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

After Welcoming 5 Million Visitors, Dubai's Museum of the Future Recruits "Future Perfects" for a New Visitor Experience in 2027

Qatar Brings 40 Tourism Partners to London to Strengthen Its Presence in International Travel Markets

Forbes Reveals World's Best Airlines and Airports for 2026: UAE and Qatar Among Winners as Delta Claims Six Awards

Saudi Winter 2026 Features More Than 1,800 Tourism Products Across Nine Major Destinations





Qatar Brings 40 Tourism Partners to London to Strengthen Its Presence in International Travel Markets

Hotels, resorts, and destination management companies to participate in WTM London 2026, with an interactive pavilion showcasing Qatar's heritage and tourism experiences

Doha – Qatar | Al Rehla

Qatar is heading to London with a delegation of 40 tourism and hospitality partners to participate in World Travel Market (WTM London 2026), scheduled for November 3–5 at ExCeL London, as part of efforts to strengthen ties with international tour operators, travel buyers, and industry professionals.

Visit Qatar announced its participation on October 20, 2026, marking its 12th consecutive appearance at one of the world's leading business events for the travel industry.

40 Partners Connecting with Global Markets

The Qatari delegation will include hotels, resorts, destination management companies, and tourism organizations, providing opportunities for direct engagement with travel businesses, international buyers, and specialized media.

Qatar's pavilion, located at stand S8-210, will welcome tourism professionals and feature both the Hayya platform and Qatar Calendar, highlighting the country's tourism services, experiences, and upcoming events.

The exhibition will allow Qatari companies to showcase their products and explore commercial partnerships. However, the participation announcement did not include any newly signed contracts or agreements.

An Interactive Experience Reflecting Qatar's Identity

The pavilion will feature an immersive experience highlighting Qatar's landmarks, natural landscapes, and cultural attractions, alongside an interactive photo installation and a Formula 1-inspired experience.

Cultural activities will introduce visitors

to traditional sword-making, Arabic calligraphy, and Qatar's pearl-diving heritage, complemented by Arabic coffee, dates, and local sweets.

These elements combine traditional heritage with contemporary experiences, giving international travel professionals an opportunity to discover the diversity of Qatar's tourism offering.

A Calendar of Sports, Arts, and Festivals

Qatar Calendar will highlight several events featured in the destination's programme, including the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, MotoGP motorcycle racing, the Doha Marathon, Art Basel Qatar, and the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027.

Other featured attractions include the Qatar International Food Festival, concerts, and cultural and entertainment events.

A Platform for Developing Tourism Business Partnerships

Qatar's participation brings hospitality businesses and destination management companies together under one platform, enabling them to present accommodation, tours, cultural experiences, and major events to international buyers.

These meetings provide opportunities to explore commercial cooperation and develop travel programmes, while the measurable outcomes of the participation will depend on subsequently confirmed agreements, bookings, and business partnerships.



UAE Cuts Tourist VAT Refund Time from Nine Days to One with AI-Powered Platform



New service launched at three airports in partnership with Planet, as tourists reclaim AED 4.2 billion through 25 million transactions since 2018

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

The UAE Federal Tax Authority (FTA) has launched a new AI-powered digital platform that reduces the time required for tourists to receive value-added tax (VAT) refunds on their purchases from approximately nine days to just one business day, marking a significant improvement in the country's shopping and travel experience.

Developed in partnership with Planet, the authorised operator of the Tourist Tax Refund Scheme, the platform is now operational at Zayed International Airport in Abu Dhabi, Dubai International Airport and Sharjah International Airport, providing a fully digital and paperless refund process.

Seamless Refunds Through Smartphones

The platform allows tourists to register their information in advance through the Planet mobile application using facial recognition, passport scanning and bank card details.

Upon arriving at the airport, travellers can scan a QR code to initiate the refund process. Artificial intelligence technology verifies purchase and travel information and identifies transactions that do not require additional inspection, allowing eligible tourists to complete their requests directly through their smartphones.

Transactions requiring further verification are directed to smart gates equipped with facial recognition technology and self-service kiosks.

According to the FTA, digital procedures can be completed within minutes, while the overall refund processing period has been reduced to one business day.

Al Mulla: Enhancing the Tourist Departure Experience

Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Mulla, Director-General of the Federal Tax Authority, said the platform represents a significant advancement in the tourist tax refund experience by simplifying procedures during the final stage of visitors' journeys.

He explained that reducing refund processing times in October 2026 forms



part of the authority's efforts to expand smart government services and support the UAE's Zero Government Bureaucracy Programme.

AED 4.2 Billion Refunded to Tourists

According to the FTA, approximately AED 4.2 billion in VAT has been refunded to tourists through 25 million transactions since the electronic refund system was introduced in 2018.

The number of participating retail outlets has reached approximately 16,700, while 98 self-service kiosks are available across the network, accounting for 22.4% of refund transactions.

The total value of VAT refunds increased by 8% in 2025 compared with 2024, while the number of transactions rose by 5%.

Tourist satisfaction with the refund service reached 93% during the first nine months of 2026.

Supporting Shopping Tourism

The initiative strengthens the UAE's shopping tourism infrastructure by connecting retailers, airports and travellers through an integrated digital refund system.

By reducing administrative procedures and accelerating refund payments, the platform improves the visitor experience at the point of departure, while maintaining existing eligibility requirements and inspection procedures where necessary.

The development adds another practical dimension to the UAE's efforts to deliver efficient, technology-driven tourism services and enhance its position as an international shopping destination.



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Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Mulla, Director-General of the Federal Tax Authority

Bahrain Surf Park Completes Wave Lagoon Filling at Bilaj Al Jazayer: A 52,000-Square-Metre Tourism Development

Edamah and GFH are behind the project, which features Spanish wave-generation technology designed to produce up to 1,000 waves per hour as part of a new water sports and leisure destination.

Manama - Bahrain | Al Rehla

The Club Hawaii – Bahrain Surf Park development at Bilaj Al Jazayer, southwest Bahrain, has reached a new construction milestone following the announcement on 17 September 2026 that filling of its artificial wave lagoon had been completed.

The milestone marks another stage in the development of the 52,000-square-metre project, which is designed to introduce surfing activities and family entertainment facilities to the Bilaj Al Jazayer coastal destination.

A Wave Lagoon Powered by Spanish Technology

The development incorporates Wavegarden Cove technology, created by Spanish company Wavegarden, to generate artificial surfing waves.
According to the announced specifications, the system is designed to produce up to 1,000 waves per hour, with capacity for approximately 90 surfers per hour.

These figures represent the facility's stated design capabilities once operational, rather than verified performance results.
The development plans also include a surfing academy, swimming pools, seating areas, restaurants, retail outlets and spaces for events and family activities.

Together, these facilities are intended to create a leisure destination combining surfing with other recreational experiences.

Who Is Behind the Project?

The project is being developed by Bahrain Real Estate Investment Company (Edamah), the real estate arm of Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, in partnership with GFH Financial Group.

On 30 April 2025, Edamah announced the award of the construction contract to Poullaides Construction Company.

Key executives associated with the development include Khalid Abdulrahman Al Majed, Chief Executive Officer of Edamah, and Victoria Williams, General Manager of Bahrain Surf Park.

Williams commented on the completion of the lagoon-filling milestone in the September 2026 announcement.
While the development partners oversee the project's investment and delivery, the park's operational management is associated with the tourism facility itself.

Part of the Wider Bilaj Al Jazayer Development

Bahrain Surf Park forms part of the broader development of Bilaj Al Jazayer, a coastal area undergoing investment in tourism, leisure and real estate facilities.

The project's significance lies in introducing a specialised tourism activity within a purpose-built environment, expanding the area's recreational offering beyond conventional beach experiences.

By combining wave-generation technology with training facilities and supporting leisure services, the development adds a distinct water sports component to Bahrain's coastal tourism infrastructure.

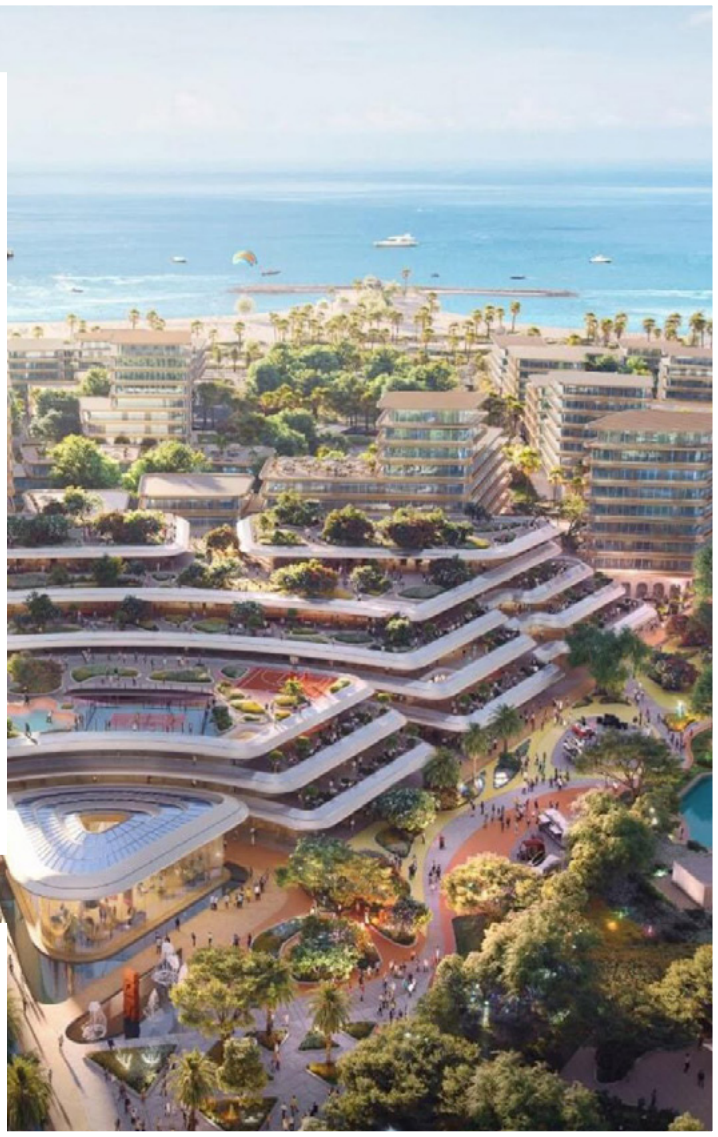
However, the official information reviewed does not establish a confirmed final investment value specifically attributable to Bahrain Surf Park.

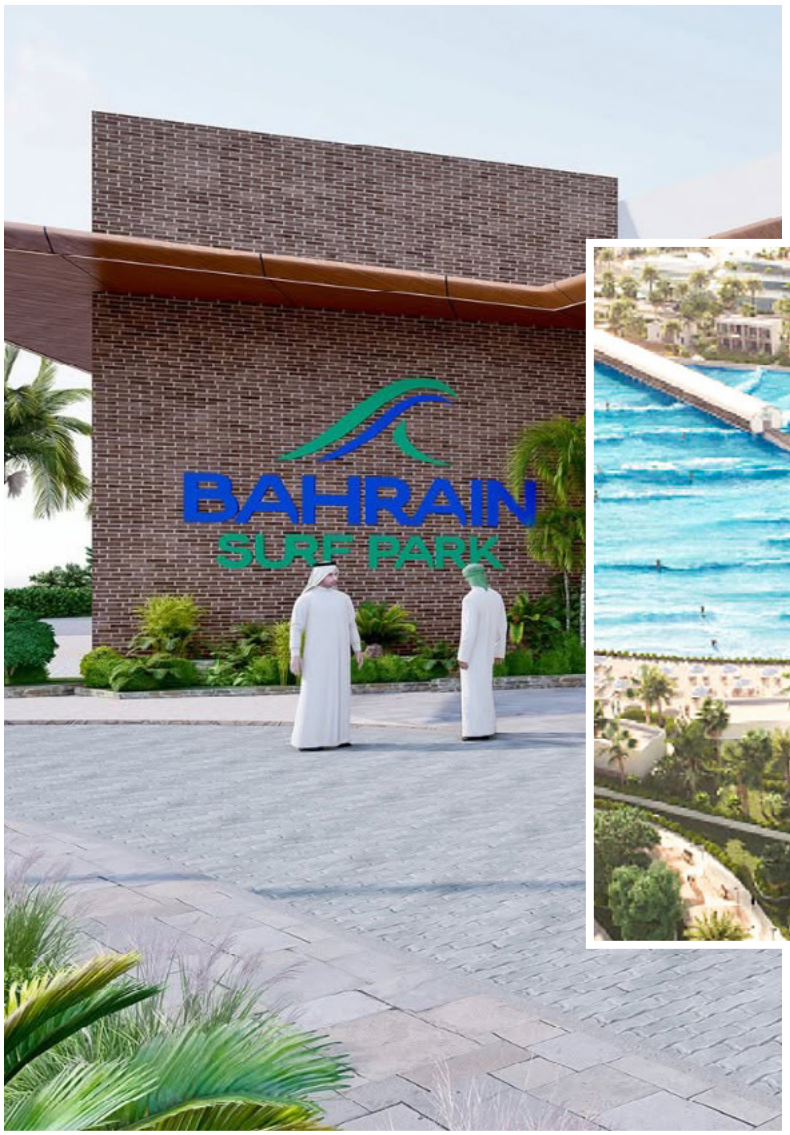
Furthermore, the 17 September 2026 announcement confirmed completion of the lagoon-filling process, not the commencement of commercial operations.

The distinction is important: a construction milestone does not constitute the official opening of the facility to visitors.

For Bahrain's tourism sector, the project represents an addition to the country's developing portfolio of specialised leisure attractions, while its operational performance can only be assessed once the facility begins welcoming paying visitors.






BAHRAIN
SURF PARK



Tunisie Telecom and Travel Agencies Federation Sign Partnership to Develop AI-Powered Tourism Services



Agreement covers digital transformation, traveller data protection, tourism content development, and professional training

Tunis – Tunisia | Al Rehla

Tunisie Telecom and the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies (FTAV) signed a partnership agreement on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, to develop digital services for travel agencies and integrate artificial intelligence into their operations, as part of efforts to modernise tourism services and strengthen the competitiveness of Tunisia's tourism industry.

The agreement covers the development of technological solutions tailored to travel agencies, digital tools for promoting Tunisia's tourism products, customer data protection, and professional training for tourism industry employees.

Artificial Intelligence to Support Travel Agencies

The agreement was signed by Lassâad Ben Dhiab, Chairman and CEO of Tunisie Telecom, and Mohamed Ali Toumi, President of the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies.

Saber Hadhafi, Head of Key Accounts at Tunisie Telecom, explained that the partnership includes using modern technologies and artificial intelligence to improve travel agencies' daily operations and develop digital content showcasing Tunisia's cultural and tourism attractions.

Tunisie Telecom will make its technological infrastructure, connectivity services, and



Lassaad Ben Dhiab
Chairman and CEO of Tunisie Télécom



specialised digital solutions available to tourism businesses, supporting the modernisation of operational processes and the improvement of services provided to travellers.

Traveller Data Protection and Professional Training

The partnership also focuses on strengthening information security and protecting personal data, while leveraging Tunisie Telecom's data centre services.

In addition, the two organisations will cooperate on workshops and initiatives to identify the technological needs of tourism businesses and develop practical digital solutions.

The agreement includes professional training and skills development programmes for young people, in coordination with relevant government authorities and tourism training institutions.

Toumi: Better Services Will Strengthen Tunisia's Competitiveness

Mohamed Ali Toumi emphasised the importance of keeping pace with rapid technological developments and their impact on travel agencies, particularly in promoting Tunisia as a destination and improving the visitor experience.

He also highlighted the need to enhance tourism service quality, with particular attention to Algeria, one of Tunisia's principal source markets.

Toumi stressed the importance of improving services for travellers at border crossings, hotels, and other tourism establishments.

A Commercial Partnership to Modernise Tourism

The agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between Tunisia's national telecommunications operator and a professional organisation representing travel agencies, creating opportunities to develop digital solutions specifically designed for the tourism and travel industry.

It provides a foundation for expanding



Mohamed Ali Toumi, President of the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies

the use of technology in business management, tourism marketing, and information security.

However, neither organisation has disclosed the financial value of the partnership, the number of travel agencies expected to benefit, or a specific implementation timetable for the new services.

No operational results have yet been published to measure the agreement's impact on travel bookings or tourism business revenues.



Forbes Reveals World's Best Airlines and Airports for 2026: UAE and Qatar Among Winners as Delta Claims Six Awards

18 categories recognised at the third annual Verified Air Travel Awards, with Singapore Changi named Best International Airport and Air New Zealand winning Innovation of the Year

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Forbes Travel Guide has announced the winners of its third annual Verified Air Travel Awards 2026, recognising excellence across 18 categories covering airlines, airports, premium lounges and passenger experiences.

The results, announced on October 20, 2026, highlighted a strong presence from the UAE and Qatar, while US carrier Delta Air Lines emerged as the most awarded company, securing six honours.

The awards were determined through an invitation-only survey involving approximately 9,000 luxury travel advisers, hospitality industry professionals, frequent travellers, and Forbes Travel Guide inspectors and trainers, with the results reviewed by a panel of experts.

UAE and Qatar Shine in International Categories

Emirates retained its title as Best International Airline for the third consecutive year, reinforcing its position among the world's leading premium carriers.

The Dubai-based airline also received two additional awards: Best International First Class for its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft and Best International Airline Lounge for its First Class Lounge at Dubai International Airport.

Qatar Airways secured the award for Best International Business Class for its Qsuite product aboard the Airbus A350-1000.

Meanwhile, the Louis Vuitton Lounge by Yannick Alléno at Hamad International Airport in Doha was named Best Independent Airport Lounge for the third consecutive year.

Together, airlines and airport facilities in the UAE and Qatar secured five awards across the international categories.

Delta Leads with Six Awards

Delta Air Lines dominated the 2026 awards, securing six honours across airline services, premium cabins, airport lounges and digital experiences.

The US carrier was named Best U.S. Airline, while its First Class cabin aboard the Airbus A321neo received the Best U.S. First Class award.

Its Delta One product was recognised as Best U.S. Business Class, and the Delta One Lounge at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport won Best U.S. Airline Lounge.

Delta also received Best Airline Loyalty Programme for SkyMiles and Best Airline App for Fly Delta.



Changi and LaGuardia Lead Airport Rankings

Singapore Changi Airport received two awards, winning Best International Airport and Best Airport Dining Experience.

In the United States, New York's LaGuardia Airport retained its title as Best U.S. Airport.

Private aviation operator JSX was recognised as Best Small Airline, while Air France, in collaboration with renowned chef Daniel Boulud, won Best Airline Culinary Partnership.

Air New Zealand received the Innovation of the Year award for its Economy Skynest concept, featuring lie-flat sleeping pods designed for passengers travelling in Economy and Premium Economy cabins.

London Heathrow's exclusive private terminal service, The Windsor by Heathrow, won the award for Best Private Airport Experience.

Passenger Experience Drives Global Competition

The 2026 awards reflect the growing importance of comfort, privacy, dining, technology and premium ground services in shaping the international air travel experience.

Beyond traditional measures of airline performance, the recognised categories highlight how carriers and airports are investing in differentiated services throughout the passenger journey.

The five awards secured by airlines and airport facilities in the UAE and Qatar underscore the Gulf region's strong representation in international premium travel recognition.

However, the awards measure service quality and passenger experience rather than direct financial performance, and no evidence was presented linking the results to increases in passenger traffic, airline revenues or tourism spending.

The winners are scheduled to be honoured during the Forbes Travel Guide Summit in Monaco, taking place from February 23 to 26, 2027.



From the Clay Tablets of the Alphabet to Olive Groves: The Hidden Secrets of the Forgotten Countryside of Ugarit

Al Rehla – Special Report

This week, as the waves of the Mediterranean gently washed against the sands of the Syrian coast, the Syrian-Italian archaeological mission announced an extraordinary discovery that has reshuffled the pages of history: an entire rural settlement and dwellings dating back 4,000 years have begun to emerge once again from beneath the soil at Tell al-Samhanah, in the village of Al-Bassah, just metres from the mouth of the North Al-Kabir River in Latakia.

The announcement was more than a new addition to the archaeological record. It was a reminder to the world that the secrets of Ugarit were not buried within the palaces of its kings alone; they continue to pulse through the fields of its countryside and the hands of its inhabitants.

Today, when you sit in one of the villages of rural Latakia and are served a hot loaf of bread fresh from a clay tannour oven, brushed with locally produced olive oil and sprinkled with wild thyme, pause before taking a bite. What you are experiencing is more than a traditional rural breakfast. It is a sensory and cultural experience whose rituals have endured on this land for more than 4,000 years.

According to mythology, this coastal region was the setting for an eternal struggle between drought and fertility. The god of drought would swallow the god of rain, leaving the fields silent and the skies withholding their water, until clouds gathered once more over the towering peak of Mount al-Aqra in the north of Latakia. Rain would then fall, and the cycle of life would resume.

Today, this new discovery connects the myths of the past with the realities beneath the soil, confirming that the newly discovered agricultural village was the lifeline that fed the kingdom and safeguarded its food security.

The Alphabetic Revolution: How Did Ugarit Change Human Language?

When historians acknowledge Ugarit's contribution, they do not mean that its people were the first to invent writing. The Sumerians of Mesopotamia and the ancient Egyptians had preceded them by centuries in developing cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing.

However, these ancient systems were highly complex, relying on hundreds of images and symbols associated with words and syllables. This made writing an elite art, largely confined to a limited class of priests and royal court scribes.

Here, nearly 34 centuries ago, Ugarit's ingenuity came to the fore. Its people fundamentally redesigned the concept, reducing a mass of hundreds of complex symbols to an accessible phonetic system consisting of just 30 letters.

Each symbol came to represent a single spoken sound, written in an easily memorised cuneiform form. This foundational achievement opened the door to knowledge and later paved the way for the emergence of the Phoenician, Aramaic and Greek alphabets, ultimately contributing to the development of the world's living languages today.

The Spirit of the Kingdom Lives On in the Everyday Lives of Syrians

What amazes any traveller to the Syrian coast is that the spirit of those ancient times has not disappeared. Instead, it is reflected in the everyday details of rural life.

Tannour Bread and Olive Pressing: The mud-brick houses and hearths uncovered by archaeologists this week at Tell al-Samhanah closely resemble the traditional tannour ovens still lit at dawn in villages across Latakia and Tartus. The ancient stone presses discovered at the site also confirm that the joy of the new olive-pressing season, along with storing the oil in clay jars, is a ritual passed down through generations in these hills.

Canaanite Words on People's Tongues: When the summer heat intensifies in coastal towns and someone casually tells you, "Today is very hot" (shob kteer), they are unknowingly echoing an ancient Canaanite word expressing scorching heat. The traditional folk chants once recited by older generations to call for rain also preserve a distant folkloric echo of humanity's age-old anticipation of rainfall and the gifts of the heavens.

Hospitality as Open as the Sea: Generosity and the spontaneous

welcoming of strangers are not incidental behaviours. They reflect a maritime environment that for centuries served as an international trading gateway open to the outside world, where local people became known for their adaptability and openness to different incoming cultures.

An Exceptional Experience for Discovery Enthusiasts

Visiting Latakia and its historical sites is not merely a walk among silent stone ruins. It is a journey that combines the pleasures of nature with the depth of civilisation.

- Standing Before a Writing Revolution: Visiting Ras Shamra takes travellers directly to the geographical site where one of the earliest major transformations in the history of human writing was recorded.

- Witnessing a Discovery as It Unfolds: Seeing Tell al-Samhanah reveal its newly uncovered secrets offers visitors the opportunity to witness how Bronze Age and Byzantine layers of history meet the lush greenery of the coast and the waters of the river.

- A Sensory Journey Through Untouched Countryside: Travellers can combine the fresh air of the Mediterranean with the fragrance of lemon and olive groves, watch the freshwater river meet the sea, and taste the land's fresh produce straight from farm to table.

Just as mythology tells of this region sheltering the secrets of great transformations, the excavations carried out this week confirm that the Syrian coast remains vibrant and fertile. It invites travel enthusiasts to experience for themselves a land that taught the world how to condense words into letters, while its people have preserved the warmth and enduring spirit of those ancient beginnings.



Snoonu and ILoveQatar Sign Partnership to Connect Entertainment Events with Online Ticket Booking



Agreement integrates digital media content with ticketing services through Snoonu's Scity platform, expanding access to cultural and entertainment events in Qatar

Doha – Qatar | Al Rehla

Qatar-based technology company Snoonu and digital media and community platform ILoveQatar have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the discovery and booking of events across Qatar, connecting digital entertainment content with ticketing services through Snoonu's Scity platform.

The partnership will allow users to explore events organised by ILoveQatar and covered by the agreement, before purchasing tickets through Scity, creating a more integrated digital experience that connects event discovery with booking.

Bringing Media and Technology Together

The agreement was signed by Khalifa Al Haroon, Founder and CEO of ILoveQatar, and Haitham Al Haidari, General Manager of New Ventures at Snoonu.

The collaboration combines ILoveQatar's established media presence and community engagement with Scity's ticketing technology, enabling audiences to discover local activities and access booking services through a more streamlined process.

The initiative establishes a direct connection between content promoting cultural and entertainment experiences and the digital infrastructure used to purchase tickets, reducing the need for users to navigate separate platforms.



Khalifa Al-Haroon, founder and CEO of the "I Love Qatar" network,



Established Experience in the Events Sector

ILoveQatar is a prominent digital platform covering local news, entertainment, events and community activities in Qatar.

The platform won the Tourism Influencer – Content Creator award at the Qatar Tourism Awards 2025 and was nominated again in 2026.

Scity, meanwhile, is a digital service developed by Snoonu that enables users to discover events and book tickets while providing technology solutions to support event organisers and improve audience engagement.

The platform was also shortlisted for the Tourism Innovation Award in the Smart and Sustainable Tourism category at the Qatar Tourism Awards 2026.

Expanding Commercial Opportunities in Entertainment

The partnership introduces an additional commercial distribution channel for Qatar's entertainment sector by connecting digital media audiences directly with event ticketing services.

For participating event organisers, the collaboration provides access to ILoveQatar's audience alongside Scity's digital booking infrastructure.

The agreement also adds to the range of digital services available to residents and visitors seeking convenient access to cultural and entertainment experiences across Qatar.

Neither company has disclosed the financial value of the agreement, the number of events or tickets covered, or any revenue generated through the partnership as of its announcement.

The collaboration reflects the growing integration of media, technology and ticket distribution within the tourism and entertainment industries, where digital platforms increasingly connect destination discovery with the purchase of experiences.



Haitham Al-Haidari, General Manager for New Ventures at "Snoonu"



Tourist Stops

From Guide to Ambassador: Why Is the Tourist Guide the Last Line of Defense for Identity?

By:
Mahmoud Al Nashit
Tourism Media Consultant

Every year on October 18, the Kingdom of Bahrain stands alone in the Arab world in celebrating "Bahraini Tourist Guide Day." Some may see it as a passing professional celebration, but at its heart lies an existential question about the future of tourism itself.

Here we are in 2026, when a tourist standing at Bahrain Fort can take out a smartphone and have artificial intelligence explain the history of Dilmun in seconds. That same tourist can book a virtual tour of the Bahrain National Museum without ever leaving their room. So why do we still need a tourist guide?

Historically, tourist guiding is nothing new to our region. More than 4,000 years ago, the people of Dilmun were the Gulf's first guides, welcoming ships from the Indus Valley Civilization and introducing their visitors to the pearl markets and freshwater springs in the heart of the salty sea — hence the name "Bahrain."

Across the Arabian Peninsula, the Mutawwif (pilgrimage guide) and the Dalil (local guide) were known even in pre-Islamic times. They were men who knew the caravan routes and the stars of the desert, and who told pilgrims and merchants stories of wells and oases. In the writings of travelers such as Ibn Battuta and Al-Maqdisi, the local guide was the only guarantor of a safe journey and a truthful account.

In modern Bahrain, official organization began with the establishment of the tourism sector in the 1970s. The earliest guides were elders from Muharraq and Manama who narrated history orally, without scripts. On October 18, 2016, the Kingdom honored this oral memory by declaring Tourist Guide Day, transforming the profession from a hobby into a national mission.

Globally, this profession is far from marginal, despite what some may think. According to the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), headquartered in Vienna and an affiliate member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, there are now more than 200,000 licensed and qualified tourist guides representing 90 national associations across more than 50 countries worldwide.

If we include guides working through digital platforms and the freelance economy, that number exceeds 2.5 million.

This silent army carries the memory of cities on its shoulders.

A guide does not simply say, "This fort is 4,000 years old." Instead, the guide says, "Here stood my grandfather selling pearls, and here my mother used to tell us the story of the fish and the diver."

The difference between a fact from Wikipedia and a grandmother's story is the difference between a passing tourist and a guest who remembers Bahrain forever.

Today, global tourism is moving beyond the concept of "sustainability" toward something deeper: "regenerative tourism."

The question is no longer: How do we avoid harming a place? It has become: How do we leave it better than we found it?

And this is where the guide emerges as a true ambassador.

An ambassador does not merely explain the stone; he protects it.

When a guide encourages guests to buy a basket from a local craftsman in Karbabad instead of an imported souvenir, he helps regenerate the local economy. When he gently stops them from touching an ancient inscription at Arad Fort, he helps preserve and renew that heritage.

At ITB Berlin 2026, the most prominent theme was "balance."
Balance between technology and humanity, between growth and preservation.
And that balance is not created by an application.
It is created by a human being.
The Bahraini tourist guide today is no longer simply someone who carries an umbrella and counts heads.
He is a guardian of the narrative, a cultural fact-checker, and the last line of defense for our identity.

The annual recognition of tourist guides by the Friends of Dilmun Group, chaired by Mirza Al Nashit, is not merely a certificate of appreciation.

It is an investment in the national narrative.

Let us preserve the guide, let us preserve the story.



After Welcoming 5 Million Visitors, Dubai's Museum of the Future Recruits "Future Perfects" for a New Visitor Experience in 2027





Applications open until November 8 for creative talents with imagination, emotional intelligence, and storytelling skills, ahead of the museum's planned reopening in the first quarter of 2027

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Having welcomed more than five million visitors from over 180 nationalities since its opening, Dubai's Museum of the Future is preparing for a new chapter that will transform how audiences engage with science, technology, and visions of tomorrow through redesigned exhibitions, interactive experiences, and a team dedicated to making human connection central to every visit.

On October 21, 2026, the museum announced the launch of "Future Perfects," a recruitment initiative designed to attract individuals who will play a key role in delivering its reimagined visitor experience ahead of its planned reopening in the first quarter of 2027.

Putting Human Connection at the Heart of the Experience

The initiative seeks individuals with imagination, curiosity, emotional intelligence, strong communication skills, and the ability to engage visitors of different ages and cultural backgrounds.

Previous experience in museums or visitor services is not a requirement.

The Future Perfects will combine visitor engagement, guidance, storytelling, and the interpretation of scientific concepts, helping transform the museum experience into an interactive journey shaped by curiosity and conversation.

The selection process includes online

"Curiosity, imagination, and human connection are essential to understanding the possibilities that technology offers."

Azza Abdulaziz Al Nuaimi
Chief Operating Officer, Museum of the Future



applications, performance assessments, and interviews with a specialist panel. Applications will remain open until November 8, 2026.

New Exhibitions and a Redesigned Visitor Journey

The Museum of the Future temporarily closed its main exhibitions in September 2026 as part of a transformation programme announced in July.

The redevelopment includes replacing its previous exhibitions and experiences with a new narrative and interactive spaces while preserving the building's distinctive architectural identity, which has become one of Dubai's most recognizable landmarks.

The new experience is scheduled to be unveiled in the first quarter of 2027, coinciding with the museum's fifth anniversary following its opening on February 22, 2022.

A confirmed reopening date and ticket prices for the new experience have not yet been announced.

Azza Al Nuaimi: Imagination and Communication Shape the Experience

Azza Abdulaziz Al Nuaimi, Chief Operating Officer of the Museum of the Future, emphasized that curiosity, imagination, and human connection are essential to understanding the opportunities created by technological advancement.

She explained that these qualities cannot be measured solely through academic qualifications or years of professional experience, noting that the initiative aims to attract individuals who may never previously have considered working in a museum.

A Tourism Landmark Reinvents Its Visitor Experience

The transformation reflects a broader approach to renewing established cultural and tourism attractions through fresh content and visitor engagement rather than focusing exclusively on architectural development or technological upgrades.

For visitors planning a trip to Dubai, the museum's main exhibitions remain closed during redevelopment, although selected activities and services may continue.

Tickets for the redesigned experience are expected to become available closer to the official reopening announcement.



Room for the Night

Where to Stay in Tetouan: Three Distinct Experiences Between the Historic Medina and the Mediterranean Coast

From a three-star city hotel to a centuries-old riad and a luxury beachfront resort with 55 suites and villas, Tetouan offers accommodation options that reflect the diversity of northern Morocco.

Tetouan, Morocco | Al Rehla

In Tetouan, choosing where to stay involves more than comparing hotel ratings and amenities. Location plays an important role in shaping the travel experience.

From the historic alleyways of the old medina to modern city-centre hotels and Mediterranean beachfront resorts, visitors can choose from accommodation options that differ in character, setting and price.

This diversity reflects Tetouan's position between Andalusian heritage and coastal tourism. According to the Moroccan National Tourist Office, the nearby Tamuda Bay coastline stretches for approximately 15 kilometres.

Source: Visit Morocco

A Practical Stay in the Heart of Tetouan

Al Mandari Hôtel Tétouan offers an example of city-centre accommodation for travellers who prefer to stay close to Tetouan's urban attractions.

Located on Avenue Moulay El Abbas, the three-star hotel has 32 rooms, including single, double and triple rooms, as well as suites.

Some rooms overlook the historic medina, while others offer views of the surrounding mountains. The property also features a restaurant and café.

As of 21 October 2026, the hotel's official website advertised starting rates of MAD 300 per night for selected room categories.

This published rate is indicative and does not constitute a confirmed booking offer for 22 October. Final prices may vary depending on travel dates, occupancy, room category and booking conditions.

Source: Hotel Al Mandari





Sleeping in a House Steeped in History

For travellers seeking a more heritage-focused experience, El Reducto offers accommodation in a historic riad within Tetouan's old medina.

According to the property's official website, the building is more than two centuries old and contains nine rooms and suites.

In 1948, it became the residence of Tetouan's Grand Vizier before being converted into a hospitality property in 2006. Further renovations were completed in 2020.

Its architecture features elements of Morocco's Andalusian heritage, including traditional zellige tilework, decorated wooden ceilings and an interior courtyard.

A rooftop terrace offers views across the city and towards the Rif Mountains.

Staying in a property of this kind allows visitors to experience the atmosphere of Tetouan's historic neighbourhoods and explore the city on foot, rather than limiting their visit to a daytime excursion.

Source: El Reducto

55 Suites and Villas on the Mediterranean

Along the coast, Royal Mansour Tamuda Bay offers a different hospitality experience in the Tamuda Bay area.

Opened in July 2024, the resort features 55 suites and villas across approximately ten hectares.

Its accommodation ranges from one- and two-bedroom suites to larger private villas designed to provide additional space and privacy.

According to the hotel group, the resort includes dining venues, marine leisure activities and a 4,300-square-metre wellness centre.

The property represents the luxury beachfront segment of the region's accommodation market, offering a distinctly different setting from hotels located within Tetouan itself.

Source: Royal Mansour

Which Location Should You Choose?

Hotels in central Tetouan are particularly convenient for visitors interested in exploring traditional markets, museums and historic neighbourhoods.

Traditional riads, meanwhile, offer a more immersive stay, with architecture and interiors that reflect the city's cultural identity.

Tamuda Bay's coastal resorts are better suited to holidays centred on the beach, relaxation and leisure, while still allowing travellers to dedicate a day to exploring Tetouan.

Each option provides a different perspective on northern Morocco, from the everyday rhythms of the historic city to the quieter atmosphere of the Mediterranean coastline.

Alrehla's Travel Tip

Before booking,

From Saqqara Excavations to Cairo and Luxor Museums: Egypt and China Expand Archaeological Cooperation



New agreement with Shanghai International Studies University covers museum training, joint research and digital heritage preservation, extending cooperation from archaeological excavations to museum management.

Shanghai, China | Al Rehla

From the archaeological sites of Saqqara to the galleries of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and Luxor Museum, Egypt and China are expanding their partnership in cultural heritage preservation following the signing of a new memorandum of understanding between Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities and Shanghai International Studies University (SISU).

The agreement covers museum training, scientific research, expertise exchange and digital technologies, building on an existing archaeological collaboration between the two countries.

The memorandum was signed on October 19, 2026, during a visit by Dr. Hisham El-Leithy, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, to the Chinese university, coinciding with his participation in the fourth meeting of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia.

Egyptian Museum and Luxor Museum at the Heart of Cooperation

The agreement provides opportunities for Chinese university students to undertake training at museums administered by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, particularly the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square and Luxor Museum.

It also covers exchanges involving researchers, museum curators, archaeologists and art history specialists.



Dr. Hisham El-Leithy
Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities



The Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square

Further areas of cooperation include scientific workshops, conferences, joint research projects and academic publications, alongside technical support for database development.

According to Shanghai International Studies University, the partnership also encompasses museum exhibition planning, digital heritage preservation and technologies supporting archaeological documentation.

Building on Archaeological Work in Saqqara

The new memorandum builds upon existing Egyptian-Chinese archaeological cooperation in Saqqara, where the university participates in a joint excavation project with the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

This collaboration has supported academic research and museum exhibition activities.

During discussions with Dr. Yin Dongmei, a senior university official, El-Leithy explored mechanisms for implementing the agreement and developing training and research programmes.

The Egyptian delegation emphasised the importance of broadening institutional cooperation, while the university reaffirmed its commitment to collaborative research and cultural heritage preservation.

Luxor's Archaeological Projects Presented to Chinese Researchers

During the visit, El-Leithy delivered an academic lecture highlighting archaeological discoveries and conservation projects on Luxor's West Bank.

The presentation included work involving the dismantling and reconstruction of the first pylon of the Ramesseum Temple and the restoration of the tomb of Kenamun.

He also outlined Egypt's efforts to preserve historic sites and improve archaeological conservation and restoration techniques.

Significance for Cultural Tourism

The partnership is particularly relevant to cultural tourism because it involves institutions responsible for preserving and presenting Egypt's archaeological heritage.

Professional training, improved documentation and scientific research are important components of museum interpretation and the quality of visitors' cultural experiences.

The agreement also strengthens academic exchanges relating to Egyptian archaeological sites, although its practical outcomes will depend on the implementation of the agreed programmes.

By expanding cooperation beyond archaeological excavations in Saqqara to include museum expertise, digital preservation and heritage management, the agreement adds a new dimension to cultural relations between Egypt and China.

No specific financial investment commitments or measurable tourism revenues have been announced in connection with the memorandum.



Saudi Winter 2026 Features More Than 1,800 Tourism Products Across Nine Major Destinations

Saudi Tourism Authority brings together over 100 public and private sector partners to offer hospitality, cultural, entertainment, and nature-based experiences

Riyadh – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Saudi Arabia is preparing to welcome the winter tourism season with a portfolio of more than 1,800 tourism products, ranging from cultural and nature-based experiences to entertainment and seasonal activities, under the Saudi Winter 2026 programme, which covers nine major destinations across the Kingdom.

The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) announced the conclusion of a programme workshop held under the patronage of Tourism Minister Ahmed bin Aqil Al-Khateeb, bringing together more than 100 public and private sector partners to coordinate preparations for the upcoming season.

Nine Destinations Offering Diverse Experiences

The programme covers Riyadh, AlUla, Al-Qassim, Hail, Jeddah, Al Khobar, Al Ahsa, Madinah, and the Red Sea, offering visitors a choice of urban attractions, heritage sites, coastal destinations, and nature-based experiences.

Its offerings include activities designed for families, children, friends, and groups, alongside tourism packages catering to different traveller segments.

The diversity extends beyond destinations to the experiences provided by participating businesses, including accommodation, hospitality, shopping, events, and cultural activities.

More Than 100 Partners Strengthen Tourism Offerings

The workshop explored opportunities for collaboration among hotels, hospitality providers, travel and tourism companies, event organizers, entertainment destinations, and retail operators.

It also showcased new tourism products and exclusive offers, focusing on making experiences easier for visitors to discover, access, and book.

Aqeel Al-Shaibani, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Tourism Authority, emphasized that collaboration with partners focuses



Saudi Winter



"Working with partners focuses on turning a diverse range of tourism products into experiences that are easy to access and book, catering to different visitor segments and target markets."

Aqeel Al Shibani
CEO, Saudi Tourism Authority

on transforming the Kingdom's diverse tourism offerings into accessible, bookable experiences suited to different visitor segments and target markets.

He explained that providing a wider range of options is intended to help visitors explore more attractions and activities during their stays.

From Tourism Destinations to Bookable Experiences

The programme's economic significance lies in bringing together hotels, travel companies, event organizers, and entertainment providers through tourism offerings that can be packaged and marketed to travellers.

The participation of more than 100 partners demonstrates the breadth of businesses involved, while the variety of products provides travel agents and tour operators with additional options when developing itineraries.

However, the authority's workshop announcement did not disclose the total financial value of the tourism products, confirmed booking volumes, or seasonal revenues. Assessing the programme's actual performance will therefore require subsequent operational data.

Saudi Winter 2026 provides a coordinated platform for presenting the Kingdom's destinations through experiences combining hospitality, heritage, nature, and entertainment, with an emphasis on improving the accessibility and booking of tourism products.

Four Eiffel Towers Cannot Match Its Height: France's "Colosseum of Nature" That Astonished Victor Hugo

Towering 1,500-metre cliffs and a waterfall 93 metres higher than the Eiffel Tower reveal one of the most spectacular natural wonders of the French Pyrenees.

Gavarnie, France | Al Rehla

Imagine four Eiffel Towers stacked on top of one another, yet still unable to reach the summit of the towering rock walls before you. At the heart of this breathtaking landscape, a waterfall plunges 423 metres, standing 93 metres taller than Paris's iconic landmark.

This remarkable destination is the Cirque de Gavarnie, a natural amphitheatre in the French Pyrenees near the Spanish border, where cliffs rise approximately 1,500 metres above the valley and waterfalls cascade between mountain peaks.

Its extraordinary scenery inspired French writer Victor Hugo to describe it as the "Colosseum of Nature."

The Landscape That Captivated Victor Hugo

When Hugo visited Gavarnie in 1843, he encountered an enormous mountain amphitheatre resembling Rome's Colosseum, but created entirely by nature.

His literary description helped establish the area's reputation among travellers and artists, making it one of the Pyrenees' most celebrated natural landmarks.

At its centre stands the Grande Cascade de Gavarnie, France's tallest waterfall, with a drop of 423 metres. Its flow varies seasonally, influenced by melting mountain snow.

A Journey Through Meadows and Waterfalls

Visitors begin their journey in the mountain village of Gavarnie, approximately 50 kilometres from Lourdes, following walking trails through green meadows, streams and dramatic mountain scenery towards panoramic viewpoints overlooking the waterfall.

One of the easier walking routes takes around two hours for a return trip, according to local tourism information. Reaching the waterfall's base involves more demanding paths requiring appropriate footwear and careful consideration of weather conditions.

The village provides accommodation, restaurants and visitor services, making it a convenient base for exploring the surrounding mountains and enjoying outdoor activities.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site Since 1997

In 1997, Gavarnie became part of the Pyrénées–Mont Perdu UNESCO World Heritage Site, spanning the French-Spanish border and recognised for its exceptional geological formations and traditional pastoral heritage.

The destination combines natural and cultural tourism, with hiking, accommodation and local hospitality services contributing to visitor-related economic activity while highlighting the importance of protecting the mountain environment.

Far from the crowds of Paris, Gavarnie offers a different perspective on France.

Here, visitors need not climb a tower to admire extraordinary heights. They simply look upwards at cliffs exceeding the combined height of four Eiffel Towers, experiencing the same magnificent landscape that captivated Victor Hugo nearly two centuries ago.





Air India and Standard Chartered Partner to Offer Exclusive Travel Benefits in UAE and Singapore

Eligible customers gain access to Maharaja Club Gold and Silver memberships, with access to over 1,000 airport lounges through Star Alliance

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Air India and Standard Chartered announced a new commercial partnership on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, combining airline loyalty benefits with international banking services to offer exclusive travel privileges to eligible affluent Indian customers in the UAE and Singapore.

The partnership targets internationally connected customers whose business activities and financial interests span multiple markets, linking wealth management services with premium travel benefits. The new privileges are scheduled to become available in the coming weeks, although no specific launch date has been announced.

Travel Privileges Across a Global Airline Network

Under the agreement, eligible Standard Chartered customers will receive Gold or Silver membership in Air India's Maharaja Club loyalty programme.

Depending on their membership tier, benefits include priority check-in and boarding, additional baggage allowance, airport lounge access, cabin upgrade vouchers and bonus loyalty points. Gold members will also enjoy Star Alliance Gold privileges, including access to a global network of more than 1,000 airport lounges, subject to applicable entry conditions, alongside priority travel services and benefits across other member airlines.

Cross-Border Banking and Wealth Management

In return, eligible Air India customers will gain access to Standard Chartered's international banking and wealth management services in the UAE and Singapore.

These services include cross-border banking relationships, investment insights and financial solutions designed for individuals managing businesses and assets across international markets.

Rajesh Kannan, Head of Wealth and Retail Banking for the UAE and Jersey and Global Head of Non-Resident Indians at Standard Chartered, said the partnership brings together Air India's international network and the bank's financial expertise to serve customers whose lives and business interests increasingly extend across borders.

Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer of Air India, said the agreement supports the airline's strategy to expand the international reach of its Maharaja Club loyalty programme while strengthening its engagement with the Indian diaspora worldwide.

Strengthening Commercial Partnerships in Travel

The agreement establishes another channel for commercial cooperation between the aviation and banking sectors by connecting airline loyalty benefits with international wealth management services.

Air India redesigned its Maharaja Club programme in 2024 and has since expanded its partnerships across hospitality, retail and financial services.

Neither company has disclosed the financial value of the agreement or the number of customers expected to benefit. Access to the new privileges will remain subject to eligibility requirements and the applicable membership terms and conditions.



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Oman Air Signs Agreement for 30,000 Seats to Attract Indonesian Tourists to Salalah

Partnership with Adhwaa Al Ardh Al Satiaa to connect Jakarta and Dhofar via Muscat in 2027, offering integrated travel packages featuring accommodation and cultural and nature experiences across Oman

Muscat – Sultanate of Oman | Al Rehla

Oman Air has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Adhwaa Al Ardh Al Satiaa to attract 30,000 Indonesian visitors to Salalah in 2027 through a planned purchase of airline seats on services connecting Jakarta to the southern Omani city via Muscat.

The agreement, announced on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, provides for the planned purchase of 30,000 seats on Oman Air flights, combined with integrated tourism packages showcasing the natural landscapes, cultural heritage and historical attractions of Salalah and other destinations across the Sultanate.

Opening a New Asian Tourism Market for Dhofar

The partnership focuses on attracting Indonesian travellers through organised packages combining air transportation with tourism experiences, highlighting Dhofar's natural attractions, beaches and historical sites associated with Oman's ancient frankincense trade.

Dr. Salim Abdullah Al Shanfari, Chairman of Adhwaa Al Ardh Al Satiaa, said the collaboration aims to facilitate travel for Indonesian tourists while introducing them to Oman's natural beauty, cultural heritage and traditional hospitality.

He also highlighted the importance of encouraging visitors to explore destinations beyond Salalah, offering a broader experience of the Sultanate.

Oman Air Expands Its Tourism Partnerships

Ahmed Ali Al Mahrouqi, Vice President of Global Sales at Oman Air, emphasised that strategic partnerships play an important role in opening new international markets for Oman's tourism industry.

He identified Indonesia as an important market within the airline's efforts to attract visitors from Southeast Asia and strengthen international tourism connectivity.

The agreement builds on Oman Air's activities supporting tourism to Salalah. The airline reported a 19% increase in passenger numbers to the destination in 2025 compared with 2024, according to its previously announced operational results.



Antonoaldo Neves
Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways

Etihad Airways Launches First Direct Abu Dhabi–Luxembourg Route with Four Weekly Flights

UAE carrier becomes the first Middle Eastern airline to serve Luxembourg, bringing forward its launch by eight days and increasing frequencies from the original plan

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

Etihad Airways inaugurated its direct flights between Abu Dhabi and Luxembourg on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, becoming the first Middle Eastern airline to operate scheduled services to the European country.

The new route operates four times a week, expanding Etihad's European network and establishing a direct air connection supporting tourism and business travel between the two destinations.

Luxembourg Airport welcomed the inaugural flight, EY51, from Abu Dhabi with a traditional water cannon salute. Services operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays using Airbus A321LR aircraft.

160 Seats Across Three Cabin Classes

The aircraft features 160 seats, including two First Class suites, 14 Business Class seats and 144 Economy Class seats.

Premium cabins offer fully flat beds, while passengers can also enjoy modern entertainment systems and onboard Wi-Fi connectivity.

Etihad initially announced in January that the route would launch on October 29 with three weekly flights. The airline subsequently brought the launch forward to October 21 and increased the frequency to four weekly services.

New Air Links to Three European Markets

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, described Luxembourg as an important addition to the airline's international network, welcoming passengers travelling to Abu Dhabi or connecting to destinations across Etihad's global network.

Alexander Flassak, Chief Executive Officer of lux-Airport, highlighted the importance of the new service in expanding travel options for residents of Luxembourg and neighbouring regions of Belgium, France and Germany.

Supporting Tourism and Business Connectivity

The new route provides direct access to Abu Dhabi's cultural attractions, leisure destinations and hospitality facilities, while offering onward connections to destinations across Asia and other international markets.

For travellers departing from the UAE, the service also opens a direct gateway to Luxembourg, known for its historic architecture, UNESCO-listed old town and natural landscapes.

While the route represents a tangible expansion of air connectivity between the UAE and Europe, Etihad has not disclosed actual booking figures or measured economic results associated with the new service.

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