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

Radisson Signs Agreement for Its First Hotel in Abha, Featuring 123 Rooms and Suites

Exhibition World Bahrain Signs Two-Year UFI Diamond Sponsorship Agreement with Regional Exclusivity

Saudi Arabia Opens Bookings for Dream of the Desert Luxury Train, with Journeys Starting at SAR 86,250 per Couple

WTM London 2026 Report: 60% Seek Luxury Holidays as 58% Travel Abroad for Events



Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok: Where Hospitality Becomes an Art and Cuisine Creates Lasting Travel Memories



In the heart of Thailand's capital, the hotel brings together elegant surroundings and exceptional service, while Chef Costanzo leads a French culinary experience that makes dining one of the most memorable highlights of the stay.

Bangkok – Saleh Al-Makhdoum

Amid the vibrant energy of Bangkok, Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok offers a distinctive hospitality experience that begins with its location in the heart of the Thai capital's commercial and diplomatic district.

Yet the experience extends far beyond its guestrooms and facilities. It is reflected in the quality of service and the thoughtful details that shape how guests feel from the moment they arrive.

Situated next to the famous Erawan Shrine and within easy reach of major shopping centres and key transport connections, the hotel combines sophisticated urban elegance with the relaxing atmosphere of a resort in the city. Its facilities include wellness and relaxation spaces, alongside a diverse collection of restaurants and dining experiences.

What truly stands out, however, is not simply the beauty of the property, but the professionalism of the people who bring its hospitality to life.

Among them is Youssef Hayef, Guest Services Manager for the Middle East, whose attention to the needs of visitors from the region reflects an understanding of the cultural and personal details that make a meaningful difference to the Arab guest experience.

Equally noteworthy is Mehdi Saeedi, Director of Sales, whose professional approach combines extensive knowledge of the hotel's offerings with the ability to build genuine relationships with guests and business partners.

Chef Costanzo: When Every Dish Tells a Story

Cuisine remains one of the most powerful elements of a hotel experience, often creating memories that linger long after departure.

At GASTON Bistro & Bar, guests are transported into the atmosphere of a traditional French bistro, where classic dishes are presented with a contemporary touch.

From Steak Frites and Confit de Canard to Bœuf Bourguignon, the menu celebrates the richness of French culinary heritage while embracing modern creativity.

Behind this experience is Chef Costanzo, Chef de Cuisine, who approaches cooking not merely as the preparation of recipes, but as a form of storytelling that connects technique, memory and culture.

Raised in a French-Italian environment deeply connected to food, Costanzo developed his passion for cooking during childhood before building his professional experience across Paris and Asia.

His culinary philosophy centres on preserving the authenticity of French cuisine while leaving room for experimentation and the discovery of new ingredients.



Mehdi Saeedi
Sales Manager



Yousef Hayef
Guest Services Manager for the Middle East



Chef Costanzo

From the welcome at reception to the attention of the sales team, and ultimately to a dish created by a chef capable of transforming simple ingredients into something memorable, the hotel demonstrates how genuine hospitality emerges when surroundings, service and flavour come together.

Mehdi Saeedi: Building Relationships Beyond Reservations

On the commercial side, Mehdi Saeedi, Director of Sales, stands out as one of the professionals reflecting the hotel's commitment to building strong relationships across different markets.

At a hotel of this calibre, the sales function extends well beyond presenting offers or managing bookings.

It requires a thorough understanding of guests' expectations, corporate requirements and the priorities of business partners, connecting each audience with the most suitable experiences available at the property.

This approach is evident in his direct communication style, prompt follow-up and ability to present the hotel as a comprehensive hospitality destination that brings together accommodation, dining, meetings and personalised guest experiences.

Rather than promoting individual services in isolation, Saeedi helps communicate the value of the hotel as an integrated offering.

Youssef Hayef: Understanding the Arab Guest Experience

Youssef Hayef, Guest Services Manager for the Middle East, plays an important role in shaping the experience of visitors arriving from the region.

The quality of a hotel stay cannot be measured solely by the efficiency of check-in procedures or the standard of a guestroom. It also depends on the hotel's ability to understand the cultural preferences and individual expectations of each guest.

Hayef's approach is characterised by personal attention, close follow-up and a willingness to listen and respond to requests with flexibility and professionalism.

This creates a sense that the service is tailored to the individual rather than delivered through a standardised approach.

Such details may appear small, but they often become the most meaningful impressions guests carry with them after checking out.

A Hospitality Experience Defined by Its People

Ultimately, the strength of Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok lies in its ability to bring together every element of the hotel experience into a cohesive whole.

Its central location and elegant atmosphere provide the setting, while attentive guest services, professional commercial relationships and distinctive culinary experiences give the stay its character.

It is a reminder that a successful hotel is not defined by its facilities alone, but by the people who shape its daily experience and give guests a reason to remember the destination long after their journey has ended.

Exhibition World Bahrain Signs Two-Year UFI Diamond Sponsorship Agreement with Regional Exclusivity



The highest sponsorship tier offered by the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry provides the venue with international exposure among event organisers, following an agreement signed during UFI's 93rd Global Congress in Bahrain.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) has signed a two-year Diamond Sponsorship agreement with the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI), securing a position within the association's highest sponsorship tier, with exclusivity among exhibition venues and service providers in the Middle East under this category.

The agreement was signed on November 4, 2026, during UFI's 93rd Global Congress, hosted by Bahrain from November 2 to 5 at Exhibition World Bahrain in Sakhir.

Regional Exclusivity Under the Diamond Sponsorship Tier

The agreement enables Exhibition World Bahrain to strengthen its presence across UFI's international network of exhibition organisers, venue operators, and specialist companies operating in the global events industry.

The sponsorship benefits include visibility at UFI's international and regional events, including its Global CEO Summit, as well as access to research, training programmes, professional initiatives, and digital and media platforms.

The announced exclusivity applies specifically to the Diamond Sponsorship category among exhibition venues and service providers in the Middle East. It does not grant exclusive rights to host UFI events.

A Partnership Targeting International Exhibition Organisers

Sara Ahmed Buhiji, CEO of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority and Chairperson of Exhibition World Bahrain, emphasised that the agreement strengthens engagement with international exhibition industry leaders.

She highlighted the opportunity to establish long-term professional relationships and showcase Bahrain's capabilities in hosting major international conferences and exhibitions.

Chris Skeith, Managing Director and CEO of UFI, welcomed Exhibition World Bahrain's participation in the Diamond Sponsorship programme,





"The agreement strengthens engagement with leaders in the international exhibitions industry, while providing an opportunity to build long-term professional relationships and showcase Bahrain's capabilities in hosting major conferences and exhibitions."

Sarah Ahmed Buhijji
CEO of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority and Chairperson of Exhibition World Bahrain

highlighting the importance of collaboration in exchanging expertise and strengthening relationships among organisations operating in the sector.

Bahrain's Platform for Major International Events

Opened in November 2022, Exhibition World Bahrain features ten exhibition halls covering a combined area of 95,000 square metres, alongside a main conference hall accommodating up to 4,000 delegates.

Hosting UFI's Global Congress provides the venue with an opportunity to engage directly with executives from international exhibition and conference organisers, as well as venue operators, while presenting its facilities to industry professionals involved in selecting destinations for major events.

The financial value of the sponsorship agreement has not been disclosed, and no new international event-hosting contracts resulting from the partnership have been announced.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Reaching the Decision-Makers Behind Global Events

The professional value of the agreement lies in establishing ongoing channels of engagement with influential organisations in the international exhibition industry, whose decisions directly affect business travel and demand for conference and hospitality services.

However, measuring the sponsorship's actual tourism impact will require monitoring whether these relationships translate into new exhibitions and conferences hosted in Bahrain, the number of international participants they attract, and the business activity they generate for the Kingdom's hospitality and service sectors.

Radisson Signs Agreement for Its First Hotel in Abha, Featuring 123 Rooms and Suites



Partnership with Ahmed Abdullah Al Salamah Group and Al Fahd Company to develop Radisson Blu Hotel, Abha, with an opening targeted for 2029 as the group expands beyond Saudi Arabia's major cities.

Abha – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Radisson Hotel Group has signed an agreement to develop Radisson Blu Hotel, Abha, marking the international hospitality group's first entry into the city of Abha in Saudi Arabia's Asir region, in partnership with local development and investment companies.

Announced on November 4, 2026, the agreement covers a new hotel featuring 123 rooms, including 14 suites, with an opening targeted for the third quarter of 2029.

Partnership with Local Investors

Radisson Hotel Group is collaborating on the project with Ahmed Abdullah Al Salamah Real Estate Development and Investment Group and Al Fahd Trading, Industry and Contracting Company.

Ahmed Abdullah Al Salamah, Chairman of Ahmed Abdullah Al Salamah Group, said the partnership reflects investors' confidence in the tourism potential of the Asir region.

He highlighted the partners' ambition to deliver a hospitality property combining international standards with local identity.

The parties have not disclosed the project's investment value, detailed ownership structure, or construction commencement date.

Location Near Abha International Airport

The planned hotel will be located in the Al Areen district, approximately seven kilometres from Abha International Airport and 13 kilometres from the city centre.

Its location is expected to benefit from surrounding infrastructure





The signing of the" agreement marks an important step in the group's expansion into Saudi cities beyond the ".main markets

Elie Milky
Chief Development Officer for the Middle East, Northeast Africa, Greece and Cyprus at Radisson Hotel Group

developments, including the expansion of Abha International Airport and the widening of the airport road, as well as its proximity to The Point, a mixed-use development.

Designed to serve both leisure and business travellers, the hotel will feature a restaurant, café, and poolside juice bar, alongside meeting and event facilities, a fitness centre, swimming pool, and other recreational amenities.

Radisson Expands Across Saudi Cities

Elie Milky, Chief Development Officer for the Middle East, Northeast Africa, Greece and Cyprus at Radisson Hotel Group, emphasised that the agreement represents an important step in the group's expansion into Saudi cities beyond its primary markets.

Radisson currently has a portfolio of 50 hotels operating or under development in Saudi Arabia, making the Kingdom one of the group's five largest markets worldwide.

The company aims to expand its Saudi portfolio to 100 hotels operating or under development by 2030.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Abha Attracts International Hotel Expansion

The agreement introduces another international hotel brand to Abha's pipeline of planned hospitality developments, reflecting growing interest in the city's mountainous landscapes, cultural attractions, and distinctive climate.

The project's significance lies in its potential to broaden accommodation options in Abha, particularly for travellers seeking internationally branded hotel services.

However, its actual contribution to hotel capacity and the local tourism market will only materialise once development is completed and the property begins operations.

The third quarter of 2029 remains the targeted opening date rather than a confirmed operational milestone.

Manchester and Nice to Sphinx, Lyon to Luxor: New European Routes Set to Expand Egypt's Air Connectivity



WTM London 2026 discussions reveal plans to strengthen direct air links with Egyptian tourism destinations, while Jet2 prepares to launch its previously announced services to Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh in February 2027.

Cairo – Egypt | Al Rehla

Discussions between Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Sherif Fathy, and international airlines and tour operators during World Travel Market (WTM London 2026) have revealed plans to expand direct air connectivity between several European cities and Egyptian tourism destinations.

The proposed routes include flights from Manchester in the United Kingdom and Nice in France to Sphinx International Airport, west of Cairo, as well as a new connection between Lyon, France, and Luxor International Airport.

The expansion aims to diversify international access to Egypt's archaeological and cultural attractions.

Sphinx and Luxor at the Centre of Expansion

The proposed services to Sphinx International Airport could improve access to the Giza Pyramids and the Grand Egyptian Museum, reducing the need for some European travellers to connect through other airports.

Meanwhile, the planned direct connection between Lyon and Luxor is expected to facilitate access to one of Egypt's leading cultural tourism destinations, renowned for its ancient temples, archaeological tombs and Nile cruises.

However, the announcements did not specify confirmed launch dates, operating airlines or weekly frequencies for the three proposed routes.

Jet2 Prepares to Enter the Egyptian Market

Meanwhile, British airline Jet2 is preparing to launch its scheduled services to Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh on February 11, 2027, according to flight schedules previously announced by the company in December 2025.

The programme includes departures from several UK airports, including Manchester, Birmingham, London Stansted, Glasgow and Leeds Bradford.

The airline aims to offer flights and package holidays to the two Red Sea destinations as part of its wider expansion into popular sunshine holiday markets.

Meetings with Major International Tour Operators

The Egyptian tourism minister's meetings included representatives from easyJet Holidays, DER Touristik, TUI and Jet2, focusing on expanding tourism programmes and increasing international visitor flows to Egypt.

The discussions form part of ongoing efforts to strengthen Egypt's presence in European travel markets and improve connectivity with its principal tourism destinations.

Bulgaria Plans Online Visa Appointment System for Turkish Travellers and Expands Consular Staffing



746,000 visits from Türkiye recorded in eight months as Sofia moves to reduce visa waiting times and facilitate travel without removing entry requirements.

Sofia – Bulgaria | Al Rehla

Bulgaria has announced new measures to facilitate visa applications for Turkish citizens, including increasing consular staffing and preparing to introduce an online appointment booking system aimed at reducing waiting times and strengthening tourism flows between the two countries.

The announcement was made on November 3, 2026, following a meeting between Bulgarian Tourism Minister Ilin Dimitrov and his Turkish counterpart, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, on the sidelines of World Travel Market (WTM London 2026).

Online Appointment System Awaiting Testing

Bulgaria's Ministry of Tourism explained that the new electronic system will undergo testing soon, with the aim of streamlining visa appointment bookings and improving the efficiency of consular services.

Authorities also plan to increase staffing levels at consulates to accommodate growing demand, particularly during peak travel and holiday seasons.

Dimitrov emphasised that difficulties in obtaining visas should not force travellers to choose alternative destinations, highlighting the importance of removing barriers that affect visitor flows.

The ministry has not announced an official launch date for the system or a revised processing timeframe for visa applications.

192,000 Turkish Tourists in Eight Months

Official data revealed that Bulgarian accommodation establishments welcomed approximately 192,000 Turkish tourists between January and August 2026, while the total number of visits by Turkish citizens reached around 746,000 during the same period.

The difference between the two figures reflects their distinct statistical coverage. The first measures guests registered at accommodation establishments, while the second represents total visits.

The two ministers also discussed developing joint tourism routes focused on cultural and historical heritage, as well as local gastronomy.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Easier Procedures Do Not Mean Visa-Free Travel

Despite the significance of the announced measures, they do not mean that visa requirements have been abolished or that the online system is already operational.

The announced improvements currently focus on processing applications from Turkish travellers, with no indication that Arab nationalities are included.

Travellers are therefore advised to check official consular requirements before booking and avoid assuming that any new measures are in effect until their implementation is formally announced.



Scraps of a Traveller

Things Travel Influencers Won't Tell You

By:
Ali Yousef Al Saad

The most misleading thing about some travel videos isn't what they show you. It's what they carefully leave out!

In just thirty seconds, a travel influencer can convince you that a small island is a piece of paradise, that the hotel is only a few steps from the beach, and that dinner costs less than a cup of coffee. Then you arrive and discover that those "few steps" require a taxi!

I'm not accusing anyone of lying. Cameras don't necessarily lie, but sometimes they tell only half the story, leaving the unfortunate traveller to discover the other half at their own expense.

Take those breathtaking beaches that appear completely deserted, with nothing but turquoise water and gentle waves. Beautiful! But what happens if the camera turns slightly to the right? You might discover hundreds of tourists, crowded umbrellas, and a determined street vendor trying to sell you your third pair of sunglasses.

The influencer arrived at sunrise. You arrived at noon, when the entire island was wide awake!

Then comes the question of money. You're told that a destination is "incredibly cheap", but nobody mentions airport transfers, entrance fees, boat excursions, taxes, or whether that beautiful hotel was provided free in exchange for promotion. Sometimes the flight is cheaper than getting around once you land!

Other details rarely survive the editing process: an hour standing in the scorching sun, a rough road leading to a famous waterfall, or a steep staircase unsuitable for elderly visitors. All these inconveniences disappear with one simple editing cut. Unfortunately, they don't disappear when you arrive carrying your own luggage.

And let's talk about the weather. You see blue skies and calm seas, but nobody tells you that the video was filmed during a completely different season. Your holiday might coincide with heavy rain or humidity that makes your shirt stick to your back before you've even left the hotel.

Food is another adventure. When an influencer announces, "This is the best meal I've ever had!" remember that taste is personal. What delights one traveller might send another searching desperately for the nearest familiar restaurant.

I enjoy travel content, and I follow many creators who genuinely provide useful information. But I wish more of us would show the queues alongside the beautiful scenery, mention the actual costs alongside the discounts, and occasionally admit, "I didn't enjoy this place."

My advice? Enjoy the videos, admire the photographs, but read, research, compare, and ask questions before booking.

Don't let the Like button make your travel decisions for you. After all, travelling is a complete experience, not just a beautiful shot made for social media.


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Saudi Arabia Opens Bookings for Dream of the Desert Luxury Train, with Journeys Starting at SAR 86,250 per Couple

First journeys are scheduled for October 2027, departing from Riyadh through Al Jouf, Hail and Qassim, with 24 luxury suites and two itineraries featuring historic fortresses, desert adventures and authentic Saudi hospitality.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

Dream of the Desert has officially opened reservations for its ultra-luxury tourist train journeys across northern Saudi Arabia, with prices starting at SAR 86,250 per couple and the first commercial departures scheduled for October 2027.

The announcement was made on November 4, 2026, during World Travel Market London (WTM London), allowing international travellers and travel agents to book the inaugural season. This marks a significant transition for the project from development and promotion to commercial sales.

The train is being developed through a partnership between Italian luxury hospitality group Arsenale and Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR). Its itineraries combine luxury accommodation on board with visits to historical landmarks and natural attractions across northern Saudi Arabia.

24 Luxury Suites and a Travelling Hospitality Experience

The train's first phase will feature 24 private suites, alongside a dining carriage serving dishes inspired by Saudi cuisine and a traditional majlis carriage reflecting the Kingdom's hospitality heritage.

All journeys will depart from Riyadh, taking guests through historic, desert and mountainous landscapes, with exclusive experiences organised at selected stops along the route.

Published prices start at SAR 86,250 per couple for a private suite on a two-night journey, including VAT, accommodation, meals both on and off the train, and the core experiences included in the itinerary.

Certain optional activities, insurance, gratuities and personal purchases are not included in the starting price.

The Desert Kingdoms: Four Days Exploring Al Jouf and Hail

The first itinerary, The Desert Kingdoms, offers a four-day, three-night journey departing from Riyadh through Al Jouf and Hail before returning to the capital.

The experience includes an exclusive evening at the historic Marid Castle in Dumat Al Jandal, featuring artistic performances, heritage storytelling and dining inspired by local cuisine.

The programme also includes exploration of the Aja Mountains in the Hail region, introducing guests to the history of northern Arabia, ancient caravan routes and the cultural traditions associated with the area.

Shadows of Aja: Desert Adventures and the Oases of Qassim

The second itinerary, Shadows of Aja, is a three-day, two-night experience connecting Hail, the Aja Mountains and the Qassim region.

The programme features guided explorations of mountainous landscapes, equestrian experiences, traditional storytelling and music, alongside outdoor dining, stargazing and introductions to the astronomical traditions of desert communities.

In Qassim, guests can enjoy the Oasis Table experience among date palm farms, discovering local agricultural products, traditional food preparation, Saudi coffee and dates.

Private Journeys and Future Plans for AlUla

In addition to the two main itineraries, Dream of the Desert offers private journeys that can be tailored to groups





"The project provides an opportunity to showcase northern Saudi Arabia to a wider international audience by combining the region's natural and cultural heritage with premium hospitality experiences."

Aqeel Al-Shaibani
CEO of the Saudi Tourism Authority

and special occasions, ranging from single-day experiences to multi-day programmes.

Future expansion plans include a dedicated route to AlUla, although a confirmed launch date has not yet been announced.

Aqeel Al Shaibani, CEO of the Saudi Tourism Authority, emphasised that the project provides an opportunity to introduce northern Saudi Arabia to a wider international audience by combining natural and cultural heritage with premium hospitality experiences.

Meanwhile, Raffaele Brischi, CEO of Arsenale International and General Manager of Dream of the Desert, explained that opening reservations represents a new phase in developing a tourism product that integrates luxury transportation, accommodation, cultural activities and destination exploration.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Transforming Rail Travel into a Complete Tourism Experience

The significance of Dream of the Desert lies in offering an experience that extends beyond travelling by train, making the journey itself an integral part of the accommodation and tourism programme.

Opening reservations represents an important commercial milestone, as the journeys are now available for marketing and booking ahead of the targeted launch, with clearly defined itineraries and published prices.

For travellers, reviewing departure dates, cancellation conditions and included services before booking is essential, particularly as the project has not yet begun commercial operations.

For the tourism industry, the project's actual performance will become measurable once operations commence, through demand for the journeys and the extent to which destinations and local communities along the routes benefit from visitor spending.

WTM London 2026 Report: 60% Seek Luxury Holidays as 58% Travel Abroad for Events



Global research reveals a shift towards experiences and value for money, while Spain introduces new accessible tourism guidelines and easyJet Holidays highlights AI-powered customer service.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

World Travel Market (WTM London 2026) has highlighted significant shifts in international travellers' priorities, with growing interest in experience-led tourism, events and more meaningful forms of luxury, alongside the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence and improved accessibility across the travel industry.

The findings were presented during the launch of the Global Travel Report, produced in collaboration with Tourism Economics, as part of WTM London, held from November 3 to 5, bringing together thousands of companies and professionals from the international tourism industry.

60% Seek Luxury Despite Spending Pressures

Survey findings presented in the report revealed that 60% of respondents are seeking luxury holidays, with the experiences offered by destinations becoming increasingly important compared with traditional displays of luxury.

Dave Goodger, Managing Director at Tourism Economics, explained that declining purchasing power is encouraging travellers to reconsider how they allocate their budgets and seek better value without necessarily giving up travel.

During a specialist session, Chase Gray of Skift Advisory suggested that the future of luxury would increasingly be defined by "access rather than excess", with greater emphasis on exclusive experiences, personal enrichment and meaningful human connections.

58% Travel Abroad to Attend Events

The Global Travel Report found that 58% of international travellers surveyed said they had travelled abroad specifically to attend an event during the previous two years.

The findings highlight the growing importance of passion-driven tourism,



including music festivals, sporting events and cultural experiences.

Visit Philadelphia also presented its approach to connecting major concerts with additional tourism experiences, encouraging visitors to explore the city beyond the event venue.

Spain Introduces New Accessibility Guidelines for Hotels

Spain's national tourism office launched a new set of hotel guidelines and a digital campaign under its Spain for All strategy, aimed at helping hospitality establishments communicate accessibility features and services more clearly to travellers with different needs.

The initiative focuses on improving the information available before booking, enabling visitors to assess whether a hotel or other accommodation meets their individual requirements.

Artificial Intelligence Expands Its Role in Travel Services

Garry Wilson, CEO of easyJet Holidays, highlighted how artificial intelligence can handle routine customer enquiries, including airport transfer arrangements, allowing employees to dedicate more time to complex requests.

He also emphasised the importance of structuring tourism content so that it remains visible and accessible through AI-powered search tools, while ensuring that information continues to be attributed to its original sources.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Experience and Information Matter Beyond Price

Discussions at WTM London 2026 reveal growing attention to the overall travel experience, alongside improvements in the digital information travellers rely on when comparing destinations and making reservations.

For Arab tourism companies and hotels, the findings offer trends worth examining, particularly in developing event-related travel experiences, communicating accessibility services and integrating intelligent technologies into customer operations.

However, these trends alone do not demonstrate future increases in revenue or market share. Measuring their commercial impact will require actual data on bookings, visitor expenditure and traveller satisfaction.

Aqaba Through the Eyes of Its Locals: From the Fish Market to Neighbourhoods Beyond the Resorts

Beyond its beaches and luxury hotels, Jordan's coastal city maintains a distinctive daily rhythm shaped by fishing, traditional markets, bakeries and local restaurants, offering visitors a different perspective on life along the Red Sea.

Aqaba, Jordan | Al Rehla

Experiencing Aqaba does not necessarily begin at a resort beach or with a diving excursion in the Red Sea. In the neighbourhoods and markets near the city centre, visitors can discover another side of everyday life, where traditional occupations, local cuisine and social connections reflect Aqaba's history as Jordan's port city on the Red Sea.

For travellers seeking to experience Aqaba like its residents, the best starting point is not a packed itinerary but a leisurely walk that allows time to observe the city's details and interact with local people.

The Fish Market: Where the Sea Meets Everyday Life

Near the Great Arab Revolt Square and the historic fishermen's harbour lies Aqaba's fish market and fishermen's marina, a location closely connected to the city's maritime economy.

According to Aqaba Development Corporation, the project was established to organise fish trading, support local fishermen and connect commercial activity with the visitor experience.

The market's significance extends beyond purchasing seafood. It offers an opportunity to learn about locally traded fish species, observe how catches are displayed and understand the relationships between fishermen, traders and restaurants.

Visitors are advised to check the market's operating hours in advance, as not every stage of its activities is necessarily accessible throughout the day.

Exploring the City Centre Beyond the Beach

A walk through Aqaba's commercial streets reveals another side of the city, with small shops, bakeries, traditional eateries and stores selling everyday essentials.

Visitors can stop for a local meal, sample freshly baked goods or discover products that residents purchase away from the tourist souvenir shops.

This experience requires neither an elaborate itinerary nor a substantial budget. Instead, it calls for curiosity and respect for the privacy of local residents and workers.

Local Cuisine: Beyond Fine Dining

Aqaba is closely associated with seafood, alongside a variety of Jordanian and Arab dishes served throughout the city.

One dish linked to Jordan's coastal cuisine is sayadiyah, a traditional preparation combining fish, rice, onions and spices, with recipes varying between restaurants and households.

Before ordering, it is advisable to ask about the type of fish being served, its price and how the cost is calculated, particularly when prices depend on weight or species.

From the City Centre to the Historic Waterfront

A local walking tour can be combined with a visit to the area surrounding Aqaba Castle and the Great Arab Revolt Square, where historical landmarks intersect with everyday life along the waterfront.

Not every stop needs to become a paid tourism activity. Walking through the streets, observing the urban landscape and spending time in local cafés can all form part of the experience.

AlRehla Perspective

Aqaba demonstrates that a destination's identity extends beyond its resorts and diving attractions. Its fishing economy, traditional markets and older neighbourhoods give the city a character that exists independently of its modern tourism image.

Travellers who dedicate time to exploring these aspects not only gain a deeper understanding of the destination but also direct part of their spending towards local businesses and economic activities.







When the Sea Suddenly Retreats… Don't Follow It. It May Not Return Alone!

On World Tsunami Awareness Day, an unusual sight might tempt you to take photographs during your holiday. But it could be a warning of approaching destructive waves. What is the ocean trying to tell you?

Al-Rehla – Special Report

Imagine relaxing on a tropical beach, enjoying the sunshine and the soothing sound of the waves. Suddenly, the sea begins to retreat, and the water recedes unusually far, revealing rocks, fish and sections of the seabed that were hidden just minutes earlier.

Some people may rush to take photographs, while others approach out of curiosity. Yet this extraordinary scene could be a natural warning of an approaching tsunami, turning a moment of exploration into a race against time.

On November 5, World Tsunami Awareness Day, the United Nations highlights the importance of preparing for coastal hazards under the theme "Be Tsunami Ready: Resilience Starts with You."

When a Retreating Sea Becomes a Warning Sign

On December 26, 2004, a devastating tsunami struck the coasts of the Indian Ocean, leaving approximately 228,000 people dead or missing, including tourists holidaying in the region.

At some beaches, the waves were preceded by an unusual retreat of the sea, prompting people to move towards the exposed seabed rather than away from the coast.

However, receding water is not the only warning sign. A strong or prolonged earthquake, an unusual roaring sound from the ocean, or a sudden rise in sea level may also indicate an approaching tsunami.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) warns that anyone noticing these natural warning signs in a tsunami-prone coastal area should act immediately. Waves can arrive within minutes, sometimes before an official warning is issued.

Don't Reach for Your Phone… Head for Higher Ground

If you notice the sea suddenly and unusually retreating, do not approach it to take photographs or collect shells and stranded fish. Leave the beach immediately and follow designated evacuation routes to higher ground or farther inland.

If you experience an earthquake, protect yourself during the shaking first, then move away from the coastline as soon as it is safe to do so.

If reaching higher ground is impossible, follow local vertical evacuation instructions and seek shelter in buildings specifically designated or approved for that purpose, where available.

Never return to the beach simply because the first wave has passed. A tsunami can consist of several successive waves, and later waves may be even more dangerous.

Powerful currents can continue for hours or even days. Always wait until the authorities officially declare the area safe.

One Important Question Before Booking an Ocean-View Room

When travelling to coastal destinations exposed to tsunami risks, do not limit your hotel enquiries to the room's view or its proximity to the beach.

Ask about the hotel's emergency procedures, designated evacuation routes and the nearest safe location on higher ground.

Take a moment to familiarise yourself with emergency signs and evacuation maps before you might need them.

Not every retreat of the sea indicates a tsunami. Tides are natural phenomena, but a sudden and unusual withdrawal of water should always be treated with caution and prompt action.

Ultimately, the goal is not to fear the ocean, but to learn how to recognise its warning signs.

Because sometimes, the most beautiful memory of a journey is the photograph you chose not to take… because you chose safety over curiosity.



Türkiye Expands Archaeological Excavations to 261 Sites and Quadruples Funding as Heritage for the Future Wins International Award



Türkiye's Minister of Culture and Tourism receives an award in Italy for transforming seasonal excavations into year-round programmes, with significant progress reported at the ancient city of Ephesus.

Paestum – Italy | Al Rehla

Türkiye's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, has received the Paestum Award 2026 in recognition of the country's Heritage for the Future project, an initiative aimed at expanding archaeological excavations and protecting historical sites through increased funding and enhanced fieldwork programmes.

The award was presented on October 30, 2026, during the 28th Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism, held in Paestum, Italy, until November 1.

From Seasonal Excavations to Year-Round Operations

Ersoy explained that Türkiye has moved beyond the traditional excavation model, which previously limited archaeological work to three or four months annually, towards programmes that allow activities to continue throughout the year under five-year plans.

He revealed that excavation team budgets have increased threefold to fourfold compared with previous levels, alongside additional human resources and equipment allocated to archaeological sites.

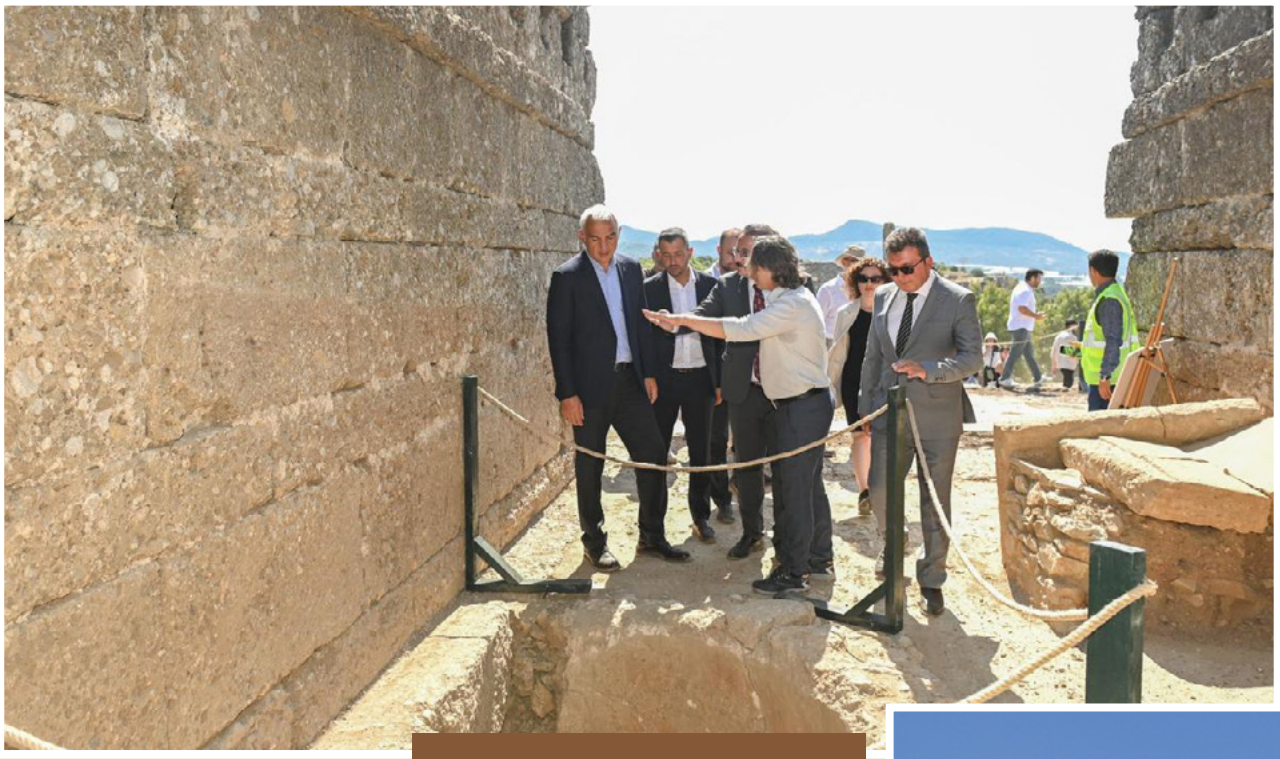
According to the minister, the number of active archaeological excavation sites across Türkiye has increased from 157 eight years ago to 261 today.

Ephesus: Major Progress in Uncovering the Ancient City

Ersoy highlighted the ancient city of Ephesus as an example of the programme's achievements.

According to figures presented by the minister, the proportion of the site uncovered through archaeological excavations has increased from approximately 25–26%, following 163 years of excavation history, to 45% over the past three years.

Ephesus is among Türkiye's most prominent archaeological destinations, attracting visitors interested in ancient civilisations, Roman architecture and Greek heritage.



However, advances in archaeological excavations do not necessarily mean that all newly uncovered areas are accessible to tourists, as historical sites require conservation, restoration and visitor management measures before opening to the public.

Cultural Cooperation with Italy

The award was presented to Ersoy by Ugo Picarelli, founder and director of the Mediterranean Exchange of Archaeological Tourism, who praised the Heritage for the Future initiative for its contribution to protecting cultural identity and highlighting historical heritage.

Ersoy also emphasised continued Turkish-Italian cooperation in archaeological excavation, restoration and museum activities.
He cited exhibitions held at the Colosseum in Rome to introduce international audiences to the archaeological significance of Göbeklitepe and Troy.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Protecting Heritage Before Expanding Visitor Access

The Heritage for the Future project highlights the importance of investing in archaeological research and the preservation of historical sites as foundations for developing cultural tourism.

However, the tourism value of such efforts cannot be measured solely by the number of excavation sites. It also depends on how many locations become accessible to visitors after appropriate conservation and safety measures, as well as the quality of information and services provided.

Expanding archaeological activity therefore represents a significant achievement supported by official statements, while its impact on tourist arrivals and tourism revenues requires separate, independently verified data.



A Night That Has Lit Up Britain for 421 Years: The November Tradition That Became a Festival of Lights

From Kent's historic castles to London's famous parks, fireworks, illuminated displays and towering bonfires bring a 1605 conspiracy back to life, with major celebrations continuing on November 7 and 8.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

Every November 5, Britain revisits a story dating back 421 years, not through the pages of history books or museum exhibitions, but through skies illuminated by fireworks, parks glowing with bonfires, and historic castles transformed into spectacular settings for light and music displays.

This is Guy Fawkes Night, also known as Bonfire Night, one of Britain's most distinctive autumn traditions, offering travellers an opportunity to discover a fascinating side of the country's history and cultural heritage.

A Plot Involving 36 Barrels of Gunpowder That Changed November Traditions

The story dates back to 1605, when a group of conspirators led by Robert Catesby planned to blow up the House of Lords during the State Opening of Parliament, intending to assassinate King James I and members of the ruling establishment.

On the night of November 4 and into the early hours of November 5, Guy Fawkes was discovered in a cellar beneath the House of Lords, guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder.

The conspiracy was uncovered before it could be carried out, and the anniversary of the King and Parliament's survival became an annual occasion.

Over the centuries, the commemorations evolved into a popular tradition featuring bonfires, fireworks and family gatherings.

Leeds Castle: When Fireworks Illuminate the Walls of History

In Kent, southeast England, Leeds Castle hosts one of the most memorable experiences associated with the occasion, transforming its historic architecture and surrounding lake into a dramatic setting for fireworks, illumination and music.

The castle's 2026 fireworks spectacular takes place on Saturday, November 7, and Sunday, November 8, with a musical theme inspired by time.

According to the castle's official website, tickets for Saturday had sold out, while a limited number remained available for Sunday at the time of the announcement, making advance booking essential.

London's Parks Become Celebration Venues

In the British capital, Alexandra Palace will host a festival on November 7 and 8, combining fireworks and drone displays with family activities, food stalls and musical entertainment.

Battersea Park will also stage fireworks displays and entertainment during the same weekend, including activities designed for families.

The experience extends well beyond watching the night sky. Many celebrations feature seasonal food stalls, hot drinks and entertainment attractions, creating a lively social atmosphere that is particularly associated with the British autumn.

How Travellers Can Enjoy the Experience

Although Guy Fawkes Night is traditionally associated with November 5, many of Britain's major fireworks displays in 2026 are scheduled for the following weekend.

Travellers should therefore confirm the dates of individual events, purchase tickets in advance and review transport arrangements, particularly for popular venues that attract large crowds.

Visitors are also advised to attend officially organised public displays and follow safety instructions rather than approaching fireworks launch areas







Oman Launches Visa Campaign to Attract High-Spending Tourists and Digital Platform Targeting 26 Countries



Partnership promotes luxury hospitality and adventure experiences through digital booking, while an AI-powered platform in eight languages supports international travel companies.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

The Sultanate of Oman has launched an international tourism campaign in partnership with Visa and the national travel operator, targeting high-spending visitors and promoting luxury hospitality, adventure tourism and marine activities. The initiative coincides with the introduction of a digital platform serving tourism partners across 26 countries.

Both initiatives were announced at World Travel Market London 2026, in the presence of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, as part of efforts to modernise tourism marketing and connect international promotional campaigns with direct bookings.

Connecting Tourism Promotion with Bookings

The campaign targets Visa cardholders worldwide, using data analytics to identify travellers interested in premium tourism experiences and deliver tailored offers.

Selected travel packages will be promoted through the Experience Oman platform and application, allowing visitors to explore tourism experiences and book them digitally.

The partnership's financial value and booking targets have not been disclosed.

AI-Powered Platform in Eight Languages

Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism also unveiled the Oman Tourism Hub, a digital platform available in eight languages and covering 26 countries.

Designed to support tour operators and travel companies, the platform features AI-powered itinerary planning tools, a virtual assistant named Dalila, online training programmes, webinars and specialised tourism information.

These services aim to help international partners develop and market Omani tourism products more effectively.

Al Rehla Perspective | From Promotion to Tourism Revenue

The two initiatives reflect Oman's shift towards targeted tourism marketing, combining traveller data with digital booking opportunities rather than relying solely on broad promotional campaigns.

However, their success will ultimately depend on confirmed bookings, average visitor spending and actual revenue generated for tourism businesses.
These performance indicators have yet to be announced.



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894 Films from 55 Countries Enter Bahrain's International Film Festival as Sixth Edition Opens

The six-day festival runs until November 10, honouring Yousra, Ghassan Massoud and Nader Al Maskati. Bahraini film Extra Time opens the screenings, alongside a programme of workshops and discussions with filmmakers.

Manama – Bahrain | Al Rehla

Bahrain welcomes the sixth edition of the Bahrain International Film Festival yesterday, Thursday, November 5, 2026, marking a new chapter as its official competition expands to an international level.

The festival has received 894 film submissions from 55 countries, transforming Manama into a meeting place for filmmakers and a platform for cinematic exchange across different cultures over six days.

Organised by the Bahrain Cinema Club in partnership with the Ministry of Information, the festival continues until November 10, featuring film screenings, discussions with artists and specialised workshops covering different aspects of filmmaking.

From Bahrain to 55 Countries

Opening the official competition to international submissions represents one of the most significant developments in the festival's sixth edition, following previous editions that focused more closely on local and regional cinema.

The submissions span five categories: Bahraini films, international short fiction films, documentaries, animation films and student films.

Ammar Zainal, the festival's Artistic Director, explained that the expansion aims to strengthen cinematic exchange and provide Bahraini filmmakers with greater opportunities to engage with international creative experiences.

The figure of 894 represents the total number of submitted films, not the number selected for screening.

Yousra, Ghassan Massoud and Nader Al Maskati to Be Honoured

The red-carpet ceremony begins at 5:00 PM in the outdoor area of The Avenues Bahrain, followed by the opening ceremony and tributes to three influential figures in Arab and Bahraini cinema.

Egyptian actress Yousra will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award in Arab Cinema, recognising her distinguished career spanning several decades.

Syrian actor Ghassan Massoud will be honoured for his artistic contributions and international cinematic achievements.

The festival will also present its Pioneer Award to Bahraini cinema pioneer Nader Al Maskati, recognising his role in establishing the Bahrain Cinema Club in 1980 and his contributions to developing the Kingdom's cinematic culture.

Bahraini Film Opens the Festival

The opening ceremony will conclude with a screening of Extra Time, written and directed by Bahraini filmmaker Mashael Al Absi in her directorial debut.

The film explores the challenges faced by young women as they pursue their ambitions while navigating social expectations, customs and traditions.

The ceremony will also feature a musical performance by Bahraini artist Abdullah Haji, blending jazz with traditional Bahraini rhythms.

An Evening with Yousra and Professional Filmmaking Workshops

On Friday, November 6, the festival will host a special conversation with Yousra at 6:00 PM at Hilton Garden Inn in Bahrain Bay.

The discussion will be moderated by Bahraini actor and producer Qahtan Al Qahtani, offering audiences an opportunity to explore highlights of the actress's career and her relationship with cinema audiences.

The festival programme also includes workshops and discussions covering screenwriting, film development, casting, costume design, production and post-production.

Additional sessions will address intellectual property rights, women's roles in the film industry and opportunities for filming productions in Bahrain, bringing together industry specialists and filmmakers.

Activities will take place across several venues, including The Avenues Bahrain, Hilton Garden Inn and the Bahrain Cinema Club headquarters.


مهرجان البحرين السينمائي
Bahrain Film Festival
6TH EDITION
SHORT FILMS,
GREAT STORIES
THE WORLD
COMES
TO
BAHRAIN
05 - 10
NOVEMBER 2026
MANAMA, BAHRAIN
FROM
BAHRAIN
TO THE
WORLD

Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou: A Moroccan Earthen Village Preserving the Legacy of Desert Caravans

Inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1987, the site features fortified walls, towers and closely clustered houses that showcase southern Morocco's traditional earthen architecture, while changing lifestyles and settlement patterns pose ongoing conservation challenges.

Ouarzazate, Morocco | Al Rehla

On the southern slopes of the High Atlas Mountains, in Morocco's Ouarzazate Province, the Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou rises with its closely clustered earthen buildings and defensive walls, offering one of the most remarkable examples of traditional architecture on the edge of the Sahara.

UNESCO inscribed the site on the World Heritage List in 1987 under cultural criteria (iv) and (v), recognising its architectural significance and its representation of traditional communal settlement patterns in southern Morocco.

What Does "Ksar" Mean?

The term ksar does not refer to a single royal palace. Instead, it describes a fortified residential settlement, known in parts of Morocco as a ksar or ksour in the plural.

Ait-Ben-Haddou consists of a collection of earthen houses enclosed within high defensive walls, reinforced by corner towers and connected through narrow passageways and fortified entrances.

The buildings vary in size and design. Some are modest dwellings, while others resemble small castles, featuring tall towers and decorative patterns formed from mud bricks.

Architecture Shaped by the Environment

The site's distinctive character lies in its use of locally available construction materials, particularly earth and wood, and in the adaptation of its buildings to the region's arid climate.

UNESCO notes that the oldest surviving structures do not appear to predate the seventeenth century, although the building techniques employed are considerably older and have long been practised throughout the valleys of southern Morocco.

It would therefore be inaccurate to describe all the existing buildings as medieval or assign them a single construction date.

These traditional techniques give the site much of its significance as evidence of earthen construction knowledge passed down through generations of local communities.

A Stop Along Historic Trade Routes

Ait-Ben-Haddou was once a stopping point along the trading route connecting sub-Saharan regions with Marrakech through the Drâa Valley and the Tizi n'Telouet Pass.

The settlement contains several elements associated with communal life, including a mosque, a public square, grain storage facilities and spaces that once served travelling caravans, as well as Muslim and Jewish cemeteries.

These features demonstrate that the ksar was not simply a defensive stronghold, but also a residential, economic and social community.

Conservation Remains an Ongoing Challenge

UNESCO emphasises that earthen buildings are particularly vulnerable when regular maintenance and repairs are neglected, especially as residential occupation declines.

The use of modern construction materials that are incompatible with traditional building techniques can also threaten the site's authenticity.

Moroccan authorities responsible for architectural heritage oversee conservation and restoration efforts, while the involvement of local communities remains essential to protecting the settlement.

AlRehla Perspective

The significance of Ait-Ben-Haddou lies in its ability to illustrate the relationship between architecture, climate, trade and communal life. A visit should involve more than photographing its towers and defensive walls. Understanding its traditional construction techniques, caravan history and conservation challenges gives the cultural experience its deeper meaning.







Tangier City Port Records MAD 202.6 Million in 2025 Revenue as Yacht Marina Occupancy Reaches 96%



Revenue rises 23% and cruise ship calls increase 49%, while the port handles 1.5 million ferry passengers and confirms 200 scheduled cruise calls for 2026.

Tangier – Morocco | Al Rehla

Morocco's Tangier City Port Management Company recorded total revenues of MAD 202.6 million in 2025, representing a 23% increase compared with the previous year, supported by growth in maritime passenger transport, cruise tourism and recreational marine activities.

The figures were disclosed by Mohamed Ouanaya, General Manager of the company, in an interview with Marina World, an international publication specialising in recreational marinas and waterfront developments.

The report highlighted Tangier's transformation into an emerging marine tourism and yachting hub in the western Mediterranean.

1.5 Million Passengers and Record Yacht Marina Occupancy

Tangier City Port handled approximately 1.5 million ferry passengers in 2025, while cruise ship calls increased by 49% compared with 2024.

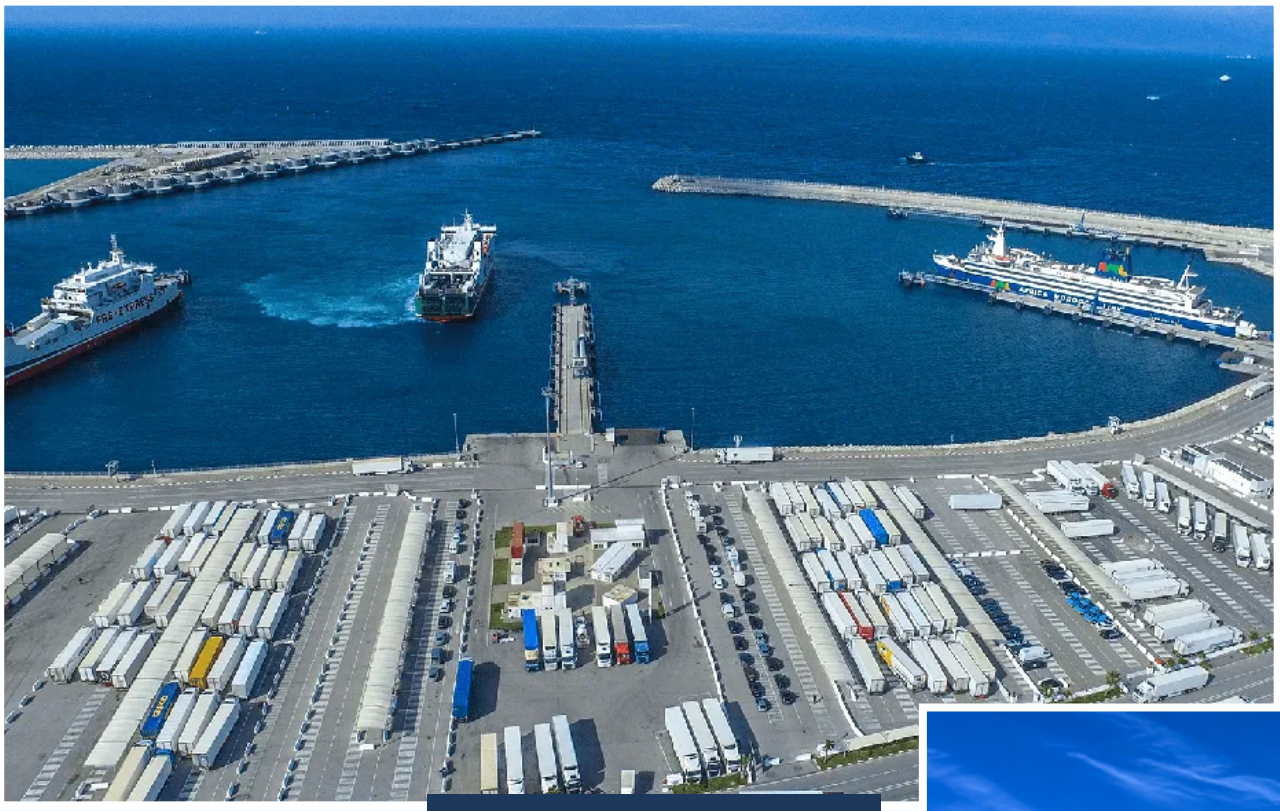
Tangier Marina Bay recorded an occupancy rate of 96%, reflecting strong demand for yacht and recreational boat berthing facilities.

Ouanaya also confirmed that 200 cruise ship calls had been scheduled for 2026, further strengthening Tangier's position on western Mediterranean cruise itineraries.

1,400 Berths Accommodating Yachts Up to 90 Metres

The waterfront development features approximately 1,400 berths across two basins, accommodating vessels ranging from seven-metre boats to superyachts measuring up to 90 metres.

Berthing services are complemented by maintenance facilities, winter storage and other marine support services, enabling the port to attract both visiting yachts and vessels requiring longer stays.



The redevelopment of Tangier City Port began in 2010, following the relocation of major commercial port activities to Tanger Med.

The transformation aimed to reposition the historic harbour as a destination combining marine tourism, leisure and related services.

New Infrastructure Projects Ahead of the 2030 World Cup

Future development plans include improving connections between the port and the city, including a proposed cable transport system.

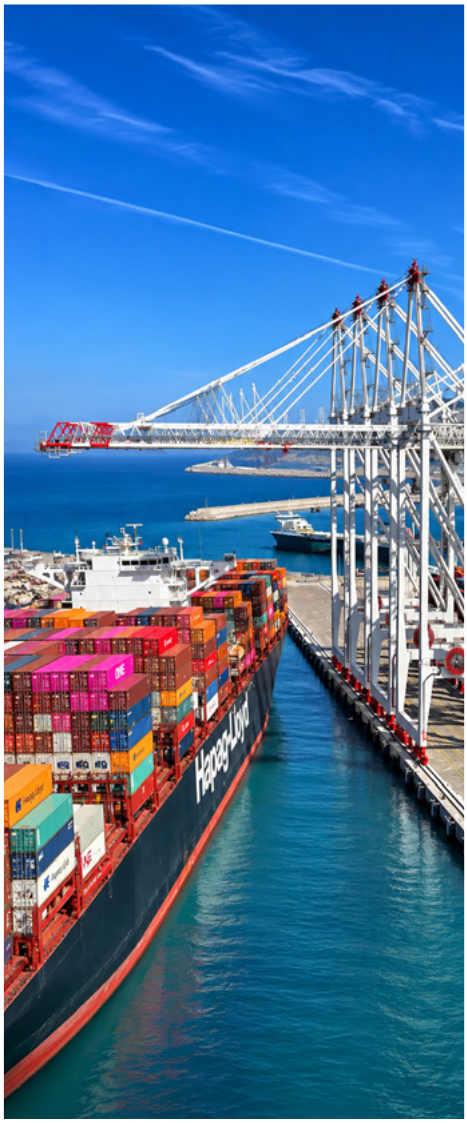
Plans also envisage introducing two high-speed electric ferries on the Tangier–Tarifa route, supporting more sustainable maritime connections between Morocco and Spain.
These initiatives remain part of announced development plans, with their completion yet to be confirmed.

Al-Rehla Perspective | A Marina Evolving into a Tourism Economy

Tangier's performance highlights the value of integrating ferry operations, cruise tourism and recreational marinas within a single waterfront destination.

The model demonstrates how diversified maritime activities can support the development of a broader marine tourism economy.

However, the management company's total revenues cover multiple port activities and should not be interpreted as income generated exclusively by yacht berthing services. A more comprehensive assessment of the port's direct tourism impact would require additional data on visitor spending, marine service revenues, and the average length of stay of yachts and cruise passengers.



Dubai Unveils Tourist Loyalty Card Benefits: Five-Year Visa and Up to AED 2,000 in Rewards



Invitation-only membership costs AED 4,032.50, with Emirates, Accor and Visa among the partners supporting repeat visits and encouraging spending on hospitality, shopping and entertainment.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Dubai revealed further details of its Dubai Access Club tourist loyalty programme on Thursday, 5 November 2026, offering eligible frequent visitors a five-year multiple-entry tourist visa alongside exclusive benefits across hotels, shopping and entertainment. The programme carries a total fee of AED 4,032.50 for applicants applying from outside the UAE.

The announcement follows the initiative's introduction earlier in November and reflects Dubai's efforts to strengthen long-term relationships with visitors by encouraging repeat trips rather than focusing solely on attracting first-time tourists.

Invitation-Only Membership

Dubai's General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs and Department of Economy and Tourism explained that the programme targets selected travellers through invitations extended by participating companies and loyalty programmes, including Emirates, Accor and Visa.

Membership becomes active only after the visa application has been approved and eligibility requirements have been satisfied. Applicants applying from within the UAE must pay an additional AED 650.

The visa permits multiple entries into the UAE during its five-year validity, subject to applicable entry and stay conditions. It does not grant continuous residence for five years.

Interested travellers may register their interest in the programme, although registration does not guarantee an invitation or visa approval.

Shopping and Hospitality Privileges

The announced benefits include rewards worth up to AED 2,000, redeemable under the programme's terms and conditions, alongside discounts and special offers through the Tourist Happiness Card at selected

retail and entertainment destinations.

Majid Al Futtaim is participating by providing shopping and leisure privileges, while the membership package also includes a prepaid mobile SIM card from du.

Additional benefits are expected to be introduced through participating partners, potentially including hotel room upgrades, airport lounge access and priority booking for selected events. However, not all these privileges are automatically available to every member.





Al Rehla Perspective | Can Repeat Tourism Become an Economic Growth Driver?

The Dubai Access Club represents a different approach to destination marketing, focusing on maintaining relationships with visitors beyond their first trip and connecting easier entry procedures with benefits offered by airlines, hotels and shopping destinations.

Its potential economic significance lies in encouraging repeat visits, allowing hospitality, retail and entertainment businesses to benefit from visitor spending across multiple trips.

However, the programme's success will depend on the attractiveness of its benefits relative to membership fees, the ease of redeeming rewards and the breadth of its partner network.

Measuring repeat visitation rates, average member spending and length of stay will be essential to assessing the programme's actual economic impact, particularly as operational results have yet to be announced.

Finland Invites 16 Singles Worldwide on a Free Four-Day Trip and Group Dinner Date in February 2027



The experience includes flights, accommodation, meals and activities, with Helsinki and Tampere hosting the selected participants. Applications are open until November 10 and require an English-language video.

Helsinki – Finland | Al Rehla

Visit Finland has launched a tourism initiative targeting single travellers from around the world, offering 16 selected participants a free four-day trip in February 2027 that combines Finnish cuisine, cultural experiences and social connections.

The initiative, called Finnish Dinner Date, forms part of a broader campaign promoting Finnish food culture, with travel, accommodation, meals and activities covered for the selected participants.

Two Groups Across Helsinki and Tampere

The experience will be divided into two groups of eight international participants each. One group will visit Helsinki, while the other will travel to Tampere in Finland's Lakeland region.

Each group dinner will also include two Finnish singles, who will join the international guests for a meal prepared by local chefs, introducing them to regional ingredients and culinary traditions.

The trips are scheduled between February 9 and 19, 2027, with participants learning their assigned destination after their selection has been confirmed.

How to Apply

Applicants must record a video in English answering the question: "What would you bring to a dinner date, and why?"

The video must be published on Instagram, TikTok or YouTube using the hashtag #FinnishDinnerDate, with the official Visit Finland account tagged according to the campaign guidelines.

Applicants must then complete the online application form and submit a link to their video.

Applications close on November 10, 2026, at 11:59 AM Finnish time, while selected participants will be announced on December 1.

From Shopping Baskets to a Tourism Experience

The initiative was inspired by Finland's so-called singles shopping basket trend, in which some shoppers use distinctive pink baskets as a playful way of signalling their openness to meeting new people.

Organisers emphasise that the experience is designed to encourage cultural exchange and social interaction rather than guarantee that participants will find a romantic partner.

Germany's Condor Launches Frankfurt–Abu Dhabi Flights as Weekly Services Between Abu Dhabi and Germany Reach 49



The airline introduces daily A330neo flights continuing to Bangkok, complementing its Berlin service launched in October under a codeshare partnership with Etihad Airways.

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

Zayed International Airport welcomed the inaugural flight of German airline Condor from Frankfurt on Thursday, November 5, 2026, marking a further expansion of air connectivity between the UAE capital and Germany.

According to Abu Dhabi Airports, the new service brings the total number of weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Germany to 49.

Condor operates the new route daily using wide-body Airbus A330neo aircraft, with flights continuing from Abu Dhabi to Bangkok, Thailand, as part of its codeshare partnership with Etihad Airways.

Frankfurt, Abu Dhabi and Bangkok on One Route

The new service allows passengers travelling from Frankfurt to fly directly to Abu Dhabi or continue their journey to Bangkok, while benefiting from additional connections available through the partnership between Condor and Etihad Airways.

The launch forms part of Condor's regional expansion, following the introduction of daily flights between Berlin and Abu Dhabi on October 15, 2026, operated by Airbus A320neo aircraft.

Condor now serves the UAE capital from two German cities, Frankfurt and Berlin, using different aircraft types on each route.

49 Weekly Flights Between Abu Dhabi and Germany

Abu Dhabi Airports confirmed that the introduction of the Frankfurt service has increased the total number of weekly flights connecting the emirate with German cities to 49, including services operated by other airlines serving the market.

A special welcoming ceremony was held at Zayed International Airport to mark the inaugural arrival, attended by representatives of Abu Dhabi Airports, Condor and Etihad Airways.

Officials highlighted the importance of expanding air connectivity between the two countries, providing additional opportunities for tourism, business travel and connecting passengers travelling through Abu Dhabi.

Partnership Expands International Travel Options

The new service builds on the codeshare agreement between Condor and Etihad Airways, designed to connect their respective networks and offer travellers a wider range of destinations across Asia, Africa and Australia.

The partnership also supports connecting flight bookings, subject to available routes and the applicable terms and conditions of both airlines.

Gulf Air Restores Full Flight Network and Reports Double-Digit Revenue Growth Following Operational Disruptions



CEO Martin Gauss reveals 40 days of temporary operations from Dammam before restoring Bahrain-based services, with passenger load factors reaching 85%.

Manama – Bahrain | Al Rehla

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has restored its full flight network and reported double-digit revenue growth compared with 2025, following operational disruptions earlier this year that temporarily forced the airline to relocate its operations to King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Speaking at the Gateway Gulf 2026 Forum in Manama, Gulf Air CEO Martin Gauss revealed that the airline maintained its international services from Dammam for 40 days while Bahrain's airspace remained closed.

During this period, passengers were transported by road from Bahrain across the King Fahd Causeway to Dammam, allowing the airline to maintain flight operations despite the suspension of services from its main hub.

Network Recovery and Revenue Growth

Gauss confirmed that Gulf Air had fully restored its route network following the resumption of operations from Bahrain, with the recovery process taking approximately three months.

He also reported passenger load factors of around 85% and double-digit revenue growth year-on-year, despite rising fuel costs and challenges facing the aviation industry.

The airline is also considering expanding its Boeing 787 aircraft orders as part of its long-term strategy to strengthen direct connectivity between Bahrain and international markets. No final decision on additional orders has been announced.

Al Rehla Perspective | Airline Resilience Protects Tourism Connectivity

Gulf Air's experience highlights the importance of maintaining air connectivity during crises, particularly for destinations heavily dependent on international aviation.

Restoring a flight network goes beyond resuming scheduled services. It also helps rebuild travel options and confidence among passengers and tourism partners.

However, revenue growth alone does not establish a complete financial recovery. Profitability, operating costs and actual passenger traffic remain essential indicators for assessing the airline's performance.

Flydubai Extends Flight Cancellations to Riyadh, Dammam and Abha Until November 9



The airline warns of possible further schedule changes on Saudi routes and urges passengers to check their bookings and update their contact details before heading to the airport.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Flydubai announced on Thursday, November 5, 2026, that it has extended flight cancellations to three Saudi Arabian destinations—Riyadh, Dammam and Abha—until November 9, amid ongoing developments affecting its flight schedules.

The decision follows earlier extensions affecting the same destinations, most recently until November 5. No confirmed date has been announced for the resumption of services.

Further Schedule Changes Possible

A flydubai spokesperson confirmed that additional changes to the airline's scheduled services to Saudi Arabia may occur, urging passengers to regularly check their flight status through official channels.

The airline also stressed the importance of updating phone numbers and email addresses linked to bookings to ensure passengers receive notifications about cancellations or schedule changes.

Services Continue to Other Destinations

The suspension does not affect all Saudi destinations served by flydubai.

Recent operational reports indicate that services continue to other cities, including Jeddah, Madinah, Taif, Tabuk, Qassim and Hail.

However, passengers are advised to verify the status of individual flights before making alternative travel arrangements.

Options for Affected Passengers

Passengers whose flights have been cancelled can review rebooking or ticket refund options through flydubai's official website, subject to applicable terms and policies.

Travellers who booked through travel agencies should contact their booking agents to confirm the available alternatives.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Check Before Heading to the Airport

The extended cancellations directly affect travel plans between Dubai and the three Saudi cities, particularly for passengers with connecting flights or hotel reservations.

Al-Rehla advises travellers to verify their flight status before heading to the airport and review refund or rebooking conditions before purchasing alternative tickets.

Passengers should continue monitoring official updates until flight schedules stabilise.

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