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Winner of the "Most Influential Tourism Newspaper in the Arab World 2026" Award by AFUSU

Oman Enforces New Regulations for Six Nature Reserves, with Entry Permits Required and Fines of Up to OMR 1,000

Sela and Tahaluf Sign 10-Year Agreement to Host Red Sea Yacht Show in Jeddah

Nasser Al Nowais: From Founding Abu Dhabi National Hotels to Building the Regional Rotana Brand

Areen Development Awards stc Bahrain Digital Infrastructure Contract for Areen Park Hotel



Sela and Tahaluf Sign 10-Year Agreement to Host Red Sea Yacht Show in Jeddah





Saudi partnership connects the international yachting industry with the Red Sea coast, with the inaugural edition scheduled for October 2027 at Jeddah Yacht Club

Jeddah – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Saudi companies Sela and Tahaluf have signed a 10-year agreement to host the Red Sea Yacht Show in Jeddah, strengthening Saudi Arabia's presence in the international marine exhibition industry and connecting its luxury tourism sector with global yacht owners, manufacturers and investors.

The signing ceremony took place at Jeddah Yacht Club on October 25, 2026, in the presence of Prince Saud bin Mishaal bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of the Makkah Region and Chairman of the exhibition's Hosting Committee.

The agreement establishes a long-term hosting framework for the exhibition, whose inaugural edition is scheduled for October 14–17, 2027, as part of Jeddah's events calendar, building on previously announced cooperation associated with the Monaco Yacht Show.

Partnership Between Two Industry Specialists

Sela, owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, specialises in developing and delivering entertainment and tourism destinations and events.

Tahaluf, a joint venture bringing together Saudi and international organisations, specialises in organising professional exhibitions and conferences.

Dr. Rakan Al Harthy, Managing Director of Sela, emphasised that the agreement aims to strengthen the Red Sea's position in the yachting and marine tourism industries

The agreement aims to strengthen the Red Sea's position in the yachting and marine tourism industry, while attracting manufacturers, investors and yacht owners.

Dr. Rakan Al-Harthi
Managing Director of Sela



while attracting yacht manufacturers, investors and owners.

Mike Champion, CEO of Tahaluf, highlighted the company's plans to leverage its international network to attract leading brands and industry participants, establishing a platform connecting businesses involved in yachting and marine services.

Jeddah's Waterfront to Host the Exhibition

The exhibition will take place at Jeddah Yacht Club and Marina, which features 94 berths capable of accommodating yachts measuring up to 120 metres, alongside facilities dedicated to marine activities and hospitality.

The selection of Jeddah follows an earlier cooperation agreement signed by the two companies during the Monaco Yacht Show in September 2026. The latest agreement establishes a 10-year hosting period.

The exhibition's commercial significance extends across yacht manufacturing, brokerage, charter services, marina operations, maintenance and specialised hospitality.

Neither company disclosed the financial value of the hosting agreement or the contractual arrangements governing responsibilities and revenue distribution.

Al Rehla Perspective | Marine Tourism Beyond Yachting

Yacht exhibitions bring together luxury travel and international commerce, offering manufacturers, brokers and marine service providers opportunities to engage directly with yacht owners, operators and investors.

For Jeddah, its existing yacht club and Red Sea location provide an established setting for hosting specialised maritime events.

The agreement establishes a long-term framework for the exhibition, although its actual tourism and commercial returns can only be assessed once the events have taken place and their results have been measured.



The company will leverage its international network to attract specialized companies and brands in the sector, while developing a platform that brings together stakeholders across the yachting industry and marine services.

Mike Champion
Chief Executive Officer of Tahaluf

Saudi Arabia Licenses Bay La Sun Marina to Accommodate 57 Leisure Boats at King Abdullah Economic City



Emaar Economic City receives the first tourist marina operating license issued by the Saudi Red Sea Authority in King Abdullah Economic City, under regulations governing berthing operations, maritime safety, and environmental protection.

King Abdullah Economic City – Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Red Sea Authority (SRSA) has granted Emaar Economic City the first tourist marina operating license issued by the authority in King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), authorizing the operation of Bay La Sun Marina, which has a capacity of 57 leisure boats.

The move marks another step in regulating yacht tourism and marine leisure services along Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast.

The license was officially handed over on Monday, October 26, 2026, in the presence of SRSA CEO Dr. Maryam Ficociello and Acting Secretary-General of the Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority Mazen bin Zaki Al-Saleh.

Bay La Sun Marina features a yacht club and facilities serving leisure boats and marine recreational activities within King Abdullah Economic City, a major waterfront development overlooking the Red Sea.

License Establishes Operational and Maritime Safety Standards

The license authorizes Emaar Economic City to manage and operate the marina in accordance with regulatory requirements governing berthing activities and essential services for yachts and other recreational marine vessels.

These requirements include providing qualified personnel, rescue equipment, and emergency response plans, alongside compliance with maritime safety, environmental protection, and service quality standards.

The license was issued under the Saudi Red Sea Authority's regulations for the design and operation of tourist marinas, which establish technical and operational obligations for marina operators.

Expanding Saudi Arabia's Network of Licensed Tourist Marinas

The licensing of Bay La Sun Marina adds to Saudi Arabia's growing network of



regulated tourist marinas.
The Saudi Red Sea Authority began issuing marina operating licenses in May 2024, initially covering facilities in Jeddah and Jazan.

The authority is responsible for regulating coastal tourism activities within its jurisdiction, including the licensing of tourist marinas and related marine recreational operations.

Emaar Economic City is the master developer of King Abdullah Economic City, overseeing the development and management of various assets and facilities, including hospitality, leisure, and supporting services.

The official announcement did not disclose the financial value of the license or any additional investment associated with it. No figures were provided regarding the marina's annual yacht traffic or operating revenues.

Al Rehla Perspective | From an Existing Marina to Licensed Tourist Operations

The significance of Bay La Sun Marina's licensing does not lie in adding 57 new berths, as the announced capacity belongs to an existing facility. Rather, it lies in bringing its operations under a defined regulatory framework governing responsibilities, maritime safety, and service quality.

For yacht owners and marine tourism operators, identifying the entity responsible for marina management, ensuring the availability of rescue and emergency procedures, and complying with environmental regulations are essential considerations when selecting berthing locations and marine services.
From an economic perspective, licensing an existing marina differs fundamentally from investing in the construction of a new facility. The former regulates the delivery of services within established infrastructure, while the latter involves capital expenditure and the development of additional maritime capacity.

This distinction is important when assessing the growth of Saudi Arabia's marine tourism industry. The issuance of a new operating license does not necessarily indicate an increase in berthing capacity or yacht traffic.

Actual operational indicators, including the number of vessels received, berth occupancy rates, and services delivered to visitors, remain more reliable measures of a marina's tourism and economic performance.



Educational Tourism

Can Cities Truly Understand Their Visitors? When Smart Tourism Becomes More Human

By:

Rajaa Aljeshi

Special Education Specialist

In a city that never sleeps, smart screens guide tourists through bustling streets, digital applications open the doors to museums, and interactive maps make exploring famous landmarks easier than ever. Yet amid this remarkable technological progress, one question deserves greater attention from the global tourism industry: Do cities truly understand the people who visit them?

A tourist is more than a number in arrival statistics, and not every traveler seeks the same experience. Some are drawn to excitement and adventure, while others prefer peace and quiet. Meanwhile, many families simply hope to find destinations where their children can enjoy themselves without every outing becoming a challenge.

As smart tourism continues to evolve, artificial intelligence offers opportunities to create more personalized travel experiences. From recommending less crowded visiting hours to providing simplified information, interactive maps, and flexible itineraries, technology can help make travel more accessible and enjoyable.

These possibilities are particularly valuable for families with children who have diverse educational and developmental needs. A child who is sensitive to noise may benefit from knowing what to expect before visiting a destination. Another may need visual guides to understand the different stages of a journey, while others may enjoy activities tailored to their abilities and interests.

However, a truly smart city should not be measured by the number of applications it develops or digital screens it installs. Its success lies in using technology to create experiences that are more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming, without compromising visitors' privacy or losing the warmth of human interaction.

This presents a new opportunity for destinations worldwide. Competition is no longer defined solely by luxurious attractions and advanced services, but increasingly by how effectively destinations recognize individual differences and respond to travelers' needs.

The future of tourism is not simply about cities knowing their visitors' names and preferences. It is about giving every traveler the freedom to explore in a way that suits them.

A city that impresses visitors with technology may earn their admiration, but a city that understands their needs earns their trust.

And in a world where smart services are becoming increasingly similar, human understanding will remain the one advantage that cannot be replicated.



UAE–UK Partnership to Connect Patients from Britain and Africa with Hospitals in the Emirates



NUQAIM Holdings and TMTC sign an agreement covering medical travel, accommodation, treatment, and recovery, as Dubai records more than 691,000 medical tourists who spent over AED 1 billion on healthcare in 2023.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

UAE-based NUQAIM Holdings and the UK's The Medical Travel Company (TMTC) signed a strategic partnership agreement in Dubai on Monday, October 26, 2026, to develop an international medical tourism corridor connecting patients from the United Kingdom and Africa with hospitals and healthcare facilities across the UAE.

The agreement was signed at Dusit Thani Dubai and aims to establish an integrated service model combining medical coordination, travel arrangements, accommodation, treatment, recovery, and post-treatment care.

An Integrated Medical Journey

Under the partnership, the companies will coordinate initial medical consultations, the selection of doctors and hospitals, visa arrangements, flight bookings, accommodation, and transportation, as well as treatment procedures and recovery services.

The model also includes continued communication with patients' treating physicians in the UK, supported by remote medical consultations and nursing assistance during recovery.

Targeted specialties include joint replacement surgery, fertility treatments, and dental implants, subject to applicable medical regulations and licensing requirements.

The UK Market Takes Priority

The partnership comes as England's healthcare system continues to face substantial waiting lists for elective treatment.

Official figures for August 2026 showed approximately 7.37 million outstanding treatment pathways involving around 6.24 million patients.

The two companies aim to offer an international treatment option for patients seeking medical care abroad.

However, neither company has disclosed package prices, the names of participating hospitals, or the number of patients expected to use the new service.





The partnership benefits from the UAE's advanced healthcare infrastructure and the medical expertise available in the country.

Dr. Shajir Ghaffar
Managing Director of NUQAIM Holdings

Dubai's Growing Medical Tourism Sector

According to Dubai Health Authority figures cited in the partnership announcement, Dubai welcomed 691,478 international medical tourists in 2023, generating more than AED 1.034 billion in direct healthcare spending.

Indirect revenues associated with medical tourism exceeded AED 2.3 billion, benefiting sectors including accommodation, aviation, hospitality, and other services.

Dr. Shajir Ghaffar, Managing Director of NUQAIM Holdings, highlighted the partnership's potential to leverage the UAE's healthcare infrastructure and medical expertise.

Ankit Mehrotra, Co-Founder of TMTC, explained that the company's service model extends beyond hospital bookings to include medical coordination, travel arrangements, recovery support, and follow-up care.

Al Rehla Perspective | When Accommodation Becomes Part of the Treatment Journey

Medical tourism differs from conventional leisure travel because accommodation arrangements are closely linked to patients' medical needs and recovery periods.

This makes coordination between hospitals, hotels, transportation providers, and healthcare professionals an essential part of the overall experience.

The partnership's commercial value lies in bringing these services together through a coordinated patient journey.
However, its actual impact on hotels, airlines, and travel companies has yet to be measured.

The companies have not disclosed the financial value of the agreement or confirmed that patients have begun receiving treatment through the new corridor. Its operational results therefore remain dependent on the partnership's implementation.

In the Footsteps of History

Borj Ghazi Mustapha: Djerba's Fortress That Witnessed the 1560 Battle and the Struggle for the Mediterranean

Built in 1425 during the Hafsid era, the fortress underwent successive military occupations and defensive modifications before becoming a historic landmark welcoming visitors to the Tunisian island.

Djerba, Tunisia | Al Rehla

Near the port of Houmt Souk on Tunisia's island of Djerba, the walls of Borj Ghazi Mustapha stand as a reminder of an era when control over Mediterranean ports and islands was central to the rivalry between maritime powers.

Also known as Borj El Kebir, or the Great Fortress, it is one of Djerba's most significant historic defensive landmarks. Its walls and towers preserve architectural traces of successive periods, from the Hafsid dynasty to Ottoman rule and the French protectorate.

A 15th-Century Fortress

According to Tunisia's Agency for Heritage Development and Cultural Promotion, the fortress was built in 1425 during the reign of the Hafsid Sultan Abu Faris Abd al-Aziz.

The monument occupies a rectangular site measuring approximately 68 meters in length and 53 meters in width. Its defensive structures include circular and square towers surrounded by a protective moat.

The entrance leads into an inner courtyard containing the remains of vaulted chambers and earlier defensive structures, including a square fortified religious complex, or ribat, measuring approximately 40 meters on each side and believed to date back to the Aghlabid period.

These architectural layers reveal that the fortress was not a static military structure. Instead, it underwent successive modifications in response to changing defensive strategies and methods of warfare.

The Battle That Changed Control of the Island

The fortress is closely associated with the Battle of Djerba in 1560, which ended in an Ottoman victory over Spanish forces and their allies.

In 1567, Ghazi Mustapha, the island's governor, initiated further restoration and fortification works to prepare the fortress as a headquarters for the Ottoman garrison.

These modifications included alterations to the main entrance, the addition of defensive installations and artillery platforms, and the reinforcement of the outer walls.

Such developments highlight Djerba's strategic importance to the powers competing for control of Mediterranean maritime routes.

From Military Stronghold to Historic Landmark

The fortress retained its defensive role for centuries and was used by French forces following their arrival on the island in 1881.

In 1915, the French garrison vacated the site, and the fortress was officially classified as a historic monument.

Modern restoration work began in 1969, while the fortress first opened to visitors in the early 1980s.

Today, it also houses the local headquarters of Tunisia's National Heritage Institute.

The Visitor Experience

Visitors can explore the inner courtyard, historic chambers and defensive structures while discovering how coastal fortresses were designed to protect ports and monitor maritime activity.

According to information published by Tunisia's heritage authorities, the fortress operates during the winter season from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and is closed on Fridays.

The published admission fee for non-residents is eight Tunisian dinars. Visitors are advised to confirm current opening hours and ticket prices before planning their visit.

The significance of Borj Ghazi Mustapha lies not only in its military architecture but also in its ability to reveal a chapter of Djerba's history that extends far beyond the island's contemporary identity as a Mediterranean beach destination.



Areen Development Awards stc Bahrain Digital Infrastructure Contract for Areen Park Hotel





The agreement covers 5G connectivity, Wi-Fi networks, telecommunications and security systems at the hotel, located next to the Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park in southern Bahrain.

Manama – Bahrain | Al Rehla

Areen Development announced on Monday, October 26, 2026, that it had awarded stc Bahrain a contract to implement an integrated information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure at Areen Park Hotel, as part of preparations to equip the property with the digital systems required for hotel operations and guest services.

The contract covers internal communications networks, security and surveillance systems, and fifth-generation (5G) mobile connectivity, bringing the hotel's operational facilities and guest services together through an integrated telecommunications infrastructure.

Integrated Networks for Guests and Hotel Operations

Under the agreement, stc Bahrain will install wireless internet (Wi-Fi) networks across all hotel floors, telephone systems, and security surveillance cameras, alongside the infrastructure supporting both guest and management networks.

The scope of work also includes advanced mobile coverage inside the hotel and its surrounding areas using 5G technology,

The agreement represents a step toward equipping the hotel with a technological infrastructure that meets the requirements of modern hospitality.

Dr. Ahlam Zainal
Chief Executive Officer of Areen Development



supporting connectivity throughout the property's facilities.

Neither company disclosed the contract value or the scheduled completion date.

Digital Infrastructure Ahead of Hotel Operations

Dr. Ahlam Zainal, Chief Executive Officer of Areen Development, described the agreement as an important step in equipping the hotel with technology infrastructure designed to meet the requirements of modern hospitality, highlighting the role of digital solutions in supporting operational efficiency.

Dr. Issa Faqih, Chief Executive Officer of Areen Hospitality, also emphasized the project's focus on integrating connectivity, security, and digital infrastructure to support hotel operations and guest services.

Eng. Khalid Al Osaimi, Chief Executive Officer of stc Bahrain, confirmed the company's role in delivering telecommunications and 5G solutions under the contract, which includes integrated operational and security systems.

A Hotel Next to the Lost Paradise of Dilmun

Areen Park Hotel is located beside the Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park in southern Bahrain, within an area that includes several leisure and tourism attractions, including Bahrain International Circuit and Al Areen Wildlife Park and Reserve.

The hotel is intended to serve families, leisure travelers, and business visitors, benefiting from its proximity to established tourism and entertainment facilities. Investment transactions involving the hotel project were announced in 2024, including stakes acquired by Investree and Naseej as part of the wider Areen development.

The latest announcement did not specify the hotel's room capacity or opening date. It also did not confirm that the digital infrastructure installation had been completed or that the hotel had commenced commercial operations.



Names Shaping Tourism

Nasser Al Nowais: From Founding Abu Dhabi National Hotels to Building the Regional Rotana Brand

An Emirati investor who co-founded a hotel group in 1992 that expanded to dozens of properties across the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and Türkiye.

Abu Dhabi - UAE | Al Rehla

When Rotana Hotel Management Corporation was established in Abu Dhabi in 1992, the regional hospitality market relied heavily on international hotel brands. Against this backdrop, Emirati investor Nasser Al Nowais joined Lebanese hospitality executive Selim El Zyr in establishing a hotel management company that began in the UAE before expanding into international markets.

Today, Al Nowais serves as Chairman of Rotana, following a career spanning hospitality investment, finance and government administration.

A Hospitality Career That Predates Rotana

Al Nowais's involvement in the hospitality industry began well before the establishment of Rotana.

He was among the founders of Abu Dhabi National Hotels and served as Chairman of its Board of Directors for 14 years.

He also held the position of Managing Director of the Abu Dhabi Fund, where his responsibilities included overseeing investments in tourism, industry,



agriculture and infrastructure across the Middle East and Africa.

In addition, he served as Undersecretary of the UAE Ministry of Finance and Industry and held responsibilities within the banking sector.

Al Nowais studied economics at New York University, an academic background that helped shape his investment and management career.

A Partnership Combining Investment and Operations

In 1992, Al Nowais co-founded Rotana with Selim El Zyr, who brought extensive operational experience in the hotel industry.

The Group opened its first property, Beach Rotana Abu Dhabi, in 1993, before gradually expanding into other cities and markets.

Over time, Rotana developed a portfolio of hospitality brands serving different market segments, ranging from upscale hotels to serviced apartments and practical accommodation options.

79 Hotels in Operation

According to a statement issued by Rotana on December 8, 2025, the Group operated 79 hotels across the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and Türkiye, with approximately 40 additional properties under development.

These figures represent the Group's reported operational portfolio at that date. They do not mean that Al Nowais personally owns these hotels or that Rotana owns all the buildings in which its hotels operate.

On June 24, 2026, the Group announced that it had 13 operational properties in Saudi Arabia, alongside ten projects in its development pipeline comprising 1,314 rooms.

Rotana also outlined a target of reaching 23 hotels in the Kingdom by 2027.

Properties under development remain distinct from hotels already open and operating.

Recognition of the Founders' Careers

In December 2025, Al Nowais and his business partner Selim El Zyr received Lifetime Achievement Awards at the International Hospitality Awards ceremony organized by Hospitality ON in Paris.

The recognition acknowledged their contributions to establishing and developing a hospitality group that originated in the Arab region.

AlRehla Perspective

The significance of Nasser Al Nowais's career lies in his contribution to building an Arab hotel management company capable of expanding across international borders, combining his investment expertise with the operational experience of his co-founding partner.

Rotana's development illustrates that hotel expansion does not necessarily require ownership of every real estate asset. Hotel management contracts can enable operators to establish a presence in multiple markets without acquiring the underlying properties.

Nevertheless, the number of hotels alone is insufficient to assess financial performance.

Evaluating the success of this business model requires data on revenue, profitability, operational efficiency and returns generated by management contracts — indicators that cannot be determined solely from the number of properties announced.



Egypt Approves International Yacht Marina Development at Shark Bay in Sharm El Sheikh

Cabinet Decision No. 3168 of 2026 authorizes a specialized tourist port for yachts and leisure vessels, with the Ministry of Transport overseeing technical implementation and compliance with maritime and environmental regulations.

Sharm El-Sheikh – Egypt | Al Rehla

The Egyptian government has approved the establishment of a specialized international tourist port at Shark Bay in Sharm El Sheikh, South Sinai, dedicated to accommodating yachts and leisure vessels.

The project was authorized under Prime Ministerial Decision No. 3168 of 2026, marking a new regulatory step in developing tourism-related maritime infrastructure along Egypt's Red Sea coast.

The decision was published in Issue No. 41 bis (W) of the Official Gazette on October 12, 2026, with Egyptian media reporting its details on October 26. It establishes the legal framework for the port and identifies the authority responsible for supervising its construction, without specifying an operational launch date or the project's capacity.

Ministry of Transport to Oversee Implementation

The decision authorizes the establishment of the port at Shark Bay, with its boundaries defined by the coordinates included in the official annex.

Egypt's Ministry of Transport, represented by the Maritime Transport and Logistics Sector, has been assigned responsibility for supervising the technical implementation of the project and ensuring compliance with applicable specifications and legal requirements, in coordination with relevant authorities.

The Minister of Transport is also tasked with issuing the necessary executive decisions and procedures to advance the project toward implementation.

The decision is based on several laws governing ports, maritime navigation, safety, and environmental protection, including Specialized and Dry Ports Law No. 1 of 1996 and Environmental Law No. 4 of 1994.

Shark Bay's Role in Marine Tourism Development

Shark Bay is located along the Red Sea coast of Sharm El Sheikh, an established tourism destination known for its hotels,



resorts, beaches, diving sites, and marine recreational activities.

The designation of an international port for yachts and leisure vessels forms part of efforts to develop maritime facilities capable of supporting this specialized tourism segment.

Unlike conventional commercial ports, yacht marinas require dedicated infrastructure and services, particularly berthing facilities, passenger reception, maritime safety arrangements, and vessel support services.

In 2022, the Egyptian government introduced regulations governing foreign yacht tourism at marinas and seaports under Prime Ministerial Decision No. 2721 of 2022, establishing a regulatory framework for the sector.

The latest announcement does not disclose the project's investment value, commercial operator, number of berths, or berthing capacity. No date has been announced for the port to receive its first yacht.

Al Rehla Perspective | A New Port Does Not Yet Mean New Tourist Arrivals

The significance of Egypt's decision lies in allocating dedicated maritime infrastructure to a specific tourism activity: accommodating yachts and leisure vessels.

It reflects efforts to develop marine tourism services alongside the country's established hospitality, resort, and coastal tourism offerings.

However, the project's economic value cannot be determined solely by the issuance of an establishment decision.

The commercial performance of yacht marinas depends on several operational factors, including berth capacity, the size of vessels they can accommodate, refueling and maintenance facilities, passenger entry procedures, port charges, and connectivity with nearby tourism establishments.

A clear distinction must therefore be made between establishing infrastructure capable of receiving yachts and generating actual international yacht traffic.

No published data currently establishes how many vessels the development may attract or the tourism expenditure it could generate.

Environmental considerations are also particularly important at Shark Bay, given the area's sensitive marine ecosystem and its tourism activities associated with coral reefs and diving.

Compliance with environmental protection requirements will therefore be an essential aspect of the project's implementation.

For the Arab tourism industry, the decision represents a noteworthy regulatory development in Egypt's marine tourism sector. Its commercial and operational significance will become clearer once the authorities announce the project developer, financing structure, berth capacity, and confirmed implementation schedule.



Oman Enforces New Regulations for Six Nature Reserves, with Entry Permits Required and Fines of Up to OMR 1,000

Entry fees set at OMR 3 for international visitors and OMR 1 for Omani nationals, with new rules governing camping, safari activities and filming to protect wildlife

Muscat – Oman | Al Rehla

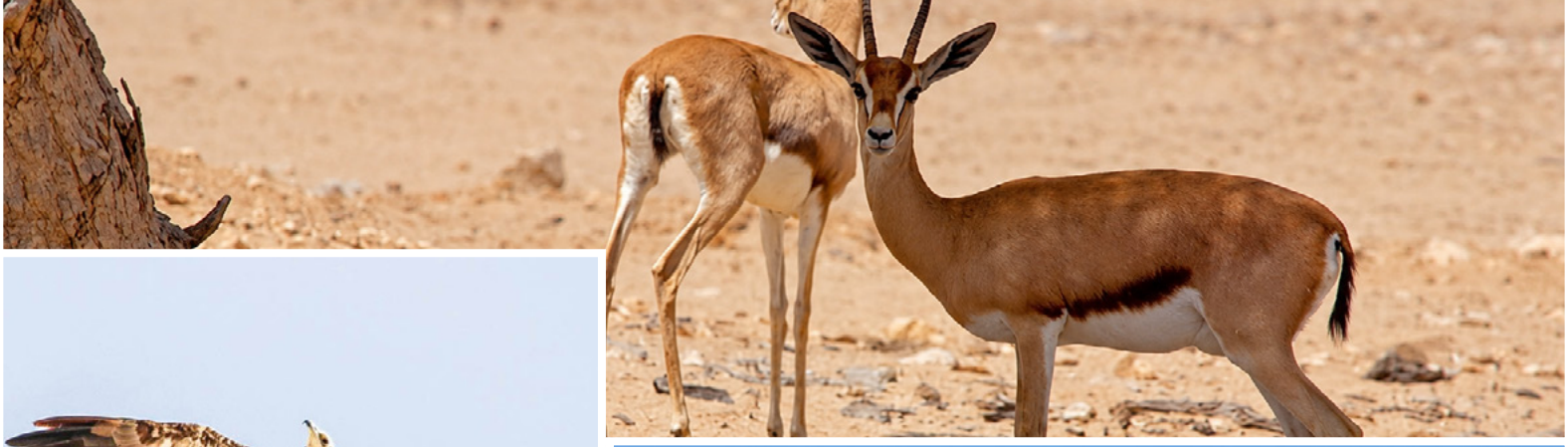
Six new regulations issued by Oman's Environment Authority came into force on Monday, October 26, 2026, introducing updated requirements for visiting nature reserves and conducting activities within them. The regulations establish entry and camping fees, permit requirements and administrative fines of up to OMR 1,000 for violations affecting wildlife and protected natural areas.

Issued by Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, on October 15, the regulations were published in Issue No. 1671 of the Official Gazette on October 25, 2026.

They cover six protected areas: Khor Salalah, Al Jabal Al Gharbi, Al Dhahirah, the Coastal Khawrs of Salalah, Al Buraimi Oasis and Ras Al Shajar.

Entry and Camping Fees

The regulations set entry fees at OMR 1 for Omani nationals and OMR 3 for







international visitors, with a fee of 100 baisas for children under 18.

Camping and overnight stays cost OMR 2 for Omani nationals and OMR 5 for international visitors, while fees for children may vary depending on the reserve.

Some regulations also establish charges for safari activities and mountain hiking, subject to obtaining the necessary permits before undertaking the activities concerned.

Advance Permits to Protect Natural Areas

Visitors must obtain permits to enter the reserves and participate in activities specified under the regulations, including camping, overnight stays and certain forms of exploration.

Permit requirements also extend to documentary and promotional filming, scientific research and sample collection.

The regulations prohibit hunting, collecting fossils and archaeological artefacts, damaging trees and vegetation, contaminating water sources, driving outside designated routes and introducing invasive or non-native species.

Entering or camping without a permit carries a fine of OMR 50, while lighting fires in violation of the rules may result in a fine of OMR 100.

Penalties for hunting or collecting fossils and archaeological artefacts can reach OMR 1,000.

Exemptions and Appeal Procedures

The regulations provide exemptions from entry permits and related fees for specified categories, including military and security personnel performing official duties, government employees and researchers undertaking authorised assignments, students participating in educational school trips, reserve residents and their first-degree relatives, and official government delegations.

The Environment Authority must decide on completed permit applications within 30 days.

Applicants whose requests are rejected may submit an appeal within 60 days of receiving notification of the decision.

Al Rehla Traveller's Guide | What to Check Before Visiting

Travellers planning to visit any of the six protected areas should contact the Environment Authority in advance to confirm the applicable permit requirements, permitted activities and fees.

This is particularly important for ecotourism operators and groups organising camping trips, safaris or documentary filming, as certain conditions and charges vary between reserves.

The new regulations establish clearer rules for access and environmental protection. However, they do not mean that every section of a nature reserve is automatically open to visitors or that all recreational activities are permitted.

Visitors should therefore verify the specific regulations for their chosen destination before travelling.



Abu Dhabi Establishes Youth Orchestra in Frank Gehry-Designed Building at Mina Zayed

A 600-seat concert hall, 18 rehearsal rooms, and free music education for the first 100 children, with the new venue scheduled to open in January 2027.

Muscat – Oman | Al Rehla

Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT Abu Dhabi) announced the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Youth Orchestra on Monday, October 26, 2026, as part of a new musical institution to be housed in a building designed by the late internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry in the Mina Zayed (MiZa) district.

The initiative aims to nurture young musical talent and strengthen the performing arts landscape in the emirate.

Scheduled to open in January 2027, the venue will feature a professional 600-seat concert hall and 18 practice and rehearsal rooms, providing dedicated facilities for music education and ensemble performances.

Frank Gehry's Architectural Legacy at Mina Zayed

The building bears the architectural signature of Frank Gehry, whose work is also associated with major cultural projects in Abu Dhabi, including the forthcoming Guggenheim Abu Dhabi on Saadiyat Island and the Abu Dhabi House of Arts.

The project introduces a new cultural and educational facility to Mina Zayed, combining structured music training with a dedicated venue for live performances.

DCT Abu Dhabi has not disclosed the project's construction cost or announced a detailed programme of public concerts.



Frank Gehry





The establishment of the orchestra represents an investment in young talent and aims to expand access to music education, while fostering creativity and cultural participation.

Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak
Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi

Free Music Education for Children

Registration has opened for the first intake of up to 100 children aged between six and nine, who will receive free music education covering Western classical music and Arabic musical traditions.

The programme follows a progressive learning approach designed to develop individual instrumental skills and ensemble performance abilities, with additional groups for advanced students planned during the first year.

Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of DCT Abu Dhabi, described the establishment of the orchestra as an investment in young talent, aimed at expanding access to music education while encouraging creativity and cultural participation.

Al Rehla Perspective | When Music Becomes Part of a Destination's Identity

The cultural appeal of a city is shaped by more than its museums and exhibitions. Music and live performances add a human dimension to the visitor experience, particularly when supported by educational institutions that nurture local talent.

The significance of the Abu Dhabi Youth Orchestra lies in its combination of distinctive architecture, Arabic musical traditions, and long-term education, rather than relying solely on occasional performances.

From a cultural tourism perspective, the venue's contribution will depend on its public programming and opportunities for visitors to attend performances, details that have yet to be announced.

The orchestra's establishment therefore represents a confirmed addition to Abu Dhabi's cultural infrastructure, although its direct impact on visitor numbers and tourism revenues has not yet been measured.



Louvre Abu Dhabi Expands Collection to 6,000 Artworks and Strengthens Its Presence in Museums Worldwide

42 artworks loaned to exhibitions in the UAE and abroad, while a new publication documents the museum's growing collection with contributions from 42 art historians, researchers and specialists.

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

Louvre Abu Dhabi has expanded its art collection from approximately 600 works when it opened in 2017 to more than 6,000 artworks, marking a significant transformation from an institution heavily reliant on international loans into a museum with a growing collection of its own that also lends works to cultural institutions worldwide.

The milestone coincides with the publication of Birth of a Collection, a new book produced in collaboration with art publisher Skira. Featuring 240 selected artworks, the publication documents the development of the museum's collection through contributions from 42 researchers, curators and art historians.

From Borrowing Artworks to Lending Them Internationally

The museum's collection has undergone a significant shift in ownership. When Louvre Abu Dhabi opened, artworks owned by the museum accounted for approximately 30% of objects displayed in its permanent galleries.

In 2021, the proportion of owned artworks surpassed that of borrowed pieces for the first time, reaching 56.8% in 2025.

Alongside this development, Louvre Abu Dhabi has loaned 42 artworks to exhibitions in the UAE and internationally since its opening.

These loans have involved prominent institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and the Galleria Borghese in Rome.

The growing number of outbound loans reflects the museum's expanding participation in international cultural exchanges, following a period when borrowed artworks from overseas museums formed a major component of its displays.

New Publication Documents the Collection's Evolution

The new book was edited by Guilhem André, Director of Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management at Louvre Abu Dhabi.

It traces the collection's development across four historical periods, beginning with the ancient world, continuing through the Middle Ages and early modern era, and extending to modern and contemporary art.

Among the collection's notable objects is a



Mamluk carpet produced in Cairo between 1450 and 1500, which was featured in an exhibition at the Louvre Museum in Paris in 2025.

Another significant acquisition is an ivory casket decorated with precious stones from the Kingdom of Kotte in Sri Lanka, acquired by Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2024.

The publication follows Birth of a Museum, released in 2013, four years before Louvre Abu Dhabi opened.

Birth of a Collection is available in Arabic, English and French.

A Cultural Presence Beyond Abu Dhabi

The growth of Louvre Abu Dhabi's collection extends beyond the number of artworks to encompass greater historical and geographical diversity.

Its holdings bring together objects from different civilisations, presented through a museum narrative that highlights artistic and cultural connections between societies.

The collection of more than 6,000 works includes objects currently on display, others held in storage, and pieces undergoing conservation or restoration.

International loans also enable audiences outside the UAE to experience selected works from the museum's holdings.

These activities reinforce Louvre Abu Dhabi's cultural role on Saadiyat Island, combining art exhibitions, academic research, education and international cultural exchange.

Al Rehla Perspective | A Journey Through World Civilisations Under One Dome

For visitors to Abu Dhabi, the Louvre experience extends beyond viewing rare paintings and sculptures. Its galleries invite travellers to discover connections between civilisations that may appear geographically and historically distant.

Visitors can explore ancient artefacts, Islamic art, and European and Asian masterpieces within a cultural journey that highlights shared influences and interactions between societies. The museum's architecture adds another dimension to the experience. Designed by Jean Nouvel, its remarkable geometric dome filters sunlight to create the celebrated "Rain of Light" effect, while galleries and walkways unfold within an architectural setting surrounded by the waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Visitors can take advantage of the museum's guided tours to learn about major artworks and the historical stories behind them, rather than simply viewing the objects.

However, not all items in the collection are displayed simultaneously, and gallery exhibits change periodically.

Located on Saadiyat Island, Louvre Abu Dhabi currently lists general adult admission at AED 70 on its official website. Free admission is available for eligible visitors, including children and teenagers under 18.

Travellers are advised to check gallery and exhibition opening hours before visiting, as these may differ from access hours for the dome area.

UAE's INDEX and Atelier Vita Maroc Sign Agreement to Develop Medical Exhibition in Casablanca



New partnership strengthens the specialised exhibitions industry and business tourism, positioning Casablanca as a gateway connecting international companies with African markets

Marrakech – Morocco | Al Rehla

UAE-based INDEX Conferences & Exhibitions, a subsidiary of INDEX Holding, has signed a cooperation agreement with Atelier Vita Maroc to develop, organise and manage a specialised dental exhibition in Casablanca, strengthening commercial ties between the UAE and Morocco in the exhibitions, conferences and business tourism sectors.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the 24th International and African Dental Congress, held in Marrakech from October 22 to 25, 2026, with AEEDC Dubai participating as a guest of honour.

UAE–Morocco Partnership

The agreement was signed by Tarek Abdel Salam Al Madani, Board Member and CEO of Exhibitions and Experiences at INDEX Holding, and Imad Benjelloun, General Manager of Atelier Vita Maroc, in the presence of Professor Abdul Salam Al Madani, President of AEEDC Dubai.

Tarek Al Madani highlighted Morocco's strategic position as a gateway to African and French-speaking markets, explaining that the partnership aims to establish a professional platform bringing together specialised companies and institutions while facilitating commercial and scientific cooperation.

Under the agreement, INDEX will contribute its international expertise in exhibition management, marketing and exhibitor engagement, while its Moroccan partner will provide local operational and logistical support and leverage its relationships within the industry.

Casablanca and Business Tourism

The agreement extends beyond the medical sector, reflecting the role of professional exhibitions in generating business travel and demand for accommodation, transportation and event-related services.

It also demonstrates the expansion of UAE exhibition organisers into African markets through local partnerships, capitalising on Casablanca's position as a regional economic and commercial centre.

Neither party disclosed the agreement's financial value, duration or the date of the exhibition's inaugural edition.



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Yiwu, China: The City That Transformed Wholesale Trade into a Tourism Experience, Attracting 681,000 International Business Visits

80,000 trading booths and more than two million product varieties, alongside markets, restaurants and cultural experiences that bring business and travel together

Yiwu – China | Al Rehla

In Yiwu, a city in eastern China's Zhejiang Province, a journey does not necessarily begin at a museum or historical landmark. Instead, it often starts in an enormous marketplace filled with toys, gifts, accessories and household goods, attracting buyers from around the world and transforming wholesale trade into one of the city's defining visitor experiences.

Yiwu recorded approximately 681,000 international business visits in 2025, an increase of 19.74% compared with the previous year, according to China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The figures highlight the growing importance of business-related travel and shopping to the city.

80,000 Trading Booths Across Multiple Sectors

Yiwu International Trade City and its wider trading complex feature approximately 80,000 booths offering more than 2.1 million product varieties, including stationery, toys, gifts, clothing, household supplies and electronics.

This concentration allows international buyers to examine products, compare specifications and negotiate directly with suppliers within one extensive commercial destination, rather than travelling between several manufacturing cities.

In 2025, Yiwu recorded exports worth 730.7 billion yuan, while its total foreign trade reached 836.5 billion yuan, representing annual growth of 25.1%, according to Chinese customs data.

From Wholesale Trade to Tourism

Yiwu has expanded beyond developing its wholesale markets to improving services for international visitors, including translation assistance, visitor support centres, tax refunds and luggage transportation.

The city also organised more than 200 internationally oriented events as part of its efforts to integrate commercial activities with cultural and leisure experiences.

Shi Shengjun, Deputy Director of Yiwu's Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports Bureau, explained that the city uses trade to attract visitors while leveraging tourism to strengthen commercial activity, creating a model that connects economic development with cultural experiences.

A Journey Beyond the Marketplaces

Visitors to Yiwu can move from the bustling trading halls to restaurants serving cuisines from around the world or explore the historic town of Fotang, known for its traditional streets, local crafts and cultural experiences, including brown sugar production and woodblock printing.

These experiences reveal another side of Yiwu beyond its reputation as a global centre for small commodities, allowing travellers to combine business meetings with opportunities to discover local traditions and everyday life.



Chef Vikas Khanna Brings India's Coastal Flavours to Dubai in Exclusive Dining Experience

Kinara restaurant will host a one-night culinary event for 60 guests on November 21, combining traditional Indian cuisine with perfumery and curated beverages for AED 900 per person.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Kinara restaurant at JA Lake View Hotel in Dubai will welcome internationally acclaimed Chef Vikas Khanna on November 21, 2026, for an exclusive dining experience titled "Coast to Coast," the third chapter of the "Forgotten Flavours" series, celebrating the culinary heritage of India's coastal regions.

The one-night event, limited to 60 guests, will bring together Chef Vikas Khanna and Chef Ashish Kumar to present a specially curated menu combining traditional Indian recipes with contemporary cooking techniques.

A Culinary Journey Along India's Coastlines

The menu draws inspiration from the cuisines of India's eastern and western coasts, reflecting their diverse cultural influences and culinary traditions passed down through generations.

Featured dishes include stuffed and charred baby eggplant, Kerala-style vegetable stew, and main-course choices of Chettinad-spiced roasted cauliflower or lobster, accompanied by traditional Indian breads.

Where Culinary Arts Meet Perfumery

The evening will also feature a collaboration with Dubai-founded luxury fragrance house Kala Huis, which will unveil its fragrance "After the Gesture," inspired by the hospitality traditions of Lucknow, India.

A specially created beverage inspired by the fragrance will accompany the launch, exploring the relationship between aromas, flavours, and cultural memory.

An Exclusive Experience Priced at AED 900

The event begins at 7:00 PM, with tickets priced at AED 900 per person, including the specially designed menu, selected beverages, and live cooking demonstrations accompanied by musical performances.

The event offers an example of culinary tourism that connects hospitality experiences with cultural heritage, transforming regional recipes into an interactive dining experience at one of Dubai's hotels.

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