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# BONDS OF LONGEVITY

Shaped by a unified ambition, Qatar's travel industry is forging long-lasting connections



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# PROUD ACHIEVEMENTS

**A**s my first time leading an issue here at *TTG MENA*, I am proud of the result. And pride in one's achievements is the fuel of the travel trade industry, where competition is universal and all stakeholders are vying for the top position. This, in turn, has made offerings the world over increase, as consumers' expectations and demands rise. This drives the development of the industry which raises the bar of what we know as excellence, redefining it entirely.

Raising the bar is the underlying foundation of the travel trade industry, and we showcase this endeavour in this edition of *TTG MENA*: Destination Qatar explores how the State is showing the world its ambition to excel; On Location Indonesia reveals how the Asian nation is flexing its MICE muscles as well as its family offering; in Update Lebanon, we examine the country's three-pronged approach at excelling in the tourist industry; Spotlight UK & Ireland shines a light on the destinations' shopping offerings; Awareness Libya focuses on the country's hospitality industry's resilience; and Analysis Family Travel explores the fast developing world of theme parks.



## A LETTER FROM...

From the team here at *TTG MENA*, have an excellent month!

**Panayiotis Markides**  
Media Reporter

## TOP STORY



## WORLD-LEADING BRAND ARRIVES IN DUBAI

**Hilton Worldwide's** luxury brand, Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah. Featuring 319 rooms, the hotel boasts views of Dubai's landmarks.

Guests can expect to choose from six restaurants offering fine cuisine and beverages including the New York-inspired Social by Heinz Beck, a stylish eatery created by multi-award winning European

chef and author, Heinz Beck.

Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah includes a range of recreational facilities including tennis and water sports. The hotel offers a 200m private beach and two temperature-controlled outdoor pools.

As a setting for meetings, launches and celebrations, the hotel provides eight naturally-lit meeting spaces and a 600-capacity, multi-purpose ballroom.

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## BUILDING A NAME IN KURDISTAN

**Millennium & Copthorne Hotels** has introduced Millennium Kurdistan Hotel & Spa, the group's second property in Kurdistan.

Located in the outskirts of Sulamaniya, adjacent to Faruk Medical city, Millennium Kurdistan Hotel & Spa features 135 guestrooms and suites, and aims to cater to both business and leisure travellers. The rooms are furnished with modern amenities and complimentary high speed WiFi is available throughout the property.

Additionally, the hotel comprises extensive spa treatments operated by Turkish brand Dogus Spa, as well as an indoor swimming pool, fitness centre and vitamin bar.



## EXHIBITION CALENDAR 2014

### FEBRUARY 23-25

Routes America, San Salvador, El Salvador  
[www.routesonline.com](http://www.routesonline.com)

### FEBRUARY 24-25

Mice Arabia Congress, Doha, Qatar  
[www.mice-arabia.com](http://www.mice-arabia.com)

### MARCH 5-9

ITB Berlin, Berlin, Germany  
[www.itb-berlin.de/en/](http://www.itb-berlin.de/en/)

### MARCH 9-11

Routes Asia, Sarawak, Malaysia  
[www.routesonline.com](http://www.routesonline.com)

### MARCH 12-13

International Confex, London, UK  
[www.international-confex.com](http://www.international-confex.com)

### MARCH 20-23

MITT, Moscow, Russia  
[www.mitt.ru/en-GB](http://www.mitt.ru/en-GB)

### MARCH 24-26

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## MAGICAL RESORT FOR RED SEA

**Steigenberger Aqua Magic** in Hurghada, Egypt, has recently launched, offering a variety of facilities catering to all tastes.

CEO, Steigenberger Hotel Group, Puneet Chhatwal commented on the opening: "Steigenberger Aqua Magic is the ideal complement to our Al Dau Beach Resort in Hurghada."

Chairman, Al Dau Development, Bassel Saad added: "Egypt guarantees ideal holiday conditions in summer and winter alike, something which is appreciated by guests from all over the world."

Steigenberger Aqua Magic

offers 707 rooms and suites, including 294 specially designed family suites with a separate children's bedroom. The rooms feature individually adjustable air conditioning, satellite TV and high-speed Internet access.

The hotel also has a certified Aqua Park providing attractions for visitors including water slides, a lazy river and a separate children's area, as well as having its own private beach.



## ANOTHER SPORTING TOUCH

The flagship golf residential community set on the fairways of Els Club Golf Course in Dubai Sports City, **Victory Heights**, recently held a special ceremony to celebrate its completion. Comprising 961 villas and town houses, available in a choice of European Classical, Spanish Andalusian, and Mediterranean architectural styles, Victory Heights boasts an on-site Ernie Els 18-hole championship golf course, Els Club House and Butch Harmon School of Golf, to name a few. With an ideal location in the centre of Dubai Sports City, home to five sporting academies, Victory Heights is a major milestone towards realising the vision of Dubai Sports City being the destination of sports in the emirate, according to president, Dubai Sports City, Khalid Al Zarooni.

## EYEING EMERGING MARKETS

**Meliá Hotel International** is gearing up to open one property in Brazil this year, with another two set to come on-board in China in 2015 and 2016. Upon opening, Meliá Paulista Business & Convention Hotel will feature 400 suites and apartments, plus a restaurant, bar, gym, seven

meeting rooms and three events and conventions venues.

Meanwhile in Zhengzhou, China, the two upcoming hotels, Inside by Meliá opening in 2015 and Meliá Zhengzhou due to launch in 2016, will together provide 933 guest rooms within a complex of three buildings. MICE facilities will include one grand ballroom for over 900 people alongside other multi-functional meeting venues.



## CEASELESS GROWTH

**Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide** launched 74 hotels in 2013, representing approximately 16,200 rooms in 22 countries, paving the way to its global lead and consolidating its presence particularly in developing markets.

The company confirmed a further 152 new hotel agreements during the 12-month stretch, marking the fourth consecutive year of increased signings and recording the highest number of new property deals signed since 2007.

"There is a global travel revolution underway, and the secular trends of rising wealth, rapid urbanisation and increasing digital interconnectivity make us as confident as ever about demand for high-end travel," remarked president, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Frits van Paasschen, adding that the hospitality giant will definitely benefit from these unstoppable trends.

“There is a global travel revolution underway.”

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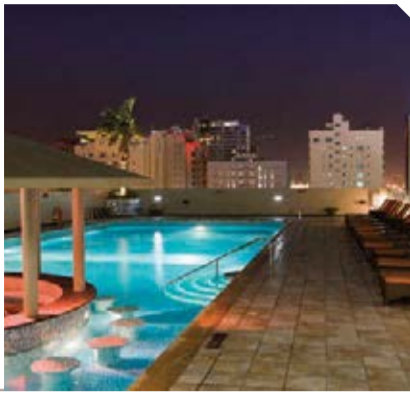
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# HOTEL CHECK

## ELITE CRYSTAL HOTEL, BAHRAIN

By Naomi Leach



This property understands the distinct needs of the business traveller and delivers exactly the environment required after a long day of meetings whether a guest chooses to unwind or continue working. My expansive one bedroom suite comprised of a living room area, bathroom, kitchen and bedroom. My colleague and I were able to continue working from the comfort of my living room. We also enjoyed

a tasty room service delivery.

In addition to a comfortable night's sleep, the hotel offered a promising start to the day with a varied and delicious international breakfast spread which began conveniently early. I also had the good fortune to lunch at the hotel and was impressed by the diverse choice, opting for a Lebanese style meal. Providing a calm and friendly service I believe this hotel would also suit the needs of a family.

.....  
TTG staff and correspondents assess services used by them. We report the results, which are based on a one-time experience only and view services from a customer perspective.

**SUITABLE FOR:** BUSINESS/LEISURE/FAMILIES

# OASIS UNVEILED



**Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort** is set to open its doors in summer 2014.

The new lakeside property, surrounded by Florida's woodlands and pools, is due to offer luxurious accommodations, restaurants, a spa, meeting and event spaces, plus golf, tennis and basketball facilities. Additionally the resort is to feature Explorer Island, a two hectare playground.

The hotel is to be situated close to the Magic Kingdom Park, Epcot, Disney's Animal Kingdom Theme Park and Disney's Hollywood Studios.

# BRAND MAKES MOROCCO DEBUT

**Beachcomber Hotels** has announced that Royal Palm Marrakech is now officially open to guests. The property is located 12km from the centre of Marrakech and eight kilometres from the airport. The luxury brand's new five-star property, inspired by Berber culture, is situated within a 231-hectare estate amongst age-old olive trees.

The 135 suites are set over three floors with views over the gardens, the hotel's golf course and across to the snow-capped Atlas mountains beyond.

There is accommodation to suit couples, families and groups with guests able to opt for a Junior Suite or choose from the family suites.

The par-72 golf course offers fairways, water hazards, greens and bunkers with practice and coaching facilities completing the golf offering. There are additional facilities including four tennis courts, two mini tennis courts, a squash court and a fully equipped sports centre offering specific fitness rooms. The Spa by Clarins provides a traditional Moroccan hammam and a range of massages and treatments. F&B options comprise four dining restaurants.

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## ELEVATED NEW SERVICE



The airline is bolstering its services

**flynas**, Saudi Arabia's national carrier, has launched a business class service on all its flights between the UAE and KSA.

Commenting on the launch, director of marketing and communication, flynas, Wael Al Sarhan said: "The great success of flynas is due to the support of our customers and in response to their loyalty we always listen to what they say, paying particular attention to what they expect from us."

flynas' business class cabin comprises eight premium seats with a generous seat pitch of 48 inches and extra-wide arm space of 40 inches.

## DEVELOPING A LEGACY

“Hilton Istanbul Bomonti is amongst our foremost MICE hotels across the world.”

Hilton Istanbul Bomonti Hotel & Conference Center has opened its doors to its very first guests.

Boasting 829 guest rooms and suites, and 12,000m<sup>2</sup> of event space, spread over 34 floors, the property builds on Hilton's legacy of almost 60 years in Turkey.

The hotel is adjacent to a new shopping and entertainment destination allowing guests to explore tourist hotspots on the European side of the city, as well as new retail, entertainment and dining options which are expected to open nearby.

Global head, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Rob Palleschi commented on the property's opening: "We are delighted to showcase our stylish design and superb Hilton service in Turkey on such a grand scale."



## BUSINESS HOTEL TO LAUNCH

**Landmark International Hotels (LIH)** has signed a long-term management agreement with Azal & Co. Holding, property owner of Al Marwa Boutique Hotel, in Baghdad, Iraq. The group has announced plans to transform the brand's offerings, for its opening in spring 2014.

LIH is expected to begin operating the hotel on the Karrada business district as of March 2014.

President, LIH, Firas Mneimneh commented: "It has a number of attractive features, which we intend to showcase to make Al Marwa LIH Hotel an iconic landmark in Baghdad."

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# BONDS OF LONGEVITY

**Masterfully embracing an array of tourism segments, Qatar seeks to gain prominence on an international level. Natalie Hami reports from the ground, on its most recent developments**

A veritable powerhouse in the MICE sector, Qatar is now swiftly and keenly turning its hand to a number of other tourism sectors, seeking to excel in those too, such as leisure, the stopover market, and F&B. In doing so, it is implementing the ever energetic and dominant marketing tool of social media.

According to general manager, Regency Holidays, Nasiruddin Shafiq, part of this energy is due to the 2022 FIFA World Cup bid win. He said: "Since winning the bid, Qatar enjoys the spotlight as a sports and business hub in the Middle East. Investments are at an all-time high and substantial growth is well on its way."

Group director sales and marketing, Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels, Abdo Kayali also asserted to *TTG* the strong belief that Qatar is still on an upward trajectory and has a hefty appetite to compete for tourism globally.

"We believe that the past is valuable to deliver future results. We want to be at the right level to compete internationally," he said.

With this in mind, hotels are likewise keen to present the destination's best attributes, as explained by general manager, Zubarah Hotel, Omar Awad, who told *TTG*: "As the first homegrown Qatari luxury hotel, it is important that we represent Qatar, its culture and heritage as well as expand the hotel on a global platform."

Eager to discover exactly how this destination is ascending to achieve a new tourism peak, *TTG* reports from Qatar on how it is not only bolstering its traditionally fortified sectors such as MICE and corporate, but is continually looking to diversify.

## DUAL STRENGTH

Advancing forth, it appears that a number of properties are taking a calendar approach by adjusting their focus, be it business or leisure, according to the time of year.

Kayali explained the group's approach exclusively to

*TTG*: "Al Jasra is around 40 per cent business and 60 per cent leisure; we mainly work with families on the leisure side. We work with the city calendar and try and balance this with the holidays."

Regarding the leisure market, he highlighted that the hotels have a variety of activities to draw in visitors both from the local market as well as the UK and Germany.

"We have a dhow for guests to enjoy and it provides an amazing experience for families, couples and business groups," he added.

The group also put together a spring festival, including a variety of concerts, geared towards coinciding with the mid-year holidays in KSA, in a bid to capture this lucrative market. General manager, Retaj Royale Doha, Ahmed Khorshed reiterated a similar sentiment: "It's a mix of business and leisure. On the weekdays it's business and at the weekend it's leisure."

Khorshed explained that the property is ideally placed in the airport area to capture the business market but also features ample sized rooms to attract leisure visitors, especially large families from the GCC.

General manager, Century Hotel Doha, Hany Maroun also outlined that the property's main focus is the business traveller, with the strong belief that this is the most ideal market to reach out to. He added that the hotel welcomes new markets with open arms.

Harnessing the benefits from an ideal location, whilst reaching out to the leisure segment with unique features, is Amari Doha.

Director of sales and marketing, Amari Doha, Rami Arafat Al-Jabari exclusively revealed to *TTG* how the property appeals to both segments. He said: "Amari Doha is ideally located in the heart of Qatar's vibrant capital and is just 15 minutes from Doha International Airport. With cultural attractions, shopping and entertainment venues quickly and easily accessed from the hotel, and Doha's business district also nearby, our hotel is conveniently located for both business and leisure travellers, which thereby provides us with a wider array of market segments to target."

Al-Jabari further explained that the surrounding Gulf states are naturally strong feeder markets for both corporate MICE and business travel, as well as for family leisure travel.

"The UAE, Oman and Kuwait are our major feeder markets for corporate travel, while Saudi Arabia and then Kuwait contribute the majority of our leisure visitors," Al-Jabari remarked.

However, the property is keenly looking to the future with plans to increase their leisure traveller market this year, especially as Qatar Airways continues to expand its network, according to Al-Jabari.

## DIGITAL EXPANSION

Alongside the leisure segment, this ever diversifying destination is skilfully drawing on a number of key tourism niches in a bid to continually bolster its own strong and varied offering.

Qatar's travel and tourism industry, from top to bottom, is also swiftly making decisive steps into the future with a strong focus on digital platforms as well as social media, utilising these as a means to reach out to either current or new clientele.

PR and marketing manager, Marriott Doha, Katie

“

**Investments are at an all-time high and substantial growth is well on its way.**

Roberts informed *TTG* of how the property is exploring and excelling in this communication platform.

"We're on Facebook and Twitter, where we post two to three times a day and we've started posting competitions too. We posted a flyer about our brunch and it got shared 500 times."

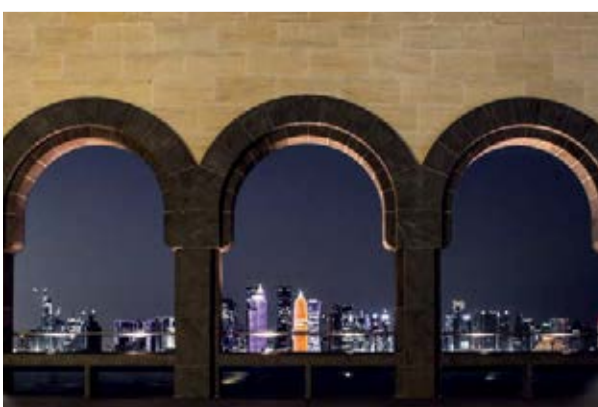
Roberts further enthused about how the various platforms encourage guests to converse on a number of topics, enabling them, as a marketing team, to post all their events and reach a wider audience than perhaps through more traditional means.

The digital age is also being welcomed by Amari Doha to adroitly communicate with its guests. One of the more significant developments in this has been the recent launch of its online Arabic booking engine, making it more convenient for its Arabic speaking customers.

According to Al-Jabari, various digital platforms centred around the Amari website are also utilised by the hotel to engage with consumers and potential guests.

"Our website provides a comprehensive source of information, special deals and promotions that both consumers and travel professionals are encouraged to visit regularly. It is available in a multitude of languages, including English and Arabic, to name a few," Al-Jabari concluded.

**Qatar is rapidly climbing the ladder of success across a variety of tourism sectors with a view to creating a destination to be rivalled on an international level.**



news

## LEISURELY IDEALS



**Sealine Beach Resort** is well positioned for the year ahead to become an integral player in Qatar's leisure proposition. "Sealine Beach Resort is the best place for both family and non-family pleasure and leisure activities," general manager, Sealine Beach Resort, Abdul Shukoor confidently enthused.

## A TASTE OF TEA

**The Torch Doha** is to soon launch its Torch Tea Garden, located on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor, overlooking the swimming pool and Aspire Park.

It is to be a high-end tea lounge serving a wide variety of tea and water selection, salads, sandwiches and crêpes, as well as homemade snacks.

## THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

**Grand Hyatt Doha** will be taking a three-pronged approach to 2014, which will see the segments of sports, leisure and MICE tourism play an equally important role, according to director of sales, Grand Hyatt Doha, Isis Giurgius.

"Qatar is planning to become the main capital of sports, and a lot of international sports teams are coming to Doha, which will lead to an increase in the leisure segment as many of the GCC citizens will come, thereby feeding into my three segments," explained Giurgius.

F&B will also be a point of focus, with developments already taking place, including the creation of a new al fresco extension of Rocca, the hotel's poolside restaurant. "We also launched a Friday brunch in the outlet, which is becoming popular with the locals," Giurgius confirmed.

## ESSENTIAL STEPS

**The Ritz-Carlton Doha** has outlined to *TTG* its upcoming plans. These include the finalisation of the renovations, which according to director of sales and marketing, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha, Zee Bassila will focus on the rejuvenation of several F&B outlets, the addition of dining options, and the extension of the Spa.



## EXTENSIVE ENHANCEMENTS

**Wyndham Grand Regency Doha** has announced a slew of developments including a freshly renovated lobby and reception area as well as two dining outlets, namely Chopsticks and Tangia.

The renovation works on the lobby and reception area have taken inspiration from the art world, turning it into an open museum and a destination for art and innovation lovers. A host of paintings, carrying the marks of a select group of international artists, has also been used to adorn the main entrance to the hotel as well as its different corridors.

Meanwhile, following a two-month hiatus, Chopsticks has reopened offering a casual-chic dining atmosphere. In addition, the property has opened the newly-designed Tangia, serving classical Moroccan dishes.



## TOURISM ON THE UPSWING

**Qatar Tourism Authority's** latest figures for 2013 illustrate an improvement and growth over 2012 across all key indicators of the tourism sector:

**GCC arrivals increased 20 per cent in Q3, 2013 versus Q3, 2012, claiming top spot for inbound tourism to the country.**

**International arrivals are also climbing, thanks to the strong performance of the country's MICE industry, having risen 13.36 per cent overall.**

**Inbound tourism from Asia, which was up 18.27 per cent, recorded the largest international increase.**

## THE FUTURE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Qatar is set to welcome its inaugural international tourism conference 'Tourism in Tomorrow's World: What the future holds for tourism in the region', hosted by Stenden University Qatar in conjunction with Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Company and the European Tourism Futures Institute.

The two-day conference is slated to take place on February 23-24 at Renaissance Doha City Centre hotel.

## SUCCESSFUL REVAMP

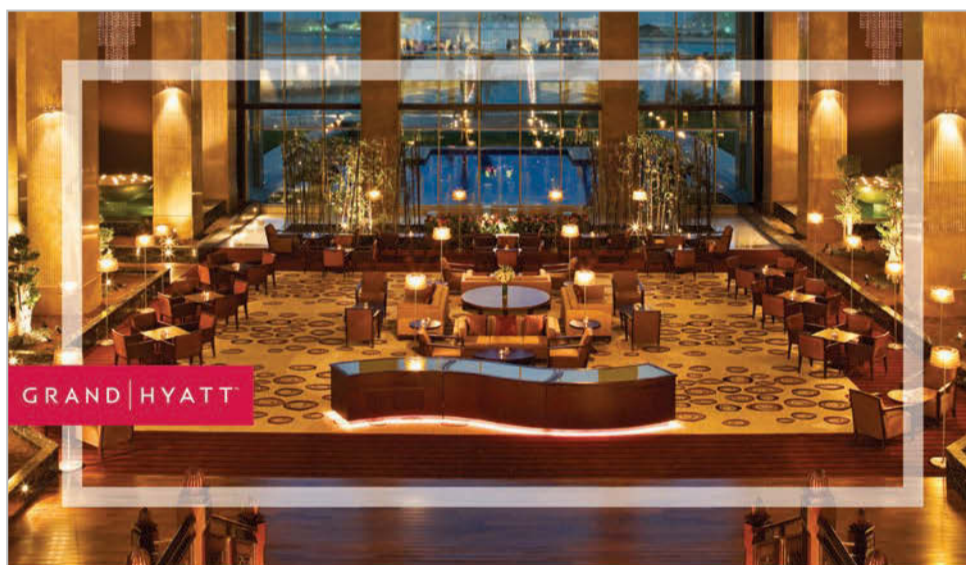
In a bid to enhance its offerings, **Mövenpick Tower & Suites Doha** has announced that it is undergoing changes to revamp its lobby and dining outlets throughout the hotel for 2014.

As part of the lobby expansion, the hotel will be replacing Wok Mee Noodle House with a new restaurant that will be opening and serving guests soon.

Marketing and communications manager, Mövenpick Tower & Suites Doha, Sara Assad noted to *TTG*: "Our efforts to keep the hotel up to date and to satisfy our guests will see a massive change hit the ground floor by the second quarter of the year. With more space and more to



offer, Mövenpick Tower & Suites Doha, which also manages the multipurpose Katara Hall in Katara Cultural Village, is looking forward to a fantastic and eventful 2014 spent with our treasured guests."



## INDULGE AT Grand Hyatt Doha.

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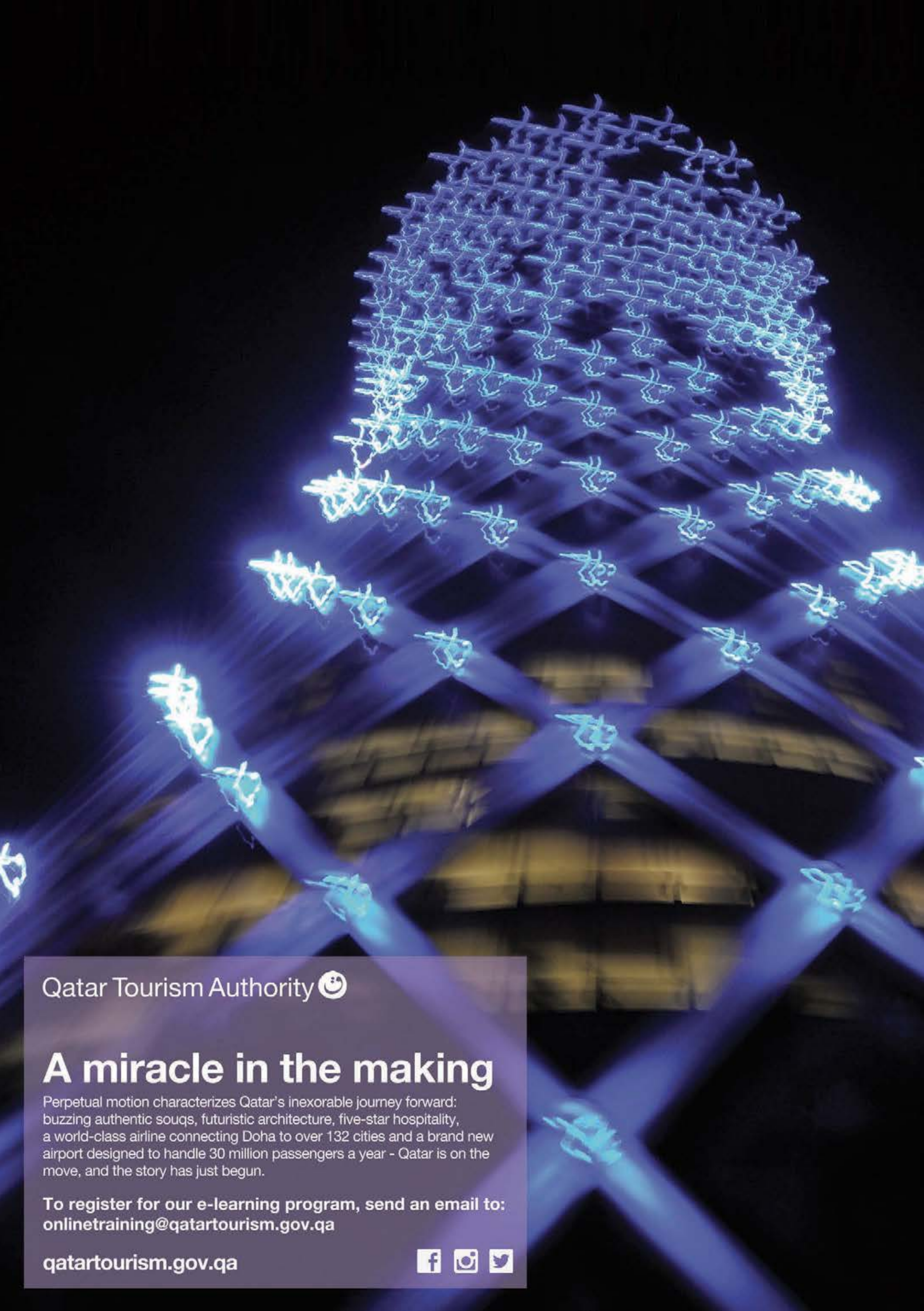
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# A COMPELLING FLAVOUR



**Proudly highlighting a trio of tourism strengths, Lebanon is catering to the tastes of MENA markets. Naomi Leach investigates**

to invite international visitors to Lebanon. SAAD Tours attends a host of shows collaborating with the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism to clarify the image of the country.

Further elaborating on this unified industry approach, cluster director, sales, marketing, revenue and reservations Phoenicia Hotel, Janet Abrahams remarked: "We are working closely with the Lebanon Tourism Board to proactively support growth in tourism to Lebanon and this forms part of our international business planning, attending trade fairs both in our region and across Europe."

## EMBRACING THE WEDDING MARKET

Retaining its status as a popular wedding destination, the Lebanese travel industry has been able to rely on this continual driver of tourism. Indeed, this niche has been largely unaffected at Corniche El Manara reported Fahkro: "Honeymoon and wedding packages are the strongest attractions for our clientele."

Meanwhile, Abrahams stated that this sector has grown over the last year and it is an expanding market for Phoenicia Hotel. Across Lebanon the wedding sector is reportedly flourishing with Younes noting that the resort is bolstering its weddings offering. Furthermore, both VEER Boutique Hotel and Resort and Rotana are promoting dual wedding and honeymoon packages.

## MEDICAL HOTSPOT

As an internationally recognised hub of medical expertise, Lebanon's medical tourism niche has also taken centre stage for the travel industry.

"Beirut is considered to be one of the key destinations when talking about medical tourism in the ME region. Every year, Lebanon receives so many visitors from the Arab countries, especially from Iraq, and also from Europe for specific medical consultancies or procedures since Lebanon is known to have the best physicians in specific specialties," outlined sales and marketing manager, Rosa Bou Chaaya, Radisson Blu Martinez Beirut.

Medical tourism is attracting both independent visitors and MICE delegations to the country, with Golden Tulip focusing on pharmaceutical segment for conferences. In 2014, Lebanon is set to host several medical congresses.

Heavily promoting medical tourism, regional business development and marketing manager, Medica Group, Eline Nehme told *TTG*: "From a medical beauty perspective, the Lebanon market is flourishing with new clinics and hospitals dedicated for beauty tourism."

**By strategically catering to its medical, wellness and corporate guests, Lebanon's travel industry is overcoming challenges to ensure loyalty from its visitors.**

**C**reativity and adaptability have become the hallmarks of Lebanon's seasoned travel and tourism industry, as it strategically embraces the fluidity of the current market. Industry stakeholders exclusively revealed to *TTG* how, now more than ever, they are overcoming challenges to target specific niche and feeder markets with a tailored offering.

Buoyed by Lebanon's trio of niche travel strengths - corporate, wedding and medical tourism, innovators are concentrating on these markets.

## SHARPENED FOCUS

In a bid to rebound from the challenges of regional instability which have overshadowed Lebanon, the country's tourism industry expressed resolve to cater to the international markets which are still investing in them.

Area vice president - Lebanon, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar, Rotana, Joseph Coubat asserted resilience to *TTG*: "We always face our challenges head on and do our best to overcome them by strengthening the relationship with our corporate accounts and delivering excellent customer care to our individual customers at the same time. We do this specifically by creating attractive, targeted deals. It's the maintenance of our loyalty to our guests that keeps us motivated." The brand has witnessed that despite a drop in Lebanon's GCC visitors, overall they still make up a large portion of its guests alongside Iraqi, Syrian, Egyptian, Jordanian and European markets.

Concurring, marketing manager, Coral Beach Hotel &

Resort, Rana Younes revealed the resort is adopting a similar strategic approach. Likewise, senior sales manager, The Golden Tulip, Jiyeh Marina Resort, Amina Zahwe told *TTG* that the team is eyeing Iraqi, Armenian, Moroccan and Turkish corporate markets alongside local business.

While a number of hotels, including Radisson Blu Martinez Beirut, are offering business orientated packages to continue to attract corporate guests to the city, similarly DMCs have had to change their footwork to match the steps of corporate arrivals. Events manager, SAAD Tours, Miray Ayoub reflected: "As a tour leader in the industry we had to focus mostly on our corporate clientele who still consider the country as safe even though there is low demand, but with the competitive hotel rates offered, corporate companies are still planning their events in Lebanon."

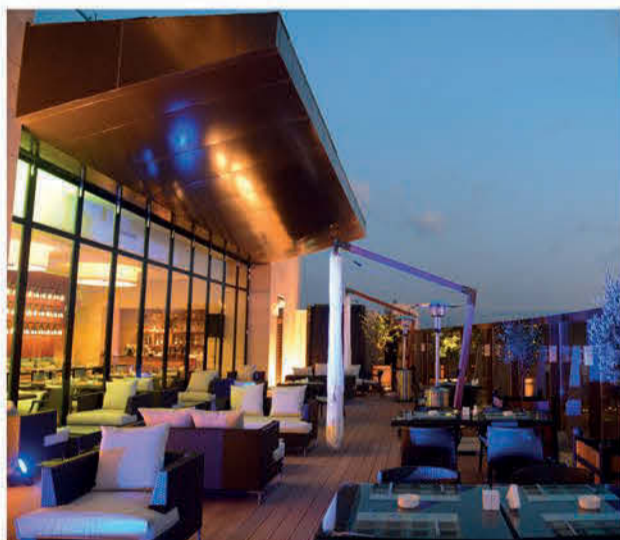
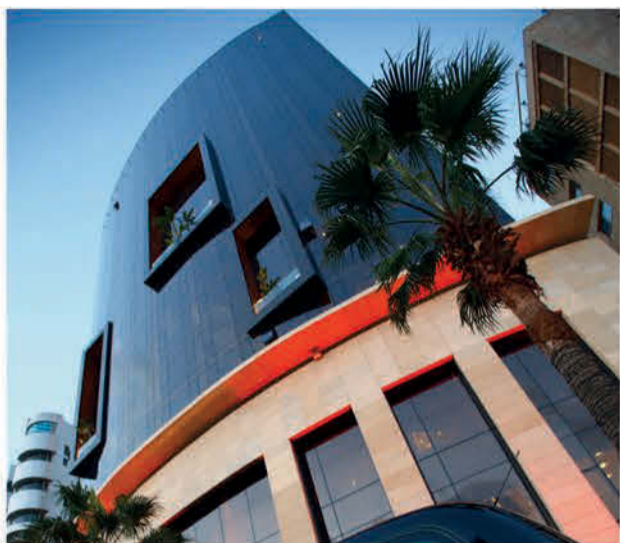
To reach these MENA audiences, director of sales and marketing, Corniche El Manara, Malek Fahkro highlighted that the property is working with a number of booking channels and online agencies to attract MICE business and exhibitions. Meanwhile, rekindling MENA markets, general manager, Coral Suites Hotel Al Hamra, Hartmut Grauel noted: "The market in Lebanon is very demanding and our management is delicately keeping up with the current market trends by dealing with modern-fresh advertising agencies, involving our brand image in marketing campaigns, connecting on our social media platforms and strengthening our online exposure."

As Radisson Blu Martinez Beirut uses its social media channels to cast Lebanon in a more positive light, trade-shows are also providing a vital platform for stakeholders



## LANCASTER PLAZA BEIRUT

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## BEIRUT'S ICONIC NEW 5-STAR HOTEL

Lancaster Hotels and Suites chain added to its portfolio a new five-star Avant-Garde Masterpiece Hotel, The Lancaster Plaza Hotel Beirut. Perched on a breathtaking sweep of the Mediterranean coastline, it is conveniently located within walking distance of Beirut shopping districts and cultural attractions. Guests will experience real art, discover exceptional design while enjoying the stunning sea view from the 151 luxurious rooms and suites, all furnished in a contemporary style with in room high-tech electronic systems.

Guests can choose between distinctive selections of restaurants, bars and indulge in the Spa treatments and massages. The hotel features 2 grand ball and meeting rooms that can cater your special events and business conferences.

The Lancaster Plaza is your final destination for luxury, comfort, and uncompromising service.





## MEDICAL TOURISM VENTURE LAUNCHED

In a collaboration between **Le Royal Hotels and Resorts, Beirut**, **Dr. Nader Saab** and the **Ministry of Tourism in Lebanon**, the country's medical prowess was promoted to Northern Iraq. Under the initiative titled 'Lebanon, Star of the Middle East' the three parties jointly launched the campaign in Erbil with the presence of high-profile personalities from both Lebanon and Northern Iraq.

One of the main pillars of the concept is to attract visitors to Lebanon, beyond shopping and sightseeing, to seek high-end aesthetic and plastic surgery - a field of expertise that the country excels in. Against this backdrop and representing an integral part of the initiative, renowned plastic surgeon Dr. Nader Saab also headed to Erbil for the launch of this campaign.



**The initiative was launched to introduce Erbil to Lebanon's medical tourism excellence.**

## NEWS FLASH

**While Golden Tulip Jiyeh Marina Resort is currently in a soft opening period, the team at the property reports that visitors can expect that they will soon benefit from more facilities completed at the hotel including an indoor pool, spa and health club club.**

## A STRATEGIC APPROACH

**Mövenpick Hotel & Resort, Beirut** is creatively focusing on its feeder markets and proactively targeting business from neighbouring countries. General manager, Mövenpick Hotel & Resort, Beirut, Pasquale Baiguera said: "Apart from the activities that our sales and marketing team undertakes locally, we receive a lot of support from our regional corporate office in promoting Beirut as a destination and our hotel, efficiently and effectively. "This happens either through other properties or representative offices. Our regional office has also created a new international sales office



that is based in Dubai as of January 2014 in order to promote our hotels located in the Middle East to the GCC market. "In parallel, we are also creating tailored packages with our partners that include flexible offers targeting the main markets that are coming to Beirut," he concluded.

## BEACH RESORT REFRESH

**Coral Beach Hotel & Resort** has revealed to **TTG** that while focusing on attracting the local market, the property has upgraded several of its F&B outlets.

The Winter Garden Restaurant & Bar has undergone a refurbishment with new menu items and presentation, in addition to the weekend promotions launched.

Additionally, SunSoul Restaurant & Shisha Lounge has had a furniture renovation, with a new menu presented, as well as having introduced its winter terrace open all year round.



## ADDING TO THE HIGH END HOSPITALITY SCENE

**Lancaster Plaza Hotel**, the five-star venue located on Raouche, Beirut's seafront stretch, has been inaugurated in a grand ceremony, under the patronage of HE Minister of Tourism, Lebanon, Fady Abboud.

The launching ceremony began with a guided tour, showcasing the guest rooms, as well as the dining locations, which include: Java Café; Piano Bar; Prime 18 Steakhouse; Fume Bar, located on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor with 360-degree views of the Mediterranean sea; and Daoud Basha.

"We are very pleased to have taken on such an iconic project, and inject it with novel features and luxury, adding to the high-end hotel

scene in Lebanon," said CEO and chairman, Achour Holding, the developing company behind Lancaster Plaza Hotel, Wissam Ali Achour.

"The hospitality and tourism industry in Lebanon is a very dynamic one, and with the introduction of a grand destination, such as the Lancaster Plaza Hotel, we have once again placed Beirut on the world map," he continued.

The refresh of the hotel includes the introduction of three new floors and a variety of modern outlets. Additionally, it includes 151 rooms and suites, all of which are fully equipped with deluxe amenities and complete with views of the sea and cityscape.

The property provides two wedding reception sites plus three high-tech meeting rooms. Other offerings include a spa with a range of treatments, steam room and more.

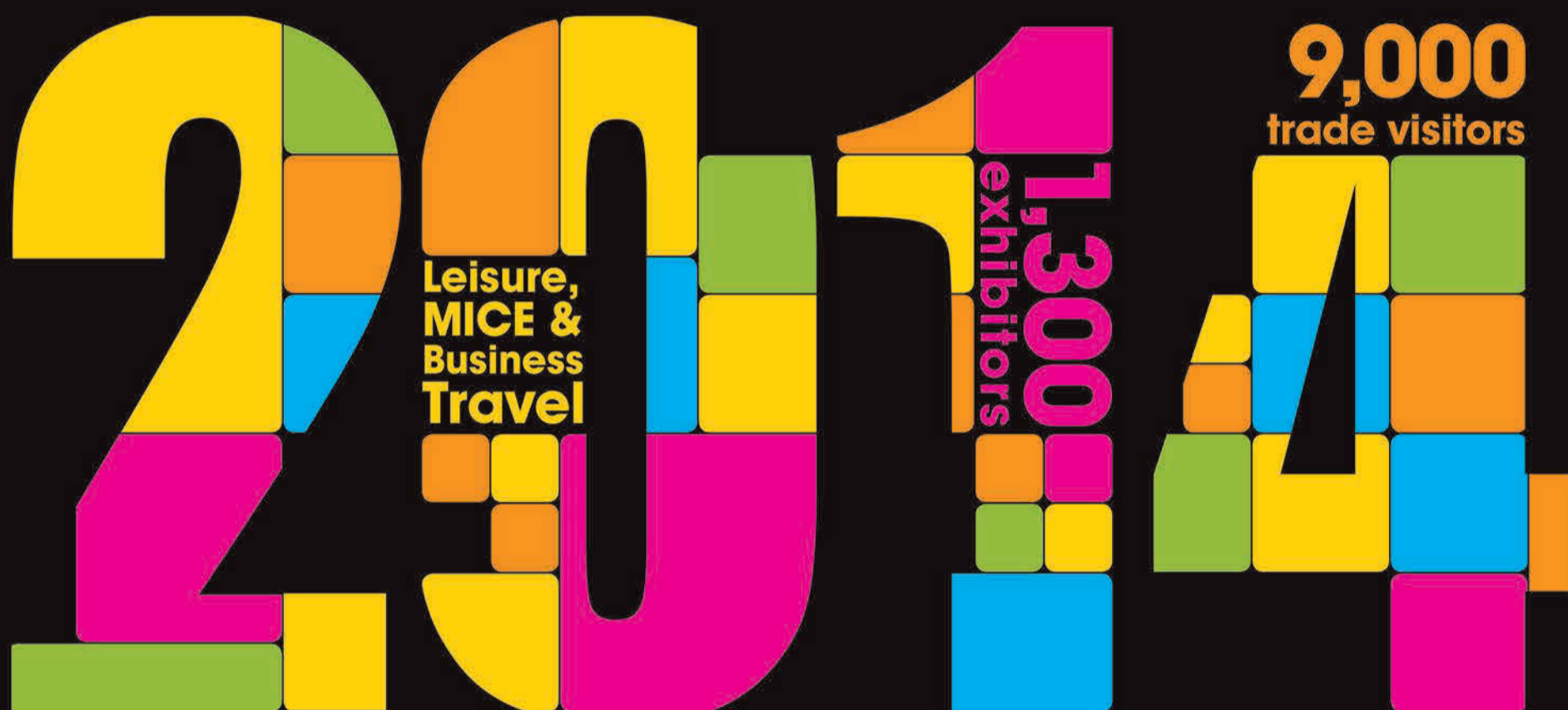


## REVEALING AN EVENTFUL CALENDAR

**Riviera Hotel and Beach Resort** announced to **TTG** that it has a host of event and packages planned for the upcoming year including a ski package in Q1. In Q2 and Q3, the property is set to introduce beach parties, fashion shows, food and beverage promotions and water sports products.



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Indonesia continues to prevail as a well-respected global leader in the burgeoning and ever-evolving world of MICE.

This was confirmed by senior vice president – Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, operations and development, Swiss-Belhotel International, Emmanuel Guillard who revealed that as a leading MICE destination, Indonesia's success derives from specific key factors. "Beneath them, however, is a strong and concerted support by the government, especially through its support of major infrastructure projects and improving access to areas where MICE business can grow and flourish," he further clarified to *TTG*.

And it is alongside this particularly cooperative governmental backing that inbound MICE tourism to Indonesia is seeking to reap a lot more than just a simple business trip.

Describing the country as a fascinating tourist hub which is safe, secure and with an intriguing culture and hospitable and naturally service-minded people, Guillard also believes that the year ahead is looking positive. "2014 will further cement Indonesia as a leading MICE destination, with hotels being built and managed by international companies in areas like Papua, Kalimantan and other parts of the archipelago to add to its already superb offering in destinations such as Bali, Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya."

Echoing Guillard's views on Indonesia's wealth of positive attributes, regional vice president – Southeast Asia, Alila Hotels & Resorts, Sean Brennan said: "Indonesia is a true playground that is easily accessible, caters for all price points, is culturally rich, oozes genuine warmth, Indonesian hospitality and boasts most land- and sea-based activities to ensure the ultimate experience. Furthermore, the level of creativity, expertise and resources plus the naturally beautiful backdrops are second to none."

And more so, as general manager, Sheraton Mustika Yogyakarta Resort & Spa, Muhamad Munir disclosed to *TTG*, most MICE travellers have the tendency to bring along their family and colleagues so it is not just business and meetings, but more.

With this in mind and coupled with its MICE components, Indonesia is presenting itself as a multi-faceted destination, ideal for the corporate traveller to invite the family.

#### ENDLESS CHOICES

Contributing to the existing and continuously developing hospitality establishments across different parts of the country, all set to ensure travellers feel at home and are entertained, general manager, Sheraton Bali Kuta Resort, Dario Orsini told *TTG*: "When it comes to attractions for travellers with their family, Indonesia is undoubtedly a paradise. From beaches, fine or street dining experiences, shopping malls, sports, art and musical performances, museums, cultural and historical sites and many more, Indonesia definitely has a lot to offer."

# LEGENDARY DIVERSITY

**Leading the way through the world of MICE tourism, Indonesia is now calling on all corporate visitors to bring the family along for added enjoyment. Stefanie Saghbini reports**



Moreover, according to Brennan, the kinds of activities which Indonesia boasts for the corporate traveller visiting with their family are almost endless.

"From white water rafting; to private cruises and live aboard luxury; to enjoying the private islands (there are 17,000 islands to explore); to bicycle tours; climbing volcanoes; snorkelling; safari parks; orangutans; komodo dragons; water parks; arts and crafts; helicopter excursions; the cuisine; plus diverse history; cultural diversity; golfing; kite flying; surfing; and more."

Similarly, assistant vice president, Regent Bali, Jamal Hussein also stated that the array of choices in Indonesia are limitless to keep the family happy. "Abundant sea sports activities, cultural performances and temple visits, guests can explore Bali with trips to the various parts of the island, shop and try out the very chic and stylish eateries available in Legian and Seminyak.

"Nightlife also offers a variety of clubs and bars and do not forget the famous spa and beauty treatments available in



**When it comes to attractions for travellers with family, Indonesia is undoubtedly a paradise.**

hotels and independently," she enthused.

Guillard also unveiled the large palette of things-to-do for the family accompanying the corporate guest, with the expert assistance, of course, from the team. "There's wellness for the family, shopping, and other activities for the kids, like discovering nature, exploring the wild and understanding a culture that is so unique and diverse.

"As hoteliers, what we are able to

provide families is an itinerary that really unveils the destination and provides the whole family with a fun, learning and bonding experience through a range of cultural activities such as massage, dance, trekking, bike riding and dining."

Aside from establishing and providing a concrete experience for the entire family to share altogether, considering the different desires of each individual travelling member is also imperative. However, it is barely a challenge for the Indonesian tourism professional, as general manager, Montigo Resorts, Michael Aloysius explained: "I think part of manifesting Indonesian hospitality is to be able to deliver these expectations, always with an element of surprise."

**With boundless options all firmly incorporated with world-leading hospitality services, Indonesia's MICE tourism product is naturally crafted to boost the ordinary business trip.**

**VIEW THE FULL REPORT ONLINE**





Special MICE Issue for GIBTM, March 15, 2014

# WHERE MICE MEANS...

## STRENGTHENING ITS Foothold

**Ascott Jakarta** is promising to maintain its commitment to deliver excellent services with personalised and memorable experiences by carrying out a multi-million dollar phased refurbishment, according to regional general manager – Indonesia and Australia, Ascott International, Kenneth Rogers.

Moreover, the next 12 months are expected to

welcome the launch of Ascott Kuningan Jakarta, while Ascott Waterplace Surabaya, Citadines Marvell Surabaya and Somerset Kencana Jakarta are gearing up to launch in 2015, Rogers further revealed to *TTG*.

“This will further strengthen our foothold as the largest international serviced residence owner-operator in the country,” Rogers concluded.



Ascott Jakarta is to cater to industry leaders, top executives and business travellers with families

## POLISHING ITS OFFERINGS

**Montigo Resorts**, Nongsa, recently introduced its events and meetings venue, which includes a ballroom that can comfortably accommodate up to 300 guests, and two meeting rooms. In addition, a new sand park has joined the property's offering, which, according to general manager, Montigo Resorts, Nongsa, Michael Aloysius, is perfect for team building activities and games.

“A second Montigo is also in the pipeline. Also in Indonesia, Montigo Resorts, Seminyak, will open in 2015,” Aloysius announced to *TTG*.

## WELCOMING SISTER HOTELS

Regional vice president - South East Asia, **Alila Hotels and Resorts**, Sean Brennan exclusively revealed to *TTG* that Alila Seminyak will be opening at the end 2014. The hotel is to offer 240 suites (all ocean views) on the beach and an events/banquet space which also opens onto the beach and which can accommodate up to 300 people. “In addition, Alila SCBD will open in Q2 of 2015, with 242 rooms plus a large ballroom that caters for up to 1,000 people,” he further divulged.



“To keep ahead of the competition, **Grand Hyatt Jakarta**, from time to time, updates the property. Recently, the **Grand Rooms and Grand Clubs** have been refurbished and the **bathrooms** have been renovated. This year, we are remodelling our **Grand Suites and Premier Suites**,” director of sales and marketing, **Grand Hyatt Jakarta**, Rini Stoltz told *TTG*.

This year, **Conrad Bali** is celebrating and marking its 10-year anniversary with many activities set to be launched this month, including special offers for MICE and families on its official website.

## LANDMARK OPENING

**Best Western**

**International** (BWI) has launched a new hotel in the heart of Kelapa Gading in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

Best Western Grand Palace Kemayoran, set in a four-storey building in close proximity to JIExpo, one of Indonesia's biggest conference and exhibition venues, comprises 156 rooms. This total includes 13 suites, all offering private balconies with views across the city.

Guests can also benefit from an outdoor lagoon-style swimming pool, enjoy a massage at the spa, sample local and international cuisine at the Onyx Restaurant, or view Jakarta's skyline at hotel's Sky Lounge.

Meanwhile for the corporate and events



markets, Best Western Grand Palace Kemayoran offers a ballroom capable of hosting up to 300 delegates, plus five meeting rooms and outdoor function space.

## REVOLUTIONISING MEETINGS

**The Dharmawangsa Jakarta** is enhancing its in-house dining options with an extension project to Jakarta Restaurant's garden, slated to be completed early this year. “A new concept of exclusive meeting venues for corporate events in Jakarta will be launched this year as well,” informed director of sales and marketing, The Dharmawangsa Jakarta, Novi Samodoro, who added that the property's ballrooms are also being renovated, which will cater to simple business meetings or corporate gatherings upon completion.



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# TTG

Middle East & North Africa



# IMMERSIVE CHARM

**As world renowned shopping hubs, both the UK and Ireland are competitively updating their variety of experiences. Panayiotis Markides examines how these destinations are utilising their cultural attributes to magnetise the MENA guest**



**T**he MENA region is growing as a popular feeder market for the UK, according to regional commercial manager - Middle East and Central Asia, British Airways, Paolo De Renzis, British Airways. As such, the airline is proactively ensuring that the UK is as easy to reach as possible.

The number of flights from the region to London Heathrow have increased by 40 per cent in the last five years, as De Renzis informed *TTG*. Indeed, inbound visitors to the UK from the UAE have surged three per cent between January and November 2012 and the same period in 2013, according to recent estimates by VisitBritain.

To welcome this increase in MENA arrivals, manager - GCC markets, VisitBritain, Annique Labuschagne told *TTG*: "We are encouraging UK suppliers to focus on the experiences that appeal to visitors from the GCC region."

And with equal eagerness for Middle Eastern patronage, the UK and Ireland's industry stakeholders are adapting their offerings and highlighting their shopping and cultural appeal to cater to the unique demands of this market.

## RETAIL AND RECREATION

The UK and Ireland's hospitality industry is satisfying the trend for personalised, culturally immersive experiences with an emphasis for MENA guests on bespoke shopping orientated trips.

Director, global sales and marketing - Middle East, Preferred Hotel Group, Nabil Hassanieh explained: "For the MENA traveller, the quality of services offered at the hotel needs to extend to leisure activities taking place within the destination itself. Our city hotels as a result are investing in concierge services to continue to grow in popularity with MENA travellers."

The Preferred Hotel Group's Lancaster London hotel offers a 'Shopaholic' package, targeted at visitors from the MENA region, while its renowned property, The Wellesley promotes a 'Ladies in Luxury' package. Also in London, The Goring hotel showcases its history and its close proximity to the capital's celebrated shopping streets to attract visitors.

The need to provide the most exclusive experience to guests and to use a central London location as an advantage is imperative,

director of communications, InterContinental London Park Lane, Patty Kahn revealed: "From personal shopping with Liberty London, to VIP shopping in the lesser-known boutique areas of Marylebone or Belgravia, or guided art and museum tours, our concierge are always on-hand to create a range of private experiences."

Reflecting this personalisation trend, PR and marketing manager - Europe, COMO Hotels, Chris Orlikowski commented to *TTG*: "We partnered up with FLORIS to give guests the chance to create their own unique perfume."

The UK's aptitude for personalisation is indeed widespread. In Manchester, Radisson Blu Edwardian, Manchester, is such an example that attracts the MENA market as it is near to the city's commercial district, luxury shopping streets and convention centre.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, The Merrion hotel sits directly opposite the seat of the Irish Parliament and for shopping enthusiasts, marketing manager, The Merrion, Sarah Glavey highlighted that Dublin's Grafton Street and Henry Street are nearby, bursting with Irish and international fashion outlets.

Hassanieh also spoke about shopping packages at Preferred Hotel Group's Dublin property, The Fitzwilliam: "Guests enjoy full VIP service when visiting department stores by only showing their key." Additionally, an on-hand concierge team ensures reservations at some of the city's leading restaurants - including those with waiting lists, VIP private visits or premium seats at the theatre.

## QUINTESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES

Capitalising on a distinctive heritage, the UK and Ireland's hospitality sector is flavouring its offerings with cultural touches.

Orlikowski noted: "We believe that especially the younger generation of Middle Eastern travellers is more and more gravitating towards chic contemporary luxury hotels such as The Halkin by COMO and Metropolitan by COMO that offer bespoke experiences to immerse guests into the local culture." One such experience COMO offers is privately guided art tours around Mayfair's galleries.

To showcase British culture, the Corinthia London takes guests on day trips to Petworth Estate in West Sussex - an historic late 17<sup>th</sup> Century mansion. PR manager, Corinthia London, Orla O'Donovan informed: "These day trips offer a unique and British experience for GCC guests travelling to London, enabling them to swap views of the London Eye and River Thames, offered by the hotel's idyllic city-centre location and close proximity to popular tourist and shopping sites, with an historic English country escape."

**As the UK and Ireland aim to welcome more MENA arrivals, the destinations within are unveiling a wealth of shopping attractions and cultural options to meet the discerning requirements of Middle Eastern visitors.**

## SCOTLAND WELCOMES THE WORLD

**VisitScotland** recently marked the launch of its Homecoming 2014 campaign to the global business tourism market at the Global Reception of Professional Convention Management Association's Convening Leaders meeting in Boston earlier this year.

The country 'Welcomes the World' in 2014 with the arrival of two major sporting events - the Commonwealth Games 2014 and the Ryder Cup



2014, which is returning to the home of golf this year. Both events are expected to draw a global audience

spanning every continent on the globe.

Moreover, Homecoming 2014 will see an ambitious programme of events and festivals take place throughout 2014, celebrating the ancestry, food and drink, sporting, creative and natural aspects of Scottish culture, thus providing a striking backdrop to any business event taking place in the country throughout the year.

## ICONIC LONDON PROPERTIES REBRANDED

**The Taj Group** has introduced its two newly rebranded London hotels - St. James' Court, A Taj Hotel and Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences.

St. James' Court, A Taj Hotel has introduced the Taj service through new offerings, amenities and service enhancements, combined with the famed Taj hospitality.

Meanwhile, Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences is enhancing its offerings through bespoke experiences

such as the Taj Royal Attache butler service, optional Jaguar airport transfers and exclusive horse and carriage rides.

In addition to the two signature suites - the world's first Jaguar Suite and the uniquely designed Cinema Suite - the property is also remodelling other suites. In 2014, it will welcome a new lobby and reception lounge, a new restaurant, library lounges and a private dining area.

## ABUNDANT OFFERINGS

**Marketing manager, GCC, Tourism Ireland, Thomas Redmond shares the country's tourism appeal to the MENA market**

Ireland prides itself on being the perfect leisure destination for families from the GCC. Like in the Gulf, the concept of family is very important to Ireland, which is evident from the wide abundance of family-friendly attractions that can be experienced across the island.

Due to its natural landscape, many of Ireland's top leisure attractions for GCC tourists are based around its unique landscape and rich history. These include

Titanic Belfast; Giant's Causeway; Cliffs of Moher; Wild Atlantic Way; Golf; horse racing and shopping.

Ireland is also well prepared to cater for the luxury tastes of GCC travellers. We have a wide array of shopping services and experiences, such as Luxury Ireland, which takes visitors on an indulgent tour of Ireland's top retailers, designers and craft-makers.

Last year more than 45,000 people from the Middle East visited the island of Ireland - a seven per cent growth



on the previous year.

Four factors drive tourism into the island of Ireland: our fantastic product; an easier visa applications process; our marketing activities in the Gulf and, the most important factor of all, market access.

We look forward to working with Emirates Airline, our network of tour operators and travel agents in the GCC to further drive tourism into Ireland.

**The Savoy** has revealed that 2014 marks the iconic hotel's 125<sup>th</sup> year since first opening. In light of this milestone, guests staying throughout August can expect to take part in guided tours by The Savoy's archivist, the recreation of menus from the time of opening and an exclusive exhibition in The Savoy Museum. A street party on Savoy Court and other celebratory events throughout the hotel will take place on August 6, 2014, the anniversary itself, as well as special rates from April 2014 until the end of year.



**British Airways** has announced it is more than halfway into an investment of over \$8.2 billion in new aircraft, smarter cabins, lounges and new technologies. As such, it has recently refurbished its 777 fleet, on top of investing \$164 million into new First cabins.

The airline is enhancing its connectivity by launching the A380 on its London - Johannesburg route, expected February 2014, followed by Washington DC in September 2014.

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# VISIONS OF OPTIMISM

Libya possesses an array of undiscovered tourism attractions, industry stakeholders reflect on the country's aim to attract the domestic market. Naomi Leach reports

## NATURAL HIGHLIGHTS



Managing director, Sherwes Travel, Ibrahim Usta revealed to *TTG*: "Travellers to this North African country are in for a special adventure as Libya is a proud nation of contrasting Arabic, European, and African influences - holidaying here promises to be a compelling and fascinating journey.

"The country is renowned for its spectacular and historical architectural masterpieces, but what many visitors are also likely to find during their holiday is that Libya is home to a plethora of breathtaking beaches as one of its borders is the Mediterranean Sea. Beaches in the north western part of Libya include those in the cities of Zwara, Melita, and Telil, while the beaches of Sabratha, Farwa Island, and Tripoli are quite popular amongst travellers as they have powdery white sand, sandy hills, and tall palm trees lining the backdrop.

"One of Libya's biggest tourism draw cards is its cultural heritage with the country boasting three classical ruins landmarks, which are all UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The city of Leptis Magna, which is an ancient Roman city, is one such venue.

"While many point to the country's irresistible fusion of Arabic influences meeting those of the Western world, one of the main reasons for tourists wanting to visit here is undoubtedly its natural beauty and diverse landscape," he concluded.

## LOOKING FORWARD



Five-star property, Radisson Blu Al Mahary Hotel, Tripoli revealed that it is offering attractive packages to ensure business from the domestic market and is optimistic of Libya's return as an international tourism player.

General manager, Radisson Blu Al Mahary Hotel, Tripoli, Volkan Vural exclusively told *TTG*: "Our business comes largely from the local market so we continue to promote our hotel and Libya as a destination by offering attractive packages and promotions aimed at this market." Vural revealed there would be a greater emphasis on working with the Libyan Ministry of Tourism to participate on the national booths in all relevant trade shows, in addition to participating on the Rezidor stand at trade shows.

Eliciting hope, Vural suggested that Libya's leisure segment may return to centre stage in the not too distant future. He asserted: "Although primarily a business destination, Libya is also a stunning undiscovered country with long unspoiled beaches, tranquil deserts and rich heritage as well as many historical sites.

"For now we have business tourism but in the future one of the country's main revenues will come from leisure tourism and also from the construction business. We should see this happening in Libya in three or four years," Vural stated.

## NEWS FLASH

**News is bubbling, according to Usta, that Libya's tourist visa will soon be issued again after its suspension of more than two years.**

### NEIGHBOURHOOD INTEREST

Malta has shown commitment to assisting with the rebuilding of Libya's tourism sector.

"Libya's tourism development looks up to attainable objectives at present with the assistance of its neighbour country Malta helping to develop tourist and hospitality sectors with representative stands at WTM," sales coordinator, Corinthia Hotel Tripoli, Charlyn Yasir shared with *TTG*.

**Libya has lots of things to offer to tourists including 2,000km of beaches, archaeological sites and also activities in the Sahara plus the volcanoes and sand dunes. In Libya you can visit a lot of things in one country."**

**Operations manager, Wadi Tidwa Tours, Ben Khalifa**

# REINVENTING THRILLS

In the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the simple aim of operating a theme park was to boast an attraction offering the fastest, highest and longest rides. However, through the course of the decade, attractions have come to rely on advanced technologies to beautify the overall experience.

These were the opinions expressed by creative director, Europa-Park, Germany, Frédéric Pastuszek, who further stated: "Nowadays, attractions are much more based on technologies and riding through extensive themed environments which bring us to the essence of our industry: telling stories."

Park manager, Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, Mike Oswald also underlined the importance technology plays to bolster the themed park product overall.

Indeed, modern communication is transforming today's world, according to vice president - group marketing, Ilyas & Mustafa Galadari Group, Adam Alexander Page, who attributes these fast-maturing traits to the rapidly developing world of themed parks.

"Until recently, the very popular single-themed parks that incorporated rides, immersive entertainment and merchandise woven around a particular theme were giving way to the multi-theme concept. With changing times and tourists demanding more from an entertainment destination, the latter itself is fast evolving into what can best be described as a 'themed leisure destination'," he continued.

## SHARED FAMILY MOMENTS

Professionals in the theme park industry are, therefore, marching head on and, side by side with the unremitting development of technology, to stay on par with altering trends; according to Pastuszek, a shared family theme park experience presently remains a top priority albeit with the necessary, up-to-date advancements.

He explained: "We are convinced that families want more immersive ride experiences that they can share together. They are more interested in having an emotional experience rather than purely sensational e.g. a high speed rollercoaster. With a new state-of-the-art technology and special effects we can create new attractions that promise much more adventure."

Echoing similar views, Oswald said: "Having attractions that are designed to meet the varying needs of each family member ensures that each guest will be able to have an experience that caters directly to them. We also designed attractions that the entire family can do together. Providing these experiences to families so that they can spend valuable time playing and having a great time together is one of the reasons that the amusement business is booming in the Middle East."

Page concurred: "The expectations of families in terms of entertainment option, especially from a tourism hotspot like Dubai, are on the prominence, based

**“Nowadays, attractions are much more based on technologies and riding through extensive themed environments.**

"This current avatar encapsulates cutting-edge entertainment in the form of increasingly faster and more challenging rides, multi-dimensional cinema viewing options and a choice of retail options, all at one address," Page further revealed.

Even more so, Oswald strongly emphasised the merging of traditional themed parks with water parks, which, he asserted, is the future of the industry. "Major waterpark manufacturers are now offering rides and technologies previously available only in theme parks, including technologies such as Linear Induction Motors (LIM), interactive gaming and special effects - all of which are present at Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi," he further highlighted.

on what they perceive should be better than the latest on offer in various parts of the world."

Thus, the well-known MENA family segment remains a promising one for the future of theme parks, even in Europe, as Pastuszek clarified: "We see more and more guests coming from MENA countries every year. Of course, this trend will continue to grow and it's our mission to adapt our service to the desires of our guests and their culture."

**As necessary technological advancements continue to bolster the rapid developments of theme parks, families across the world are in for a more refined and fun experience.**

**From the vintage family experiences of yesteryear to the technologically advanced offerings of today, family travel has experienced a rapid evolution manifested in the themed entertainment park. Stefanie Saghbini investigates**

## PIRATE THEMED FUN UNVEILED

Guests at **Legoland Windsor Resort** can expect plenty of pirate-themed activities in 2014 as Pirates Landing receives a major re-vamp to become the new Pirate Shores.

Featuring Castaway Camp, a new pirate adventure play area, over 100 brand new Lego models



and themed features on the Pirate Falls Treasure Quest log flume ride, alongside a new themed restaurant, the Jolly Rocker Pirate Ship ride and Pirate Goldwash, Pirate Shores altogether promises a fun family adventure.

In light of this, the 150-room Legoland Windsor Resort, which is open from March 14 - November 3 this year, is inviting guests with kids to enjoy its LEGO-themed family rooms, whose price includes park tickets and early bird access to selected rides.

## UNFOLDING PLANS

"Work is in progress at the various themed segments of IMG - Worlds of Adventure (IMGWOA) for its 2014 opening. Erection of the structural columns of the massive 139,355m<sup>2</sup> -themed entertainment destination, marking a key stage in the construction of IMGWOA, is

at an advanced stage and we expect this part of the project to be completed shortly. Meanwhile, shipments of the rides have started to arrive onsite," said vice president - group marketing, Ilyas & Mustafa Galadari Group, Adam Alexander Page.



## CHARACTERS COME TO LIFE

'Despicable Me: Minion Mayhem', a 3D ultra-HD movie motion-simulator ride, and 'Super Silly Fun Land', an interactive play land adventure, inspired by Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment's 'Despicable Me' will come

to life at Universal Studios Hollywood, Los Angeles, the US, in spring 2014.

According to president, Universal Studios Hollywood, Lany Kurzweit, the new ride will introduce guests to the same characters from the film, but in a whole new way.

## CAPTURING ALL THE JOY

One of Europe's leading attraction operators, **Merlin Entertainments**, recently joined forces with Finland-based **Rovio Entertainment**, creator of the Angry Birds franchise, to premiere the world's first Angry Birds 4D experience at Thorpe Park Resort, Surrey, the UK.

Scheduled to open in May 2014, the Angry Birds 4D experience will form the centrepiece of a brand new 4,000m<sup>2</sup> fully-themed land at the theme park.

This is set to feature the Angry Birds characters,

coming home to roost on Detonator, the resort's 9.3m<sup>2</sup> drop tower ride, while Red Bird and the Bad Piggies go bump to bump on a brand new dodgems attraction.

Both teams will collaborate to ensure that all the new attractions capture the fun and delightful humour of one of the world's most iconic games.

The 4D experience is being jointly developed by Rovio Entertainment and top 4D animators 3DBA in collaboration with Simworx.



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## ANDREAS JERSABECK



GENERAL MANAGER

CONRAD DUBAI

Conrad Dubai has announced the appointment of Andreas Jersabeck as general manager. Stemming from 38 years of hospitality experience across 11 countries, and 16 years in general manager roles across a number of Hilton Worldwide's properties, Jersabeck brings a wealth of knowledge to his new position and a known successful history, having led many teams to win international recognition.

## ALAN PRYOR



GENERAL MANAGER  
DESIGNATE

KUALA LUMPUR  
CONVENTION CENTRE

Alan Pryor has been appointed general manager designate of Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. Pryor takes over from Datuk Peter Brokenshire who retires at the end of March 2014. Before joining the centre as deputy general manager in 2011, Pryor had the role of director, operations, Durban International Convention Centre.

## THOMAS TAPKEN



VICE PRESIDENT - OPERATIONS,  
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

MILLENNIUM AND COPTHORNE  
HOTELS, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Millennium and Copthorne Hotels, Middle East & Africa, recently announced the appointment of Thomas Tapken to its regional head office in Dubai. Tapken has been appointed vice president - operations, Middle East & Africa following his 30 years of experience, driving service and excellence across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

## PAUL JORDAAN



RESORT MANAGER

SIX SENSES ZIGHY BAY

Paul Jordaan has been recruited as resort manager of Six Senses Zighy Bay. With an extensive background in boutique luxury brands throughout Africa, Asia, the UK and North America, Jordaan has relocated from a regional general manager position with Aman Resorts in India and Sri Lanka. Previously, Jordaan was hotel manager at Point Grace on Turks and Caicos foray.



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## STEWART SELBIE



GENERAL MANAGER

ST REGIS SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT

With a passion for exceeding guest expectations and creating brand-inspired experiences, Stewart Selbie has become the new general manager of St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort, Abu Dhabi, and area general manager of the emirate. With over 30 years of experience within Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Selbie is expected to lead the team towards service excellence.

## AHMAD AL ARAJ



HOTEL MANAGER

AYLA HOTELS & RESORTS

The beginning of the New Year has seen the addition of Ahmad Al Araj to the team of Ayla Hotels and Resorts in the position of hotel manager. Working closely with general manager of the property, Mohamed Soussan, Al Araj will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the hotel brand, devoting 15 years of valuable expertise to the property.



## SPECIAL AGENT...

**Managing director,  
Universal Touring  
Company, Mahmood  
Al-Shaibani**

Managing director, Universal Touring Company, Mahmood Al-Shaibani shed some light on how the company aims to showcase Yemen: "For this season we are offering a special proposal for Socotra island which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

"We expect 2014 to be more stable; accordingly we will extend our programmes for classic Yemen,

which covers the central area of the country, the mountains and also Socotra island.

"Most bookings are small groups and individuals; some local families, and a few charter flights to Socotra island.

"For those who would like to visit Yemen, we propose Socotra, in addition to the old city of Sana'a, also a UNESCO World Heritage site."

## What's trending this month...

### Moving forward

International Travel Connections (ITC) has rebranded to mark its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as ITC Luxury Travel and has launched a Caribbean cruise following the England cricket tour.



### Redeveloped specialist

Tourism Ireland has redeveloped its Ireland Specialists Programme, its eLearning platform dedicated to assisting travel agents to keep the travel trade informed of Tourism Ireland's updates.



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**Fairmont Heliopolis & Towers**  
The Egyptian hotel welcomes former Miss India, Celina Jaitley to its premises.

**The Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel, Residence & Spa** The property launches the Great British Week activities by welcoming the iconic MINI Cooper to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of friendship between the UK and Bahrain.



**Hilton Hurghada Plaza** is awarded with a Green Globe certification.



**St Regis Doha** receives celebrated British chef, Gordon Ramsey to visit his two Doha restaurants.

**Qatar Airways** Retaining his top ranking, Rafael Nadal makes a winning start to the New Year at the Qatar Airways sponsored ExxonMobil Open 2014 championship.



**Etihad Airways** announces the PGA golf star Martin Kaymer as its latest guest ambassador.

A visual tour of recent events in the region



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DANY BOLDUC

Chief operating officer,  
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