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# National Museum of Qatar: 539 Geometric Discs Transform the "Desert Rose" into a Doha Architectural Landmark

## Pickalbatros: 1,258 Flights Operated by Two Turkish Airlines to Egypt in Nine Months

## Sharjah International Tourism Forum Brings Together Global Leaders to Discuss AI and Hotel Sustainability

## Abu Dhabi Confirms EuroLeague Final Four Hosting Rights for 2027 and 2029 Following Successful 2025 Edition



# Pickalbatros: 1,258 Flights Operated by Two Turkish Airlines to Egypt in Nine Months



**Pegasus operated 887 flights and AJet 371 through September 2026, while Mohamed Eid expects the combined total to reach 1,900 by year-end and air traffic to potentially double in 2027.**

## Antalya – Türkiye | Al Rehla

Pickalbatros Hotels & Resorts has reported that Turkish carriers Pegasus Airlines and AJet operated a combined 1,258 flights to Egyptian destinations, particularly Sharm El Sheikh, during the first nine months of 2026, according to an airline traffic monitoring report presented by the group on the sidelines of Antalya Tourism Fair (ATF 2026).

Mohamed Eid, a representative of Pickalbatros Group, expressed optimism about growth in the Turkish market next year, citing airline traffic indicators and meetings held with carriers and tour operators.

### Pegasus Leads with 887 Flights

Eid explained that Pegasus operated 887 flights through the end of September 2026, compared with 371 flights by AJet, noting that these figures exclude the final three months of the year.

He expects Pegasus to reach approximately 1,200 flights by the end of December, while AJet could operate between 600 and 700 flights, bringing their combined annual total to between 1,800 and 1,900 flights.

"Air traffic figures are the natural indicator we always look at, and they are increasing," Eid said, expressing optimism that flight activity could double in 2027, based on meetings he described as encouraging.

The figures are based on a monitoring report presented by the group, while the estimates for the end of 2026 and for 2027 remain commercial forecasts rather than confirmed operational results.

### Turkish Arrivals to Egypt Rise 43%

The group's indicators coincide with an announcement by Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Sherif Fathy, at the EMITT tourism exhibition in Istanbul in February 2026, revealing a 43% increase in Turkish tourist arrivals to Egypt in 2025.

The minister also projected growth of between 20% and 25% in flight bookings from the Turkish market during 2026, alongside efforts to strengthen air connectivity and cooperation with tour



operators.

## Three Resorts Among Turkish Travellers' Preferred Choices

Eid identified three Pickalbatros resorts in Sharm El Sheikh as particularly popular with Turkish visitors: Laguna Vista in Nabq Bay, Royal Grand in the Hadaba area, and Albatros Palace in the Montazah area of Ras Nasrani.

He highlighted the all-inclusive accommodation model as a major attraction, alongside Egypt's mild climate, competitive prices and geographical proximity to Türkiye.

Eid also explained that Turkish travellers' interest in Egypt extends beyond beach resorts to the country's ancient civilisation, archaeological attractions and museums.

Visitors staying in Sharm El Sheikh for seven to ten days can dedicate one or two days to exploring Cairo, combining a seaside holiday with cultural experiences.

## Direct Contracts and Joint Egyptian-Turkish Events

Eid revealed that the group had concluded multiple direct agreements with Turkish travel companies and held meetings with airlines to explore opportunities for increasing flights to Egyptian destinations.

The discussions also included proposals for incentive programmes and tourism promotion initiatives in Sharm El Sheikh.

He emphasised the group's ongoing engagement with Turkish partners through tourism exhibitions in Istanbul each February and Antalya each October, as well as specialised workshops throughout the year.

Pickalbatros is also considering organising joint Egyptian-Turkish events at its resorts and hosting Turkish celebrities and influencers to promote tourism experiences in Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada.

However, no names or specific dates for these activities have yet been announced.

Owned by Egyptian businessman Kamel Abou Ali, Pickalbatros is a hospitality group specialising in resort operations and all-inclusive accommodation, with properties in Egypt and Morocco.

Eid believes continued commercial cooperation with Turkish travel companies and airlines, together with Egypt's tourism attractions, provides grounds for optimism about the 2027 season.

Nevertheless, actual growth will depend on the number of flights operated and tourist arrivals recorded over the coming period.

# Sharjah International Tourism Forum Brings Together Global Leaders to Discuss AI and Hotel Sustainability




**The 13th edition welcomes the Secretary-General of UN Tourism and features specialised workshops on accessible tourism, education, and destination management, alongside an innovation hackathon involving more than 800 students.**

## Sharjah – UAE | Al Rehla

Sharjah is hosting the 13th edition of the Sharjah International Travel and Tourism Forum today, Wednesday, October 28, 2026, bringing together tourism and hospitality leaders, industry experts, and representatives of UN Tourism to discuss destination resilience, sustainability, professional education, and artificial intelligence applications in the travel industry.

Organised by the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA), the forum is being held at Al Jawaher Reception and Convention Centre under the theme "New Trends in the World of Tourism." The event takes place under the patronage of Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed bin Sultan Al Qasimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah and Chairman of the Executive Council.

### UN Tourism Leadership and Industry Experts

The programme features a keynote address by Shaikha Al Nowais, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, alongside the participation of Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy and Tourism, and Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of SCTDA.

Naema Abdullah Al Ali, General Coordinator of the forum, explained that this year's edition focuses on three main pillars: industry resilience and sustainability, education, and innovation.

These themes are intended to address challenges facing the tourism sector and encourage the exchange of international expertise.

The forum also includes discussions on strengthening Sharjah's position in business and events tourism, as well as developing destinations capable of responding to economic and operational changes.

### Workshops on Hotel Sustainability and Accessible Tourism

The professional programme includes a workshop organised in cooperation with UN Tourism on developing destinations and services that accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, alongside another session dedicated to tourism education.

Within the hospitality sector, a specialised



workshop will outline the practical steps hotels can take to move from implementing sustainable practices to obtaining relevant sustainability certifications.

Additional sessions will examine investment in cultural heritage, local community development, and the role of tour guiding and storytelling in enhancing visitor experiences.

## Artificial Intelligence in Destination Management

The programme also explores the use of artificial intelligence to analyse visitor feedback and transform it into actionable insights that help destination managers improve services and manage tourism reputation.

Experts will discuss how digital technologies and immersive experiences can be used to present cultural heritage while preserving the identity and authenticity of destinations.

The forum is also connected to the second edition of the Tourism Innovation Hackathon, launched by SCTDA in cooperation with the American University of Sharjah.

The initiative brings together more than 800 students from universities across the UAE to develop practical technology-based ideas that can be applied within the tourism industry.

## Al Rehla Perspective | What Does the Forum Offer Tourism Professionals?

The forum's professional value lies in moving beyond broad discussions to address specific operational challenges, including preparing hotels for sustainability certification, improving accessible tourism services, and analysing visitor experiences through artificial intelligence.

These topics provide hotels, travel companies, tour operators, and tourist guides with practical approaches that can be studied and adapted to the requirements of their respective markets.

However, implementing these solutions and measuring their impact will require subsequent programmes and operational data. No final results confirming new investment agreements or commercial deals arising from the forum have been announced so far.



**"The current edition focuses on three main pillars: sector resilience and sustainability, education, and innovation, with the aim of discussing the challenges facing tourism and exchanging international expertise."**

**Naima Abdullah Al Ali**
**General Coordinator of the Forum**



**Tourist Stops**

# Beyond the Map: What Are the Criteria for Discovering New Tourist Destinations?


**By:**

**Mahmoud Al Nashit**

**Tourism Media Consultant**


Discovering new tourist destinations is not simply about identifying a place on the map. It is a comprehensive process built around delivering value, preserving the environment, and creating exceptional memories for travellers.

This process is guided by four fundamental criteria: authenticity and immersive cultural experiences, infrastructure readiness and environmental sustainability, digital presence and growth indicators, and value for money.

These criteria are increasingly important as the global tourism industry seeks to stimulate growth in emerging destinations, supported by travellers' expanding preferences and rising consumer spending on travel and leisure worldwide.

Safety and accessibility must also remain among the foremost considerations. These include stability, visa requirements, flight availability, and the quality of roads and transportation networks.

Equally important are a destination's distinctive cultural and natural characteristics, ranging from heritage sites and traditional villages to nature reserves and authentic local experiences that give visitors a genuine sense of discovery.

Travel agencies and tour operators specialising in different types of tourism fully recognise the importance of these factors. They also consider regional and international tourism statistics when assessing emerging destinations.

A promising destination is not necessarily the most famous. Rather, it is one that brings together the essential elements of a sustainable visitor experience, transforming an initial discovery into repeat visits and positive recommendations to others.

The Arab region is experiencing exceptional tourism growth. According to a Gulf statistical report, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries collectively welcomed more than 75.7 million tourists, generating approximately $131.9 billion in tourism revenues.

This performance has been supported by the development of new coastal and mountain destinations across the region, successfully combining technological advancement with cultural authenticity.

Modern tourism is no longer centred exclusively on major capitals and established destinations. Instead, it is increasingly driven by contemporary travellers' enthusiasm for exploring lesser-known places.

This shift comes as international tourism recorded a historic milestone, with global tourist arrivals exceeding 1.5 billion, according to UN Tourism data.

The discovery of destinations has therefore evolved from a spontaneous adventure into a discipline based on clearly defined criteria adopted by tourism institutions and decision-makers.

Destination research agencies increasingly rely on travel data analysis, online popularity, rising search interest, and the circulation of photographs and videos across social media platforms.

These digital signals can serve as early indicators of emerging tourism trends, revealing destinations that are beginning to attract attention among international travellers.

At the same time, price flexibility and the availability of diverse accommodation options suited to different budgets remain essential factors in a destination's ability to grow rapidly and appeal to a broader range of travellers worldwide.

Ultimately, successful destination discovery requires a careful balance between accessibility, authenticity, sustainability, digital visibility, and economic value. Together, these elements can transform an unfamiliar location into an attractive and enduring tourism destination.



# Shurooq Completes 75% of Kalba Beach Project, Featuring 11 Commercial Units Along 700-Metre Waterfront



**Construction targeted for completion in December 2026, with New Year fireworks planned and new dining, sports, and leisure facilities designed to preserve the surrounding coastal environment and natural reserves.**

## Kalba – UAE | Al Rehla

The Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq) has announced that construction of the Kalba Beach project on the emirate's eastern coast is 75% complete, with work targeted for completion by December 2026.

The development will introduce a 700-metre waterfront featuring 11 commercial units alongside recreational and public facilities designed to serve residents and visitors.

The announcement, made on October 26, 2026, comes as part of an update on tourism developments in Kalba, a coastal destination known for its beaches, mountains, mangrove forests, nature reserves, and archaeological attractions.

### Restaurants, Cafés, and Sports Facilities

The project includes 11 commercial units designated for businesses such as restaurants, cafés, and kiosks, alongside dedicated walking, jogging, and cycling paths, football and volleyball courts, and indoor and outdoor children's play areas.

Additional facilities include a prayer room, public amenities, and accessibility features for people with disabilities, providing recreational options for visitors of different ages and needs.

The commercial spaces also create opportunities for entrepreneurs and local businesses operating in the hospitality, food and beverage, and retail sectors. However, the project's total investment value and the identities of its commercial operators have not yet been announced.

### Fireworks and Environmentally Conscious Design

Shurooq has announced plans for fireworks displays at the waterfront as part of New Year celebrations, although an official date for opening the development to the public has not yet been confirmed.

The project has been designed with consideration for the surrounding coastal environment, particularly nearby mangrove forests and protected natural areas.

Environmental measures include the use of recycled materials, rammed earth construction techniques, and solar-powered solutions.

The waterfront is also being developed in




accordance with the requirements of the international Blue Flag programme, which promotes water quality, environmental management, and beach safety.

However, no official confirmation has been issued that the project has obtained Blue Flag certification.

## Archaeological Centre to Showcase More Than 400 Rock Engravings

Alongside the waterfront development, work is progressing on the Kalba Rock Art Centre at the Khatm Al Melaha archaeological site.

The site contains more than 400 engravings distributed across 150 rock formations, offering evidence of different historical periods and providing insights into the area's archaeological heritage.

The Sharjah Department of Public Works is responsible for implementing the project, with completion targeted for the second quarter of 2027.

Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer, Chief Executive Officer of Shurooq, emphasized that Kalba's development projects aim to connect the city's natural and cultural attractions with facilities and experiences that allow residents and visitors to appreciate its diversity.

## Al Rehla Perspective | What Will Kalba Beach Offer Visitors?

Once opened, Kalba Beach will add another recreational destination to the eastern coast of Sharjah, allowing visitors to combine waterfront activities, dining, cafés, and family-friendly facilities with visits to nearby natural attractions, including mangrove forests and mountainous landscapes.

Kalba's appeal lies in the opportunity to experience the sea, nature, and cultural heritage within a single trip, although access to certain protected areas and environmental attractions may be subject to specific regulations.
For families planning to visit during the New Year holiday, it is advisable to confirm the official opening date and fireworks schedule before making travel arrangements.
The completion of construction work does not necessarily mean that the development will immediately open to the public.



**"The development of Kalba's projects is based on connecting its natural and cultural assets with services and experiences that enable residents and visitors to benefit from the city's diversity."**

**Ahmed Obaid Al Qaseer**
**CEO of Shurooq**

# Project on the Map

## OMR 80 Million Yinkat Hills Development to Feature Five-Star Resort and 300 Residential Units in Muscat

**Development and usufruct agreement signed with Masa Al Qurum Development for a 500,000-square-metre integrated tourism project featuring hospitality facilities, resort-style residences and commercial outlets.**

### Muscat – Sultanate of Oman | Al Rehla

Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed an agreement to develop the integrated Yinkat Hills tourism project in the Wilayat of Muscat, with an announced investment value of OMR 80 million.

The project forms part of the Sultanate's efforts to develop integrated tourism destinations combining hospitality, residential accommodation and recreational services.

The agreement was signed during the October Urbanism 2026 events, which began on October 5 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

It includes development rights and a usufruct arrangement for an integrated tourism complex on government-owned tourism land.

### 500,000 Square Metres Between the Mountains and the Sea

Yinkat Hills will occupy approximately 500,000 square metres in a location characterised by its coastal setting and mountainous terrain.

According to official information, the master plan is divided into three phases incorporating hotel facilities, resort-style residential units and commercial activities.

The first phase involves developing a five-star resort featuring 100 rooms, alongside associated tourism, leisure and hospitality facilities.

The second phase comprises 126 resort-style residential units distributed across land plots in eight different sizes.

The third phase includes a further 174 residential units and 35 retail outlets, bringing the total number of planned residential units to 300.

### Who Is Behind the Project?

Masa Al Qurum Development is responsible for developing Yinkat Hills under the development and usufruct agreement signed with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The company was represented at the signing by Tariq bin Abdul Latif bin Dawood Al Zadjali, its authorised partner, while the ministry was represented by Azzan bin Qassim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism.

The official announcement did not provide sufficient information about the company's ownership percentages or ultimate shareholders. Consequently, its ownership structure cannot be conclusively established from the agreement alone.

### Part of Oman's Integrated Tourism Development Programme

Yinkat Hills is among the tourism developments for which the ministry announced agreements in October 2026, alongside other projects involving the Sultan Qaboos Port waterfront and Al Bandar Integrated Tourism Complex.

The components of Yinkat Hills demonstrate that the development extends beyond a standalone hotel, combining tourist accommodation, resort-style residences and commercial services within a single master-planned destination.

From an economic perspective, the OMR 80 million figure represents the project's announced investment value, rather than expenditure already incurred or revenue generated.

Similarly, the signing of the development agreement does not mean that the resort has opened or that construction of the residential units has been completed.

The official announcement did not specify a final opening date or disclose verified construction progress percentages.

The project's significance will therefore depend on the actual progress achieved across its development phases, particularly the completion of hospitality, residential and commercial facilities and their integration into Muscat's wider tourism offering.







# National Museum of Qatar Opens Two International Exhibitions Exploring 1,000 Years of Maritime Trade and Contemporary Art




**Around 120 ceramic artifacts trace historic trade routes between China and the Gulf, while 25 works by Italian artist Giuseppe Penone feature in his first comprehensive exhibition in the region.**

## Doha – Qatar | Al Rehla

Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, inaugurated two international exhibitions at the National Museum of Qatar on October 26, 2026, bringing together the history of ancient maritime trade and contemporary art as part of the Qatar Creates Fall/Winter 2026–2027 season.

The exhibitions offer visitors to Doha two distinct cultural experiences: Boats Floating Afar: The Maritime Trade of Ancient Chinese Ceramics, which explores more than a thousand years of commercial exchange between China, the Arabian Gulf, and other regions, and Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Flow of Life, showcasing the Italian artist's work across indoor and outdoor spaces at the museum.

### 120 Artifacts Trace the History of the Maritime Silk Road

Presented in collaboration with the National Museum of China, Boats Floating Afar features approximately 120 ceramic and pottery artifacts dating from the Tang to the Qing dynasties, spanning the period from AD 618 to 1911.

The exhibition includes ceramic vessels, plates, and jars, alongside objects recovered from historic shipwrecks and archaeological discoveries, revealing how Chinese goods travelled across the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf to Africa and Europe.

It highlights the role of maritime commerce in the movement of goods, artistic techniques, and ideas between civilizations, while also presenting archaeological discoveries from Qatar that connect the country's history with ancient international trading networks.

The exhibition is organized into four thematic sections examining the evolution of Chinese ceramic production and the expansion of its overseas markets over the centuries.

### 25 Works by Italian Artist Giuseppe Penone

The second exhibition, Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Flow of Life, presents 25 artworks created between 1970 and







2026, displayed across five pavilions in the courtyard of the National Museum of Qatar.

It marks the first comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the Italian artist in the Middle East and North Africa.

The collection brings together sculptures, drawings, installations, photographs, and moving-image works, exploring the relationship between humanity and nature through materials including wood, bronze, marble, and ceramics.

The exhibition was curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director of Serpentine, and Issa Al Shirawi, Head of International Exhibitions at Qatar Museums.

Penone's artistic presence also extends beyond the museum through his public sculpture Idee di Pietra (Ideas of Stone) at Old Doha Port, adding another contemporary artwork to the city's cultural landscape.

## Exhibitions Continue Until February 2027

The Giuseppe Penone exhibition will run until February 13, 2027, while Qatar Museums' official visitor information currently lists January 31, 2027, as the closing date for Boats Floating Afar.

Both exhibitions form part of the Qatar Creates cultural programme, which brings together artistic exhibitions and cultural initiatives across Doha's museums and institutions, connecting regional heritage with international contemporary art.

## Al Rehla Perspective | How to Plan Your Visit

The National Museum of Qatar offers visitors the opportunity to experience two contrasting cultural journeys in one location.

The first explores the history of maritime commerce and the movement of Chinese ceramics into the Arabian Gulf, while the second introduces contemporary artistic expressions inspired by natural materials and the relationship between people and their environment.

Visitors can also extend their cultural itinerary to Old Doha Port to see Penone's new public sculpture and explore the surrounding waterfront district.

Both exhibitions are accessible with a National Museum of Qatar admission ticket. The published admission price is QAR 25 for non-resident adults, while Qatar residents and children aged 16 and under are eligible for free entry, according to the museum's official ticketing categories.

The museum is open from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays; from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Thursdays; and from 1:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Fridays. It is closed on Tuesdays.

Visitors are advised to check the latest exhibition schedules and book tickets through Qatar Museums' official website before their visit, as opening hours and exhibition dates may be subject to change.

# National Museum of Qatar: 539 Geometric Discs Transform the “Desert Rose” into a Doha Architectural Landmark

**Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel and opened in 2019, the museum incorporates a historic palace while combining nature-inspired forms with modern construction technologies.**

## Doha, Qatar | Al Rehla

Along the waterfront of Doha, Qatar’s capital, the National Museum of Qatar stands out with an architectural composition unlike that of conventional buildings. Its interlocking discs, arranged at different angles and in varying sizes, evoke the shape of the “desert rose,” a natural crystalline formation found in desert environments.

Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the museum opened in March 2019, becoming one of the most prominent examples of incorporating local natural forms into contemporary cultural architecture.

### 539 Discs Shape the Building

The design consists of 539 interlocking geometric discs of different sizes and orientations, serving structural and architectural functions, including walls, roofs and shading elements.

Approximately 76,000 glass-fibre-reinforced concrete panels were used to clad the building, manufactured using thousands of moulds.

Constructing this complex arrangement was more than an aesthetic challenge. It required precise coordination between architectural design, structural engineering and building systems, particularly because changing the position of one disc could affect the elements connected to it.

### A Historic Palace Within Contemporary Architecture

The museum was not developed independently of its site’s history. Instead, it was designed around the Palace of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani, which once served as a residence for the ruling family and a seat of government.

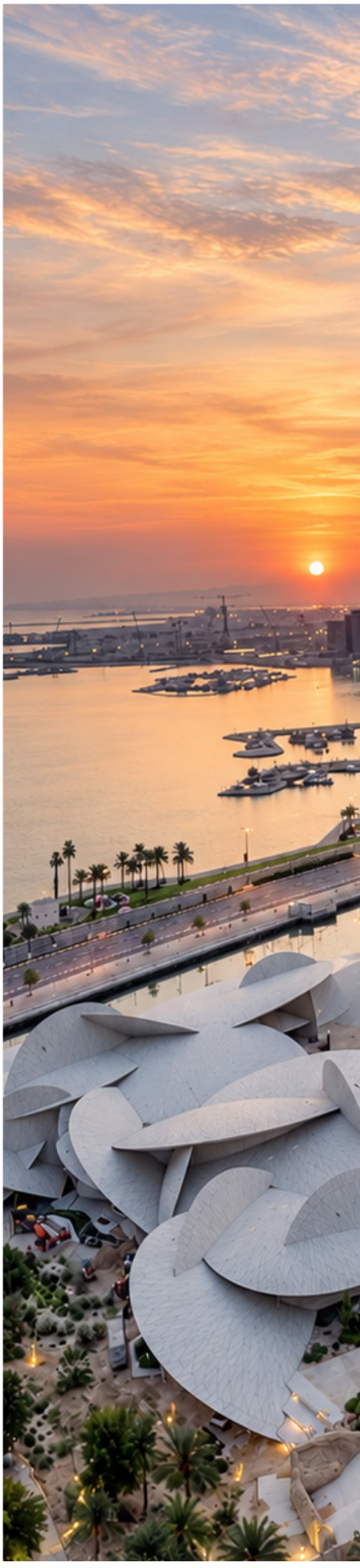
The palace underwent restoration to preserve its historic architectural features, becoming an integral part of the museum’s architectural experience.

This arrangement establishes a direct relationship between an existing historic building and a contemporary structure, rather than demolishing the old to make way for the new.

The exhibition galleries surround a central courtyard known as the Baraha, while the visitor experience follows an exhibition route extending approximately 1.5 kilometres.

### Architecture Designed for the Climate

The interlocking discs serve purposes beyond shaping the museum’s exterior. Their projecting sections provide shade for walkways and outdoor spaces, helping reduce direct sunlight exposure across parts of the building.





The museum's exterior also features sandy tones that visually connect the structure with its surrounding desert environment.

The museum received LEED Gold certification and a four-star sustainability rating under the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS), reflecting the integration of environmental considerations into its design.

## Architecture That Tells a Story

The architectural significance of the National Museum of Qatar lies in transforming a local natural phenomenon into an integrated building system, rather than simply borrowing its appearance as a decorative motif.

The museum also demonstrates how historic structures can be preserved within contemporary cultural developments, allowing the original palace to remain part of the site's architectural narrative.

For visitors, the museum experience begins even before entering the exhibition galleries. The building itself tells part of the story of the relationship between Qatar's natural environment, its history and the evolution of its contemporary architecture.

Sources: National Museum of Qatar – Architecture; Ateliers Jean Nouvel – Project; Qatar Museums – Sustainable Design.

Editorial Record Update – Thursday, October 29, 2026
The article on Baron Empain Palace has been replaced with "National Museum of Qatar – Desert Rose," while Baron Empain Palace has been recorded as a previously covered subject.

Verification is still required to confirm that no standalone article about the National Museum of Qatar has been published within the past 365 days, as the complete editorial archive was unavailable during this review.

# Abu Dhabi Confirms EuroLeague Final Four Hosting Rights for 2027 and 2029 Following Successful 2025 Edition




**Etihad Arena to host the Final Four on May 28 and 30, 2027, following a sold-out 2025 final attended by 12,000 fans, with general-public tickets selling out in less than seven hours.**

## Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) and Euroleague Basketball announced on October 27, 2026, that the UAE capital will host the EuroLeague Final Four in 2027 and 2029, following its successful debut as host of the championship in May 2025. The announcement forms part of a multi-year partnership between the two organizations.

The 2027 edition will take place at Etihad Arena on Yas Island from May 28 to 30, bringing together four clubs that qualify for the final stage of Europe's premier basketball competition. Dates for the 2029 edition have yet to be announced.

## Semifinals on May 28, Championship Final on May 30

The two semifinal matches will be played on Friday, May 28, 2027, with the winners advancing to the championship game on Sunday, May 30. The final day will also feature the championship game of the adidas NextGen EuroLeague, a competition dedicated to developing young basketball talent.

The tournament returns to Abu Dhabi after the emirate hosted the 2025 Final Four, when Turkish club Fenerbahçe Beko Istanbul claimed the championship with an 81–70 victory over AS Monaco in front of 12,000 spectators at Etihad Arena.

General-public tickets for the 2025 event sold out in less than seven hours after going on sale in February that year. Additional limited options were subsequently available through packages combining match tickets with hotel accommodation.

## A Tourism Partnership Beyond Basketball

Saleh Mohamed Al Geziry, Director General of Tourism at DCT Abu Dhabi, emphasized that hosting the championship again reflects the strength of the partnership with Euroleague Basketball and reinforces the emirate's position as an international basketball destination. He also highlighted the contribution of major sporting events to local economic activity and destination promotion.




Dejan Bodiroga, President of Euroleague Basketball, described the 2025 Abu Dhabi edition as one of the competition's standout events in recent history.

Meanwhile, Chus Bueno, Chief Executive Officer of Euroleague Basketball, characterized the renewed collaboration as part of the competition's international expansion strategy.

The partnership was facilitated by IMG, while Experience Abu Dhabi will continue as a main partner of Euroleague Basketball competitions and presenting partner of the Final Four, providing the destination with promotional and media exposure throughout the season.

## 19.57 Million Television Views Across Regional Markets

The announcement comes amid growing interest in European basketball across the Middle East.

During the 2025–2026 season, which featured the participation of Dubai Basketball, the competition recorded a cumulative television audience of 19.57 million views across the region through broadcast partner Dubai TV.

The figure represents cumulative television viewership throughout the season, rather than unique individual viewers or attendance at matches in Abu Dhabi.

## Al Rehla Perspective | What Does the Event Mean for Travelers?

The return of the EuroLeague Final Four to Yas Island gives basketball fans across the Gulf and wider Arab region an opportunity to plan a trip to Abu Dhabi that combines top-level sporting action with hotel stays, entertainment attractions, and leisure experiences.

Ticket sale dates and prices for the 2027 edition have not yet been announced. Fans interested in attending should therefore rely on official ticketing channels for confirmed booking information.



**"Hosting the finals once again reflects the strength of our partnership with EuroLeague Basketball and reinforces Abu Dhabi's position as a leading destination for international basketball."**

**Saleh Mohamed Al Geziry**
**Director General of Tourism, Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi.**

# Aqaba Strengthens Its Business Tourism Profile with 350 Companies at SOFEX and Major International Summits in 2027

**The special operations exhibition brings together delegations from 75 countries, while the Jordanian coastal city prepares to host the World Ocean Summit, a diving and blue economy exhibition, and a major technology forum.**



**Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference SOFEX 2026**

## Aqaba – Jordan | Al Rehla

Jordan's coastal city of Aqaba is strengthening its position on the international meetings and exhibitions map as the 15th edition of the Special Operations Forces Exhibition and Conference (SOFEX 2026) gets underway, bringing together more than 400 official delegations from 75 countries and 350 exhibiting companies from 38 countries.

The event coincides with preparations by the Aqaba International Exhibition and Convention Centre to host a series of specialized international events covering the blue economy, logistics, and technology over the coming months.

King Abdullah II officially inaugurated SOFEX on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, in the presence of Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II and Prince Hashem bin Abdullah II. The exhibition continues until October 29.

Organized in coordination with the Jordan Armed Forces, SOFEX brings together international companies, institutions, and delegations specializing in defence, security, and special operations technologies.

### World Ocean Summit Coming in March

Aqaba's upcoming events calendar includes the 14th World Ocean Summit and Expo, organized by Economist Enterprise from March 16 to 18, 2027.

The summit will bring together government




«Aqaba Blue: Ocean Future in Action»

representatives, investors, business leaders, and experts to discuss the blue economy, coastal investment, ocean conservation, and the development of marine-related industries.
Its agenda will address sustainable coastal tourism, coral reef protection, financing for marine projects, and the climate challenges facing coastal destinations.

## Diving and Blue Economy Exhibition

Aqaba is also preparing to host Aqaba Blue: Ocean Future in Action in March 2027, an international event dedicated to diving, water sports, marine technology, and coastal tourism.

The exhibition will bring together diving equipment manufacturers, tourism operators, industry professionals, and marine environmental organizations, alongside business meetings, technology showcases, and specialized workshops.

The event is particularly relevant to Aqaba's position as a Red Sea diving destination, where marine tourism supports a network of diving centres, hotels, tour operators, and related services.

## From Logistics to Technology

The city's upcoming calendar also includes the Jordan International Freight, Forwarding and Logistics Exhibition and Conference (JIFEX 2026), scheduled for December.

In April 2027, Aqaba will host the REACH technology forum, organized by the Information and Communications Technology Association of Jordan (int@j).

The event will bring together professionals and companies involved in information technology, telecommunications, and the digital economy.

This diverse calendar reflects the expanding role of the Aqaba International Exhibition and Convention Centre as a venue serving multiple professional sectors rather than relying on a single category of exhibitions.

## Al Rehla Perspective | Aqaba Between Business Tourism and the Red Sea

International conferences and exhibitions provide Aqaba with opportunities to introduce business visitors to its wider tourism offerings, including hotel accommodation, restaurants, boat excursions, and diving experiences.

The city's location on the Red Sea allows conference delegates and exhibition participants to combine professional commitments with beach activities and marine experiences.

However, measuring the actual tourism benefits of these events requires reliable data on international attendance, hotel room nights, and visitor spending.

No independently reported figures have yet established the direct tourism revenue or accommodation demand generated by the events included in Aqaba's upcoming calendar.

# Dubai Taxi Company and National Taxi Renew Hala Partnership for Five Years




**More than 7,700 taxis will remain available for booking through the Careem app, following approximately 120 million rides since 2019 across a wider network of over 13,000 vehicles.**

## Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Dubai Taxi Company (DTC) and National Taxi have renewed their strategic agreements with Hala, Dubai's e-hailing taxi service, for an additional five years, ensuring that more than 7,700 taxis will remain available for booking through the Careem app as part of the emirate's transportation network serving residents and visitors.

Announced on October 28, 2026, the renewal extends a partnership established when Hala launched in 2019, integrating licensed taxi fleets into Dubai's digital booking ecosystem.

The agreements cover taxis operated by the two companies, excluding their dedicated airport taxi fleets. The figure does not represent an addition of 7,700 new vehicles to Dubai's existing taxi fleet.

## 120 Million Rides Since 2019

According to official figures, approximately 120 million rides have been booked through Hala using taxis operated by Dubai Taxi Company and National Taxi since the partnership began in 2019.

Hala's wider network currently comprises more than 13,000 registered taxis and over 26,000 drivers, allowing passengers to book licensed taxis through the Careem app.

The service provides residents and visitors with an alternative to hailing taxis on the street or waiting at traditional taxi ranks, making transportation more accessible through smartphone bookings.

## Combining Public Transport and Digital Technology

Hala is a joint venture between Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) and Careem, connecting licensed taxi services with digital booking and demand-management technologies.





"Renewing the agreement supports the continued development of services, enhances the customer experience, and strengthens integration between the company's operations and the Hala platform."

Mansoor Rahma Al Falasi Group
CEO, Dubai Taxi Company

Mansoor Rahma Al Falasi, CEO of Dubai Taxi Company, said the renewed partnership supports the continued development of mobility services, improvements in customer experience, and closer integration between the company's operations and Hala's platform.

Khaled Nuseibeh, CEO of Hala, said the agreements would support further improvements in access to taxis through the app, alongside continued investment in driver support and service quality.

The renewal also aligns with the RTA's target of shifting 80% of taxi journeys to electronic booking by 2030.

## What Does the Agreement Mean for Visitors to Dubai?

For tourists, Hala provides a convenient way to book licensed taxis through the Careem app when travelling between hotels, tourist attractions, shopping malls, restaurants, and business districts.

Visitors can use the application to request a taxi and review the available journey details before confirming their booking, depending on the service options displayed.

The renewed agreements exclude dedicated airport taxi fleets, so travellers arriving at Dubai's airports should check the transportation and booking options available at their arrival terminal.

The announcement did not introduce changes to taxi fares or confirm any new benefits specifically designed for tourists.

# Coming to the Destination

## TND 77.6 Million to Modernise Djerba–Zarzis Airport, Strengthening the Island's International Gateway

**The airport handled more than 2.3 million passengers across 16,777 flights in 2025, while the investment programme covers infrastructure, safety and digital transformation through 2030.**

### Djerba – Tunisia | Al Rehla

Djerba, one of Tunisia's leading island destinations, is preparing for a new phase of aviation infrastructure modernisation under an investment programme announced by the Tunisian Ministry of Transport.

Approximately TND 77.6 million has been allocated to upgrade Djerba–Zarzis International Airport through 2030, with the aim of improving its operational infrastructure, facilities and passenger services.

The programme is particularly significant for an island that relies heavily on international air connectivity to welcome visitors, especially from European markets, alongside domestic and regional passenger traffic.

### TND 63.4 Million Allocated to the First Phase

According to information provided by the Ministry of Transport in response to a written parliamentary question, approximately TND 63.4 million has been allocated for investment during 2025 and 2026, with a further TND 14.2 million earmarked for the period from 2027 to 2030.

The planned improvements cover infrastructure modernisation, safety equipment, operational facilities and passenger services, with particular attention to digital transformation and sustainable development standards.

However, the published information does not provide a detailed implementation timetable for each component or confirm an expansion of the passenger terminal.

The figures therefore represent announced investment allocations rather than the value of completed construction or modernisation works.

### More Than 2.3 Million Passengers in 2025

Djerba–Zarzis International Airport handled more than 2.3 million passengers in 2025, representing a 6.5% increase compared with 2024.

Aircraft movements reached 16,777 flights, up 2.7%, while international passenger traffic increased by 8.1% and international flight movements rose by 5.3%.

These figures highlight the airport's importance in connecting Djerba with international tourism markets, particularly given the concentration of hotels and resorts across the island and neighbouring coastal areas.

### New Air Routes Strengthen International Connectivity

In 2026, Djerba gained a new direct air connection with Zurich after Swiss airline Edelweiss Air launched flights on March 1.

Under the schedule announced in March, the service is planned to operate until November 29, 2026, with weekly frequencies varying according to the season.

The route adds to the island's international air network, although the announced schedule does not mean flights operate daily or throughout the year.

### What Will the Modernisation Mean for Visitors?

The investment programme focuses on improving the airport facilities used by travellers, from passenger processing and equipment to operational services and infrastructure.

It also places air connectivity within broader efforts to support Djerba as a destination combining Mediterranean beach tourism with a distinctive cultural heritage.

The island's traditional settlement pattern was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2023, recognising the unique architectural and cultural characteristics of its historic landscape.

However, the actual impact of the airport investments will need to be assessed through completed works, improvements in passenger services and the dates on which upgraded facilities enter operation, rather than through announced funding allocations alone.



# Qatar’s Retaj and Al Jazeera Finance Sign Agreement to Finance Property Purchases in Egypt with Hotel Management Services




## Qatar’s Retaj and Al Jazeera Finance Sign Agreement to Finance Property Purchases in Egypt with Hotel Management Services

### Doha – Qatar | Al Rehla

Qatar-based Retaj Hotels & Hospitality has signed a cooperation agreement with Al Jazeera Finance, enabling Qatari citizens and residents of Qatar to access financing solutions for purchasing and owning properties in Egypt, with the option of benefiting from professional hotel management, hospitality operations, and property rental services.

Announced on October 27, 2026, the agreement brings together Islamic property financing and hospitality services, targeting customers seeking residential units for personal or family use, as well as those considering property ownership alongside separate investment and operational arrangements.

Neither company has disclosed the financial value of the agreement or the number of properties targeted.

### Islamic Lease-to-Own Financing

Under the agreement, Al Jazeera Finance will assess customer applications and provide financing offers in accordance with its approved eligibility criteria, using an Islamic lease-to-own structure known as Ijarah Muntahia Bittamleek.

Retaj Hotels & Hospitality will coordinate property purchase and registration procedures in cooperation with developers in Egypt, leading to the transfer of ownership once contractual financial obligations have been fulfilled.

Each financing application remains subject to individual approval and eligibility requirements. The agreement does not constitute a commitment to finance a specified number of properties.

### Hotel Management and Property Rental Services

The partnership also allows Retaj and its affiliated companies to offer property management, hospitality operations, and rental services on behalf of owners, depending on the nature of each property and its suitability for such activities.

These services will be provided under separate agreements defining management responsibilities, service fees, and the obligations of the parties involved.



**Amer Mohammed Saeed Al Jabri**
**Chief Executive Officer of Al Jazeera Finance**



**Sheikh Nayef bin Eid Al Thani**
**Chairman of Retaj Group of Companies**

This aspect is particularly relevant to customers residing outside Egypt who wish to entrust the management and operation of their properties to a specialist company rather than handling day-to-day responsibilities themselves.

The two companies have not yet identified specific hotel projects or residential units that will begin operating under the agreement.

## Who Is Behind the Agreement?

The agreement was signed by Sheikh Nayef bin Eid Al Thani, Chairman of Retaj Group of Companies, and Amer Mohammed Saeed Al Jabri, Chief Executive Officer of Al Jazeera Finance, in the presence of Medhat El Nouby, Chief Executive Officer of Retaj Hotels & Hospitality, and senior representatives of both companies.

Retaj's portfolio comprises approximately 40 properties, including hotels, resorts, and serviced residences, covering both operating establishments and projects under development.

Egypt is among the markets in which the group has an interest as part of its hospitality management and operations activities.

## Al Rehla Perspective | From Property Ownership to Hotel Operations

The agreement's significance lies in combining property acquisition financing with the option of professional hospitality management, a model that differs from purchasing a residential unit solely for personal use or leasing it under a conventional residential tenancy.

Hotel-style operations require arrangements covering property management, maintenance, guest services, marketing, and reservations, alongside compliance with applicable regulatory and licensing requirements.

However, the availability of rental management services does not guarantee rental income or occupancy levels.

Neither company has disclosed projected returns, executed hotel management contracts, or the actual volume of financing generated under the agreement. Such information will be necessary to assess the partnership'smeasurable impact on Egypt's hospitality sector.

# BWH Hotels Rebrands as WorldHotels, Unifying a Portfolio of 4,000 Hotels and 70 Million Loyalty Members




**18 hotel brands across more than 100 countries brought under one umbrella, with a unified rewards programme launching on January 5, 2027, while preserving existing points and reservations.**

## Phoenix – United States | Al Rehla

Global hospitality group BWH Hotels has announced the adoption of WorldHotels as the new overarching brand for its hotel portfolio, marking a major corporate transformation encompassing more than 4,000 hotels and hospitality properties across its global portfolio, 18 brands operating in over 100 countries, and the consolidation of two loyalty programmes with approximately 70 million members.

Announced on October 27, 2026, the restructuring aims to connect the group's existing hotel brands through a unified global platform for reservations, rewards and destination discovery, while maintaining the individual identities of its properties.

### Unified Loyalty Programme for 70 Million Members

The group plans to launch its unified WorldHotels Rewards programme on January 5, 2027, combining Best Western Rewards and WorldHotels Rewards into a single system featuring three membership tiers.

WorldHotels confirmed that members will retain the value of their existing points, membership status and preferential member rates. Points will continue to have no expiration date, while accounts and rewards will transition automatically without requiring members to register again.

Further details of the programme are scheduled to be announced on November 16, 2026. The group also confirmed that existing and future reservations will remain unaffected by the transition.

### Best Western Brands to Retain Their Names

The transformation does not involve discontinuing established brands such as Best Western, Best Western Plus, Best Western Premier and SureStay. Hotels will continue operating under their recognised names and signage.





**"Unifying brand identity, loyalty programmes and digital services helps showcase the full range of accommodation options while preserving each hotel's independence."**

**Larry Cuculic**
**CEO of WorldHotels**

Larry Cuculic, President and CEO of WorldHotels, explained that many travellers remain unfamiliar with the full diversity of the group's portfolio. He noted that bringing its corporate identity, loyalty programmes and digital services together would make its accommodation options easier to discover while preserving the independence of individual hotels.
The portfolio includes luxury, upscale, boutique and economy hotels, as well as extended-stay properties. WorldHotels Collection brings together independent properties across six specialised categories.

## Digital Platform Built on More Than 10,000 Hours of Expertise

The group has introduced a new website and redesigned mobile application, alongside a destination discovery platform developed using insights collected by hotel teams over more than 10,000 hours.

The platform provides information about neighbourhoods, local experiences and attractions surrounding participating hotels, helping travellers choose accommodation based on their interests as well as price and location.

## 27 Hotels in the Middle East, with Expansion in Saudi Arabia and Morocco

The transformation is particularly relevant to Arab hospitality markets. In September 2026, the group reported operating 27 hotels across the Middle East, with a target of expanding its regional portfolio to 70 hotels over the following three years.

In Saudi Arabia, the group operates 12 hotels and has signed agreements for 14 additional projects, while approximately 15 more projects remain under negotiation.

In Morocco, the group announced an agreement to develop 25 new hotels over five to six years. Egypt, meanwhile, represents its largest development pipeline in the Middle East and North Africa.

For Arab travellers, the most immediate practical benefit of the transition will be access to a broader hotel network through a unified loyalty system, without needing to modify existing reservations or manually transfer reward points.

# talabat and Qatar Airways Link Everyday Purchases in Kuwait to Avios Travel Rewards




**Members earn 3 Avios for every KWD 1 spent through the app, with a minimum eligible purchase of KWD 4.5, allowing rewards to be redeemed for flights, cabin upgrades, and additional travel services.**

## Kuwait – Al Rehla

Food delivery platform talabat and Qatar Airways Privilege Club announced a new partnership in Kuwait on October 27, 2026, enabling customers to earn Avios points on everyday purchases made through the talabat app and redeem them for travel-related rewards, including flight tickets, cabin upgrades, and additional baggage allowances.

The partnership operates through the Card-Linked Offers programme, allowing Privilege Club members to accumulate travel rewards through spending with commercial partners beyond the airline and hospitality sectors.

### 3 Avios for Every Kuwaiti Dinar Spent

Under the partnership, Privilege Club members earn three Avios for every Kuwaiti dinar spent on eligible purchases through talabat, provided each transaction meets the minimum spending requirement of KWD 4.5.

To participate, members must link an eligible Visa payment card to their Qatar Airways Privilege Club account and use that card to pay for qualifying orders through the talabat app.

At the announced earning rate, an eligible purchase worth KWD 10 generates 30 Avios, which are credited to the member's account and can subsequently be redeemed in accordance with the loyalty programme's terms and conditions.

### Rewards Include Flights and Cabin Upgrades

Accumulated Avios can be redeemed for reward flights with Qatar Airways and its partner airlines, cabin upgrades, additional baggage allowances, and shopping at Qatar Duty Free.

Members may also use their points for selected travel experiences offered by Qatar Airways Holidays.

The programme provides redemption opportunities across the oneworld alliance






**"Our collaboration with Al Imtiyaz Club aims to deliver added value to customers' purchases and expand the platform's network of commercial partners through rewards linked to lifestyle and travel."**

**Bader Al-Ghanim**
**Chief International Officer,**
**Talabat Kuwait.**

and other airline partners, subject to reward seat availability and applicable programme conditions.

Bader Al Ghanim, Chief International Officer at talabat Kuwait, said the collaboration with Qatar Airways Privilege Club aims to deliver additional value to customers' everyday purchases while expanding the platform's network of commercial partners through lifestyle and travel-related rewards.

## Gulf Expansion Following Qatar Partnership

The Kuwait agreement builds on an earlier collaboration between talabat and Qatar Airways Privilege Club, announced in Qatar in June 2024.

Under the previous arrangement, eligible purchases through talabat earned one Avios for every QAR 4 spent, subject to a minimum transaction value of QAR 200.

Founded in Kuwait in 2004, talabat subsequently expanded across eight markets in the Middle East and North Africa. The company was listed on the Dubai Financial Market in December 2024 and operates within Germany's Delivery Hero group.

The Kuwait launch adds another channel for earning rewards through Qatar Airways Privilege Club, which allows members to collect and redeem Avios across a network of more than 90 global partners in travel, shopping, and other services.

## Al Rehla Perspective | How Can Travelers Benefit from Everyday Purchases?

The partnership allows residents of Kuwait to accumulate travel rewards through their regular purchases without booking a flight, simply by linking an eligible Visa card to their Privilege Club membership and using it for qualifying transactions through talabat.

However, earning Avios does not automatically entitle customers to a free flight. Redemption depends on the available points balance, the number of Avios required for the selected flight or service, and the applicable terms. Taxes and additional charges may also apply when issuing reward tickets.

Travelers should pay attention to the minimum transaction requirement of KWD 4.5 and verify purchase eligibility before making payments. The announced offer applies specifically to Kuwait and does not automatically extend to other markets where talabat operates.

Members should also maintain qualifying activity in their accounts, as Avios expire after 36 consecutive months without eligible earning or redemption activity.



# IATA: Airline Payment Processing Costs Reach $24.5 Billion Worldwide in 2025

**Costs rise 10.4% against 7.7% sales growth since 2023, with payment processing averaging $5 per passenger compared with an expected net profit of $4.50 in 2026.**

**Macau – China | Al Rehla**

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) revealed that airlines worldwide incurred $24.5 billion in payment processing costs in 2025, against total sales of $1.05 trillion, as payment collection expenses increased faster than sales, adding financial pressure to an industry already operating on narrow profit margins.

According to figures released by IATA in Macau on October 27, 2026, payment processing costs increased by 10.4% compared with 2023, while airline sales grew by just 7.7% over the same period, rising from $977 billion to $1.05 trillion.

### $5 in Payment Costs per Passenger

Average payment processing costs reached approximately $5 per passenger in 2025, compared with an expected airline net profit of $4.50 per passenger in 2026, according to IATA estimates.

Although the figures relate to different years, the comparison highlights the scale of payment processing expenses relative to the industry's limited profit margins.

Sandrine Le Borgne, IATA's Interim Director General and Chief Financial Officer, warned that payment transaction costs rising faster than industry revenues represent an unsustainable trend. She emphasized the need to improve financial efficiency in a sector characterized by intense competition, high capital requirements, and narrow margins.

### $20.7 Billion in Transaction Fees

Payment transaction fees accounted for the largest share of expenses, reaching $20.7 billion, or 84.5% of total payment processing costs.

Internal operating expenses associated with payment systems, regulatory compliance, and cash flow management amounted to $2.9 billion, while fraud and uncollected sales resulted in additional losses of $900 million.

Card payments recorded the highest average processing fees at 2.53% of transaction value, compared with an overall estimated average of 1.97%. Fees for some lower-cost payment methods were as low as 0.01%.




## 29% of Passengers Prefer Digital Wallets

IATA's 2025 Global Passenger Survey found that 29% of respondents preferred digital wallets, while 8% favored local instant payment solutions.

The association also reported that approximately one in five attempts to purchase ancillary services is not completed when the initial payment method is declined and no alternative is available.

Such failed transactions represent potential lost revenue for airlines, particularly from services such as additional baggage allowances and seat selection.

As part of efforts to improve payment efficiency, IATA highlighted the expansion of its IATA Pay service, which is available in 34 countries and supports 38 local payment systems.

Meanwhile, the IATA Financial Gateway (IFG) covers more than 170 countries and supports over 300 payment methods, enabling airlines to manage transactions across different sales channels and markets.

The association's initiatives also include improving transparency around card payment fees used by travel agencies and developing corporate travel payment solutions, with the aim of reducing transaction costs and simplifying payment collection and financial settlement processes.

## Al Rehla Perspective | What Do Rising Payment Costs Mean for Travelers?

Although airlines incur an average payment processing cost of $5 per passenger, this does not represent a fixed additional charge imposed on travelers when purchasing tickets. Instead, it forms part of the operating expenses airlines bear when collecting payments for bookings and ancillary services.

For travelers, improvements in payment systems could provide greater flexibility when booking flights, particularly when using international bank cards or purchasing tickets in foreign currencies. A wider selection of payment methods could also reduce failed transactions when purchasing additional baggage allowances or selecting seats.

However, lower payment processing costs for airlines do not necessarily translate into cheaper airfares. Similarly, using digital wallets does not automatically guarantee lower fees, as some wallets rely on conventional bank cards.

Travelers are therefore advised to compare the final payable amount before confirming a booking, paying particular attention to currency conversion charges and any additional fees associated with their chosen payment method.



# From Malta: New Initiative Links Hotel Revenues to Local Community Development and Tackling Gentrification

**PACT seeks to strengthen hotels' responsibility towards residents and cultural heritage, while Iniala Group operates a donation-matching programme supporting social and cultural initiatives in Valletta.**

## Valletta – Malta | Al Rehla

A tourism initiative launched in Malta's capital, Valletta, is seeking to reshape the relationship between hotels and the communities that host them by encouraging hospitality businesses to support local residents, cultural activities, and heritage preservation, amid growing concerns over the pressures tourism can place on historic cities.

Known as Positive Action Community Tourism (PACT), the initiative brings together hospitality and community stakeholders, including British entrepreneur Mark Weingard, founder of the luxury hospitality company Iniala Group.

In an interview published by Euronews on October 28, 2026, Weingard explained that the initiative originated in Valletta and that its organisers are working with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) to expand its reach internationally.

### Hotels as Part of the Community

The initiative is based on the principle that a hotel's responsibility extends beyond providing accommodation to visitors. It also involves supporting the communities whose cultural and architectural heritage contributes to the destination's appeal.

Weingard points to Iniala Harbour House in Valletta as an example. The luxury property was developed within a collection of restored historic buildings, preserving architectural features while maintaining a connection to the Maltese capital's urban fabric.

The group also supports local cultural and sporting activities, alongside social initiatives benefiting residents.

One of PACT's objectives is to address some of the negative consequences associated with tourism growth, including rising housing costs, changes to historic neighbourhoods, and the displacement of traditional local businesses.

### One Euro from the Guest, One from the Hotel

Iniala Group provides a practical example of community participation through its "1+1" initiative, announced in March 2024.

Under the programme, guests at participating establishments can voluntarily add a €1 donation to their bill, with the hotel contributing an additional euro for every euro donated.

The funds support nonprofit organisations, including Victory Kitchen, which provides meals to people in need, and Din l-Art Ħelwa, an organisation dedicated to protecting Malta's architectural and natural heritage.

The group also supports arts and cultural activities in Valletta, including initiatives associated with the Malta International Contemporary Art Space (MICAS), alongside local sporting and community programmes.




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# Syrian Airlines to Resume Direct Damascus–Berlin Flights Twice Weekly Starting November 10

## The national carrier expands its European network with direct flights between Damascus and the German capital using Airbus A320 aircraft, operating on Tuesdays and Fridays.

### Damascus – Syria | Al Rehla

The Syrian Civil Aviation and Air Transport Authority has announced that Syrian Airlines will begin operating scheduled direct flights between Damascus International Airport and Berlin, Germany, on November 10, 2026, marking another step in the national carrier's return to European markets and providing an additional travel option between Syria and Germany.

The announcement, issued on October 26, forms part of a gradual plan to expand Syrian Airlines' international network following the resumption of services to several European cities in September.

### Two Weekly Flights to Berlin

According to the published flight schedule, Syrian Airlines plans to operate two weekly services between Damascus and Berlin Brandenburg Airport on Tuesdays and Fridays, using Airbus A320 aircraft.

Tuesday flights will depart Damascus at 6:55 a.m. and arrive in Berlin at 9:25 a.m. local time. Friday services will leave Damascus at 2:20 p.m., arriving in Berlin at 4:50 p.m.

In the opposite direction, Tuesday flights will depart Berlin at 10:25 a.m. and arrive in Damascus at 4:40 p.m., while Friday flights will leave Berlin at 5:50 p.m. and arrive in Damascus at 12:05 a.m. the following day.

The direct journey takes approximately four and a half hours, accounting for the time difference between the two countries.

### Expanding the Airline's European Presence

Omar Al Hosari, President of the Syrian Civil Aviation and Air Transport Authority, described the launch of the Damascus–Berlin route as an important step toward rebuilding the national carrier's European network and strengthening Syria's connections with international air transport markets.

He emphasized that the new service goes beyond adding another destination, as it will facilitate travel for members of the Syrian community living in Germany while supporting passenger movement and commercial and tourism exchanges between the two countries.

Syrian Airlines resumed direct flights to Copenhagen and Vienna in September 2026, alongside services to Amsterdam, as part of its gradual expansion across European markets.

The national carrier's entry into the Berlin market follows the resumption of direct air services between Syria and Germany by other airlines in recent months, including German carrier LEAV Aviation, which launched Düsseldorf–Damascus flights in July 2026.




# Air Algérie Resumes Flights to Tripoli After a Long Suspension, Operating Twice Weekly via Mitiga Airport

## First flight departs Algiers Houari Boumediene Airport on October 28, 2026, restoring direct air connections between the two capitals every Wednesday and Friday.

### Algiers – Algeria | Al Rehla

Air Algérie resumed direct flights to the Libyan capital, Tripoli, on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, following a lengthy suspension, with the inaugural service departing Algiers Houari Boumediene International Airport for Mitiga International Airport.

The resumption marks the Algerian national carrier's return to the route, which was first announced in September before the flight schedule was confirmed in early October.

### Two Weekly Flights Connecting the Capitals

Air Algérie has scheduled two weekly flights between Algiers and Tripoli, operating on Wednesdays and Fridays and connecting Houari Boumediene International Airport with Mitiga International Airport.

According to information published by the Arab Air Carriers' Organization (AACO), the airline planned to operate the service using Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

The restored route provides passengers with a direct travel option between Algeria and Libya after an extended interruption in the carrier's operations.

### Reconnecting Libya as Part of African Network Expansion

Said Ahmed Dekdouk , Air Algérie's Acting Director of Sales and Network, explained that the resumption forms part of the airline's strategy to expand its international network, particularly across Africa.

He noted that the route provides additional options for passenger and cargo transportation, highlighting the role of air connectivity in supporting economic and commercial relations between Algeria and Libya.

The airline has been developing its international network by introducing new destinations and restoring suspended routes, as part of its broader efforts to strengthen Algiers Airport's position as a regional aviation hub.

### From Announcement to Actual Operations

Air Algérie initially announced Tripoli's return to its destination network on September 30, before confirming the operational launch date on October 6. The inaugural flight on October 28 marked the transition from the announcement and booking phase to actual flight operations.

The airline has not yet released passenger figures, load factors, or revenue data for the inaugural service.
There is also no verified evidence at this stage of a measurable increase in tourism between the two countries resulting from the route's restoration.

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