati women, marking a 15% increase from July 2024 and an impressive 155% rise compared to that of July 2020. Their operations span a wide array of economic and investment activities, including e-commerce, tourism technology.”



His Excellency Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri
Minister of Economy and Tourism

Spirit of partnership big driver



Suhaila Ghubash - Vice President
Festival & Events
DFRE

“Empowered by the UAE’s visionary leadership and unified spirit of inclusivity, Emirati women and men are working side by side as trailblazers and leaders across thriving industries like travel and tourism. At DFRE, we take immense pride in embedding national talent into the heart of our forward-looking tourism initiatives, culture-led festivals, and world-class events. Ultimately, it is this spirit of partnership that ensures we move forward hand in hand while honouring our heritage and actively defining our shared future.”

Emirati talent drives tourism

“The travel, tourism and hospitality sector has created opportunities for national talent through vocational training, education, emiratization, and entrepreneurship. Emirati professionals play a key role in shaping the industry’s future by leading innovation, sharing our heritage and representing the UAE as proud cultural ambassadors nationally and globally. Community collaboration and national support have helped us shape experiences that reflect our Emirati identity. This shared effort continues to drive excellence and empower local talent, especially youth.”



Huda Al Hadhrami
Deputy Head – Empowerment
and Inclusion (UAE), VFS Global

Local perspectives through UAE travel



Meerah Ketait
Head of Retail and Leisure
dnata Travel

“Graduate programs and government support have opened doors for more Emiratis to bring fresh ideas into areas like product innovation, customer experience, and sustainability. ‘Hand in Hand’ captures this perfectly; our sector thrives when private companies, educators and policymakers work together to create meaningful career pathways for the community. It’s about ensuring the UAE’s travel story reflects local perspectives and world-class standards, blending heritage with ambition as we grow into a truly global tourism hub.”

Empowering youth in the region

“As the first Emirati female General Manager, I have been privileged to contribute to shaping the nation’s travel, tourism and hospitality sectors, mentoring future leaders and advocating for Emirati talent at every level. Through my work with WorldSkills and youth training initiatives, I’ve witnessed the power of skills to transform lives and unlock opportunity. Guided by H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan’s initiatives, we continue building a generation of Emiratis driving innovation, shaping policy, and leading operational excellence — hand in hand, shaping the future.”



Sharihan Al Mashary
Board Member, Academy of Culinary Arts Cambodia, Riphah Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Arts and University of Cincinnati, Clermont College

Supporting nation building



Noora Belselah
VP Projects
RoyalJet

“Emirati women have always played a vital role in driving the UAE’s impressive growth and relentless pursuit of economic and social progress. With the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors making a huge contribution to the country’s economic progress, Emirati women are playing key and influential roles in driving its growth. And, whether at work or at home, we have been at the forefront in nation-building, in strengthening bonds with our families and the community, and in facilitating productivity among colleagues and organisations.”

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