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Pickalbatros Reopens Palmeraie Golf Palace in Marrakech Following MAD 300 Million Redevelopment



Pickalbatros Reopens Palmeraie Golf Palace in Marrakech Following MAD 300 Million Redevelopment



The Egyptian hospitality group's investments in Morocco exceed USD 400 million, with its portfolio expanding to nine hotels and more than 3,000 rooms as it approaches its 17th anniversary in the Kingdom.

Marrakech – Morocco | Al Rehla

Egypt's Pickalbatros Hotels & Resorts Group reopened Palmeraie Golf Palace in Marrakech on Friday, November 27, 2026, following a comprehensive renovation, modernisation and expansion programme involving investments of MAD 300 million, according to the Marrakech-Safi Regional Investment Centre.

The reopening of the hotel, which dates back more than three decades, was attended by Moroccan Minister of Tourism, Handicrafts, and Social and Solidarity Economy Jalal Charaf, Egyptian Ambassador to Morocco Ahmed Nehad Abdel Latif, and several government officials, business leaders and tourism industry representatives from both countries.

335 Rooms and Suites and 500 Job Opportunities

According to the Regional Investment Centre, the property has a capacity of 335 hotel rooms and is associated with the provision of 500 job opportunities.

The hotel features 13 outdoor swimming pools and one indoor pool, a 1,200-square-metre spa and four hectares of landscaped gardens.



Kamel Abu Ali
Founder and Chairman of Pickalbatros Group


PALMERAIE GOLF PALACE


fit GYM









Located near an 18-hole golf course, the property combines luxury hospitality with golf tourism and wellness experiences.

More Than USD 400 Million in Investments in Morocco

Egyptian businessman Kamel Abou Ali, Founder and Chairman of Pickalbatros Hotels & Resorts Group, revealed that the group's total investments in Morocco have exceeded USD 400 million, while its hospitality portfolio has expanded to nine hotels comprising more than 3,000 rooms across Marrakech, Agadir and Casablanca.

The reopening comes as the group prepares to celebrate 17 years of operations in the Moroccan market in early 2027.

Mohamed Eid Soliman, the group's Regional Marketing Director, noted that the expansion reflects its strategy to strengthen its hospitality portfolio and attract regional and international tourism markets.

Who Is Behind the Project?

Egyptian businessman Kamel Abou Ali established Pickalbatros Hotels & Resorts Group in 1992, gradually expanding its presence across the hospitality sectors in Egypt and Morocco.

According to Forbes Middle East, the group's portfolio comprised approximately 45 hospitality properties with more than 20,000 hotel keys as of September 2026.

Its founder ranked 34th on Forbes Middle East's 2026 list of the Top 100 Travel and Tourism Leaders.

Alrehla Perspective | Cross-Border Arab Tourism Investment

"The expansion reflects the group's strategy to strengthen its hotel portfolio and attract visitors from regional and international tourism markets."

Mohamed Eid Soliman
Regional Marketing Director, Pickalbatros Group

The reopening of Palmeraie Golf Palace illustrates a regional expansion model centred on refurbishing and modernising existing hospitality assets rather than relying exclusively on new hotel developments.

Pickalbatros' presence in Morocco also highlights the role of Arab capital in developing the hospitality industry across national borders and diversifying specialised tourism products, particularly golf tourism, wellness and luxury resorts.








PALMERAIE GOLF PALA



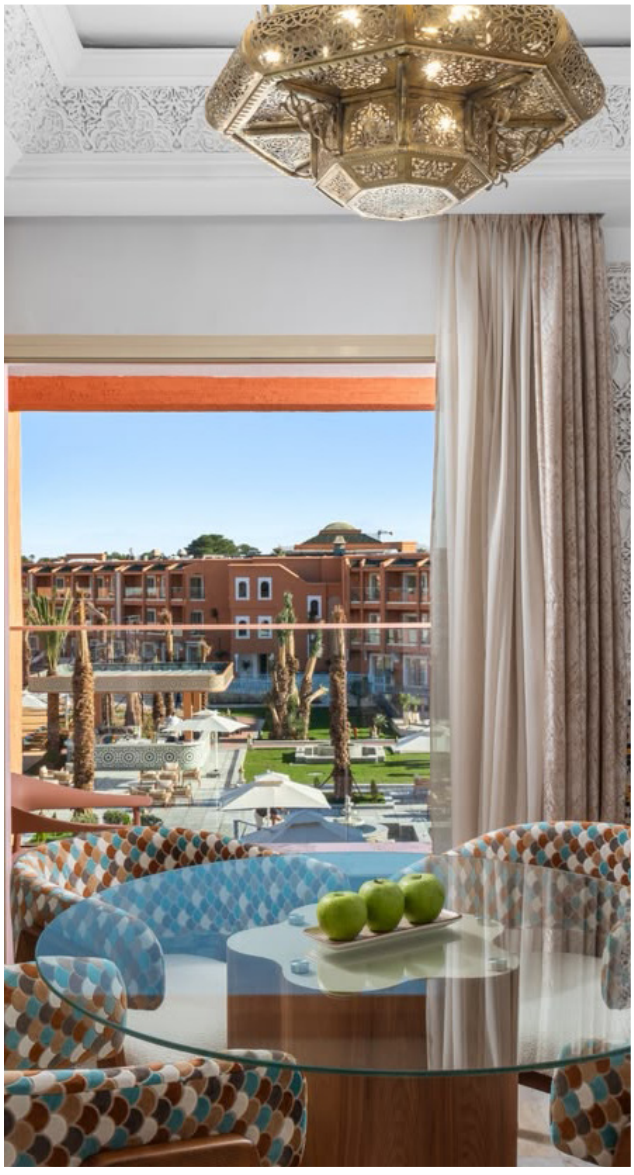














BAAN Holding Signs SAR 23 Million Financing Agreement with Tourism Development Fund to Redevelop Hotel in Hail



The financing facility extends over 24 months from the date of the first Tawarruq transaction, while the group's hospitality portfolio comprises 22 hotels with 2,785 keys.

Hail – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

BAAN Holding Group has signed a financing facility agreement worth SAR 23 million with Saudi Arabia's Tourism Development Fund (TDF) to finance the renovation and redevelopment of one of its hotels in Hail, as part of the group's strategy to modernise its hospitality assets and strengthen its presence in the Kingdom's hospitality sector.

In a disclosure to the Saudi Exchange (Tadawul), the group stated that the agreement was signed on November 26, 2026, with a financing period of 24 months commencing from the date of the first Tawarruq transaction.

Financing Guarantees Linked to Project Performance

The guarantees provided under the financing facility include a promissory note covering the full financing amount, the project's net operating profit, the hotel lease agreement, and the assignment of third-party liability insurance and insurance policies covering the financed assets.

The group confirmed that there were no related parties involved in the agreement. However, it did not disclose the name of the hotel benefiting from the financing, the total redevelopment cost or the expected completion date.



Fahad bin Mohammed Al-Obailan
Group CEO



Redeveloping Existing Hospitality Assets

The agreement forms part of the group's strategy to modernise its hospitality portfolio and capitalise on investment opportunities within Saudi Arabia's tourism sector.

The project derives additional significance from its location in Hail, a destination offering natural, heritage and cultural tourism attractions, alongside a range of sporting and tourism events.

Who Is Behind the Project?

Established in 1978, BAAN Holding Group, formerly known as Al Hokair Group, is listed on the Saudi Exchange under ticker symbol 1820. Its business activities span hospitality, entertainment, catering, food and beverages, restaurants and investment.

The group is led by Chief Executive Officer Fahad bin Mohammed Al Obailan, while Sami Bou Khaled heads its hospitality division, which comprises 22 hotels with a total capacity of 2,785 keys, according to figures published on the group's official website.

Saudi Arabia's Tourism Development Fund provides financing solutions designed to support tourism investments and projects across the Kingdom.

Alrehla Perspective | Tourism Financing Supports the Redevelopment of Existing Assets

The agreement highlights the importance of financing dedicated to renovating existing hospitality properties as an alternative investment approach to developing new hotels.

The economic viability of such projects remains dependent on renovation costs, their ability to improve hotel operating performance and competitiveness, and the generation of sufficient revenue to meet financing obligations, in line with actual demand within the destination.



Sami Boukhaled
CEO of Hospitality Sector





Travel in Brief

Morocco.. A Gulf Love Affair Renewed with Every Visit

BY:
Dr. Saleh Al-Makhdoum
President of the Arab Tourism Media Club

There are countries we visit out of curiosity and others we return to out of nostalgia. Morocco is one of those destinations that succeeds in forging a special emotional bond with its visitors, particularly Gulf tourists, who discover a unique blend of Arab authenticity, natural beauty, and cultural diversity.

Perhaps the secret behind Gulf travelers' affection for Morocco lies in the sense of familiarity they experience despite the differences in everyday life. Shared language, customs, traditions, and warm Moroccan hospitality make visitors feel at home, while the distinctive character of Moroccan culture offers a travel experience that is both unique and continually refreshing.

Morocco is renowned for its remarkable tourism diversity. In Marrakech, visitors experience the charm of historic medinas, traditional markets, and authentic Moroccan riads. In Agadir, they enjoy beautiful beaches and luxurious resorts, while Tangier combines Mediterranean character with a rich historical heritage. Fez preserves its deep-rooted cultural and historical identity, and Casablanca offers a modern urban experience.

Moroccan cuisine is another major reason for this enduring connection. Tagine, couscous, grilled specialties, and traditional Moroccan mint tea, known as atay, are far more than food and drinks. They are cultural experiences that reflect the richness of everyday life and the spirit of Moroccan society.



Hilton Debuts LXR Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi with 202 Rooms and Suites Following Eastern Mangroves Hotel Redevelopment



The Mangroves Abu Dhabi opens as part of Aldar Properties' AED 1.5 billion hospitality portfolio redevelopment programme, offering more than 1,400 square metres of meeting and event space.

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

The Mangroves Abu Dhabi opened its doors to guests on November 26, 2026, marking the debut of Hilton's luxury brand, LXR Hotels & Resorts, in the UAE capital as part of the group's expansion in the region's luxury hospitality sector.

Redeveloped by Aldar Properties, the hotel features 202 rooms and suites in the Eastern Mangroves district, combining natural views of mangrove forests and waterways with proximity to Abu Dhabi's commercial and cultural centres.

Redevelopment Under an AED 1.5 Billion Investment Programme

The property previously operated under the Anantara brand before being incorporated into Aldar Properties' hospitality asset redevelopment programme, announced in September 2024 with a total investment of AED 1.5 billion.

The programme aims to modernise existing hospitality assets and reposition them within the luxury hospitality segment through collaborations with international hotel brands.

The standalone redevelopment cost of The Mangroves Abu Dhabi has not been disclosed.

Hospitality Experiences Inspired by the Local Environment

The hotel features three principal dining destinations: Lilia, inspired by Levantine cuisine; Diya, specialising in coffee, tea and light refreshments; and TAYŌ, which combines Mediterranean flavours with Japanese culinary techniques.

The property also offers an infinity pool overlooking the mangrove forests and a fitness centre, while its



dedicated spa is scheduled to open in 2027.

Guest experiences include workshops exploring Emirati tea-making traditions, private tours of Louvre Abu Dhabi and desert excursions, offered through LXR's signature 'Pursuit of Adventure' programme.

More Than 1,400 Square Metres for Business Tourism

The hotel provides more than 1,400 square metres of space dedicated to meetings, conferences and private events, including a ballroom, meeting rooms and multipurpose facilities.

These facilities enable the property to cater to diverse traveller segments, combining leisure tourism with business events and meetings.

Who Is Behind the Project?

Aldar Properties, listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX), is responsible for the hotel's redevelopment as part of its hospitality investment portfolio. The company is chaired by Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, with Talal Al Dhiyebi serving as Group Chief Executive Officer.

The hotel brand belongs to US-based Hilton, one of the world's largest hospitality groups, led by President and Chief Executive Officer Christopher J. Nassetta.

LXR Hotels & Resorts forms part of Hilton's luxury portfolio and comprises 18 properties worldwide, according to the opening announcement. The brand focuses on distinctive hospitality experiences rooted in the cultural and natural characteristics of each destination.

Alrehla Perspective | Redeveloping Hospitality Assets to Enhance Investment Value

The opening of The Mangroves Abu Dhabi reflects an investment model centred on redeveloping existing hospitality assets and repositioning them through partnerships with international brands, facility modernisation and the diversification of services and potential revenue streams.

For hotel owners and investors, this model highlights opportunities to enhance the operational value and competitiveness of existing properties rather than relying exclusively on new hotel developments, while taking into consideration redevelopment costs, operating expenses and actual demand for luxury hospitality services.

Ras Al Khaimah Tops the World's Best Cities for Expats in 2026, with Dubai and Abu Dhabi Among the Top Five



The UAE and Spain account for six of the world's top 10 cities in the InterNations ranking, with housing affordability, career opportunities and ease of settling in strengthening Ras Al Khaimah's appeal.

Ras Al Khaimah – UAE | Al Rehla

Ras Al Khaimah has topped the Expat City Ranking 2026, published by InterNations, ahead of Mexico City and Málaga, while Dubai and Abu Dhabi secured fourth and fifth places, respectively, giving the United Arab Emirates three positions among the world's top five ranked cities.

The ranking covered 33 cities worldwide, drawing on the findings of the Expat Insider 2026 survey, which assesses expatriates' satisfaction with living conditions, employment, housing, ease of settling in and personal finances

Ras Al Khaimah Leads Three Key Indices

Ras Al Khaimah ranked first in three of the five main indices: Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad and Expat Essentials, while securing second place in the Personal Finance Index.

Some 84% of expatriates surveyed in the emirate expressed satisfaction with their lives, compared with a global average of 70%, while 85% reported that relocating to Ras Al Khaimah had improved their career prospects, against 55% globally.

Housing and Administrative Efficiency Strengthen the Emirate's Appeal

Around 80% of respondents reported that finding accommodation in Ras Al Khaimah was easy, compared with 44% globally, while 69% rated housing affordability positively, against a global average of 32%.

Despite leading the overall ranking, Ras Al Khaimah placed 18th in the Quality of Life Index and 28th in the Travel and Transit subcategory.

The UAE and Spain Dominate the Rankings

The UAE and Spain collectively secured

six positions among the world's top 10 cities for expatriates, with three cities from each country.

Meanwhile, Berlin ranked last, preceded by New York and Frankfurt.

7,786 Survey Participants

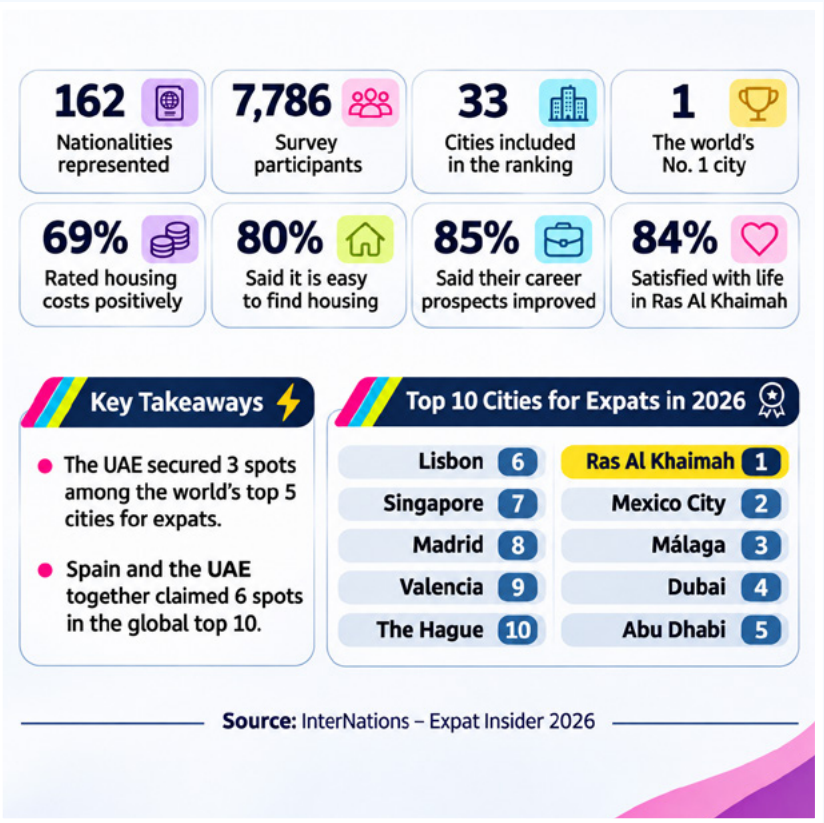
Conducted between February 1 and March 31, 2026, the survey involved 7,786 expatriates representing 162 nationalities and assessed up to 53 factors associated with living abroad, grouped into five main indices.

InterNations required a minimum of 50 respondents per destination for inclusion in the ranking.

Alrehla Perspective | Destination Attractiveness Goes Beyond Tourism Assets

The findings highlight the importance of integrating services, infrastructure, housing and employment opportunities in shaping a destination's appeal to international residents, alongside its natural, cultural and entertainment attractions.

However, the ranking reflects expatriates' personal experiences and satisfaction rather than directly measuring tourism performance, visitor numbers or destination competitiveness.





Egypt Opens Registration for 2027 Hajj Tour Operator Consortiums with a Minimum of 45 Pilgrims per Programme



December 3 set as the electronic registration deadline, with temporary financial guarantees ranging from EGP 150,000 to EGP 400,000 per successful lottery applicant, depending on the programme category.

Cairo – Egypt | Al Rehla

The Egyptian Travel Agents Association (ETAA) has opened electronic registration for consortiums of tourism companies organising Hajj programmes for the 1448 AH/2027 season, with registration closing on Thursday, December 3, 2026, as part of the season's operational procedures coordinated with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Minimum of 45 Pilgrims per Programme

The association has established a minimum requirement of 45 pilgrims per programme within each consortium, including supervisors, institutional allocations and premium packages, while excluding drivers from the count for overland programmes.

It also confirmed that Category A and Category B camp programmes will remain separate pending coordination with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah regarding their potential merger.

Financial Guarantees of Up to EGP 400,000

Tourism companies are required to provide temporary financial guarantees through bank cheques payable to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

The guarantees amount to EGP 400,000 per successful lottery applicant for the tower accommodation category, EGP 300,000 for the camp accommodation category, and EGP 150,000 for both economy and overland programmes.

These amounts represent temporary financial guarantees required from tour operators rather than the prices charged to pilgrims.

Electronic Management of Consortiums

The lead company in each consortium is responsible for registering its details and adding prospective member companies, which must electronically accept or reject participation requests.

The association stressed the importance of completing successful applicants' records, registering programmes for supervisors' allocations and premium packages, ensuring consistency across the association's and ministry's electronic platforms, and submitting declarations and financial guarantee cheques within the specified deadlines.

Last Edition Crowned

the Leaders of Hospitality...

Who Will Claim the Gold This Year?

Nominations Open Now





From the Summit of Everest to Jordan's Trails.. Mohamed Wahba Explores Stories of History, Art and Nature

BY:
Abdulrahim Al-Arjan
Traveler and Adventure Tourism Researcher

Egyptian traveler and artist Mohamed Wahba concluded his second visit to Jordan, a journey that combined cultural tourism, adventure and art. His itinerary included archaeological and religious sites, hiking trails and creative activities documenting heritage and human memory.

Madaba.. History and Nature

In Madaba, we accompanied Wahba to Mount Nebo, where he learned about its religious and historical significance through an explanation by Father Ammar Shaheen. The tour continued to the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, the Map Church, renowned for its historic mosaic map, the Church of the Martyrs, the Madaba Museum and the archaeological site of Tell Hisban.

His journey also included hiking along the trail connecting Mount Nebo with the Baptism Site, reaching the area of Moses' Springs, in an experience that brought together natural landscapes and spiritual heritage.

The Dolmens.. Art Preserving an Ancient Civilization

At the Al-Murayghat Basin, Wahba participated in an initiative to document the heritage of the dolmens, creating an artwork depicting one of these ancient stone structures.

With his contribution, the initiative we are undertaking has reached 63 artworks created by 41 artists from 11 countries, bringing together visual arts, archaeology and heritage documentation to introduce this ancient legacy to a wider audience.

From Everest to Art

Wahba also conducted a comic art workshop at the German Jordanian University, sharing insights from his artistic studies in Japan and his training under renowned Korean artist Kim Jung Gi.

In Amman, Space 317 hosted a signing event for his two books, The Spirit of Cairo and Bayt Al-Kritliyya, which document cities, architecture and human memory through an artistic perspective.

Having previously reached the summit of Mount Everest carrying the Egyptian flag, Wahba represents a distinctive combination of adventure, artistic creativity and historical exploration.

Organized through personal efforts, this visit demonstrates how individual initiatives can showcase Jordan's tourism and cultural diversity. It also highlights the need for stronger partnerships among tourism authorities, universities, cultural institutions, artists and travelers to document Jordan's heritage and promote it internationally.



Saudi Arabia Invites Tourism Start-ups to Reclaim 10 Types of Government Fees Under SAR 1.5 Billion Initiative



More than SAR 415 million reimbursed to 11,848 enterprises across various economic sectors, with December 31, 2026, set as the registration deadline.

Riyadh – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism has invited small and medium-sized tourism enterprises that commenced operations in 2024 to benefit from the 'Estrdad' initiative, implemented by the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at), which enables eligible businesses to reclaim up to 10 types of government fees and charges, subject to approved eligibility criteria.

The invitation forms part of the initiative's second edition, which has an allocated budget of SAR 1.5 billion to support emerging businesses across various economic sectors during their first three years of operation.

More Than SAR 415 Million in Fees Reimbursed

According to the latest figures announced on November 18, 2026, total reimbursements under the initiative exceeded SAR 415 million, benefiting 11,848 enterprises, while approximately 44,000 businesses preliminarily met the eligibility requirements.

These figures cover all participating economic sectors, with no specific breakdown disclosed for the tourism industry.





Reimbursement of Establishment and Operating Fees

The initiative covers reimbursement of up to 80% of expatriate worker levies, alongside commercial registration fees, municipal and economic activity licences, business conversion fees, chamber of commerce and Saudi Post subscriptions, publication of articles of association, and trademark and patent registration fees.

These incentives aim to ease the financial burdens associated with establishing and operating businesses.

December 31 Registration Deadline

The Ministry of Tourism has urged targeted enterprises to verify their eligibility and submit applications through the Estrdad digital platform before the registration deadline of December 31, 2026.

Periodic reimbursement payments to eligible enterprises will continue until the end of 2028.

Alrehla Perspective | Managing Costs and Liquidity in Tourism Enterprises

The initiative is particularly significant for emerging tourism businesses facing establishment, licensing and labour costs during their initial years of operation.

Fee reimbursements enable eligible enterprises to recover a portion of their expenditure and reinvest it in business development and service improvements. However, the actual financial benefits remain dependent on the nature of their activities, the fees paid and compliance with the initiative's eligibility requirements.



More Than 80 Culinary Experiences from Around the World in the Heart of Historic Riyadh



‘Sikkat Al Atimah Winter’ combines culinary arts and architectural heritage in a three-day event aimed at revitalising the Saudi capital’s historic centre and supporting entrepreneurs.

Riyadh – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

The Saudi capital, Riyadh, is hosting the ‘Sikkat Al Atimah Winter’ event, which opened on November 26, 2026, and runs until November 28, featuring more than 80 culinary experiences from local and international cuisines.

The initiative leverages culinary arts to revitalise historic sites and enrich tourism and entertainment experiences in the heart of the capital.

A Journey Through Global Cuisines

The event offers visitors an opportunity to explore diverse culinary cultures through a programme featuring live cooking demonstrations, tasting sessions, interactions with chefs and interactive activities designed for families and culinary enthusiasts.

The programme also allows visitors to discover ingredients, cooking techniques and culinary traditions associated with different cultures.

Architectural Heritage as Part of the Experience

The event draws its distinctive character from its location between Al-Daho District and Al-Adl Square, near the Qasr Al-Hukm district and Souq Al-Zal, where culinary experiences complement the architectural and cultural landscape of historic Riyadh.

The setting allows visitors to combine gastronomic activities with exploring traditional markets and surrounding heritage landmarks.

A Platform for Food and Beverage Entrepreneurs

The event forms part of the Royal Commission for Riyadh City’s initiatives to revitalise social and cultural activity in historic neighbourhoods.

It also provides opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs specialising in food and beverages to showcase their products and engage directly with consumers.

Alrehla Perspective | Culinary Tourism as a Gateway to Revitalising Historic Districts

‘Sikkat Al Atimah Winter’ illustrates how culinary activities can contribute to revitalising historic urban centres by combining architectural identity, cultural heritage and contemporary hospitality experiences.

The significance of this model lies in transforming historic neighbourhoods from conventional sightseeing locations into destinations hosting diverse tourism and cultural activities, while enabling local businesses to contribute to enriching the visitor experience.

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When Systems Fail: Has Travel Become Hostage to Technology?



12,462 flights cancelled across the United States on the day of an aviation communications network disruption, while nearly 64% of Delta's flights were delayed on the day its aircraft weight and balance system failed.

Manama – Bahrain | Al Rehla

From check-in and baggage handling to air traffic management and aircraft weight calculations, technology has become an integral part of every stage of the passenger journey. However, two technical disruptions in the United States during November 2026 have reignited debate over the aviation industry's ability to maintain operations when digital systems fail.

Four Hours and 45 Minutes of Aviation Disruption

On November 13, 2026, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a nationwide ground stop following a communications network disruption that affected the stability of communications and radar systems at 17 of the country's 22 en-route air traffic control centres.

The ground stop lasted approximately four hours and 45 minutes before network stability was restored and air traffic operations resumed.

According to official figures, approximately 12,462 flights were cancelled that day, including 9,082 operated by major airlines. The FAA clarified, however, that not all cancellations were directly attributable to the ground stop.

When Airlines Revert to Manual Procedures

Nine days later, Delta Air Lines experienced a failure in its automated aircraft weight and balance system, a critical component of flight safety requirements.

The airline resorted to alternative manual procedures while addressing the technical issue and restoring the system.

According to FlightAware data, Delta



recorded approximately 2,194 flight delays on November 22, representing nearly 64% of its scheduled flights that day. However, not all delays can be attributed exclusively to the technical failure.

The Economic Cost Extends Beyond Airports

The consequences of operational disruptions are not limited to airlines. They can extend to hotel reservations, organised tours, ground transportation and connecting flights.

Airlines also face challenges related to aircraft and crew rescheduling, passenger rebooking and obligations concerning passenger rights, including applicable ticket refunds when flights are cancelled or significantly altered.

Does the Aviation Industry Have a Backup Plan?

Both incidents highlight the importance of developing business continuity plans alongside investment in technology. Such measures include backup systems, employee training in alternative procedures and regular operational readiness assessments.

The objective is not to return to traditional operating methods or abandon digital transformation, but to build an operational framework capable of managing disruptions without compromising safety standards.

Alrehla Perspective | Operational Resilience as a New Measure of Competitiveness

As airports across the Arab world expand and invest in automation, artificial intelligence and digital services, operational resilience is becoming an increasingly important consideration in assessing tourism infrastructure.

Ultimately, the strength of tomorrow's airports may lie not only in the sophistication of their technology, but also in their ability to continue delivering services safely when that technology fails.

By : Roula Alhasan

Ubaid-Period Temple and a Cuneiform Library of 200 Clay Tablets: New Discoveries Reveal the Secrets of Ancient Mesopotamia

Dhi Qar prepares to welcome three international archaeological missions in December, as discoveries in the ancient cities of Nigin and Girsu shed light on religious, scientific and social life in ancient Iraq.

Dhi Qar – Iraq | Al Rehla

Archaeological sites across Iraq's Dhi Qar Governorate continue to reveal new evidence of Mesopotamia's ancient civilisation, following significant discoveries in the cities of Nigin and Girsu, including an ancient temple, a pottery production facility and a library containing approximately 200 clay tablets bearing historical, literary and medical texts.

The discoveries coincide with preparations to welcome three additional international archaeological missions in December 2026 as part of the ongoing excavation season.

An Ubaid-Period Temple in the Ancient City of Nigin

During its eighth excavation season at Tell Zurghul in Al-Dawaya District, a joint Italian-Iraqi archaeological mission uncovered a temple dating back to the Ubaid period, alongside a structure believed to have served as a tavern or storage facility, and a pottery production site.

Dhi Qar's Inspector of Antiquities and Heritage, Shamil Ibrahim Dayekh Al-Rumaidh, confirmed that excavations remain ongoing, noting the discovery of a clay tablet associated with the history of the newly uncovered temple.

Scientific studies conducted by the Italian archaeological mission indicate that settlement in ancient Nigin extended from the middle of the fifth millennium BCE to the end of the third millennium BCE. The city later became part of the Sumerian state of Lagash.

A Clay Tablet Library Preserving Royal History and Medical Knowledge

At the archaeological site of Tello, identified as the ancient city of Girsu, excavations uncovered more than 350 artefacts, including approximately 200 clay tablets within a Babylonian-era building known as the "House of the Priests."

According to Iraqi officials, the discoveries include texts relating to the Epic of Gilgamesh and the history of the kings of Lagash, alongside medical prescriptions, engineering plans and religious writings, providing valuable evidence of the development of knowledge and scientific practices in ancient Mesopotamia.

Three New International Archaeological Missions

Dhi Qar is preparing to welcome archaeological missions from Australia, Italy and Slovakia in December 2026 to conduct excavations at Eridu and Jokha, joining seven international missions currently operating across the governorate.

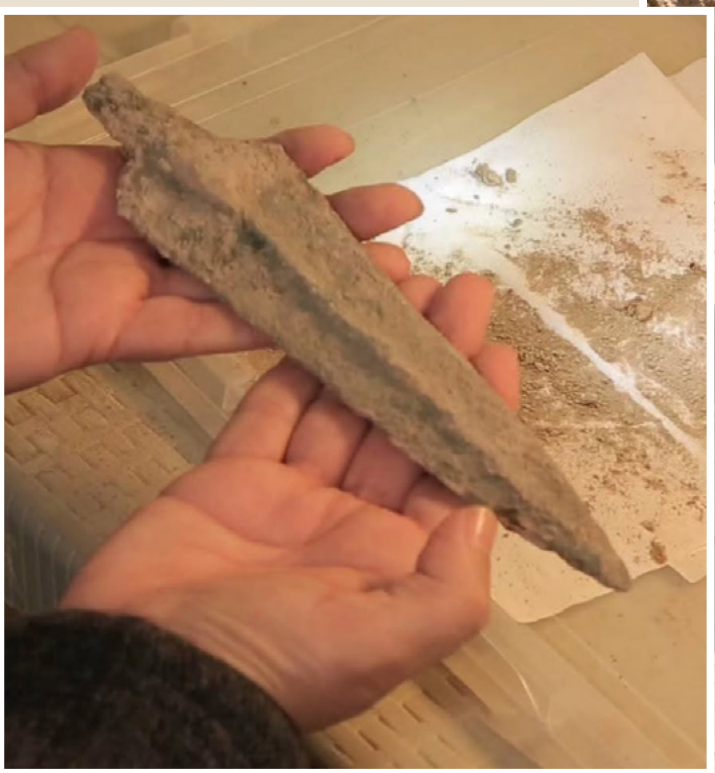
Dhi Qar is home to approximately 1,200 archaeological sites representing successive periods of Iraqi history, from the Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian civilisations through to the Islamic eras.

Alrehla Perspective | Archaeological Tourism and the Legacy of Mesopotamia

These successive discoveries provide valuable insights into the emergence of cities and the evolution of religious, economic and scientific life in ancient Iraq.

Their tourism significance lies in the potential to incorporate archaeological research findings into future museum exhibitions and cultural tourism routes, subject to the requirements of site preservation, artefact conservation and public accessibility.







UN Tourism Develops Global Tourism Investment Platform with €5 Million in Funding from Angola



'UN Tourism Pass' brings investment opportunities and economic indicators together in a unified database, while Egypt proposes a standardised methodology for measuring tourism employment worldwide.

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

Documents from the 127th session of the UN Tourism Executive Council, which concluded in Abu Dhabi on November 25, 2026, revealed details of a global digital platform named 'UN Tourism Pass', with a budget of €5 million funded by the Republic of Angola to enhance access to tourism investment opportunities across Member States.

The project is based on a cooperation agreement signed between UN Tourism and Angola's Ministry of Tourism on October 28, 2026, extending until December 31, 2029.

A Global Map of Investment Opportunities

The platform will feature country profiles, an interactive map of tourism projects, comparable economic and investment indicators, and tools to facilitate communication between investors and relevant project stakeholders.

Participation will be free of charge for Member States, with no mandatory financial contributions.

Three Development Phases

The implementation programme encompasses three development phases, beginning with prototype testing, followed by the public release of core functionalities and culminating in the completion of the platform's digital services.

The platform is scheduled to be available in at least English and Spanish, with additional languages and artificial intelligence-powered tools under consideration.

UN Tourism will neither provide financing nor guarantee the economic viability of listed projects or act as an intermediary in investment transactions.

Egypt Proposes Standardising Tourism Employment Statistics

In a related development, Dr Ahmed Nabil, Assistant to Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities for Aviation Affairs, called for the development of a standardised methodology for measuring tourism employment in coordination with the International Labour Organization (ILO), addressing discrepancies in statistical estimates across countries and international institutions.



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Paris Celebrates Fragonard's Centenary: A Journey Through a Century of French Perfumery and Art

Around 270 artworks and historical objects on display at the Monnaie de Paris, alongside interactive experiences allowing visitors to create their own fragrances until January 10, 2027.

Paris – France | Al-Rehla

Amid historic perfume bottles, fine art and costumes inspired by the 18th century, Paris is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the French perfume house Fragonard through a special exhibition hosted by the Monnaie de Paris, running until January 10, 2027.

Entitled "Fragonard: A Century of Collections and Craftsmanship," the exhibition brings together approximately 270 artworks and historical objects tracing the heritage of French perfumery, art and craftsmanship, offering a cultural experience that evokes European lifestyles and aesthetic tastes of the 18th century.

From Grasse to Paris: A Century-Old Family Story

The perfume house traces its origins to 1926 in Grasse, southern France, a city internationally renowned for its perfume-making traditions. Its name was inspired by the French painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard, one of the city's most celebrated figures.

A century after its establishment, Fragonard remains a family-run business, managed by sisters Anne, Agnès and Françoise Costa, representing the fourth generation of the founding family.

The perfume house operates seven museums across Grasse, Paris and Arles, preserving artistic and cultural collections accumulated over generations.

When Perfumery Meets Art

The exhibition explores the relationship between perfumery, fine art, fashion and decorative arts through paintings by prominent artists, historic perfume bottles, precious vessels and period costumes.

Olfactory experiences are integrated throughout the exhibition route, designed by the Nathalie Crinière agency, allowing visitors to discover the connections between fragrance, memory, art and French culture.

Create Your Own Fragrance

Visitors can participate in specialised perfume-making workshops and discover six fragrance compositions inspired by the flowers of Grasse, including rose, jasmine and orange blossom.

Participants can create their own unique fragrance and take it home in a 12ml bottle, in an interactive experience available to visitors aged eight and above.

A Cultural Experience in the Heart of Paris

The exhibition welcomes visitors from Tuesday to Sunday, between 11am and 6pm, with extended opening hours until 9pm on Wednesdays.

Standard admission costs €12, while visitors under the age of 26 are eligible for free admission. The museum recommends booking online in advance, particularly during weekends.







Istanbul Brings Together Over 400 Speakers and 200 Brands and Partners at Gastromasa International Gastronomy Conference



The 11th edition explores restaurant chain expansion, the evolution of hospitality services and interaction between global culinary cultures.

Istanbul – Türkiye | Al Rehla

Istanbul is hosting the 11th edition of the Gastromasa International Gastronomy Conference and Exhibition, bringing together more than 400 speakers and over 200 brands and partners, alongside internationally renowned chefs, investors and leaders from the restaurant, hotel, and food and beverage industries.

Organised by Sözen Group under the theme "Culture and Interaction," the conference opened on November 26, 2026, at the Haliç Congress Center and continues through November 27.

Prominent Names in Global Gastronomy

The speaker line-up features some of the world's leading culinary figures, including France's Pierre Hermé, Italy's Mauro Uliassi, Japan's Hiroyasu Kawate, Peru's Pía León and Syrian chef Mohammad Orfali.

The conference features panel discussions, workshops and live cooking demonstrations, showcasing chefs' experiences, creative approaches and methods of incorporating cultural heritage into contemporary dining experiences.

From Local Restaurants to Commercial Chains

The conference's professional programme addresses key economic and operational issues, including the expansion of restaurant groups, the transformation of local brands into commercial chains, the development of hotel food and beverage services, and evolving guest expectations.

Sessions also feature hospitality professionals from prominent Istanbul hotels, including Four Seasons, The Ritz-Carlton, Hilton and Çırağan Palace Kempinski.

Strengthening International Cooperation

During the opening ceremony, Istanbul Governor Davut Gül called for broader cooperation among stakeholders to develop future editions of the conference.

Gastromasa founder Gökmen Sözen emphasised the importance of collective efforts to promote Türkiye's culinary culture internationally.

Uzbekistan Attracts Over 100 Tourism Companies from More Than 30 Countries and Launches Its First International Tourism Investment Forum



The 31st edition of the 'Tourism on the Silk Road' exhibition spans 10,000 square metres and expects to attract more than 15,000 visitors, with hospitality investment and destination development topping the agenda.

Tashkent – Uzbekistan | Al Rehla

The Uzbek capital, Tashkent, is hosting the 31st edition of the 'Tourism on the Silk Road' exhibition (TITF 2026) from November 25 to 27, 2026, with the participation of more than 100 companies from over 30 countries.

Covering an exhibition area of 10,000 square metres, the event is expected to attract more than 15,000 visitors.

This year's edition features the inaugural International Tourism Investment Forum, which opened on Wednesday as part of Uzbekistan's efforts to attract international investment and develop its tourism and hospitality infrastructure.

Hospitality Investment and Destination Development

The forum explores mechanisms for improving the tourism investment environment, developing tourism zones and strengthening public-private partnerships, alongside the role of international hotel brands in developing hospitality infrastructure.

Discussions also cover investment opportunities in mountain tourism and the development of transport and logistics systems, while the programme includes scheduled signing ceremonies for cooperation agreements and new projects.

Diversifying Tourism Products

The exhibition highlights medical, ecological, gastronomic and cultural tourism, alongside discussions on developing cross-border tourism experiences and strengthening regional integration among Central Asian countries.

The professional programme also explores the application of artificial intelligence and digital transformation in the travel industry, featuring practical workshops and a tourism hackathon aimed at developing innovative solutions for the sector.

Who Is Behind the Exhibition?

The Tourism Committee of Uzbekistan organises the event in cooperation with relevant tourism and exhibition industry partners, aiming to strengthen the country's presence in international markets and develop commercial and investment relations across the sector.

The exhibition concludes on November 27 with the Silk Road Tourism Awards ceremony.

Libya and Boeing Explore Establishing a New National Airline: Is a Third Carrier the Answer or Should Existing Airlines Be Restructured?



A memorandum of cooperation covers fleet development, route network planning and the establishment of an aircraft maintenance centre, while Libyan Airlines' historical accumulated losses of LYD 1.87 billion put economic viability at the forefront of priorities.

Tripoli – Libya | Al Rehla

Libya's Government of National Unity is exploring the establishment of a new national airline in cooperation with US aircraft manufacturer Boeing, under an expanded memorandum of cooperation announced in Washington on November 21, 2026, amid financial and operational challenges facing the country's two state-owned carriers, Libyan Airlines and Afriqiyah Airways.

The memorandum builds on cooperation initiated in May and covers route network planning, fleet development, workforce training and plans to establish a specialised aircraft maintenance and repair centre.

The government has yet to disclose the required investment, funding sources, ownership structure of the proposed airline or the commencement date of its commercial operations.

A Heavy Financial Legacy Facing Existing Airlines

The proposed airline comes against a backdrop of accumulated financial challenges facing Libya's state-owned carriers.

According to World Bank figures, Libyan Airlines' accumulated losses reached approximately LYD 1.87 billion by 2021, equivalent to 187% of its capital.

The airline's domestic debt also amounted to approximately LYD 1.125 billion, according to the Administrative Control Authority's 2023 report, as cited by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

Fleet Development Challenges

Aircraft selection represents a key component of the proposed airline's economic feasibility study, particularly given the technical expertise accumulated by Libyan carriers in operating Airbus aircraft.

Introducing new aircraft types requires an assessment of crew and engineer training costs, maintenance, spare parts and technical equipment, alongside financing terms and aircraft suitability for the proposed route network.

The European Ban Remains a Challenge

Despite the Libyan Ministry of Transport's announcement in October that international restrictions on overflights through Libyan airspace had been lifted, airlines certified in Libya remain subject to European Union operating restrictions related to aviation safety oversight.

Compliance with these requirements remains one of the principal challenges facing any future expansion by Libyan carriers into European markets.

Vietnam Moves to Develop Five Types of Tourism Products Based on Traditional Medicine



More than 500 specialists and delegates attend an international conference in Ho Chi Minh City showcasing a model that combines healthcare, cultural experiences and local medical heritage.

Ho Chi Minh City – Vietnam | Al Rehla

Vietnam is moving towards developing five types of tourism products based on traditional medicine as part of its health tourism development priorities for 2026–2030, seeking to leverage its medical and cultural heritage to diversify experiences offered to domestic and international visitors.

The initiative was highlighted during an international scientific conference organised by the Traditional Medicine Hospital of Ho Chi Minh City on November 27, 2026, at the Independence Palace, bringing together more than 500 delegates and specialists from Vietnam and abroad.

A Tourism Model Rooted in Local Identity

Dr Do Tan Khoa, Director of the Traditional Medicine Hospital, presented a model combining healthcare services with cultural experiences inspired by southern Vietnam's heritage, including the use of local herbs, traditional food preparation techniques, and practices associated with wellness and relaxation.

The model draws on Vietnam's traditional medical heritage and the philosophy of renowned historical physician Tu Tĩnh, which emphasises the use of local plants and natural resources in traditional medical practices.

Experiences Combining Health and Culture

The proposed model includes massage services, herbal baths, specialised nutrition programmes and introductions to traditional medical practices, alongside herbal tea preparation experiences and opportunities to learn about Vietnamese ginseng.

It also incorporates traditional southern Vietnamese music into wellness experiences and provides digital educational content exploring the history of traditional medicine.

The suitability and effectiveness of therapeutic procedures remain subject to medical assessment and the scientific evidence available for each practice.

Tourism Product Development Through 2030

Dr Trinh Thi Dieu Thuong, Director of the Traditional Medicine and Pharmacy Administration at Vietnam's Ministry of Health, outlined priorities for developing tourism products associated with traditional medicine during the 2026–2030 period, aiming to expand the application of this model nationwide.

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