

Focus Country



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'Sharjah remains a favourite destination for tourists from India'

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) is once again focusing on India as a major future market in which to promote Sharjah's tourism potential as part of its overseas promotion strategy. The delegation from the emirate held a series of workshops and meetings with decision makers and major travel and tourism companies in the country. The road shows took place from December 7 to 11 and covered four cities: Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi. H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority spoke to Travel News Digest on the sidelines of the India mission.



The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) recently held an event under the theme 'All Things New in Sharjah'. Can you throw light on some of the new developments and activities in the tourism sector?

Sharjah is witnessing a number of new hospitality and tourism developments that will add to its charm as a popular tourist destination in the region. One of the major upcoming tourism projects is Al Noor Island in Sharjah's Khalid Lagoon. The AED 80 million (\$22 million) project, an iconic destination in the emirate, consists of a uniquely designed streamlined structure inspired by the natural environment of butterflies. A key attraction, the Butterfly House, is a nature-inspired structure hosting as many as 500 exotic butterflies brought from Far East Asian countries.

The emirate's latest destination for a family day out is the Al Montazah Park, a 126,000 sq m water themed park featuring eight pulsating rides. The park is also distinct for its massive green spaces and designated facilities for children. For adults and children seeking an extra bit of adventure, the park offers Al Montazah Adventures which consists of a number of gladiator-inspired obstacle courses divided into different difficulty levels.

New hospitality developments include Sheraton Sharjah Beach Resort & Spa, Sharjah's latest and most extensive beach resort nestled amid uninterrupted palm-fringed beaches in the emirate. Another major hospitality development is Novotel Sharjah Expo, a new business hotel that will cater to the requirements of the emirate's various sectors and activities at Sharjah's prime MICE location, the Expo Centre Sharjah. Apart from these projects, the Majlis Grand Mercure Sharjah - Resort & Spa operated by Accor is coming up at the Sharjah Corniche as the first Art & Culture themed 5-Star-Deluxe Resort in the luxury segment.

Sharjah has taken proactive steps to transform its eco-tourism landscape with the launch of a number of projects in this area. Prominent among these is the Kalba Eco-tourism Project which is aimed at preserving the diverse habitats and rich wildlife on the east coast of Sharjah. The location allows visitors to enjoy a peaceful time in natural settings featuring lagoons,

mangroves and mountains.

Another landmark eco-tourism project is Sir Bu Nuair Island, located 65 km off the UAE coastline in the Arabian Gulf. The project will host a five-star hotel and resort, hotel apartments and villas as well as a number retail and leisure offerings amid stunning natural scenery and beautiful beaches.

Sharjah is also transforming a 25,000 hectare area in the Maleiha region of the emirate into a major eco-tourism destination that will reflect the regional culture, history and eco-system. The project will feature leisure facilities and accommodation such as hotels, resorts, restaurants, and cafes, and Visitors Centre in addition to offering specialist tours of Maleiha's protected areas.

Sharjah is hosting for the first time the UIM-ABP Aquabike Class Pro Circuit World Championship - Grand Prix of Sharjah on December 19-20, 2015, extending the excitement of UIM F1H2O World Championship 2015 - Grand Prix of Sharjah organised for the 16th year in the emirate. Aquabike racing is the only UIM sanctioned and leading World Championship, and is one of the most popular products of H2O Racing. It is a unique global event merging extreme sports with glamour and is a showcase for a youthful and dynamic lifestyle that will enrich the list of action-packed events in Sharjah's tourism calendar.



How do you envision 'Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021'? What are the chief objectives?

Sharjah's tourism sector has received a new strategic direction with Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority launching the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, aiming to attract 10 million visitors to the emirate in the next five years. The Vision is built on four key pillars. As part of the first pillar, Sharjah will be promoted as an Ideal Family Tourism Destination by offering distinct packages and offers specially designed for families. The second pillar will involve an Innovative Tourism Approach to improve the tourist experience through the provision of innovative solutions. World Class Tourism Facilities and Capabilities constitute the third pillar to enhance efficiencies in tourism sector through partnership and collaborative action. International Cultural Hub is the fourth pillar which will help achieve the Vision through effective promotion of cultural and heritage elements among families.

Sharjah has also undertaken the task of human skill development in the hotel sector under the 'Marhabtein' training programme. How far has it been successful?

The 'Marhabtein' training programme is one of the most successful initiatives launched under the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021. The comprehensive training programme has contributed to enhancing efficiencies through collaborative action and promoting Sharjah as a destination with world class tourism facilities and capabilities. In the first phase of the initiative, SCTDA partnered with Sharjah Roads and Transport Authority (SRTA) to start a training programme for taxi drivers in Sharjah to improve their service delivery and equip them with capabilities to provide a better experience for visitors to the emirate.

In the second phase of the initiative, SCTDA launched 'YOU@SHARJAH' Front Line Training Programme to develop human resource capabilities in the hotel sector. The new programme targeted at front office staff, including receptionists and customer service representatives, who deal directly with tourists and guests.

Another training programme was organised for senior executives in the Sharjah hotel and tourism sector to provide them with updated knowledge, skills and tools on the power of data to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of hotel and tourism business operations in Sharjah.

Can you specifically underline the initiatives taken to attract Indian tourists to the city?

The emirate of Sharjah remains a favourite destination for tourists from India, especially since the UAE has close ties with India and hosts a large number of residents from the Indian community. Sharjah attracted more than 135,000 tourists from India in 2014, recording a 23% increase compared to 2013.

Sharjah has positioned itself as a world class tourist destination for the entire family. The emirate offers a variety of attractions for everyone in the family, from dazzling shows and carnivals to enchanting parks and stunning desert landscapes as well as scenic man-made lagoons and an array of cultural and edutainment locations. For the adventurous, the emirate offers water sports, snorkelling and diving activities on its east coast, where families have the option to either camp on the beach or stay in any of the motels and hotels that line the coast.

Are there further plans of launching new flights for easing air connectivity?

Sharjah's Air Arabia connects the emirate with 13 Indian cities through 112 flights a week. Considering that tourists from India form a major chunk of visitors to the emirate, efforts will continue to provide easier air connectivity to visitors from the country.

What facilities are being provided to Indians for visit/tourist visa procurement?

Sharjah is offering tourist visa for 30 days and 90 days with easy documentation and at affordable prices, which can be easily availed through Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA).

Tourist arrivals exceed 4 millions in Abu Dhabi as new cruise terminal opens

Tourist arrivals in Abu Dhabi exceeds four millions in 2015. "We have stretched our target and we now expect 4.1 million tourists 2015," Sultan Al Dhaheri, the acting Executive Director at TCA Abu Dhabi, said on the sidelines of the opening of the new cruise terminal at Zayed Port. He said that the growth in the capital's tourism sector in the next five years would be driven by infrastructure developments such as the cruise terminal, the Midfield Terminal at Abu Dhabi airport and the completion of cultural attractions, including the Louvre and Guggenheim museums. In June, TCA Abu Dhabi had raised the initial target for 2015 from 3.49 million arrivals to 3.9 million as guest numbers surged by 20% in the first four months of 2015, with key source markets such as the United Kingdom, India, China and

Germany contributing to the bulk of the increase.

"Further details were released on the growth of the cruise sector. Cruise passengers will increase by 15,000 in the 2016-17 season," said Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, the Chief Executive of Abu Dhabi Ports. That works out to a year-on-year increase of more than seven percent as figures from TCA Abu Dhabi and the ports operator show that about 205,000 cruise visitors from 112 ship visits were expected this season. The cruise season starts in September and runs through May.

220,000 cruise passengers are expected in the capital next season from 117 ships expected to call on Zayed Port. The ports operator expects that figure to reach 300,000 passengers from 130 ship calls in 2019-20.



Focus Country

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TOURISM & ANTIQUITIES



United Arab Emirates, The National Council of Tourism & Antiquities (NCTA)

Seven Emirates One Destination

The United Arab Emirates has accomplished many remarkable things over the past 40 years. Thanks to the pioneering vision of their founder Sheikh Zayed, the UAE is now truly a global country, with over 200 nationalities living and working there, and has rightfully earned its reputation as the economy of tomorrow and a model for emerging markets everywhere. The mission of National Council of Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA) is to tell their nation's story and preserve these ancient values that make them great, to instill in their people a sense of pride and legacy while sharing their success with the rest of the world. The United Arab Emirates is a holidaymaker's paradise. With pristine beaches, cool blue water and a gleaming skyline, the UAE is quickly named as a favourite destination by vacationers from around the world. Along with palm-laden hotels, shiny yachts and colossal malls that would make even the most dedicated shopper wide-eyed with wonder, new attractions are opening up all over the country, drawing new audiences and appealing to an ever more diverse set of vacationers.

Abu Dhabi



Ajman



Dubai



Fujairah



Ras Al Khaimah



Sharjah



Umm Al Qauwain



Vision

To position the United Arab Emirates as the leading tourism hub regionally and globally

Mission

Consolidation of efforts between the tourism authorities in UAE to identify UAE as a leading tourism hub and co-ordinate the efforts to preserve and maintain UAE's antiquities through unified external representation and co-operation with international organisations, governmental and non-governmental

Values

Leadership: Create young leaders that can stimulate a group of people to work toward a common goal

Excellence: Adopt the principles of excellence and strive for continuous improvement

Respect: Respect the cultural values and principles of local community and history, the expectations of visitors and the needs of employees

Learning: Adopt an active role in continuous learning and the formation of educational experiences

Credibility & Transparency: Ensure all interactions reflect the cultural values of transparency, credibility and morals

Innovation: Appreciation of creativity and encouragement of new ideas and innovations

Sustainability: Creation of sustainable solutions adopting 'green' standards

Focus Country UAE's historic destination promotion at OTM

Under the umbrella of National Council of Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) showcased its India-specific tourism promotions at OTM Mumbai 2016. For the very first time in trade show history, the United Arab Emirates led their participation with all its 7 emirates – Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain – making them the largest destination exhibitor in OTM Mumbai 2016.



Abdulla Al Hammadi
Director - Marketing & Overseas Promotions
NCTA, UAE

“OTM is a very good show. We are getting lots of enquiries. Our 30 co-participants from 7 Emirates are also getting very nice results. We are looking for more tourists from India to the United Arab Emirates. We plan to do big campaign in the near future and we will be participating in OTM 2017 as well.”



MIDDLE EAST

Oman records 17% increase in Indian arrivals in 2015

Oman received 299,022 Indian arrivals last year recording 17% growth in 2015 over 2014. Oman's National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) released the arrival figures which highlight an increase in inbound numbers from India. The statistics also reflect a growth of 60% in Indian arrivals to Oman in the last five years.

Speaking on the increase, Lubaina Sheerazi, India Representative, Ministry of Tourism, Oman said, "The increase is very encouraging and reflects all the hard work we have put in promoting and marketing the destination in India. Since 2014, we started promoting Oman as an ideal wedding destination for Indians as Muscat is close to India. Our efforts were rewarded as we witnessed several large-scale weddings take place in the last two years. From Sonam Kapoor to diamond merchants in Surat and NRI's, several Indians are now visiting Oman for the purpose of destination weddings. This has contributed significantly to our arrival numbers. MICE tourism in Oman has also seen an increase and to attract more MICE activities this year, our efforts are aimed at increasing interactions with tour operators and corporates."

As a country surrounded by mighty mountains, valleys, deserts and beaches, Oman is an excellent short-haul destination from India. "To attract more tourists from India, we are looking at promoting various activities. We have observed over the years that Indian travellers don't travel just for sight-seeing and shopping anymore. More young people are now travelling who prefer active holidays and Oman has a lot to offer to these travellers. From canyoning to deep sea



diving, from sailing to golfing, Oman is a treat to anyone seeking an outdoor holiday," Sheerazi added.

Oman has seen several major developments in the country over the years and some properties in the pipeline to be opened in 2016 include: The Anantara Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, a rare jewel in the rocky contours of the vast Saiq Plateau on Oman's fabled Green Mountain, magnificently perched almost 3,000 m above sea level on the curving rim of a great canyon; the Anantara Salalah Resort, situated between a beach and natural lagoon on the south coast of Dhofar in Salalah, Oman; The Kempinski Hotel and Residences at Muscat's Al Mouj resort. Muscat has seen recent growth in the MICE market and this is anticipated to grow even faster with the opening of the new Oman Convention and Exhibition centre. The 22,000 m facility will be complemented with four hotels with a total of 1,000 rooms and a business park.

Lebanon continues development in its tourism and travel industry

Amid continuing regional tension, the Levant or Eastern Mediterranean witnessed continuous development in its tourism and travel industry. Lebanon registered an incremental trend in figures of tourism spending, vat refunds and airport arrivals.

Lebanon's hotel occupancy had a year-on-year increase during the months of January and February 2016, although the average room rate was set to meet the market seasonal demand.

Beirut welcomed a unique and live performance of the Disney award-winning movie, Frozen, on the main Biel exhibition centre stage that held thousands of parents who shared the beautiful experience with their children.

Mostly Shakespeare was one of many scheduled performances within the Al-Bustan International Festival of Music & the Performing Arts.

Several options are available for accommodation, that range from B&B homestays in Beirut and beyond, to luxurious, lavish properties ready to cater to all travellers.

Positive experiences are the mottos in Lebanon,



where one can travel to meditate, attend social events, practice active sports, and visit natural wonders.

Lebanon tourism wants to be an ideal destination for leisure attractions with its varied landscape and mild climate, besides the extreme richness of its cultural and historic patrimony.

Qatar Airways A350 aircraft makes its first entry in India

Qatar Airways marked its return to the India Aviation International Exhibition and Conference with the display of its A350 new-generation aircraft for medium to long-haul operations, making its first public appearance in India. The ultra-modern aircraft was able to grab the attention of visitors and VIPs with its custom-designed interiors and innovative design.

President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, inaugurated the fifth edition of India Aviation, the country's largest exhibition and conference on civil aviation, which was held in Hyderabad recently. Also present on the occasion was Ashok Gajapathi Raju Pusapati, Indian Union Minister for Civil Aviation.

Qatar Airways, the global launch customer of the A350, just celebrated one year of operations with the technologically advanced aircraft. The airline's A350

now flies to four destinations - Frankfurt, Munich, Philadelphia and Singapore - across three continents: Asia, Europe and North America. Soon, the aircraft would be flying to the upcoming new routes of Adelaide and Boston, and also the second daily flight to New York.

H.E. Al Baker said, "It gives us immense pride to be a part of India Aviation 2016 and we are delighted to showcase our A350 for the first time here. We remain committed to India and look forward to developing our footprint to give the Indian travelling public a wide choice of services. This will expand opportunities for business and tourism, and create new jobs in aviation and allied industries."

Like Qatar, he said, the Indian economy is experiencing robust growth. "Qatar Airways serves more than 150 destinations with award-winning service, and we serve more cities in India than any other country in our network. We fly to 13 Indian cities operating 102 passenger flights and 30 freighter flights every week. This market will always be a key part of our growth strategy, and we look forward to growing our presence in India."

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority updates Visit Abu Dhabi mobile app

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) has released a new, improved version of its Visit Abu Dhabi mobile application. The latest Visit Abu Dhabi app version that lets users to gain instant access to all that's new in the emirate via their mobile phones is now live and features several upgrades and enhancements, as TCA Abu Dhabi continues to improve the functionality of the service.

Version 4.0 of the app allows access to the same content at the Authority's destination portal VisitAbuDhabi.ae and is available for iPhone, Android & Windows Phone. The app will further feature enhancements to make it a more user-friendly experience.

"We've listened carefully to all your feedback and our app has been completely redesigned from top to bottom following the latest user experience trends to make the whole experience even more immersive and easy to use," said Mouza Al Shamsi, Acting Executive Director of Marketing and Communications at TCA Abu Dhabi. "The entire key features that you're familiar with from our previous versions are still present but now they're even faster, smarter and bursting with functionality."



Etihad signs agreement with Luggage Logistics for baggage management

Etihad Airways has announced an agreement with Luggage Logistics to transform the end-to-end baggage management process across the airline's global airport network.

Luggage Logistics' advanced Baggage Management System (BMS) will enable Etihad Airways to significantly improve the delivery of guests' luggage to their destination on time. It will also help the airline to easily track where bags are at any point along the journey, throughout its global operation.

BMS will integrate with flight schedules and other key passenger information and departure control systems. This will increase the speed at which Etihad Airways' guest bags can be identified and transferred from the aircraft to the airport terminal facilities onto connecting flights, keeping departures on schedule and improving the on-time performance of its flights.

Geert W Boven, Etihad Airways' Senior Vice President Airport Services, said, "The partnership with Luggage Logistics will greatly improve the identification, management and transfer control of guest baggage across our global airport network including at our Abu Dhabi base. The new baggage management solution will enhance the guest experience by reducing lost or misplaced luggage, minimise delays commonly associated with baggage management, while optimising our flight operations."



MIDDLE EAST

TCA Abu Dhabi unveils action-packed agenda for Summer Season 2016

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) unveiled the line-up for this year's events and shows for Abu Dhabi Summer Season, running emirate-wide from July 7 to September 11. The programme of leading international theatre shows, comedy acts, concerts, circus performances, an illusionist and activation zones will be held at venues across Abu Dhabi city, Al Ain and the Western Region and span Eid Al Fitr, the school holidays and Indian Independence Day.

Sultan Al Dhaheri, Acting Executive Director Tourism, TCA Abu Dhabi, said, "We are hugely encouraged by the number of visitors who came to the emirate to experience Abu Dhabi Summer Season last year, not only from across the GCC but from around the world. This annual event is one that reaps very positive rewards in our visitor numbers during the traditionally quieter summer period as we move towards becoming a year-round destination." Summer Season 2015 witnessed a 21% increase in guest arrivals into the emirate compared to 2014 with 951,979 guests checking into Abu Dhabi's 167 hotels and hotel apartments during the period. The largest increase in visitor numbers was from India rising nearly 30%.

The ultimate record-breaking roller coaster 'Flying Aces' was also launched recently at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. Commenting on the launch of Flying Aces,



Jesse Vargas, General Manager at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi said, "Following the introduction of two new attractions in 2015, we are starting 2016 with the biggest ride unveiling since our grand opening, with the launch of the incredible, record-breaking roller coaster, Flying Aces. This coaster will surprise guests with

never-before-experienced thrills and it further cements Ferrari World Abu Dhabi's reputation as a pioneer in the region's leisure and entertainment industry. A theme park evolution on this scale is unheard of and we are so proud to bring even more fun to one of Abu Dhabi's premier leisure destinations, Yas Island."

Etihad Airways and Jet Airways enter 3rd year of Mumbai Indians sponsorship of Vivo Indian Premier League T20 season

Etihad Airways and Jet Airways are continuing their sponsorship as Official Airline partners and principal sponsors of defending champions Mumbai Indians at this year's Vivo Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 cricket tournament. Mumbai Indians feature some of the sport's biggest names. The team is captained by Indian batsman Rohit Sharma and coached by former Australia captain Ricky Ponting. Star players in this year's squad include Indian spin bowler Harbhajan Singh, Sri Lankan fast bowler Lasith Malinga, New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson, England wicketkeeper Joss Buttler and West Indies' Lendl Simmons, who won the ICC T20 World Cup with his national team in India last week.

Peter Baumgartner, Chief Commercial Officer, Etihad Airways, said, "Etihad Airways has a great sporting tradition, supporting leading teams around the world. Mumbai Indians are no exception. We are delighted to team up with our Indian partner Jet Airways to once again sponsor Mumbai Indians, arguably the best domestic sporting brand in Indian cricket."

Gaurang Shetty, Jet Airways Whole-time Director, said, "Our partnership with the Mumbai Indians is a truly winning combination. We are excited to extend this association with the defending champions to the 2016 IPL. We look forward to another year of thrilling competition and engagement with fans as Rohit Sharma and his team set out to emulate their



title-winning performance."

Following the same format as last year, Etihad Airways' logo will appear on the back of shirts worn by the Mumbai Indians for home matches, and the Jet Airways logo will be featured in the same position for away matches. Under the sponsorship agreement, Etihad Airways and Jet Airways will enjoy extensive branding and message beamed across LED pitchside advertising and on giant screens at Wankhede Stadium.

Jordan Tourism Board conducts wedding planners FAM from India

Jordan Tourism Board recently held a Mega Wedding Planners FAM to Jordan from India. The participants were from prominent wedding planning companies from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad.

The group travelled from Amman to the Dead

Sea, Petra, Jerash, Ma'ain Hot Springs and Aqaba to scout potential locations and venues of Jordan for holding Indian destination weddings. Jordan is slated to become an exotic and promising wedding destination, as Indians increasingly look for newer venues and exciting options for themed weddings.



Kuwait to foster further growth in tourism

Tourism in Kuwait will grow by 4.3% per annum, forecasts recent statistics, thereby propelling the country to invest in the sector. The forecast has been reported for over the next decade through to 2025, with a total investment figure of KWD 276 million (one billion dollars).

Tourism received a boost in 2015 with airport passenger volume growing from around 10 million travellers in 2014 to just over 10.2 million last year as the Gulf state ploughs ahead with plans to expand its transportation infrastructure.

World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) report titled 'Kuwait Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2015' states that tourism accounts for 1.5% of GDP in 2015, and is set to rise by 0.3% by 2025. The report also expects a growth in leisure spend by 6.2% per annum to KWD 2.4 billion in 2025 while business travel is expected to grow by 5.6% per annum to KWD 457.3 million in 2025.



"Kuwait is focused on adding new high profile brands to its hotel mix as well as opening up the country with its expansion programme for Kuwait International airport," said Nadege Noblet-Segers, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market.

WTTC also predicts 440,000 tourist arrivals by 2024. Kuwait also exhibits high domestic travel spend that generated 88.1% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2014 and is expected to increase by 6.4% per annum through to 2025.

High-end brands such as Four Seasons will open its first 263-key Kuwait property at Burj Alshaya at the end of 2016. This will be followed by the Mercure Kuwait (2017), Hilton Olympia Kuwait in 2019 and a Grand Hyatt in 2020. Kuwait will be entering new mid-market territory with a number of upcoming projects including the 160-room Novotel Sharq (2017) and several Rotana properties, with a Centro Rotana set to debut in 2018 with 200 rooms.

MIDDLE EAST

Ethihad Airways launches the first airbus A380 service to Mumbai

Flight EY204 from Abu Dhabi landed at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai, making the city the airline's fourth A380 destination following London Heathrow, Sydney, New York, followed by Melbourne.

With the aircraft upgrade, Etihad Airways is able to offer an all-A380 daily service in both directions between Mumbai and New York JFK International with a seamless connection over Abu Dhabi, along with the unique USA customs border protection which enables guests to pre-clear U.S. customs in Abu Dhabi. The service is operated as a codeshare flight with Etihad Airways' strategic Indian partner, Jet Airways.

James Hogan, President and CEO, Etihad Airways, said, "Bringing our flagship product to India with additional seat capacity demonstrates our overwhelming undertaking to one of the world's fastest growing economies, helping fulfil growing demand and meeting travellers' expectations for superior products and services. Key feeder markets to and from Europe, North America and the Middle East will also benefit greatly from the upgraded service."

Neerja Bhatia, Vice President- Indian Subcontinent,



Etihad Airways, added, "We are delighted to showcase our innovative The Residence featuring a living room, shower and bedroom, and our revolutionary First Apartments and Business Studios on the new daily A380 Mumbai flights that give our guests the very best onboard experiences with unmatched luxury and comfort."

The A380 operates on one of the five-daily scheduled flights between Mumbai and Abu Dhabi. Etihad Airways operates three flights and Jet Airways operates two. The Mumbai A380 also offers guests with connections to and from popular destinations such as London, Paris, Manchester, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto, Bahrain, Doha and Jeddah.

Ras Al Khaimah sings agreement with Cox & Kings to increase arrivals from India

Ras Al Khaimah has signed an agreement with Cox & Kings Ltd to strengthen its relationship and expand its presence in the Indian market, which is one of the fastest outbound markets in the region. This agreement will focus on promoting the various aspects of Ras Al Khaimah and popularising it in the Indian market.

The agreement is aimed at increasing tourism arrivals to Ras Al Khaimah from India. The partnership will also introduce Ras Al Khaimah to the Indian market through specially created itineraries, creation of standalone tourism products for the emirate and market the destination via a series of campaigns and training programmes for Cox & Kings staff.

Haitham Mattar, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, said, "Following our revised

strategies and vision to reach one million visitors by the end of 2018, we will be announcing a number of partnerships such as this. Air India Express has already launched new routes to the emirate and our agreement with Cox & Kings will ensure we're making the destination as accessible as ever. India offers an important contribution towards our overall visitor figures and we are keen to progress this opportunity to target Indian travellers even further."

Ashutosh Mehere, Senior Vice President, Alliances & Special Projects, Cox & Kings Ltd, said, "Ras Al Khaimah offers the Indian traveller an opportunity to explore a new destination. We will focus on promoting the destination aggressively in the Indian market and create packages that are affordable and capture the essence of the destination."



Air Arabia offers connectivity from India to Sarajevo



Sarajevo has become the latest destination to be served from India by Air Arabia, via Sharjah. This makes it the 54th accessible destination from India to which the airline flies thrice a week. The service can be availed from 13 cities in the country including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Calicut, Chennai, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Goa, Kochi, Mumbai, Nagpur, New Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer, Air Arabia, remarked, "Bosnia and Herzegovina are rapidly emerging as a must-visit destination for tourists seeking great culture and history alongside incredible backdrop and outdoor activities. Sarajevo adds further strength to our broad network of destinations in Eastern Europe and we will continue to expand in the same manner."

Lemon Tree Hotels to consolidate its presence in UAE

Lemon Tree Hotels has divulged its plans of establishing eight properties in the UAE within the next three years. The midscale hotel operator is eyeing hotels and serviced apartments in Abu Dhabi, Fujairah and Dubai, expecting to open its first property.

Rattan Keswani, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels, explained, "You go where your customer goes, or where the demand will be created, and it is the spending power of Indians that we are trying to harness. Moreover, most of the development here is in upscale categories and although a larger number of travellers are in the midscale

sector, nobody is filling the gap."

Lemon Tree has already stepped into the Middle East, with a partnership sealed with Sydney-based real estate company Raine and Horne to open properties in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, banking on the same for its growth in UAE.

Sanjay Chinnani, Managing Director, Raine and Horne, further talked about opportunities in several Dubai neighbourhoods, including Jaddaf, Business Bay, City Walk, Al Barsha, Jumeirah Lakes Towers, Jebel Ali and Jumeirah Village Circle.

The hotel group also plans to expand in Sri Lanka and Thailand.



MIDDLE EAST

Ras Al Khaimah records 37% rise in Indian tourists

Visitor arrivals from India to Ras Al Khaimah increased by 37% during January-April, 2016, marking a remarkable surge over the same period previous year, reported Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA).

India has emerged as the fourth largest international inbound market for Ras Al Khaimah. To further the current tourism development strategy, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Authority recently conducted road shows and one-on-one interactions with Indian travel trade partners to educate them about the tourist offerings of the emirate.

Haitham Mattar, CEO, Ras Al Khaimah TDA, said, "As part of our tourism strategy to attract one million visitors to Ras Al Khaimah by the end of 2018, we place great importance on diversifying our source markets and creating sustainable tourism growth. We recently launched our new brand positioning which emphasises Ras Al Khaimah's natural assets, luxurious indulgence, range of activities for different types of travellers, and authentic Arabian heritage and culture. We are very hopeful that visitors from India will continue to grow as more leisure and business travellers discover the emirate's



unique offerings."

An occupancy rate of 71% was recorded by the hotels in the first quarter of 2016, up by 18% over

that of last year. Coupled with a 9.2% year-on-year increase in Rev PAR, this demonstrates the highest growth across the GCC region.

Petra makes a new archaeological discovery

Petra will now showcase a new archaeological discovery to the world. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has confirmed the discovery of an enormous monument that has no parallels to any other structure in the Nabatean city.

The discovery was reported by archaeologists Sarah Parcak and Chris Tuttle in a study published in The Journal of American Schools of Oriental Research (BASOR).

"The historic discovery of something this monumentally significant brings us to a state of pride, joy and awe. The fact that technological advancement has given us a glimpse into our history is a sign that we must further invest in the future to be able to see and uncover

our past. This discovery brings us closer to our heritage and to understanding the prosperous civilisation of the Nabateans. With that said, we're proud to further look into drone technology, satellite imaging and excavation ventures in hopes of bringing more of Jordan's hidden treasures to light," said H.E. Lina Annab, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities.

The monument owes its discovery to modern technology like Google Earth, satellite imaging and drone. Pottery found near the site that is yet to be excavated, dates it back to 2100 years ago. Located nearly 800 m to the south of the famous Treasury, this breakthrough confirms that Petra extends further than what meets the eye.



Ferrari World Abu Dhabi introduces new kid's ride for 2016

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has introduced a kid's ride in 2016, called Benno's Great Race. A new trackless, interactive family ride, Benno's Great Race takes visitors on a romp through a cartoon version of the Italian countryside. With wrenches in hand, riders engage in several interactive tasks along the way, helping build a race car and later clearing obstacles along its path. The ride is a clever mix of practical and screen effects, with the screens hosting the interactive elements. Using that wrench as a controller, corresponding icons on the screens become wrenches, scissors, or hammers under your control.

Ferrari world also opened its third roller coaster, Flying Aces, earlier this year. Featuring 'the world's tallest loop, the steepest and fastest cable lift incline, and 10 zero-gravity airtime moments', this roller



coaster replicates the feeling of an old-time biplane flight.

Jordan Tourism Board hosts a month-long food & photo festival in Delhi

The Jordan Tourism Board, in association with Zorzura, recently concluded a month-long Jordan Food Festival and Photo Exhibition in Zorzura, Qutub Hotel, New Delhi.

The festival, held from June 3 to July 2, 2016, commenced with a grand launch event at Zorzura. H.E. Hassan Mahmoud Mohammad Al Jawarneh, Jordanian Ambassador to India was the Chief Guest at the show with former Indian Ambassador to Jordan, Anil Trigunayat, as the Guest of Honour.



"It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here to promote tourism from India to Jordan and we hope the friendship and tourism between both countries continues to thrive," expressed Al Jawarneh.

Amit Mishra, Co-Founder, Think Greeneries, felicitated the dignitaries with mementos and Ashit Taneja, Country Manager, Jordan Tourism Board, gave away tokens of appreciation to the event partners.

Eminent media personalities, business officials, journalists, bloggers and travel trade industry association heads and partners were present at the festival to immerse in the spirit of Jordanian culture and to savour its different flavours.

A weekly lucky draw was also conducted where winners received complimentary tickets to Jordan from Air Arabia when they dined at Zorzura. Each bill generated at the Food Festival promotion could be used at Zorzura to avail a 10% discount against a Jordan holiday package with SOTC.

The food festival had Zorzura as its Hospitality Partner, Air Arabia as its Airline Partner and SOTC as the Travel Partner.

 MIDDLE EAST

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Yas Island to welcome sensational Bollywood shows

Yas Island is geared up to celebrate Indian Independence with the most coveted line-up of Indian artists.

Bollywood sensation Farhan Akhtar and music directors Vishal and Shekhar take to the du Forum stage on August 12 with extraordinary performances. The stars return to the UAE after many years with fresh, new songs along with their roster of past favourites.

On August 13, the legendary trio of Shankar, Ehsaan and Loy will have fans dancing at the du Forum as they also make their Abu Dhabi debut with new material from their latest hit Bollywood movie soundtracks - 'Dostana 2', 'Agra Ka Dabra', 'Mirziya'.



Etihad Cargo launches luxury car service for summer

Etihad Cargo has launched a new travel offer for guests who want to travel with their luxury car over the summer season.

Drivers can enjoy up to 20% off air cargo rates and their seat, when they book in First or Business Class. The cargo section for the national carrier is also offering additional services this year, arranging hotel accommodation and having the car delivered straight to the driver's doorstep. The offer is available from Abu Dhabi to European destinations including Amsterdam, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Geneva, London, Manchester, Milan, Munich, Paris and Zurich.

David Kerr, Senior Vice President, Etihad Cargo, said, "Through our use of a mixed fleet of aircraft, we have a range of options that enable us to transport cars in the hold including some of the new additions to our fleet such as the Airbus 380s."

With upgrades and expansions having been made to the passenger fleet, it is possible to move vehicles

in the bellyhold of Etihad's aircraft such as the Airbus 380. This also provides guests with access to The Residence, the world's first three-room private suite on a commercial aircraft, which is served by a personal butler.



Ferrari World Abu Dhabi launches new Family and Friends offer

Visitors will now get a chance to escape scorching summer heat and enjoy exceptional rides and attractions with the 'Family and Friends' offer launched by Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

Running from July 10 to September 9, the promotion will allow guests to purchase four Bronze admission tickets for the price of three at only AED 825. Groups consisting of more than four members can also buy up to three additional bronze tickets at only AED 206.25 per ticket.

The all-new Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has launched record-breaking roller coaster, Flying Aces, and the interactive family-friendly ride, Benno's Great Race, and many others.

Guests will also be eligible to enter a lucky draw and win various rewards, including a Maserati and AED 1 million in cash as part of the 'Say Yas' summer campaign running on Yas Island. This new offer will be available only when tickets are purchased at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi's ticket counter.



Solar-powered plane arrives at Cairo, Egypt

The Egyptian Tourism Authority and Ministry of Aviation recently held a press conference to welcome Solar Impulse 2, the solar powered plane which has taken off from Seville on the penultimate leg of a



round-the-world trip which reached Cairo.

Operated by pilot André Borschberg, Solar Impulse 2 travels at an average speed of 75 km/h and at a maximum altitude of 28,000 feet.

"This is Solar Impulse's penultimate flight before reaching their long-awaited finish line. We are honoured to welcome Solar Impulse 2 to Egypt. It is not every day that history is being made, but we have welcomed the first solar powered plane and we look forward to welcome our tourist aboard solar powered planes in the near future," said H.E. Egypt's Minister of Tourism Mohamed Yehia Rashed.

The plane utilises 17,248 solar cells that render fuel consumption unnecessary, weighs 2.3 tons and has a wingspan of 72 meters.

Sonam Kapoor makes maiden visit to Israel

Bollywood actress Sonam Kapoor recently made her first visit to Israel, accompanied by her mother where they spent time unwinding and relaxing while still visiting the sites and sights, enjoying the vast cuisines and the culture in Jerusalem, Dead Sea and Tel Aviv.

The Neerja star was in Israel to shoot the cover story of Harper's Bazaar Bride Magazine in the stunning Jerusalem. Sonam extended her trip after the shoot and also met Amir Halevi, Director General - Israel Ministry of Tourism, along with Hassan Madah, Director - Israel Ministry of Tourism, India.

"I was thrilled while exploring Israel and everything about this place is so unique! When I was in Jerusalem, the character of the city, the culture, beautiful alleys, markets, and lovely people kept me hooked all the time. I also felt that Dead Sea is out of the world experience which I will always cherish. I hope to be back here soon," said Kapoor.

"Bollywood music is popular in Israel, but the sighting



of a Bollywood star is not common so we were happy to welcome Sonam Kapoor as she is among the first few Bollywood celebrities to visit Israel. As India is an important market for us, we continue our focus to attract Indian

travellers to Israel for leisure travel like honeymoon, family vacations or adventure, as well as MICE, and we hope that Sonam Kapoor's visit will attract her fans to visit the country as well," added Madah.

Abu Dhabi builds focus on India as a leading overseas source market

In its bid to project itself as a prime location for MICE and business events, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) hosted a corporate dinner in Mumbai and Pune on September 1-2, 2016.

Ethihad and Jet Airways participated as partners for the event that was attended by leading figures from the tourism industry. Present at the gala dinner were Rotana Hotels & Resorts, Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri Hotel in Abu Dhabi and Anantara Hotels & Resorts who promoted awareness about the family-friendly attractions being offered in Abu Dhabi.

Bejan Dinshaw, Country Manager- India, TCA Abu Dhabi, said, "We were delighted to host this event and received a great response from the corporate attendees. It was a pleasure to meet everyone from the industry. I am really looking forward to the corporate trips and we look forward to hosting them in Abu Dhabi."

Abu Dhabi is currently attracting a lot of business travellers through incentives and conferences. Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau's 'Advantage Abu Dhabi' incentive programmes provide financial and



ground-assistance for viable business events. Not only MICE, the emirate is evolving as a choice destination for leisure, special interest, weddings, honeymoon, and other niche travel segments.

Destination Abu Dhabi thus offers a mixed platter of luxury with adventure, and being just few hours away from India it definitely makes it a perfect location for Indian travellers.

Israel Ministry of Tourism launches its first all-India advertising campaign

The Israel Ministry of Tourism Office in India has launched a new advertising campaign in the country that will run for a period of two months, showcasing tourist attractions in Israel through print, television and digital media.

This new campaign will mark the first ever all-India campaign of such scale by the Israel Tourism Ministry. The TV commercials, broadcasted under the slogan, 'Begin your Journey to Israel now', displays the variety of tourist attractions in Israel- the modern city of Tel Aviv, the Dead Sea, the Baha'i Gardens in the city of Haifa, the holy city of Jerusalem and more.

The tourism has also launched a new website, goisrael.com, to provide a wealth of information on tour operators and packages, to facilitate a hassle-free travel to the destination.



"After we conducted a research in India we found out that the Indian travellers are not aware of the tourist attractions and experience that Israel offers, so we decide to launch a campaign to create awareness among them. Since India is an important market for us, we have invested ₹13 crore in this campaign. We will invest more in the future since we have a growth in arrivals from India. Last year we had a growth of 13%," said Hassan Madah, Director, Israel Ministry of Tourism Office in India.

Lama Tours organises Tier II city roadshow 2016

Lama Tours organised its Tier II city roadshow in Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Pune, Kochi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Jalandhar.

Kulwant Singh, CEO & MD, Car Fare & Lama Groups LLC, said, "Tier II cities are very important for us as we have been coming to India for the last 15 years, doing roadshows in Tier I cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, etc. but we saw that a lot of enquiries are being generated from Tier II cities. Also, there was a gap of right information being provided by the Tier I cities to the Tier II. We thought it would be ideal for us to come to Tier II cities, talk

to the agents and give them information about our products."

Lama Tours highlighted the importance of Indian travellers to the UAE, as this is a strong feeder market to the region. The roadshows had an opportunity to interact with hoteliers, travel agents beside the travel trade fraternity.

Participants were ranging from Hotels, Airlines, Dubai Parks & Resorts, Golden Sands Hotel, Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo, Atlantis The Palm Dubai, Ferrari and Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, Air India, among others.

Atlantis, The Palm introduces MICE bookers' incentive for the Indian travel trade

The Indian travel trade will now be able to avail exclusive experiences at Atlantis, The Palm with its booking incentive programme for all MICE bookings and stay till March 31, 2017.

The offers range from complimentary tickets to Aquaventure Waterpark or Lost Chambers Aquarium or dinner for two for 100 room nights and above to a lavish three nights stay for four guests and complimentary dinner and spa vouchers for confirmation of over 700 room nights.

For early bookers, Atlantis has another special offer with rates starting from 1,200 AED for a minimum of 40 rooms for two nights on half board inclusive of all taxes.

Sonu Shah, Manager Sales at Atlantis, The Palm, commented, "India is one of the top markets for



Atlantis and has immense potential. With this programme we aim to maximise bookings across all segments such as weddings, corporate meetings or large scale entertainment events and at the same time reward our trusted partners with an experience at our resort."

Atlantis will further dedicate a special Event Manager to each event to fulfill all requirements. Atlantis arranges bespoke schedules for groups, keeping the desired venue, group size, purpose of visit and budget in mind.

Jordan Tourism Board collaborates with Pammi Aunty to showcase tourism

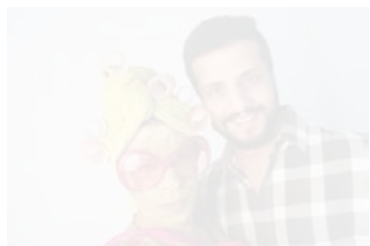
Ssumier Pasricha and his Internet-breaking hit sensation Punjabi alter-ego Pammi Aunty has entered into collaboration with Jordan Tourism Board, India Office, to promote the

country's tourism.

The actor will be travelling in Jordan and visit destinations comprising Petra, Dead Sea, Wadi Rum, Aqaba and Amman, from where he will be making and posting videos. "Imagine Pammi Aunty swimming in the Dead Sea and calling Sarla Pehnji! It will be fun," said Ssumier Pasricha.

"Pammi Aunty in Jordan has already become an Internet sensation within a few hours of the first teaser video; and will mark a turning point for Jordan tourism and arrival numbers for Indians to Jordan," commented Ashit Taneja, Country Manager, Jordan Tourism Board, India Office.

The first video will have Pammi Aunty talking about being invited to Jordan. "She obviously doesn't know anything about the country, so she will start reading about it," says Ssumier, who is currently working on the creatives.



Air Arabia introduces EMI options for Indian travellers

Enhancing the value-for-money options for customers, Air Arabia is now providing comprehensive EMI payment options for Indian travellers. Through EMI, travellers will now be able to budget their expenses to travel to the destinations connected by Air Arabia.

To avail the facility, one only needs to opt for the 'pay with EMI' option on the payment page and choose the preferred bank. The self-explanatory and easy-to-follow interface will display a choice of duration for the EMI, along with the amount break-up that will be billed to the credit card statement every month.

Air Arabia operates 115 weekly flights from its hub in Sharjah to 13 cities in India



MIDDLE EAST

Sharjah Tourism conducts four-city promotional roadshow in India

The Sharjah Tourism board recently conducted a tourism promotional roadshow across four Indian cities- New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chandigarh. The aim of the shows was to increase visibility



of the emirate of Sharjah as a leisure & business destination amongst Indian travellers, policy makers and business sector.

H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority, Government of Sharjah, said, "India is a very lucrative market and we are aware of the potential it holds in terms of inbound visitor traffic into Sharjah. We are happy to be tapping this important market through our four-city roadshow. We received an overwhelming response from travel agents and stakeholders and we look forward to doing more activities in near future."

Working with the Sharjah Tourism Board on this four city promotional trip was Khalid Waleed Al Mansoori from Overseas Promotions Department and Sachin Nene, Regional General Manager from Air Arabia. The delegation also spoke about cultural legacy between both the countries and the need to promote Sharjah as a new holiday destination.

Abu Dhabi launches a new global destination campaign

Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), which is developing a leading cultural landscape to support its evolution into a world-class sustainable destination, has launched a new global promotional campaign aimed at encouraging travellers to experience Abu Dhabi's 'extraordinary stories.'

The campaign highlights Abu Dhabi as an inspiring destination for those wanting to experience cultural authenticity and diverse natural assets.

"It tells the extraordinary story of Abu Dhabi, from its ancient past to its modern wonders, guiding audiences through breathtaking natural environments and exhilarating experiences," explained His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman, TCA Abu Dhabi. "Every filmed moment, every photograph and word evokes the poetic beauty and authenticity of the emirate, which invites travellers to become a part of its story."

"Audiences will also discover a dynamic, family-leisure entertainment destination and one which also holds out ambitious business opportunities. The campaign will unearth these stories and bring them to life for our potential visitors, inspiring them to journey here," the Chairman added.

The campaign comprises of two-series television commercial dedicated to GCC and international markets which would be broadcasted and run across TV networks, digital channels and in-flight entertainment systems.

The production also includes five promotional videos that highlight Abu Dhabi's tourism, culture, MICE, events



and cruise experiences which would be available to Abu Dhabi's tourism stakeholders to be used in exhibitions, road shows, and events.

According to TCA Abu Dhabi Director General, His Excellency Saif Saeed Ghobash, the campaign has been aligned to a go-to-market strategy of prioritising source market channels according to their travel booking preferences and periods.

"This means it will run heavily in the U.K. and Germany straight after New Year when travellers' minds turn to sunshine breaks and in China, specifically to catch Chinese New Year and the Golden Weeks. Other markets will be addressed in a like-minded booking preference approach," he explained.

Luxor hosts the 104th session of the World Tourism Organisation

The Ministry of Tourism and Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) sponsored the 104th session of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Executive Council which took place in the city of Luxor, Egypt.

Luxor also hosted the 5th UNWTO Global Summit on City Tourism, which was attended by representatives and participants from different countries all over the world. The conference had included several workshops to exchange experiences in the field of tourism and propose ways to support and develop tourism in Luxor.

The 5th UNWTO Global Summit discussed the tourism trends in the city that included sustainable development, spatial organisation, development and innovation in the field of city tourism, along with cross-cultural behaviour. The gathering also discussed how the public and private sectors can contribute to tourism development, cultural exchange between nations, identity and cultural heritage preservation of countries.

Yehia Rashed, Minister of Tourism, expressed his delight for the coronation of Luxor city as the capital of world tourism. "The Tourism Ministry and tourism sector are keen on exerting continuous efforts to take advantage of such event, in order to highlight the tourist attractions of this historical city and reignite the tourism traffic especially in Luxor and Aswan," he stated.

Rashed added that there has been an ongoing stream of support from the government towards the restoration of tourism traffic in Egypt. "We are pleased to support and sponsor such international event which affirms the effective role and importance of both Luxor and Egypt in the tourism field and highlights the international recognition it holds," he said.



Dubai Tourism partners with Shah Rukh Khan to promote Dubai

Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) has announced a new collaboration with Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan that would comprise of a series of short films, in which the actor would unravel the secrets of Dubai, offering his fans a chance to see the city through the star's eyes.

The project aims to appeal to the fans of the actor from across the globe, giving them the opportunity to explore the city and its many offerings.

Shah Rukh Khan commented, "Dubai is a second home to me... Whether I am here on vacation with my family and friends or my many business trips here for shoots, it's a city that I truly relate to on so many levels - driven, passionate and spirited. And I can't wait to take my fans and fellow travellers from around the world on an unexpected discovery of a city that I love. This new collaboration with Dubai Tourism is exciting and one that I am personally very passionate about."

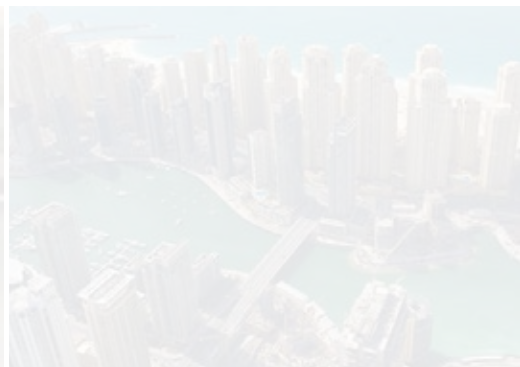
The series of short films, which is slated to be released across various Dubai Tourism channels in December, would kick-start a year-long campaign of multiple Dubai Tourism projects in collaboration with Bollywood.

Issam Kazim, CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), said, "We are delighted to partner with Shah Rukh Khan for this

special project, which highlights Dubai's diverse offerings that cater to every type of traveller. We look forward to exploring Shah Rukh's strong connection with Dubai and sharing his unique experience with a global



audience. These upcoming collaborations with the Bollywood industry will reinforce the strong role India has played in our city's evolution and further fortify our bond."



MIDDLE EAST

UAE theme parks to receive more than 19 million visitors by 2020

As per data released by Colliers International, ahead of Arabian Travel Market 2017, UAE's existing and new generation theme parks would attract more than 19 million visitors a year by 2020 if current trends continue.

The prediction has been made using existing admissions and arrivals data for Yas Island's Ferrari World, Waterworld, Dubai's Aquaventure and Wild Wadias, as well as a sample of new and upcoming parks. All four parks witnessed a strong correlation between the rising number of visitors to the UAE and its admissions, with their combined admissions predicted to reach 19 million visitors annually.

Similar patterns are likely to be seen for IMG Worlds of Adventure as well as Dubai Parks and Resorts, which opened this year in Dubai. Both the parks aim to draw in millions of visitors in their first year of operations, with IMG expecting to draw 4.5 million people while Dubai

Parks and Resorts predicting 6.7 million ticketed visitors.

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market, said, "Dubai has a unique chance to replicate the success we have seen in other markets such as Orlando, Singapore and Tokyo, attracting new arrivals while also capturing a share of both the stopover and direct tourism markets. Theme parks are a new addition to the tourism landscape here in the GCC and it's important that destinations are positioned to take full advantage of the benefits they can bring."

The predictions were published in a report titled "Theme Park Tourism," by Colliers International and have been released to coincide with the openings of Dubai's IMG Worlds of Adventure and Dubai Parks and Resorts (DPR).

The new parks would also create a distinct economic boost for hoteliers. Hotels and airlines have seen business



disrupted by events in key source markets including sharp fluctuations in the value of the Ruble, Euro and Sterling.

Colliers concluded that the closer a hotel is to a theme park, the stronger its performance would be in the key metrics of occupancy, Average Daily Rate (ADR) and RevPAR, the decade after opening.

Hotels located in the 'inner circle' of a theme park development can expect to attain occupancy levels two to 10% points higher than properties in the outer circle and city.

flydubai inaugurates its service to Bangkok



Dubai-based flydubai has officially launched its Bangkok service, making it the airline's first double daily route outside of the GCC.

The inaugural flight from Dubai International Terminal two landed at Bangkok International Airport on November 29, providing connecting routes for travel through Dubai. Bangkok, as a popular tourist destination, offers holidaymakers a variety of experiences from adventure, sport, and health and wellness retreats. Additionally, flights to Bangkok would provide passengers with alternative travel options into neighbouring South East Asian cities.

Commenting on the launch of the new route, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, Ghaith Al Ghaith said, "Today's inaugural flight to Bangkok is a significant milestone for our airline and represents the increasing maturity of flydubai's network. We look forward to offering business and leisure travellers from both Dubai and Bangkok increased choice and flexibility across our network."

Speaking at a press conference held with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Sudhir Sreedharan,

Senior Vice President, Commercial (GCC, Subcontinent and Africa) for flydubai, said, "Bangkok is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world, offering a wide range of attractions and activities. With the addition of this important city to flydubai's growing network, we will not only offer passengers from Dubai alternative travel options through Thailand but additionally connect Thailand to Russia and Europe via Dubai, strengthening the UAE's position as an international travel hub."

Thailand is the latest addition to flydubai's network of more than 90 destinations, offering increased choice and flexibility for business and leisure passengers.

Discussing the start of flydubai flights to Bangkok, Tanes Petsuwan, the TAT Deputy Governor for International Marketing (Europe, Africa, Middle East and Americas) said, "flydubai's new direct flights between Dubai and Bangkok add another welcome dimension to UAE-Thailand relations in a number of ways. The start of these flights brings fresh promise to our business and trade ties, our respective roles as regional trade fair capitals and to our cultural and tourism development."

Ethiad Aviation Group to collaborate with Lufthansa Group

Ethiad Airways and Lufthansa German Airlines have agreed on codeshare flights, with Lufthansa to lease 38 aircraft from airberlin for its point-to-point carrier Eurowings. Its network carrier Austrian Airlines Ethiad Airways, the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates and Lufthansa German Airlines, had also announced the conclusion of a codeshare agreement. The arrangement is set to start in January 2017 and is subject to government approval.

The wet-lease agreement between Lufthansa Group and airberlin has Ethiad Aviation Group 29% indirect stake. Lufthansa's point-to-point carrier Eurowings and Austrian Airlines, a Lufthansa Group airline, have signed an agreement to wet lease 38 aircraft from airberlin. 33 of these aircraft are to be operated for the Eurowings Group, an additional five aircraft are to be flown for Austrian Airlines. The agreement has a term of six years and becomes effective from February 2017 subject to any regulatory requirements. The leases have been agreed at competitive rates.



James Hogan, President and CEO, Ethiad Aviation Group, said, "We have long seen Germany as a key strategic market for Ethiad Aviation Group and this new relationship with Lufthansa marks the next step in our commitment to the leading European aviation group. Lufthansa is highly respected globally and I'm very pleased that we will work together in the future for the benefit of our customers."

Carsten Spohr, Chairman of the Board and CEO, Lufthansa Group, said, "We are looking forward to partnering with the Ethiad Aviation Group. The wet-lease contract with airberlin fosters the growth of our Eurowings Group. The codeshare agreement of Lufthansa and Ethiad will offer our customers more benefits and complement both airlines' networks. We will consider extending our cooperation in other areas."

Under the codeshare agreement, the German airline will place its 'LH' code on Ethiad Airways' twice daily non-stop flights between its home base of Abu Dhabi and Frankfurt and its twice daily non-stop services between Abu Dhabi and Munich, the biggest city in southern Germany.

The UAE's national airline will, in turn, put its 'EY' code on Lufthansa's long-haul, non-stop intercontinental services between its home base of Frankfurt, the business and commercial capital of Germany, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as well as Bogota, Colombia.

Oman Air unveils the new Oman Air Pass

To celebrate National Day in Oman, the 'National Carrier of the Sultanate of Oman,' Oman Air has announced the introduction of the new Oman Air Pass.

The new pass would offer regular travellers between Muscat and Salalah, the option to pre-purchase an online booklet containing eight one-way tickets with discounts of up to 30% off the standard fare for travel in economy. Customers can use the tickets on either Muscat to Salalah or Salalah to Muscat Flights and can be gifted or used by all the family and friends. However, the tickets must be booked online on Oman Air's website 48 hours prior to flight.

Oman Air, on top of this offer, has announced that users of the Oman Air Pass would also earn 460 Simbad miles. The airline has been dedicated to facilitating the travel between Salalah and Muscat with eleven flights a day on their Boeing 737, Boeing 787 and Airbus 330 aircraft.

In June 2016, Oman Air provided a substantial boost to its services to Salalah with the addition of an extra 23,000 seats to the principal city of Dhofar during the key summer months of the Khareef (monsoon season).

Besides this, the airline has increased capacity between Salalah and Dubai by 42% in 2016 to a record 71,176 seats with six daily flights. These unprecedented increases would see Oman Air offering a total of 317,600 seats to and from Salalah in 2016.



Abu Dhabi Tourism organises a food festival & four roadshows in India

Abu Dhabi Food Festival (ADFF) was organised in Mumbai in December with the UAE's ambassador HE Dr. Ahmed Albanna as the guest of honour. ADFF opened with a special menu available to guests which featured Indo-Emirati and Emirati-Indian fusion food.

The ADFF initiative in India was organised to reinforce India's position as the best overseas source market for Abu Dhabi guest arrivals. "We have now created a niche in the Indian market for Emirati cuisine. We are extremely delighted to have had our Celebrity Chef Khulood with us; she made this event all the more successful," said Bejan Dinshaw, Country Manager-India, TCA Abu Dhabi.

With India being the best source market for Abu Dhabi, the emirate's tourism and culture authority also concluded their four-city roadshows which took place in Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

TCA Abu Dhabi's roadshow featured ten stakeholders which included Etihad Airways, Lama Tours & Holidays, ORYX International Tourism, Ryna Tourism, Armed forces Officers Club & Hotel, Rotana,



The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Seawings, Jumeirah at Etihad Towers, and Yas Island Abu Dhabi.

In the first half of 2016, 152,423 Indians checked into Abu Dhabi hotels which was a 20% year-over-year increase, with Indian guests accounting for seven percent of all hotel stays in the Emirate, with a longer-than-average stay of 3.4 nights.

Minor Hotels to launch its luxury brand in Saudi Arabia

Minor Hotels (MH) has announced the debut of its luxury Anantara brand in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

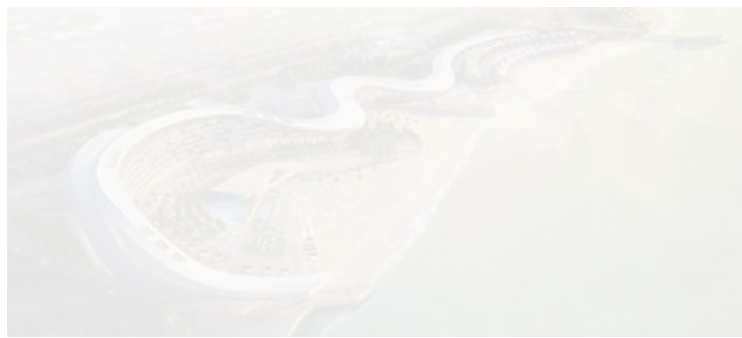
Scheduled to open in 2019, Anantara Jeddah Resort will be located on the waterfront in Obhur in the city's upmarket northern district and will offer 226 guest rooms and 102 two to five bedroom villas. The property, owned by SAB Group, was previously a luxury residential compound that will undergo a renovation and transformation led by cutting-edge international design architects.

Facilities will include a selection of dining options with both indoor and outdoor seating, fitness and swimming pool areas, a kid's and teen's club and a library. For business guests, there will be a 500 square metre

meeting room which is divisible by two, plus two further meeting rooms. The resort will have two receptions and lobbies with one dedicated for VIP arrivals.

William E. Heinecke, Chairman and CEO of Minor International, commented, "We are delighted to announce Anantara Jeddah which represents Minor Hotels' debut in Saudi Arabia and grows our presence in the GCC to four countries."

Sheikh Salah al Belawi, Chairman of SAB Group, added, "We are excited to bring the concept, experience and legacy of Minor Hotels through their flagship 'Anantara Hotels and Resorts' to Jeddah. We, at SAB Group, are delighted to partner with Minor Hotels and host the Anantara brand."



Israel witnesses strong growth in visitor arrivals from India

Israel, in November 2016, welcomed 5,617 travellers from India, which was 50% more than 2015, thus creating a new record in outbound travel to Israel from India.

"I am delighted to see the numbers growing and I am looking forward to see more Indian travellers visiting and exploring Israel," said Hassan Madah, Director of the Israel Ministry of Tourism Office in India.

2016 at the Israel Ministry of Tourism has been successful in maintaining the growing travel relationship between India and Israel. Not only did the Israel Ministry of Tourism have a very successful marketing campaign in 2016 through television, newspapers, magazines and multiple digital platforms, they have

also seen a growth in travel from India to Israel.

Israel saw a growth of five percent in Indian arrivals during the first six months of 2016. In 2015, it achieved a growth of 13.2% by welcoming 39,529 Indian tourists as compared with 34,920 in 2014. Top destinations include Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, Dead Sea, etc. Apart from these traditionally popular destinations, Israel is also making efforts to promote new destinations like Akko and Eilat, situated on the shores of Red Sea.



Qatar Airways adds new destination and daily flights to Seychelles

Qatar Airways under its global route expansion has launched daily flights to the islands of the Seychelles. The 14th new destination on the airline's route map in 2016 and the third in Africa. Seychelles is key to Qatar Airways' global network expansion strategy and its continuing growth in Africa, with the destination comprising of 115 tropical islands in the western Indian Ocean, located off the east coast of Africa. Its airport is located on the island of Mahé near the city of Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Akbar Al Baker, said, "We are sure that the Seychelles is going to be a popular option with many travellers from Europe and the Middle East looking for an exotic island getaway. With this new service, holiday-makers can seamlessly connect to the Seychelles via our state-of-the-art home and hub in Doha, Hamad International Airport."



The Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Ports and Marine, Alain St Ange, said, "The new services will add important value to the thriving tourism industry with huge potential to boost traffic from Europe and further expand the emerging Middle East and East Asia's travelling markets amongst others."

The airline currently operates to 23 African gateways, including the recently launched service to the Namibian capital of Windhoek, which joined the airline's route map in September 2016.

The Doha to Seychelles flight schedule offers an attractive 8:50 am arrival and 7:25 pm departure so travellers can take full advantage of their time on the islands.

Yas Island's fourth theme park, SeaWorld to begin its operations from 2022

Abu Dhabi's Yas Island is set to welcome another world-famous theme park by 2022. "We are very excited to announce Yas Island's fourth theme park, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi. What encouraged us more is the new direction of SeaWorld, focusing on education and preservation was the main driver of building SeaWorld destination. We believe the new strategy of SeaWorld will help us build something exciting and new," Mohammad Abdallah Al Zaabi, CEO-Developer Miral said.



SeaWorld will be located near Yas Mall, adjacent to Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, and although the exact size of the park is not yet confirmed, plans show the park to have a significantly larger area than any of the other theme parks on the island, including Ferrari World. The new theme park will include rides, an aquarium, first of its kind in the country marine-life research, rehabilitation, rescue and return centre, which is planned to open ahead of the theme park. The park will be the first new SeaWorld to not have orcas and it aims to provide an environment for local and global researchers, scientists and marine conservationists to better understand and learn from the region's marine life habitats and conditions.

Focus Country

UAE heralds its second year of joint participation under one pavilion for all seven emirates for OTM 2017



In 2016, The Ministry of Economy, in cooperation with all tourism departments and authorities of United Arab Emirates (UAE), showcased the first ever UAE pavilion in OTM 2016 from February 18-20 at the Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre. The objective was to promote UAE as a tourism destination within the Indian market with 'VISIT UAE' campaign. UAE participation in 2016 was extremely successful and produced a very positive feedback from the Indian market. The UAE pavilion bagged the 'Best Stand' award at OTM 2016.

After successful showcase in OTM 2016, H.E. Mohammed Al Mheiri, Undersecretary, Minister Advisor- Tourism Affairs, will lead the high-level UAE delegation comprising of Abdulla Al Hammadi, Director- Tourism, representatives from Tourism Authorities/Departments of the seven Emirates, national carrier and other tourism stakeholders including hotels, to continue promoting UAE as one destination and participate in OTM 2017 as a Focus Country.

UAE has very ambitious plans and have set clear targets to achieve in the Indian market, which is supported by all tourism departments and travel and tourism partners in all seven emirates. UAE Tourism within the Ministry of Economy's main responsibility is to actively represent the country at global tourism events and create a federal level structure to

regulate tourism departments in individual Emirates to ensure uniformity and the successful implementation of a cohesive strategy to boost tourism throughout the UAE. OTM India is one of main trade events we are keen to represent UAE as a unique and unforgettable destination.

India is one of the fastest growing markets with 20.38 million outbound tourists in 2015, growing at 11.1% over 2014. Mumbai is the biggest outbound tourist market in India, contributing to the largest share of overseas and domestic travel from the country.

"The Indian market is one of the most important source markets in the world and particularly to the UAE tourism industry. Tourist flow between the two countries experienced a boom in the last few years. In 2015, the Indian market represented 8.5% of total inbound tourism to the UAE. This is almost more than two million Indian visitors and we are expecting to hit five percent increase in 2016," stated H.E. Mohammed Al Mheiri.

UAE and India are very well connected via strong and vital air connection, where UAE and Indian airlines have more than 1108 flights in both directions with more than 65200 seat capacity per week.

OTM is India's biggest travel trade show which is organised in February every year in Mumbai, the largest travel market in India at the Bombay Convention Centre in Goregaon.

"OTM is the most effective platform to market to the Indian travel industry catering to over 20 million outbound travelers spending over \$10 billion and growing over 10% per year. It is also a window to domestic tourists who undertake over a billion trips annually - at least 10% of them with an immediate potential to travel abroad and it is really important for us to showcase UAE as a tourism destination in which Indian visitors can enjoy a wide variety of unique products and tourism services," stated H.E. Mheiri.

UAE participation will facilitate partnerships between the many departments within the framework of tourism providing innovative services and service for residents and visitors. This exhibition will highlight integration among UAE government departments to deliver quality services to potential visitors and enhance the level of happiness and satisfaction in these services in line with the vision of UAE.

With a stand space of 352 sq m and being the Focus Country, the UAE Pavilion is prominently located right in front of the main entrance thereby linking all exhibition visitors to make their first visit which they are guaranteed to never forget! Co-participants include a delightful blend of local tourism departments, National Airlines, prominent DMCs, Hotel chains and major attraction. The UAE Pavilion is all set to enthrall and entice visitors to the UAE.



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H.E. Mohammed Al Mheiri
Undersecretary
Minister Advisor- Tourism Affairs, UAE

AbuDhabi



Ajman



Dubai



Fujairah



Ras Al Khaimah



Sharjah



Umm Al Quwain



Visit UAE participates as Focus Country for the second consecutive year



This is our second participation at OTM and also as a Focus Country. This exhibition is a key platform for us to work closely with our travel partners from India and raise more awareness on our destination United Arab Emirates (UAE). Through our participation at OTM, we aim to showcase the key attractions of UAE. OTM has provided a great platform for participating countries to interact and explore the trends in the tourism industry.

ABDULLAH SALEH AL HAMMADI
Director
Ministry's Tourism Department, UAE



OTM 2017 is an important platform for Dubai to showcase all that Dubai has to offer to the Indian market. India is the number one source market for visitors to Dubai and this platform helps us attract even more visitors from this market. We will be definitely participating in the next edition and use this event to keep on showcasing not only Dubai, but the entire UAE as well.

HAMAD M BIN MEJREN
Senior VP- Stakeholders
Dubai Corporation for Tourism & Commerce Marketing



OTM 2017 has proven to be a well organised exhibition with a very good turnout. We understand why it is considered as one of the main events in India for the travel trade industry. This year's edition has brought forth a great quality and variety of destinations and we would definitely like to keep being a part of this event in the years to come.

BEJAN DINSHAW
Country Manager
Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority



India is a huge market and we know that there are very few prestigious and successful events in the country, one of them being OTM. Over the last couple of years, we have been participating in this exhibition and have observed how good a platform it is. The quality of buyers at OTM 2017 is excellent and we have high expectations from the future editions of this event.

H.E. KHALID JASIM AL MIDFA
Chairman



The Indian market is extremely important to Fujairah and we have found OTM to be a very good platform in tapping this market. The overall response of OTM 2017 was very good, especially the variety of destinations. We will definitely participate in the future editions of this exhibition.

OMAR BANI HAMOUR
Marketing & Exhibitions Coordinator
Fujairah Tourism & Antiquities Authority

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Sharjah Tourism conducts four-city promotional roadshow in India

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The Sharjah Tourism board recently conducted a tourism promotional roadshow across four Indian cities- New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chandigarh. The aim of the shows was to increase visibility of the emirate of Sharjah as a leisure & business destination amongst Indian travellers, policy makers and business sector.

H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority, Government of Sharjah, said, "India is a very lucrative market and we are aware of the potential it holds in terms of inbound visitor traffic into Sharjah. We are happy to be tapping this important market through our four-city roadshow. We received an overwhelming response from travel agents and stakeholders and we look forward to doing more activities in near future."

Working with the Sharjah Tourism Board on this four city promotional trip was Khalid Waleed Al Mansoori from Overseas Promotions Department and Sachin Nene, Regional General Manager from Air Arabia. The delegation also spoke about cultural legacy between both the countries and the need to promote Sharjah as a new holiday destination.

The four city roadshow of Sharjah Tourism board in India was promoted by Outbound Konnections. Outbound Konnections is a specialist in the fields of representation and marketing of tourism products and offers services such as consultancy, sales and public relations, mainly B2B.

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Abu Dhabi Tourism organises a food festival & four roadshows in India

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TCA Abu Dhabi's roadshow featured ten stake holders which included Etihad Airways, Lama Tours & Holidays, ORYX International Tourism, Ryna Tourism, Armed forces Officers Club & Hotel, Rotana, The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Seawings, Jumeirah at Etihad Towers, and Yas Island Abu Dhabi.

In the first half of 2016, 152,423 Indians checked into Abu Dhabi hotels which was a 20% year-over-year increase, with Indian guests accounting for seven percent of all hotel stays in the Emirate, with a longer-than-average stay of 3.4 nights.

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Abu Dhabi launches a new global destination campaign

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Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), which is developing a leading cultural landscape to support its evolution into a world-class sustainable destination, has launched a new global promotional campaign aimed at encouraging travellers to experience Abu Dhabi's 'extraordinary stories.'

The campaign highlights Abu Dhabi as an inspiring destination for those wanting to experience cultural authenticity and diverse natural assets.

"It tells the extraordinary story of Abu Dhabi, from its ancient past to its modern wonders, guiding audiences through breathtaking natural environments and exhilarating experiences," explained His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman, TCA Abu Dhabi. "Every filmed moment, every photograph and word evokes the poetic beauty and authenticity of the emirate, which invites travellers to become a part of its story."

"Audiences will also discover a dynamic, family-leisure entertainment destination and one which also holds out ambitious business opportunities. The campaign will unearth these stories and bring them to life for our potential visitors, inspiring them to journey here," the Chairman added.

The campaign comprises of two-series television commercial dedicated to GCC and international markets which would be broadcasted and run across TV networks, digital channels and in-flight entertainment systems.

The production also includes five promotional videos that highlight Abu Dhabi's tourism, culture, MICE, events and cruise experiences which would be available to Abu Dhabi's tourism stakeholders to be used in exhibitions, road shows, and events.

According to TCA Abu Dhabi Director General, His Excellency Saif Saeed Ghobash, the campaign has been aligned to a go-to-market strategy of prioritising source market channels according to their travel booking preferences and periods.

"This means it will run heavily in the U.K. and Germany straight after New Year when travellers' minds turn to sunshine breaks and in China, specifically to catch Chinese New Year and the Golden Weeks. Other markets will be addressed in a like-minded booking preference approach," he explained.

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Abu Dhabi builds focus on India as a leading overseas source market

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In its bid to project itself as a prime location for MICE and business events, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) hosted a corporate dinner in Mumbai and Pune on September 1-2, 2016.

Etihad and Jet Airways participated as partners for the event that was attended by leading figures from the tourism industry. Present at the gala dinner were Rotana Hotels & Resorts, Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri Hotel in Abu Dhabi and Anantara Hotels & Resorts who promoted awareness about the family-friendly attractions being offered in Abu Dhabi.

Bejan Dinshaw, Country Manager- India, TCA Abu Dhabi, said, "We were delighted to host this event and received a great response from the corporate attendees. It was a pleasure to meet everyone from the industry. I am really looking forward to the corporate trips and we look forward to hosting them in Abu Dhabi."

Abu Dhabi is currently attracting a lot of business travellers through incentives and conferences. Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau's 'Advantage Abu Dhabi' incentive programmes provide financial and ground-assistance for viable business events. Not only MICE, the emirate is evolving as a choice destination for leisure, special interest, weddings, honeymoon, and other niche travel segments.

Destination Abu Dhabi thus offers a missed platter of luxury with adventure, and being just few hours away from India it definitely makes it a perfect location for Indian travellers.

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63rd Annual TAAI Convention to be held from October 14-16 at Abu Dhabi



TAAI will promote 'Inbound into India' as an important subject at the Convention to encourage more visitors to India



63rd Annual Convention & Exhibition of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), popularly known as the Indian Travel Congress will be held from October 14-16, 2016 at Abu Dhabi. The venue and dates for the convention were finalised at the recently held Managing Committee meeting in Mumbai.

Emirates Palace, the seven star hotel with a strikingly magnificent and unmatched edifice is shortlisted to be an important venue for the Convention.

Talking about the host destination, Sunil Kumar, President, TAAI, said that Abu Dhabi has grown into a masterpiece among the cities of the world. He added that when a survey was done on 100 outbound passengers from India who visits Dubai, it revealed that only about five percent visits Abu Dhabi, which is quite shocking. One prime reason is the inadequate awareness on the growing strengths of Abu Dhabi, particularly in the areas of Tourism and MICE.

TAAI is associating with Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) who have assured of their support to TAAI to hold this event in Abu Dhabi.

Speaking about the Convention, Kumar reflected that the Convention would be rich in its content as well as in offering experiential take-home to the delegates. He said that the content would focus on the importance of a fast changing 'today' and the urgent need for members to rise beyond the routine.

The Convention will also focus on an exhibition that will offer exhibitors and vendors from the region, the valuable opportunity to connect with the fast growing Indian outbound industry and to also promote India. TAAI will promote 'Inbound into India' as an important subject at the Convention to encourage the region to connect well with India.

Evenings will be classy- pre and post tours will be plenty and above all the attendees will be offered abundant luxury of a very high order. TAAI will be soon rolling out the registration opportunities.

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Ferrari World Abu Dhabi launches new 'Family and Friends' offer

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Visitors will now get a chance to escape scorching summer heat and enjoy exceptional rides and attractions with the 'Family and Friends' offer launched by Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

Running from July 10 to September 9, the promotion will allow guests to purchase four Bronze admission tickets for the price of three at only AED 825. Groups consisting of more than four members can also buy up to three additional bronze tickets at only AED 206.25 per ticket.

The all-new Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has launched record-breaking roller coaster, Flying Aces, and the interactive family-friendly ride, Benno's Great Race, and many others.

Guests will also be eligible to enter a lucky draw and win various rewards, including a Maserati and AED 1 million in cash as part of the 'Say Yas' summer campaign running on Yas Island. This new offer will be available only when tickets are purchased at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi's ticket counter.

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Ferrari World Abu Dhabi introduces new kids ride for 2016

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Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has introduced a kid's ride in 2016, called Benno's Great Race.

A new trackless, interactive family ride, Benno's Great Race takes visitors on a romp through a cartoon version of the Italian countryside. With wrenches in hand, riders engage in several interactive tasks along the way, helping build a race car and later clearing obstacles along its path. The ride is a clever mix of practical and screen effects, with the screens hosting the interactive elements. Using that wrench as a controller, corresponding icons on the screens become wrenches, scissors, or hammers under your control.

Ferrari world also opened its third roller coaster, Flying Aces, earlier this year. Featuring "the world's tallest loop, the steepest and fastest cable lift incline, and 10 zero-gravity airtime moments", this roller coaster replicates the feeling of an old-time biplane flight.

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Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority updates Visit Abu Dhabi mobile app

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Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) has released a new, improved version of its Visit Abu Dhabi mobile application. The latest Visit Abu Dhabi app version that lets users gain instant access to all that's new in the emirate via their mobile phones is now live and features several upgrades and enhancements, as TCA Abu Dhabi continues to improve the functionality of the service.

Version 4.0 of the app allows access to the same content at the Authority's destination portal VisitAbuDhabi.ae and is available for iPhone, Android & Windows Phone. The app will further feature enhancements to make it a more user-friendly experience.

"We've listened carefully to all your feedback and our app has been completely redesigned from top to bottom following the latest user experience trends to make the whole experience even more immersive and easy to use," said Mouza Al Shamsi, Acting Executive Director of Marketing and Communications at TCA Abu Dhabi. "The entire key features that you're familiar with from our previous versions are still present but now they're even faster, smarter and bursting with functionality."

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Tourist arrivals exceed 4 millions in Abu Dhabi as new cruise terminal opens

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Tourist arrivals in Abu Dhabi exceed four millions in 2015. "We have stretched our target and we now expect 4.1 million tourists 2015," Sultan Al Dhaheri, the acting Executive Director at TCA Abu Dhabi, said on the sidelines of the opening of the new cruise terminal at Zayed Port. He said that the growth in the capital's tourism sector in the next five years would be driven by infrastructure developments such as the cruise terminal, the Midfield Terminal at Abu Dhabi airport and the completion of cultural attractions, including the Louvre and Guggenheim museums. In June, TCA Abu Dhabi had raised the initial target for 2015 from 3.49 million arrivals to 3.9 million as guest numbers surged by 20% in the first four months of 2015, with key source markets such as the United Kingdom, India, China and Germany contributing to the bulk of the increase.

"Further details were released on the growth of the cruise sector. Cruise passengers will increase by 15,000 in the 2016-17 season," said Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, the Chief Executive of Abu Dhabi Ports. That works out to a year-on-year increase of more than seven percent as figures from TCA Abu Dhabi and the ports operator show that about 205,000 cruise visitors from 112 ship visits were expected this season. The cruise season starts in September and runs through May.

220,000 cruise passengers are expected in the capital next season from 117 ships expected to call on Zayed Port. The ports operator expects that figure to reach 300,000 passengers from 130 ship calls in 2019-20.

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Abu Dhabi Film Commission brings new Indian production to the capital

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Abu Dhabi Film Commission (ADFC) has secured a new Indian production for which the capital will serve as the second filming location for two weeks.

Upcoming Telugu feature film, Duvvada Jagannadham (also known as DJ) is written and directed by Harish Shankar and will be shot in various locations across the Emirate including Abu Dhabi Global Market, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), Intercontinental Hotel, Yas Links Golf Club and Galleria Mall, with access to twofour54's production services.

Maryam Al Mheiri, Acting CEO, twofour54, said, "twofour54 is growing a reputation as a trusted industry partner for productions of every size and from different markets. The geographic proximity of the Emirate to India as well as our world-class production infrastructure and services have been key to the projects we have previously supported and we are delighted to be welcoming the fourth Indian production to Abu Dhabi. Our experience in servicing box office hits strengthens our position as a leading content creation hub that matches expectations of producers from around the world."

Jassim Al Nowais, Manager, ADFC, said, "India is the world's largest film industry with rich stories and content to be produced from every corner of the country. We are proud to have partnered with some of India's top producers in facilitating their filming experience in Abu Dhabi over the past few years having successfully delivered Baby, Bang Bang! and more recently, Dishoom. The capital's diverse filming locations, local production services and support, as well as a 30% cash rebate, have helped us reach new milestones and attract projects that target a wide range of audiences and we look forward to working with the cast and crew of DJ in Abu Dhabi."

Writer and Director of DJ, Harish Shankar, added, "ADFC and twofour54 have checked all the boxes of our requirements; from the variety of locations to world-class production services support and infrastructure. Abu Dhabi's production industry has now become closely correlated with India given the prominent reputation it has built in a short period of time as a filming destination and we are excited about working together on this project."

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UAE eyes big on outbound tourism potential of India

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United Arab Emirates (UAE) is eyeing big on India's outbound tourism potential. Thanks to the increasing emphasis of all the seven States in the UAE on India to promote 'within the country' destinations under one umbrella of its extensive tourism offerings. Highly placed representatives of the UAE's travel and tourism industry under the umbrella of National Council of Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA) announced its India-specific tourism promotion plans during India's biggest Outbound Travel Mart – OTM 2016 in Mumbai. The UAE has the largest pavilion at the OTM.

H.E. Sultan Mohamed Bin Khadin, Acting Consul, the UAE Embassy in India, who was present on the occasion, said, "The UAE has trade and cultural ties with India since ages. We want to strengthen these ties further and foresee a substantial growth in the number of tourist footfalls in the near future."

The UAE is positioning itself as a unique country where all the seven states like Dubai, Sharjah, Ras-Al-Khamaiyah, Abu Dhabi, etc. have different tourism varieties to showcase to India. Unlike other tourist destinations, where tourists need to travel long distance, the UAE has a long expanse from the North to South, which has a wide variety of tourism offerings like terrains, mountains, beaches, desert, etc.

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman, Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Development Authority, who is part of the delegation representing the UAE, said, "The UAE has been promoting its tourism potential globally and we find India as a great opportunity to expand relationships with India's outbound travel and trade fraternity. In the UAE, Dubai is a commercial hub, Sharjah is a cultural hub and that way all the seven states have different offerings. Sharjah alone contributes about 8.5% of GDP from tourism, which is bound to grow further. We are expecting a manifold increase in tourism footfalls from Tier I and Tier II countries of India."

In Sharjah alone, the number of hotel guests from India has seen a 23% per cent growth. Adding further, Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, said, "There are 110 flights per week just for Sharjah from India. We will achieve a double-digit growth in footfalls in the near future."

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UAE theme parks to receive more than 19 million visitors by 2020

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As per data released by Colliers International, ahead of Arabian Travel Market 2017, UAE's existing and new generation theme parks would attract more than 19 million visitors a year by 2020 if current trends continue.

The prediction has been made using existing admissions and arrivals data for Yas Island's Ferrari World and Waterworld and Dubai's Aquaventure and Wild Wadias, as well as a sample of new and upcoming parks. All four parks witnessed a strong correlation between the rising number of visitors to the UAE and its admissions, with their combined admissions predicted to reach 19 million visitors annually.

Similar patterns are likely to be seen for IMG Worlds of Adventure and Dubai Parks and Resorts, which opened this year in Dubai. Both the parks aim to draw in millions of visitors in their first year of operations, with IMG expecting to draw 4.5 million people and Dubai Parks and Resorts predicting 6.7 million ticketed visitors.

Simon Press, Senior Exhibition Director, Arabian Travel Market, said, "Dubai has a unique chance to replicate the success we have seen in other markets such as Orlando, Singapore and Tokyo, attracting new arrivals while also capturing a share of both the stopover and direct tourism markets. Theme parks are a new addition to the tourism landscape here in the GCC and it's important that destinations are positioned to take full advantage of the benefits they can bring."

The predictions were published in a report titled 'Theme Park Tourism,' by Colliers International and have been released to coincide with the openings of Dubai's IMG Worlds of Adventure and Dubai Parks and Resorts (DPR).

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Ferrari World Abu Dhabi to launch a new thrill ride 'Turbo Track'

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Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has unveiled 'Turbo Track,' a new rollercoaster which is all set to open at the end of March 2017. The three-stage experience, which would give guests an authentic feel of what it's like to become a Ferrari test driver, is the latest addition to the Park.

The opening two stages of the experience will include an on-screen training and performance analysis. Recruits then board Turbo Track and burst through the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi iconic red roof at 102 kmph, before experiencing zero gravity as they plummet vertically back down. The experience includes both front-facing and back-facing seats, offering two unique perspectives.

"At Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, we're passionate about creating thrilling and inspiring experiences, and we can't wait to share this incredible new experience with our guests. Not only does this unique ride offer heart-pounding thrills for all riders, it also gives them the chance to see the world through the eyes of a Ferrari test driver, creating once again a strong connection with the legendary brand," said Jesse Vargas, General Manager, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

The completion of Turbo Track was a monumental feat of engineering, following a highly complex process which saw a 16sqm opening created in the glass funnel, a signature design feature at the centre of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. The top of the 64-meter-high track becomes Yas Island's highest point and has been created by the same team that built Formula Rossa.

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Abu Dhabi cruise sector celebrates record ships and passengers visiting the emirate

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The cruise sector in Abu Dhabi celebrated a year of achievement with record numbers of ship calls and passengers arriving at the emirates during the previous 2016 season.

During the season from October until June, Abu Dhabi received more than 100 ship calls for the first time ever, seven regional rotational callers again the highest ever recorded, and welcomed more than 228,000 passengers, making the emirate a firm fixture on the world cruise map.

The previous season, Abu Dhabi reported 94 ship calls and 200,000 passengers. Ten years ago just 35,000 passengers and 29 ship arrivals visited the emirate.

The rise in projected passenger figures, currently estimated at 250,000 passengers this season, to reach 450,000 by 2020 and 808,000 by 2025, is due to a series of initiatives to encourage the emirate to develop its cruise sector as this has been identified as a primary niche product in the emirate's economic diversification.

Towards the end of 2016, Sir Bani Yas Cruise Beach was opened in the Western Region and is now the Gulf region's only dedicated desert island cruise stopover, which will attract more than 60,000 passengers in its first season.

H.E. Saif Saeed Ghobash, Director General, TCA Abu Dhabi, said, "Our strategic intervention is strengthening the cruise sector's influence on the tourism economy and contributing to the emirate's economic diversification. This is now Abu Dhabi's longest ever cruise season where we will welcome 139 ship calls to Abu Dhabi and 39 to Sir Bani Yas Island."

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Abu Dhabi attracts huge crowd for New Year celebrations

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Abu Dhabi celebrated an extremely busy New Year's period with the emirate's diverse programme of multiple leisure activities, hotel and dining promotions, music concerts, cultural festivals and entertainment events that were held during December 2016.

As 2016 came to an end, the city's packed calendar of activities and concerts made sure that many of Abu Dhabi's top-tier hotels were running at 100% occupancy levels, with many more hotels close to full capacity.

Establishments enjoying full capacity over the New Year period included the Beach Rotana, Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche and Intercontinental Abu Dhabi.

Guests checking in to the emirate's hotels from January until November 2016 showed an increase of eight percent compared with 2015, with the total number of guest arrivals at 4,022,918.

Events such as the New Year's Eve concert by world-famous rock band Coldplay at du Arena on Abu Dhabi's 'entertainment hub' of Yas Island helped boost visitor numbers, with 30,000 people packed into the venue to enjoy famous songs by the band.

Yas Island's 'Winterland Carnival' which was held at the du Forum welcomed more than 26,000 people who enjoyed the activities at this unique winter-themed event, which featured exciting rides, games, performers, as well as an array of food trucks.

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Abu Dhabi Food Festival 2016 inspires culinary enthusiasts

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The Abu Dhabi Food Festival (ADFF) 2016 welcomed more than 29,000 visitors and food lovers from the region, contributing to positioning Abu Dhabi as a global culinary hub.

Organised by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), the food festival ran from December 5-23, 2016 across the emirates. It incorporated an outstanding line-up of food and beverage events, including the Gourmet Abu Dhabi experiences, Street Feast and for the first time, the SIAL trade fair, the fastest-growing trade fair events in the MENA region for the food, beverage and hospitality sector.

Sultan Al Dhaheri, Acting Executive Director-Tourism Sector, TCA Abu Dhabi, said, "This year's ADFF was once again a resounding success that highlighted the emirate's culinary excellence and diversity. ADFF has become one of the significant offerings on our annual calendar of events and we are adding more elements to it annually to further distinguish what we will offer."

The food festival featured a range of exciting and interactive events for children and families to enjoy. For the first time ever, ADFF welcomed Hollywood celebrities John Cusack and Jesse Metcalfe to the emirate for exclusive dining appearances.

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Abu Dhabi expects 4,50,000 cruise travellers by 2020

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The cruise tourism industry of Abu Dhabi has been predicted to grow by 10.5% annually, luring about 4,50,000 cruise tourists within the year 2020. It also targets to attract more than 8,08,000 cruise passengers in 2025.

The figure marks a leap from the 2,50,000 cruise travellers who are expected to arrive in Abu Dhabi in the holiday season that would last till June 2017.

A report published by Oxford Economics that was commissioned by Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA) of Abu Dhabi, Etihad Airways and Abu Dhabi Ports said that the total expenditure from the cruise sector would reach about Dh417 million within 2020.

The figures mark a 71% rise from Dh244 million that was spent in 2015, with this figure expected to rise to Dh745 million by 2025.

Saeed Al Daher, Cruise Development and City Tour Manager at Abu Dhabi's TCA had declared that Europe is responsible for about 39% of passengers who arrive at the ports of Abu Dhabi. Germany tops the list when it comes to Europe.

Daheri said that they have started heading to India and China as these two nations would be their priorities in the following years. He had also mentioned that they have started hosting road shows in various places to promote Abu Dhabi and that they have been to three cities in China and also three cities in India. They are planning to participate in similar events for promotional campaigns.