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Arabian Travel Market 2025 Dubai

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Ahmed bin Saeed opens Arabian Travel Market 2025

The 32nd edition of the event at the Dubai World Trade Centre features a record 2,800 exhibitors from 166 countries- from 166 Countries

StayKSA ... An Ambitious Foundation Shaping the Future of Hotel Booking in Saudi Arabia

Katara Hospitality Affirms to "Al-Rihla": Our Presence at ATM is a Message of Commitment to Excellence and Inspiration

Al-Hussam Tourism ... A Legacy Shaping the Future of Religious and Leisure Tourism in Saudi Arabia

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa speaks to "Al Rehla": Sharjah Inspires the World... From Culture to Sustainability at the Heart of Arabian Travel Market

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Dubai - UAE

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports, and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, today opened the 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM), a leading global event for the travel and tourism industry, being held from 28 April to 1 May at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Bringing together professionals and leaders from across the global travel sector, including leisure, business events (MICE), luxury, and corporate travel, this year's event features a record 2,800 exhibitors from 166 countries and is expected to welcome 55,000 attendees. During the opening, His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed said that the strong turnout at this year's Arabian Travel Market reflects Dubai's position as a leading global hub for tourism, travel and hospitality, and underscores the emirate's growing role in shaping the future of the global tourism sector.

His Highness said: "Guided by the vision of our leadership, Dubai continues to consolidate its position as a leading global destination for tourism and a key meeting point for industry stakeholders, bringing together investors, decision-makers, experts and leading travel agencies from around the world. The long-standing success of Arabian Travel Market highlights Dubai's pivotal role in fostering strategic partnerships that drive the growth and advancement of the global tourism industry."

His Highness added: "The events and exhibitions sector remain a vital driver of Dubai's economic growth. The success of Arabian Travel Market, along with other major events hosted by the city throughout the year, reflects our steady progress towards achieving a key objective of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, which is to position Dubai among the world's top three cities for business and specialised tourism by 2033."

Following the official inauguration, His Highness toured the exhibition halls, accompanied by His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism; Her Excellency Hessa bint Essa Buhumaid, Director General of the Community Development Authority; and His Excellency Lieutenant General Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri, Director General of the General Directorate for Identity

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“The strong turnout at this year’s Arabian Travel Market reflects Dubai’s position as a leading global hub for tourism, travel and hospitality, and underscores the emirate’s growing role in shaping the future of the global tourism sector”



Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum

President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, Chairman of Dubai Airports, and Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group

and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai.

Key Highlights

His Highness was briefed on key highlights of the 32nd edition of Arabian Travel Market, which has recorded a significant increase in international exhibitor participation, with a 20% rise from Asia, a 15% increase from the Middle East, more than 12% growth from Europe, and continued growth from Africa and the Americas.

ATM 2025 is being held under the theme ‘Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow’s Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity’, underlining the vital role of cross-border collaboration, industry partnerships, and community engagement in reshaping the future of tourism and advancing sustainable practices. Several new features are debuting at ATM 2025. Responding to growing demand for a dedicated platform for business events, IBTM@ATM has been launched this year.

The new sector provides a specialist zone for business events suppliers to connect with buyers through pre-scheduled appointments and business exchanges. IBTM@ATM will also host a dedicated conference exploring key industry trends, staged on the new Business Events Stage.

ATM Travel Tech has expanded by more than 26% this year, reflecting the sector’s increasing integration with technology and innovation. A new Start-Up and Innovation Zone has been introduced, showcasing 21 pioneering companies reshaping the future of travel. The zone also offers an immersive VR experience, allowing visitors to explore new possibilities and transformative solutions within the travel ecosystem.

Commenting on the opening of ATM 2025, Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: “From next-generation technologies and the rise of travel start-ups to the introduction of IBTM@ATM, this year’s edition of ATM highlights an industry that is more connected, innovative and resilient than ever before. We are proud to offer a platform that fosters global collaboration, drives impactful business opportunities, and helps shape the future of travel.”

ATM Conference

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum was also briefed on the renowned ATM Conference, which returns this year with more than 200 speakers leading over 70 sessions across the Global Stage, Future Stage, and the newly launched Business Events Stage.

The conference programme will explore emerging trends, share global best practices, and discuss strategies to unlock new opportunities while addressing key industry challenges.

This year’s programme covers a diverse range of topics, including the future of aviation, emerging trends in hospitality, climate action initiatives, and the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the sector. On the first day, Cassie Kozyrkov, CEO of Kozyr, a leading international expert in AI and Google’s first Chief Decision Scientist, hosted the opening session on the Future Stage on how the travel industry can lead in AI adoption. The second day of the ATM Conference will feature the annual Ministerial Session, which will explore how tourism growth can be unlocked through enhanced connectivity. The session will bring together the Ministers of Tourism from Bahrain and Lebanon, alongside the CEO of Trip.com, to discuss how infrastructure, innovation and inclusion can build robust

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“From next-generation technologies and the rise of travel start-ups to the introduction of IBTM@ ATM, this year’s edition of ATM highlights an industry that is more connected, innovative and resilient than ever before. We are proud to offer a platform that fosters global collaboration, drives impactful business opportunities, and helps shape the future of travel”

Danielle Curtis

Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market

tourism frameworks that empower communities and enhance cross-border accessibility.

On day three, Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, will address the Global Stage to examine the future of aviation in an era of transformation and global disruption. Meanwhile, key findings from the IBTM World Trends Report will be shared on the Business Events Stage.

The final day will feature in-depth market insight sessions on Asia Pacific, as well as a dedicated spotlight on India’s burgeoning tourism sector. A major highlight on closing day will be the ATM Start-Up Competition, offering a platform for emerging entrepreneurs and innovators to pitch their ideas and redefine the future of travel.

ATM 2025 forms part of Arabian Travel Week, a ten-day festival of travel and tourism events held annually in Dubai. Over its three-decade history, ATM has played a pivotal role in facilitating over USD2.5 billion in industry deals and advancing the Middle East’s tourism landscape. Organised in collaboration with Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2025’s strategic partners include the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) as Destination Partner; Emirates as Official Airline Partner; IHG Hotels & Resorts as Official Hotel Partner; and Al Rais Travel as Official DMC Partner.



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On the Sidelines of Its Participation in Arabian Travel Market: Katara Hospitality Affirms to "Al-Rihla":

Our Presence at ATM is a Message of Commitment to Excellence and Inspiration



- **Sheikh Abdulrahman Al Thani: Shaping the Future of Hospitality... From Qatar to the World**
- **Investing in Excellence: How Katara Hospitality Leads the Luxury Revolution**
- **Digital Innovation and Sustainability... Two Pillars of Tomorrow's Hospitality**
- **Katara Hotels... Experiences that Narrate Eternal Stories with a Contemporary Spirit**



In a world where change accelerates at an unprecedented pace, Katara Hospitality stands proudly as a cornerstone of the luxury hospitality sector in the Middle East and beyond. Speaking passionately about the company's future, Sheikh Abdulrahman Al Thani revealed that Katara is currently developing several projects both within Qatar and internationally, with a focus on smart, strategic expansion. "Today, we are enhancing our existing portfolio of 42 hotels and resorts and looking forward to adding more properties over the next five years as we explore newly opened markets," Al Thani said, with a smile reflecting his confidence in the company's vision.

At the heart of its strategy, Katara understands that modern luxury goes far beyond marble and fine fabrics; it becomes an immersive experience telling the story of each destination. Katara's hotels have become cultural platforms, offering guests moments of authentic connection with local heritage, whether through culinary experiences inspired by regional kitchens or cultural activities that touch the soul.

Regarding Katara's contribution to Qatar's national tourism strategy, Al Thani affirmed that the com-

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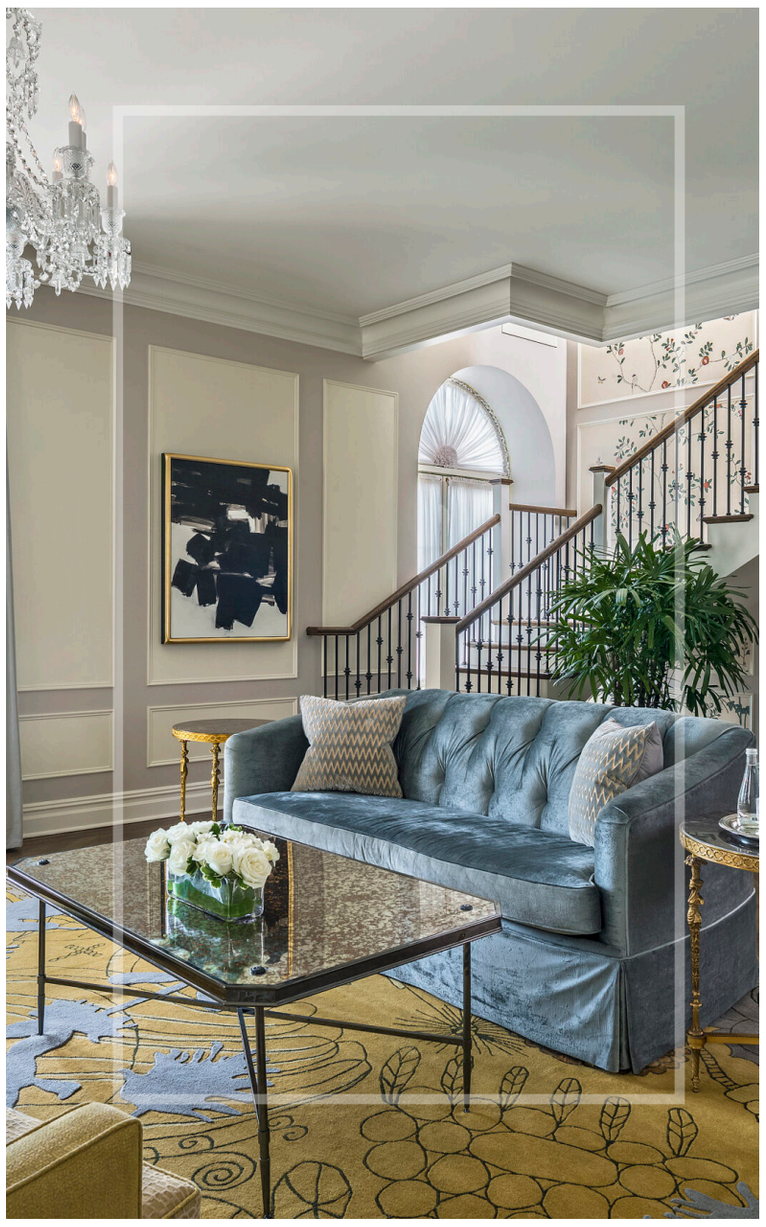
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pany directly supports the country's economic diversification through continuous investment in resort development and active participation in Qatar's tourism events, strengthening Doha's standing as a global hospitality capital. "Katara does not merely build hotels; we build bridges between cultures, enhancing mutual understanding and showcasing Qatari excellence," he added.

Digital innovation remains a key priority. Al Thani highlighted Katara's strong investment in AI technologies to craft highly personalized guest experiences and to implement smart room services, making each stay smoother and more luxurious.

"We do not just offer accommodation; we create unforgettable personal experiences," he said.

Alongside technological advancements, environmental sustainability holds a central place in Katara's strategy. Al Thani explained that each property is treated as a living part of its local community, with initiatives carefully designed to respect the environmental and cultural characteristics of each destination. Through clean energy use, eco-conscious architectural designs, and comprehensive wellness programs, Katara places sustainability at the heart of every new project.
On Katara's participation in Arabian Travel Market 2025, Al Thani emphasized that their presence goes far beyond showcasing a portfolio of hotels and resorts. "It is a clear message that we are committed to continuous innovation and partnerships that enhance the luxury travel industry across the region," he stated, adding that the platform provides a valuable opportunity to showcase Katara's contributions to Qatar's national strategy and to explore future investment opportunities.

Regarding future projects, Al Thani revealed Katara's plans to launch Ultra Luxury hotels that go beyond traditional luxury to offer fully integrated experiences touching the senses and the soul. "Our goal is not merely to host guests, but to enrich their journeys with authentic cultural and emotional experiences," he explained, noting that new hospitality concepts will be unveiled soon as part of projects that redefine contemporary luxury.

Commenting on the performance of Katara's hotels over the past year, Al Thani pointed out that occupancy rates remained high despite global challenges, reflecting the brand's strength and service quality. "Our flexible strategy and focus on providing personalized guest experiences were key drivers of our success," he said.
Sheikh Abdulrahman Al Thani concluded with a message to investors: "Investing in the hospitality sector today means investing in building bridges between peoples and cultures. At Katara Hospitality, we believe the future of tourism lies in authentic connections—digital, human, and cultural. We invite all those who share this vision to join us on our journey towards building a more distinctive and inclusive world of travel."



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Muhannad Khoja
CEO of StayKSA and Chairman of Siad Holding

> We warmly welcome all potential partners to explore StayKSA. Partnering with us is not merely an investment in a booking platform; it is an investment in the very future of Saudi tourism

stayksa.com

StayKSA ... An Ambitious Foundation Shaping the Future of Hotel Booking in Saudi Arabia

- Strategic Contribution to Saudi Vision 2030
- Saudi Excellence Competing with Global Platforms
- Ambitious Expansion Plans within and beyond the Kingdom
- Innovation in User Experience and Boosting Tourism Investment

At the vibrant corridors of Arabian Travel Market 2025, Al Rehla newspaper had the opportunity to meet Eng. Muhannad Khoja, CEO of StayKSA and Chairman of Siad Holding. He spoke in detail about the inception of StayKSA and its journey toward leadership in the hotel booking sector within Saudi Arabia.

Khoja emphasized that StayKSA was founded on a clear and ambitious vision aimed at creating a leading Saudi electronic platform that simplifies the hotel booking experience for travelers through intensive investment in modern technologies.

"Our primary goal from the start was to remove the complex barriers travelers face when booking accommodations, offering a wide range of options tailored to various needs," Khoja explained, noting that success was achieved through a combination of focusing on quality, diversity, and delivering a smooth and easy user experience.

This pursuit of excellence was not just a slogan; StayKSA built a strong network of local hotels offering high-level hospitality experiences, strengthening its position in the Saudi market and distinguishing it from other platforms.

Strategic Contribution to Saudi Vision 2030

During the interview, Khoja shed light on the pivotal role StayKSA plays in supporting the goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

"We believe that tourism is a vital sector for achieving economic diversification, and from this perspective, StayKSA was designed to enhance domestic tourism and attract international visitors,"

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Khoja stated confidently.

By providing an advanced platform that offers easy access to a wide variety of accommodation options, StayKSA contributes to stimulating internal travel and encouraging tourists to explore the Kingdom's rich natural and cultural diversity.

Moreover, the company is committed to raising hospitality standards in line with national targets, further strengthening Saudi Arabia's position as a premier global tourist destination.

Saudi Excellence Competing with Global Platforms

Despite the presence of many international booking platforms, StayKSA has successfully carved out a distinctive niche by deeply focusing on delivering an authentic Saudi experience. "We are not just offering a hotel booking service; we are providing travelers with a comprehensive experience that starts from planning the trip to the finest details of their stay," Khoja explained.

What differentiates StayKSA is its profound understanding of the needs of both Saudi and international travelers visiting the Kingdom. The platform offers customized deals and options combining strategic locations with high-quality services. When selecting its hospitality partners, StayKSA applies strict standards to ensure exceptional experiences that meet and exceed customer expectations.

Ambitious Expansion Plans within and beyond the Kingdom

Regarding expansion plans, Khoja revealed that StayKSA is not only focusing on strengthening its presence within Saudi Arabia but also has regional expansion ambitions.

"We are focused on expanding our hotel network across the Kingdom to support domestic tourism, but we also plan to penetrate the Gulf and Middle Eastern markets, capitalizing on the growing demand for Saudi destinations," he explained.

To achieve this expansion, StayKSA is developing additional services that go beyond traditional hotel booking, such as offering integrated tourism experiences that include cultural and entertainment activities, transforming the platform into a comprehensive travel destination for every traveler.

The company's participation in Arabian Travel Market 2025 marks a new launch point towards achieving these goals, as StayKSA seeks to build new strategic partnerships and strengthen its international presence.

Innovation in User Experience and Boosting Tourism Investment

One of the core pillars on which StayKSA stands is continuous innovation in user experience.

Khoja said, "We believe that the technology of the future is the key to a personalized travel experience for every individual, and thus we invest heavily in developing smart tools that help users organize their trips with ease and flexibility."

By adopting artificial intelligence and analyzing booking behaviors, StayKSA aims to offer suggestions tailored precisely to each user's preferences.

The platform also provides round-the-clock personalized technical support to ensure the highest levels of service.

Regarding the future, Khoja unveiled plans to launch new features, including the development of advanced applications, expanding the hotel base, and offering unique tourism experiences that highlight the beauty and diversity of Saudi Arabia.

"We aspire to become the preferred partner for every traveler seeking to discover Saudi Arabia," he said confidently.

In conclusion, Khoja addressed investors and visitors with a clear message:

"We warmly welcome all potential partners to explore StayKSA. Partnering with us is not merely an investment in a booking platform; it is an investment in the very future of Saudi tourism."

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Business events and festivals set the stage for socio-economic growth, according to experts at Arabian Travel Market



Dubai, Emirates

On the opening day of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) today, tourism leaders from the UAE were joined by representatives from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) on the Business Events Stage, to examine how major events and festivals are driving socio-economic growth in the UAE.

Moderated by Senthil Gopinath, CEO, ICCA, the panel featured Ahmed Al-Khaja, CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment, Dubai Economy and Tourism; Mubarak Al Shamsi, Director of Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau, Department of Culture and Tourism; Iyad Rasbey, VP - Destination Tourism Development, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority; and Martin Thomas Boyle, CEO, International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO). Together, they explored howevents are fostering socio-economic growth and enhancing destination appeal across the Middle East region.

Opening the session, Al-Khaja elaborated on the pivotal role that festivals in Dubai have played in shaping the city's cultural and economic landscape. Notably, he highlighted the Dubai Shopping Festival, which was launched in 1996, as a particularly influential event that not only attracts local residents but also draws tourists from around the world each year.

Commenting on the events strategy for Abu Dhabi, Al Shamsi said: "In recent years, Abu Dhabi has achieved remarkable success in hosting major exhibitions, conferences, and events, delivering clear economic benefits. However, our strategy extends beyond numbers and is focused on creating a long-lasting legacy that aligns with Vision 2030, with a focus on advancing key sectors including healthcare, innovation, sustainability and energy."

According to Rasbey, events have been key to Ras Al Khaimah's rising prominence: "Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) is an important segment and has contributed significantly to our growth. Last year, Ras Al Khaimah achieved 40% growth, with MICE being the fourth largest segment contributing to this.

"It is vital for us to secure events that contribute to our growth and development. Examples of past events include the Global Citizen Forum, which attracted investors and high-net-worth individuals to the Emirate. In terms of tourism growth, hosting the Arab Aviation Summit

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Senthil Gopinath
CEO, ICCA



Ahmed Al-Khaja
CEO, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment, Dubai Economy and Tourism



Mubarak Al Shamsi
Director of Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau, Department of Culture and Tourism

enabled us to connect Ras Al Khaimah International Airport with 11 cities globally."

Elsewhere today, Fouad Talat, Regional Manager, Booking.com, John Bevan, CEO, dnata Travel Group and Amani O'Neill, Senior Public Policy Manager, Middle East, Airbnb, discussed the microtrends redefining travel. During the engaging session, the speakers covered trends including sleep tourism, dark tourism and coffee tourism, outlining how these trends are impacting global travel behaviours and shaping the way destinations evolve and adapt.

During the discussion, the speakers discussed how tourism providers should adjust their marketing strategies to align with these trends and provided practical applications for incorporating microtrends into long-term planning.

Tomorrow at ATM, the Business Events Stage will host an exclusive networking session where participants will have the opportunity to engage with prominent international and regional associations to foster strategic relationships, unlock collaboration opportunities and exchange high-value business leads.

This week, ATM will showcase 2,800 exhibitors and the event is expected to host 55,000 attendees from around the world. Attendees will have the opportunity to gain insights from over 200 high-profile speakers across more than 70 conference sessions on the Global Stage, Future Stage and the new Business Events Stage and connect with industry professionals from over 161 countries.

The latest ATM news stories are available at https://hub.wtm.com/category/press/atm-press-releases/.



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Abdulaziz Khogeer

CEO of Al-Hussam Tourism and Head of Hajj, Umrah, and Tourism Sector at Siyad Holding

> We seeks to create immersive experiences that celebrate the essence of Saudi hospitality, inviting the world to discover the Kingdom's warmth, rich culture, and stunning natural beauty

Al-Hussam Tourism ...

A Legacy Shaping the Future of Religious and Leisure Tourism in Saudi Arabia

- Over 65 Years Serving the Guests of the Holy Mosques
- Advanced Strategies to Keep Pace with Expanding Tourism
- Innovative Initiatives to Enrich Pilgrim Experiences
- Active Support for Saudi Vision 2030
- Expansion Plans and Strategic Partnerships in Global Markets

During the Arabian Travel Market 2025 in Dubai, Al-Rihla Newspaper met with Mr. Abdulaziz Khogeer, CEO of Al-Hussam Tourism and Head of Hajj, Umrah, and Tourism Sector at Siyad Holding. He shared an in-depth vision of his company's pioneering role in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia, along with its ambitious plans to enhance its services in line with the significant transformations the Kingdom is currently witnessing.

Since its founding over sixty-five years ago, Al-Hussam Tourism has been a cornerstone of Siyad Holding Group. Today, it proudly continues this legacy. The company initially focused on serving the guests of the Holy Mosques by offering comprehensive solutions to Hajj, Umrah, and tourism companies, later becoming a key player in destination management within the Kingdom. Today, Al-Hussam has expanded to cover religious and domestic tourism, leveraging its extensive experience to offer innovative services that meet the aspirations of visitors and pilgrims alike.

Advanced Strategies to Keep Pace with Expanding Tourism

Amid the tourism boom Saudi Arabia is experiencing, Al-Hussam Tourism is setting a bold strategy aimed at strengthening its leading position.

As Mr. Khogeer explained, the company builds on its deep-rooted expertise in managing Hajj and Umrah services as a foundation to broaden its tourism offerings.

Currently, Al-Hussam offers comprehensive packages for individuals and groups, covering diverse regions across the Kingdom—from Makkah and Madinah to Taif and AlUla—while providing additional services that enrich the tourist experience, such as cultural tours and vis-

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its to historical sites.

The strategy also emphasizes enhancing the customer experience through innovative solutions that ensure ease of booking, high-quality accommodations, and seamless travel within the Kingdom, working closely with both local and international partners to elevate service standards.

Innovative Initiatives to Enrich Pilgrim Experiences

Because excellence lies in the details, Al-Hussam has launched several innovative initiatives aimed at transforming the pilgrimage journey into a rich and diverse experience.

One of the standout initiatives is the "Prophetic Biography Program," which takes visitors on educational tours exploring the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through organized visits to historic Islamic landmarks, deepening their spiritual connection.

The company also strives to enrich the religious journey with programs that include museum visits, exploration of Hira Cave, Thawr Cave, Mount Uhud, along with cultural activities like experiencing traditional Saudi attire and tasting authentic Saudi cuisine within historic Makkah homes.

To ensure the visitor's experience begins with a warm welcome, Al-Hussam has introduced a specialized reception system that greets pilgrims with flowers and Zamzam water upon arrival and provides comprehensive hospitality services throughout their stay in leading hotels in Makkah and Madinah.

Active Support for Saudi Vision 2030

Al-Hussam Tourism recognizes the critical national role it plays, ensuring its activities align with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, particularly in enhancing religious tourism and expanding the domestic tourism sector. As Mr. Khogeer pointed out, the company directly contributes to increasing visitor numbers by developing its offerings and diversifying its packages to meet the expectations of both religious and leisure tourists.

The company is also committed to building a sophisticated image of the Kingdom by delivering a holistic experience that highlights Saudi Arabia's rich heritage and authentic Arabian hospitality, helping position the Kingdom as one of the world's premier tourist destinations.

Expansion Plans and Strategic Partnerships in Global Markets

Al-Hussam's ambitions extend beyond the local market; the company is confidently moving toward regional and international expansion.

Mr. Khogeer emphasized that participating in Arabian Travel Market 2025 serves as a strategic platform to forge new partnerships with global tourism companies and travel agents, aiming to attract broader visitor segments, especially from the Gulf, Europe, and China.

The company designs customized programs tailored to the needs of various markets, focusing on offering a comprehensive tourism experience that respects and embraces different cultures. Moreover, Al-Hussam increasingly relies on modern technology, developing advanced digital systems for bookings and customer service, and employing smart solutions like QR codes and AI to deliver personalized and efficient services.

Regarding expansion challenges, Khogeer noted that Al-Hussam places great emphasis on balancing high service quality with competitive pricing by offering a range of packages that accommodate different budgets without compromising service standards.

A Bold Future Outlook

With well-thought-out plans and a deep passion for innovation, Al-Hussam Tourism aims, over the next five years, to solidify its position as the premier choice for global tourism companies and the guests of the Holy Mosques alike.

The company also seeks to create immersive experiences that celebrate the essence of Saudi hospitality, inviting the world to discover the Kingdom's warmth, rich culture, and stunning natural beauty. With each step forward, Al-Hussam Tourism reaffirms its commitment to leadership, not only in destination management but also in crafting an unforgettable Saudi travel experience.

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Diriyah at ATM 2025: A Representation of Global Connectivity and the Future of Tourism Development



As you explore Diriyah, you are captivated by its unique fusion of historical depth and modern development, weaving one of Saudi Arabia's most inspiring success stories for the world to witness. This story is not merely told through words but is lived and experienced in every detail. Diriyah, the birthplace of the First Saudi State, stands today not only as a symbol of history but also as one of the world's most prominent cultural and tourism destinations.

During its participation in Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025 in Dubai, Diriyah delivered a clear and powerful message to all: "You are at the heart of history, and you will experience an extraordinary journey rich in detail."Inside a meticulously designed pavilion, the numbers spoke louder than words, illustrating Diriyah's scale and ambition: more than SAR 236 billion in investments, an expected 50 million annual visits, 178,000 jobs, and a projected contribution of over SAR 70 billion to Saudi Arabia's GDP. The development also features more than 40 international luxury hotels, 18,000 residential units built in the authentic Najdi architectural style, over 300 hotel units, nine museums, a university, four healthcare facilities, 16 schools, 31 mosques, four metro stations, 60,000 parking spaces, and more than 10 iconic cultural and historical landmarks.

Each of these figures represents not only a milestone but also a steadfast commitment to transforming Diriyah into a vibrant destination rich in culture and authentic experiences. Diriyah stands as a symbol of national pride and a global icon, telling the story of the birthplace of the Saudi State to the world, a story that spans more than 300 years.

The City of Earth, Bridging the Past and the Future

Just 25 minutes from King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, you will find yourself at a global tourism and cultural destination spanning over 14 square kilometers. Diriyah confidently offers the world a comprehensive tourism experience that blends the Kingdom's deep-rooted heritage with the modern horizons of its promising future.

Standing before the historic At-Turaif District, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one can sense the grandeur of its rich history and the carefully crafted future unfolding ahead. Diriyah proves that heritage and history are not confined to museums but are lived and felt in every moment. Every wall and pathway in Diriyah bears the marks of the ancestors, while today, major global brands compete to establish a presence alongside local cafes that exude the aroma of authentic Saudi coffee.

Bab Samhan Hotel, the first hotel inaugurated as part of the Diriyah project, perfectly embodies this duality. It offers 134 rooms designed in the traditional Najdi style, operating under the Luxury Collection brand, and provides visitors with a unique living experience in the heart of history. Adjacent to the popular Bujairi Terrace, Zallal exemplifies how a location can evolve while preserving its authentic identity. Its advanced business environment, upscale restaurants, boutique shops, and cafes are seamlessly intertwined with the spirit of the place. Meanwhile, Bujairi Terrace, which has welcomed over 3 million visitors since 2022, stands as a testament to the success of Diriyah's vision of becoming a daily destination for entertainment and cultural engagement. These sites, among others, are not merely



tourist attractions or development projects. They are integral components of a vibrant, living community that breathes culture and warmly welcomes visitors from around the globe. Notably, 70% of these visitors can reach Diriyah within 8 hours, while 30% can do so in just 4 hours.

Remarkable Journey of Transformation

The achievements realized in Diriyah over just a few years are truly remarkable. Numerous plans have been executed in record time, establishing Diriyah as a model of success in transforming cultural heritage into a comprehensive development project. Significant advancements have been made in infrastructure, including the development of road networks and main corridors, parking facilities, pathways, parks, and direct connections to Riyadh through various accessible routes from different directions.

The development efforts also included the restoration of several historical landmarks, transforming them into vibrant platforms that offer rich cultural experiences. The Diriyah Museum, with its interactive exhibits, now serves as a gateway to understanding the illustrious history of the Saudi State.

Understanding that a visitor's journey is incomplete without meaningful engagement, Diriyah has developed a comprehensive system of events and festivals, trained a new generation of tour guides, and produced rich content that blends tradition with creativity. From Diriyah Season to art exhibitions, from live performances to the grand celebrations of Founding Day that narrate a 300-year legacy, Diriyah offers a continuous, immersive cultural experience every day.

Designing a Timeless Future Through Sustainable Development
Diriyah is a large-scale, multi-use development project that embodies a vision extending to 2030 and beyond. Its long-term development plans encompass the creation of residential neighborhoods, educational institutions, healthcare centers, and entertainment and commercial hubs, all within a framework that adheres to the highest global standards.

Diriyah plays a pivotal role in supporting the ambitious goals of Saudi Vision 2030, particularly in advancing cultural tourism, luxury hospitality, and experiential travel, which are key sectors in reshaping the Kingdom's national tourism landscape. It also focuses on developing a comprehensive system of events and festivals, offering content that seamlessly blends authenticity with innovation.

In line with this vision, Diriyah has recently established several strategic partnerships, notably with GOZAHID to drive tourism attraction, and with international companies such as Giza Systems, which is leading the implementation of the smart city infrastructure in Diriyah. Additionally, the IBM Maximo Application Suite has been selected to monitor and manage assets across the project.

Beyond these initiatives, Diriyah is committed to creating luxurious hospitality facilities that offer visitors an experience where traditional Saudi hospitality is harmoniously blended with world-class luxury. Comprehensive entertainment centers are also being developed, providing a diverse range of shopping, dining, and leisure experiences for visitors from around the globe.

A suitable environment for work and investment

Diriyah's allure extends beyond visitation and residence; it reaches the global investment community by offering promising opportunities across sectors such as hospitality, housing, office space, education, culture, retail, and sports. Diriyah represents a comprehensive development project that aligns with evolving market needs, welcoming investors from around the world into a modern business environment that balances sustainability and innovation while honoring the site's rich heritage.

Diriyah provides a wide range of investment opportunities within a supportive and flexible framework, fostering strategic partnerships and collaboration between the public and private sectors. Notable projects such as the Media and Innovation District, the Royal Opera House, Wadi Safar, and a selection of international hotels exemplify Diriyah's vision to attract investment and strengthen its position as a premier destination for tourism, culture, arts, and innovation.

Since the beginning of 2025, the total value of signed investment contracts has exceeded SAR 10.9 billion, reflecting the global market's confidence in the Diriyah project and its long-term economic viability. Supported by an advanced transportation network that includes more than 60,000 parking spaces and four metro stations integrated with the city of Riyadh as part of the master plan, Diriyah is poised to become a connected smart city, enhancing its appeal to investors, residents, and travel enthusiasts alike.

An Experience to Remember Forever
Through its participation in ATM 2025, Diriyah reaffirms its status as a must-visit destination, representing both the present and the future. In a world filled with similarities, Diriyah stands apart, offering a unique experience shaped by its deep-rooted heritage and expansive ambitions.

With each visit, guests will discover something new, a newly opened café, a different art exhibition, or a story told by a knowledgeable tour guide who knows that every stone in Diriyah carries a story of its own.

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Ahmed AlNuwaysiri

Media Relations Assistant Manager at Diriyah Company

> We invite all lovers of culture, tourism, and travel from around the world to visit Diriyah and experience its unique offerings. Enjoy its rich heritage and enchanting atmosphere as one of the most important tourist destinations globally

Diriyah... Diriyah on the Map of Global Tourism

On the sidelines of the "Arabian Travel Market 2025" events, the newspaper "Al-Rihlah" had a special interview with Mr. Ahmed Suleiman Al-Nuwaisri, Assistant Director of Media Relations at Diriyah Company, in which he passionately answered our questions about the projects and future of Diriyah. In the interview, he mentioned:

What does Diriyah's participation in Arabian Travel Market 2025 signify for the project?
Diriyah's participation in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025 marks a pivotal moment in advancing the project's strategic vision and ambitions. It reflects Diriyah's critical role in achieving the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, particularly in establishing the Kingdom as a global hub for heritage, cultural tourism, and world-class hospitality.

This participation serves as a powerful platform to position Diriyah firmly on the global tourism map. It showcases Diriyah not only as a premier heritage and cultural destination but also as a living symbol of Saudi Arabia's history, culture, and identity. Beyond presenting tourism opportunities, it highlights Diriyah's transformation into an economic catalyst, contributing to the diversification of the Kingdom's economy through the growing tourism sector.

Through ATM 2025, Diriyah aims to attract international tourists, forge strategic partnerships with global tourism companies and investors, and build collaborative relationships with leading entities in the industry. The event also underscores Diriyah's commitment to sustainability and innovation, as reflected in its smart infrastructure and efforts to integrate modern technologies in heritage preservation.

Notably, this year's participation will spotlight new luxury hospitality offerings such as Nature by Oberoi and Equinox Hotels, further cementing Diriyah's reputation as a world-class travel destination. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to showcase the UNESCO-listed At-Turaif District — the birthplace of the Kingdom — as a beacon of cultural dialogue and a testament to Saudi Arabia's rich historical legacy.

Ultimately, Diriyah's presence at ATM 2025 signifies its evolution into a globally competitive destination, seamlessly blending authentic heritage with contemporary experiences, and driving forward the Kingdom's vision for a vibrant, diversified economy.

How does Diriyah contribute to showcasing Saudi Arabia's identity and positioning it as a global tourism destination?
Diriyah is far more than a tourism project; it stands as a cultural gateway that redefines the world's perception of Saudi

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identity by bridging a rich past with an ambitious future. It embodies the essence of Saudi Vision 2030 by transforming heritage into a thriving economy and positioning the Kingdom as a premier global tourism destination.

Sustainable tourism and cultural preservation are foundational pillars of this vision. Diriyah offers a comprehensive model that safeguards cultural identity while ensuring the continuity of resources and opportunities for future generations. Through carefully considered practices, it successfully integrates heritage conservation with the delivery of authentic, sustainable tourism experiences. The slogan "The City of Earth" powerfully captures Diriyah's spirit. It represents not merely a visual or verbal identity but a profound message reflecting Diriyah's deep roots in the soil of Saudi Arabia. Its development draws authentically from Najdi culture, local materials, and the aspirations of its people, who are shaping its present and future. This identity reinforces that Diriyah's growth is not built on imported models but evolves organically from its authentic heritage toward a bold future.

Diriyah highlights Saudi Arabia's identity and enhances its global standing through several key initiatives. Central to this is the revival of cultural and historical heritage, exemplified by the UNESCO World Heritage-listed At-Turaif District, the birthplace of the First Saudi State, offering immersive cultural tours, craft workshops, and interactive experiences.

Luxury tourism is another cornerstone of Diriyah's offering. World-class hotels such as Bab Samhan, Aman, and Six Senses seamlessly blend authentic Najdi design with modern luxury. Destinations like Wadi Safar, a premier golf and equestrian hub, further reinforce the balance between nature, sustainability, and luxury hospitality. Meanwhile, Diriyah Square serves as a commercial and cultural epicenter, hosting luxury brands, entertainment venues, and major cultural events. Cultural and entertainment events also plays a vital role. Diriyah hosts the annual Diriyah Season, presenting a wide range of unique activities and experiences that attract millions of visitors across its historic districts. Additionally, the recently awarded Royal Opera House contract will bring world-class performances to a venue inspired by authentic Najdi heritage, further enriching Diriyah's cultural landscape.

To complement these efforts, Diriyah is forging strategic partnerships with leading hospitality brands such as Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons, as well as major technology companies like STC, with the aim of developing a smart infrastructure that supports its future growth ambitions.

Economically and socially, the Diriyah project is designed to deliver a significant impact by generating an estimated 178,000 jobs and launching specialized training initiatives such as the Diriyah Engineers Development Program. It is projected to boost the local economy by SAR 70 billion and attract 50 million annual visitors by 2030.

Blending tradition with innovation, Diriyah will stand as an open-air museum where advanced technologies including artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things enrich cultural heritage experiences. Visitors will be able to stay in traditional Najdi-style accommodations reimagined with world-class hospitality services, creating a one-of-a-kind cultural

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tourism experience. Through all these efforts, Diriyah is not only showcasing Saudi Arabia's identity, but also redefining it for the world and setting new global standards for cultural tourism and sustainable development.

What are the main attractions that Diriyah will offer to regional and international tourists in the coming years?

Diriyah is a multifunctional city offering a rich and diverse portfolio of investment opportunities for the global business community, spanning sectors such as office space, residential, retail, hospitality, culture, sports, and education. Backed by one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, the Saudi Public Investment Fund, the project's total investments are estimated at approximately SAR 236 billion ($63.2 billion).

With this strong backing, Diriyah is set to transform into a vibrant, integrated destination for living, working, and entertainment, accommodating around 100,000 residents and providing a dynamic work environment for tens of thousands of employees , all in alignment with the economic diversification strategy of Saudi Vision 2030. Diriyah presents a unique urban model centered around people, drawing upon its rich historical legacy as the cradle of the First Saudi State and home to At-Turaif District, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Among the key attractions that distinguish Diriyah for regional and international tourists are:

Rich cultural and tourism heritage: Showcased beautifully in the historic At-Turaif District, which reflects the authenticity of Najdi architecture and the history of the First Saudi State. The project includes a distinguished selection of international hotels such as Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons, Aman, and Armani, offering luxurious and exceptional hospitality experiences, alongside outstanding entertainment and cultural projects featuring cultural, creative, and commercial centers, and family-friendly entertainment facilities.

Natural environment and open pathways: Diriyah offers expansive natural spaces, including Wadi Hanifah, along with pedestrian and cycling paths that allow visitors to enjoy outdoor activities in a stunning natural setting.
Unique dining experiences: Visitors can indulge in upscale international restaurants and luxurious cafes that blend local and global influences. Notably, Taleed restaurant, recently opened in Bab Samhan and managed by renowned chef Michael Mina, offers a culinary experience that fuses Hijazi flavors with modern touches.
Arts and culture: Diriyah serves as a vibrant cultural hub, hosting art exhibitions and live events, while also developing major cultural projects such as the Royal Opera House.

Education and creativity: Diriyah is emerging as a leading center for educational and innovation-focused initiatives, exemplified by the launch of the Media and Innovation District, which fosters a knowledge-driven, creative production environment, enhanced by its strategic proximity to Riyadh's city center.

Humanization projects: Diriyah emphasizes creating vibrant public spaces, developing pedestrian-friendly environments, expanding natural open areas, and offering interactive community facilities that enrich social and urban life.
Environmental sustainability: Sustainability principles are deeply embedded in Diriyah's development approach, with a focus on using local materials and environmentally friendly technologies to ensure harmony with the surrounding natural environment.
Global events and festivals: Diriyah has become a host for major sporting and cultural events, such as Formula E races and various arts and music festivals, adding a dynamic and experiential dimension to the visitor experience.
Authentic Saudi identity: Diriyah embodies Saudi authenticity through its traditional Najdi architecture, craftsmanship, and historical landmarks, offering visitors a rare opportunity to experience the Kingdom's cultural and historical heritage firsthand.

Diriyah continues to solidify its position as a vibrant global destination, attracting visitors from around the world and offering a comprehensive cultural and tourism experience that honors its deep historical roots while embodying the Kingdom's future aspirations.

Are there any new initiatives or partnerships being announced during this year's exhibition?
Diriyah Company fully recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships in advancing its ambitious goals for the development of the tourism and hospitality sectors. In line with this commitment, the Company has signed an agreement with GOZAHID, a key travel industry partner, aimed at enhancing Diriyah's status as a must-visit destination and firmly establishing it among the world's top cultural and heritage sites. This partnership will focus on launching joint marketing initiatives targeting local, regional, and international travelers, with a particular emphasis on promoting cultural and heritage tourism. Planned initiatives include specialized training programs for tour operators, workshops to introduce the unique offerings of Diriyah, and the development of customized training materials for tour guides. These efforts are designed to ensure visitors enjoy an authentic, immersive tourism experience that faithfully reflects the rich essence and history of Diriyah.
How is heritage preservation balanced with offering a modern and immersive tourism experience?
Diriyah is deeply committed to achieving a distinctive balance between preserving its rich heritage and delivering a modern, immersive tourism experience. It masterfully blends the protection of authentic architectural heritage with the introduction of innovative visitor experiences that leverage the latest technologies.

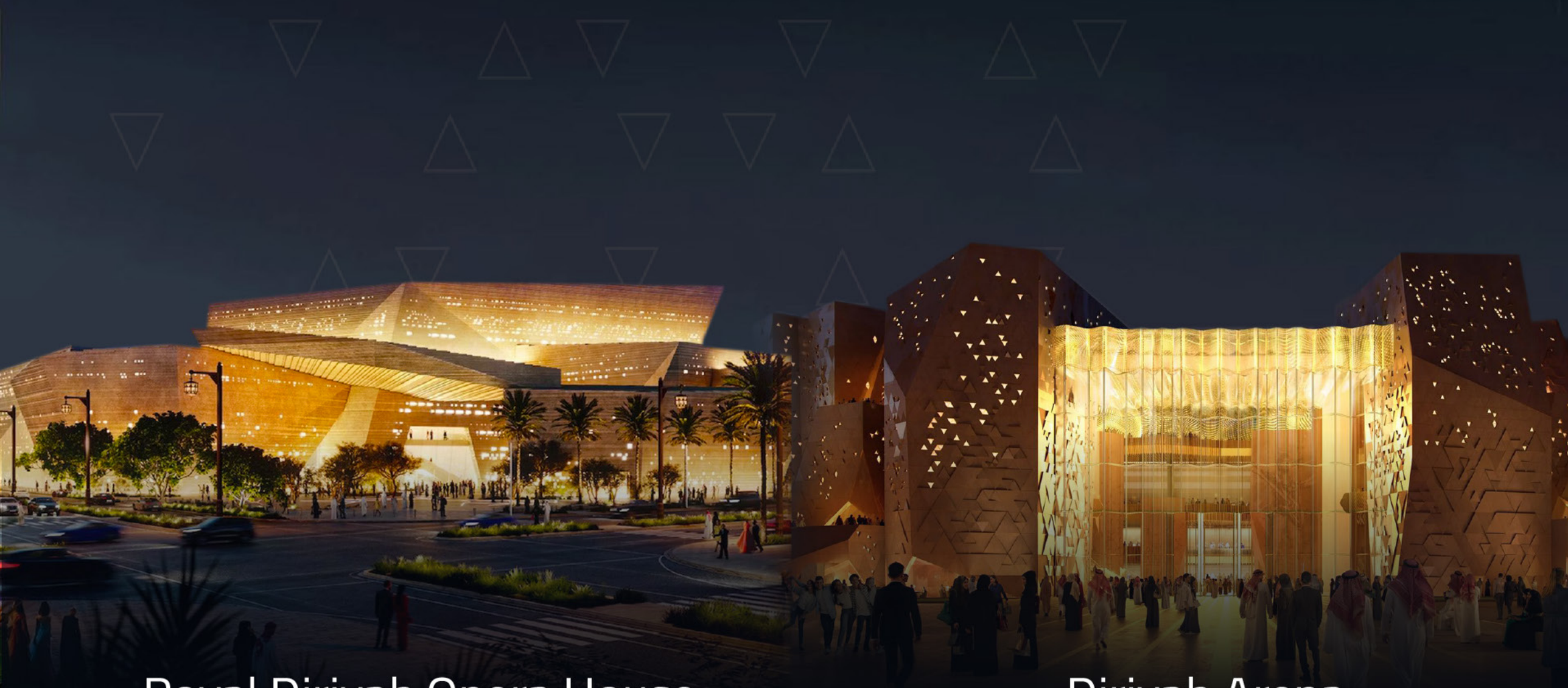
In the historic At-Turaif District and Salwa Palace, the essence of the past and the spirit of history permeate every corner, while modern elements are seamlessly integrated through contemporary architectural designs inspired by the Najdi environment. This vision is further reflected in the development of luxury global hotels that embody a modern spirit while respecting and honoring traditional heritage, creating a unique artistic fusion between contemporary and historical styles.

Diriyah also brings heritage to life through interactive experiences that showcase traditional crafts and folk arts, strengthening the connection between generations and preserving authentic cultural expressions. These experiences are enhanced by cutting-edge technologies, such as smart applications that provide visitors with cultural insights and real-time guidance throughout their journey, enriching their exploration and deepening their engagement.

Through this thoughtful approach, Diriyah offers a comprehensive tourism experience that celebrates its historical legacy while embracing innovation, positioning itself as an unforgettable destination where tradition and modernity coexist in perfect harmony.

DIRIYAH

City of Earth



Royal Diriyah Opera House

Diriyah Arena

Diriyah marks its fifth participation in the

Arabian Travel Market



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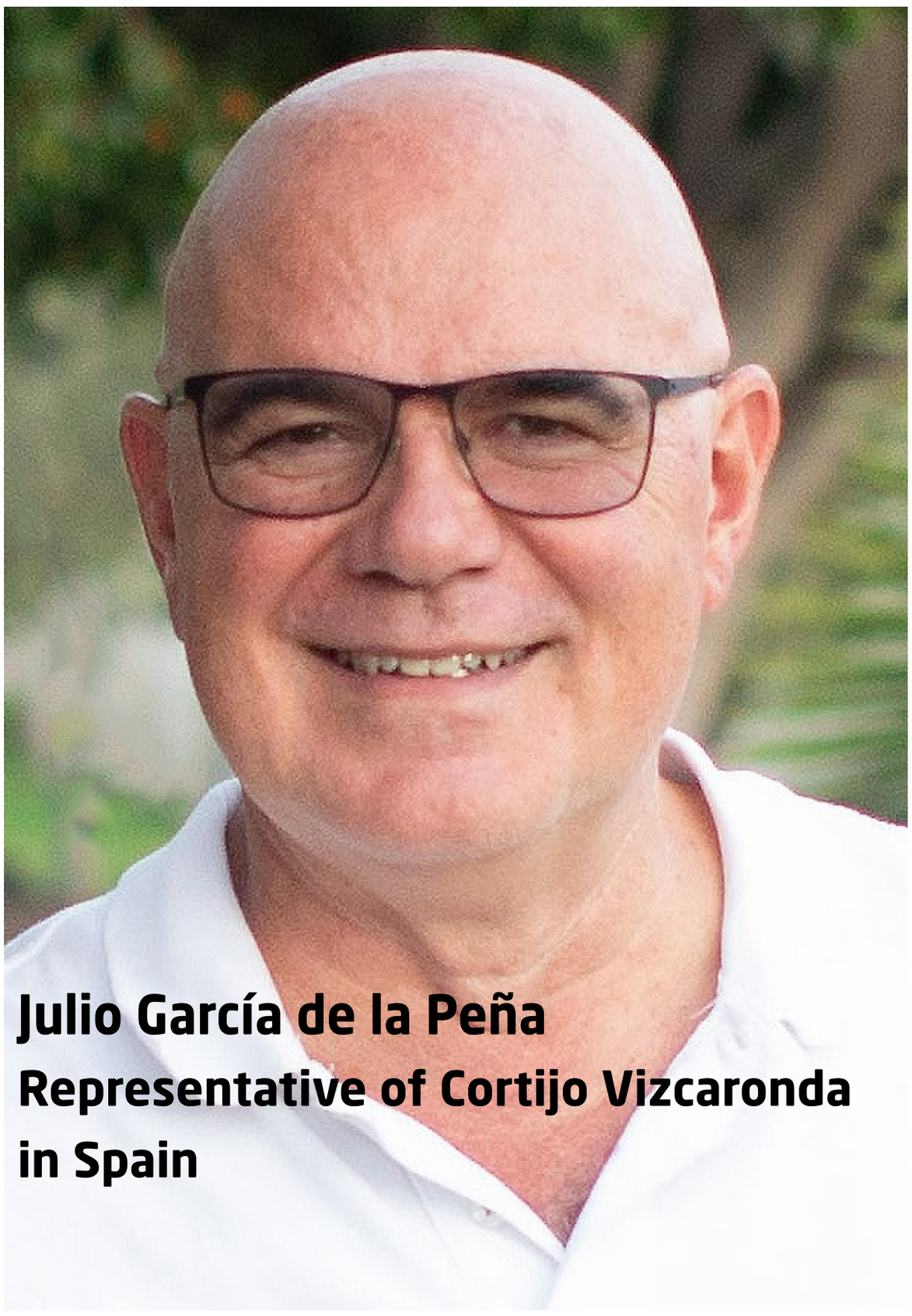
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Julio García de la Peña
Representative of Cortijo Vizcaronda in Spain

Cortijo Vizcaronda:
Where Andalusian Heritage Meets Modern Boutique Luxury

"We are not just restoring a property; we are creating an experience." This is how Julio García de la Peña, the official representative of the Cortijo Vizcaronda project in southern Spain, introduces the concept that is quickly drawing attention from international investors and hospitality visionaries. Speaking to Al-Rihla Newspaper, García de la Peña outlines a compelling vision for a boutique hotel nestled in the hills of Manilva – a project that seamlessly blends location, design, and experience.

"We're standing on one of the most privileged plots in southern Spain," Julio begins. "From here, you can see the Mediterranean stretching to Gibraltar and even the African coastline on a clear day. Yet, we're just minutes away from world-renowned golf courses, the charm of whitewashed Andalusian villages, and the cultural vitality of the Costa del Sol."

> **"We're standing on one of the most privileged plots in southern Spain," Julio begins. "From here, you can see the Mediterranean stretching to Gibraltar and even the African coastline on a clear day. Yet, we're just minutes away from world-renowned golf courses, the charm of whitewashed Andalusian villages, and the cultural vitality of the Costa del Sol**

The estate, known as Cortijo Vizcaronda, sits surrounded by vineyards and natural beauty, elevated above the coastline in a tranquil yet connected setting. What makes this opportunity rare, according to García de la Peña, is not only the view or the setting – it's the readiness. "All the necessary permits are in place. The vision is clear. We are offering a turnkey development project in a region that continues to grow in prestige."

An Approved Concept with Deep Cultural Roots

The property, a restored Andalusian cortijo, has been officially approved for conversion into a boutique hotel. "This is not speculative," Julio affirms. "We have the approval. We have the structure. Now it's about bringing the right team together to realize a concept that the market is clearly demanding."

That concept? A refined hospitality experience with suites, private terraces, a fine dining restaurant, and curated gardens that invite relaxation and reflection. "We want guests to feel like they are stepping into a private estate with all the comforts of modern luxury, but deeply connected to the land and its traditions," says García de la Peña.

The hotel's vision also includes wellness areas, intimate lounges, and spaces for exclusive events – weddings, corporate retreats, wellness programs, and private cultural gatherings. "It's an incredibly versatile asset," he explains. "It offers the kind of flexibility that high-end travelers and event planners increasingly seek."

A Strategic Location Between Marbella and Gibraltar

Cortijo Vizcaronda is strategically located less than ten minutes from the Mediterranean coast, with easy access to Sotogrande and Marbella. "You can fly into Málaga or Gibraltar, and within

an hour you're here," Julio says. "It's convenient, yet private – far from the bustle of mass tourism, but close enough to enjoy everything the Costa del Sol has to offer."

The nearby attractions include elite golf courses, Michelin-starred restaurants, historic sites, and natural parks. Yet the estate maintains an air of seclusion that makes it ideal for the kind of clientele the project aims to attract. "Discerning travelers today value authenticity, privacy, and experience. That's exactly what Cortijo Vizcaronda is designed to deliver," he notes.

A Response to the New Luxury Travel Landscape

Asked about the market demand, Julio is confident: "We're seeing a shift in luxury hospitality. People no longer just want five-star service – they want meaning, connection, and storytelling. This cortijo offers that. It's a place where the architecture, the land, and the experience all align to create something truly memorable."

The boutique hotel model, particularly one rooted in local culture and with limited occupancy, aligns perfectly with the post-pandemic preferences of affluent travelers. "It's not about quantity anymore. It's about exclusivity and personalization," says García de la Peña. "That's what makes this project so compelling – both emotionally and financially."

Investment with Legacy and Lifestyle

Cortijo Vizcaronda is more than a hotel project – it's a statement of identity and vision. "Whether someone wants to build a family legacy, develop a unique hospitality brand, or create a lifestyle destination in Europe, this is a foundation you can build upon," says Julio.

The investment potential is also significant. "We're looking at a region that continues to grow, with a shortage of venues that offer this level of character and exclusivity. The ROI is there, but so is the chance to create something that endures – something with soul."

Closing the Gap Between Dream and Reality

With approvals secured, the architectural integrity preserved, and a concept ready to be brought to life, Cortijo Vizcaronda stands as a ready-to-develop boutique hotel in one of Europe's most attractive regions. As Julio García de la Peña concludes: "The dream is already drawn. Now we invite the right visionary to step in and make it real."

In the evolving landscape of luxury travel, Cortijo Vizcaronda may well be one of the last great opportunities to invest in authenticity, beauty, and experience – all in one extraordinary place.



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Mohammed Jassim Al Rais

Executive Vice President of Al Rais Travel Agencies

“The world is full of treasures waiting to be discovered. Let travel be your passport to gaining experience, inspiration, and openness to the cultures of the world. We at Al Rais Travel Group will always be your trusted partners in making your dreams come true, no matter where your destination is”

Al Rais Travel... A dynamic balance between promoting Emirati culture and leisure tourism

On the sidelines of the “Arab Travel Market 2025” activities, the “Al Riha” newspaper had an exclusive interview with Mr. Mohammed Jassim Al Rais, the Executive Vice President of Al Rais Travel and Cruises Agencies, during which he answered our questions, including:

You were selected as one of the top 25 influential figures in the travel and tourism sector in the Middle East in 2018 and received the honorary title of President of the Travel Agents Group in Dubai in 2022. How have these achievements contributed to enhancing the position of Al Rais Company as a market leader?

My selection as one of the top 25 influential figures in the travel and tourism sector in the Middle East in 2018, along with being awarded the honorary title of President of the Travel Agents Group in Dubai in 2022, represents the culmination of a long journey of hard work and innovation in this vital sector. These achievements have enhanced the credibility of Al Rais Travel Group as one of the prominent names in the market, contributing to opening new horizons for international partnerships and solidifying our position as a key provider of integrated travel solutions in the region.

Forbes ranked you in 2023 as one of the 100 strongest leaders in tourism. What challenges did you face in achieving this distinction? What message do you have for the aspiring youth in this sector?

Reaching the list of the top 100 leaders in tourism according to Forbes in 2023 was a real challenge in a rapidly changing market, which requires anticipating expectations and exceeding traditional standards. We faced challenges such as digital transformations and changes in travel patterns post-pandemic. My message to young people is: Do not settle for the ordinary; always be proactive and innovative, as great opportunities come to those who prepare for them with diligence and passion.

You manage several companies under Al Rais Group, such as Al Rais Holidays and Car Rentals. How do you coordinate between these divisions to create a comprehensive tourism experience for customers?

We manage several companies under the umbrella of Al Rais Travel Group, such as Al Rais Holidays and Car Rentals, through a unified strategic vision focused on the comprehensive customer experience.

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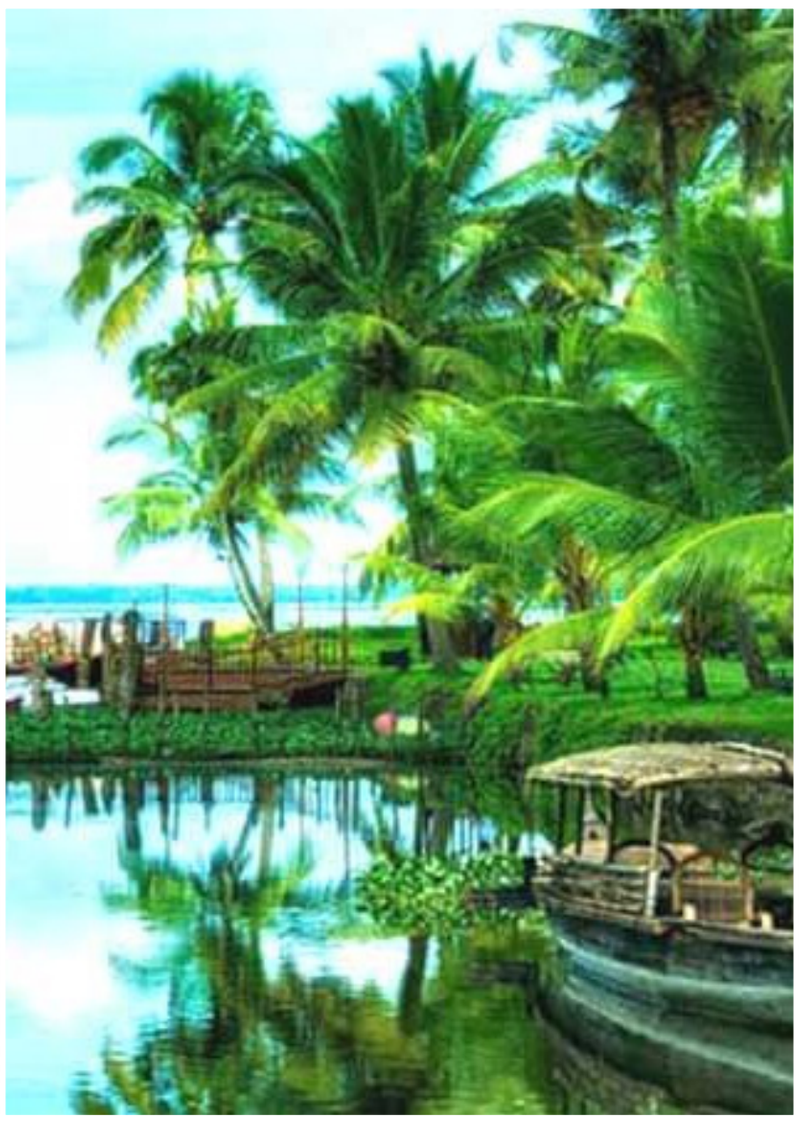
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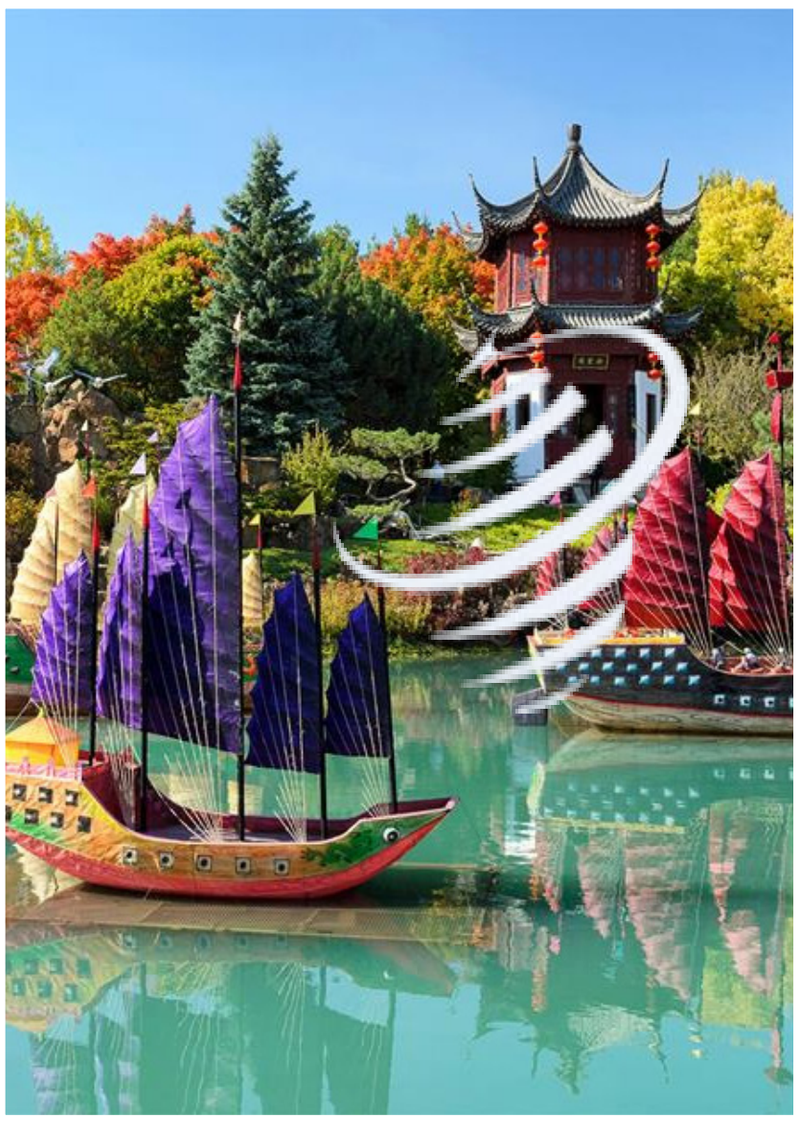
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We integrate services through a single online platform to ensure ease of access and integration, allowing travelers to have a seamless experience that includes booking, accommodation, transportation, and 24/7 support services.

Your journey in developing e-services began in 2008. How do you see the impact of digital transformation on the future of tourism? Do you rely on artificial intelligence to improve customer experience?

Since 2008, we have recognized that digital transformation is no longer an option but a necessity. Today, we use artificial intelligence to personalize the experience for each customer by analyzing travel behaviors and providing smart recommendations. We believe that the future of tourism will be digital, supported by technologies such as self-booking, virtual assistants, and AI-enhanced personalized travel services.

You participated in the Arabian Travel Market. What major initiatives are you planning to launch during your participation in the World Travel Market 2025?

At the World Travel Market 2025, we plan to unveil a range of smart initiatives, including the launch of our new integrated instant booking platform, as well as enhancing our global presence by opening a new representative office in India, supporting our plans for expansion into emerging Asian markets.

How do you handle intense competition with major tourism companies in the UAE? What makes Al Rais Group a unique choice for tourists?

We face competition in the UAE by adhering to three core pillars: continuous innovation, delivering tailored solutions for each client, and building long-term relationships with our partners. What makes Al Rais Travel Group a distinctive choice is the combination of our rich legacy since ١٩٧٧ with a modern vision that places the needs of the traveler at the heart of our strategy.

You mentioned in a previous statement that the support of the leadership in the UAE is key to the success of the tourism sector. How do you embody this support in your projects?

The support of the wise leadership in the UAE for tourism is a source of inspiration for us. We translate this support into tangible investments in projects that enhance tourism diversity, develop digital platforms that align with the country's focus on innovation and sustainability, and contribute to national and global events that promote the UAE as a leading tourist destination.

After your success in attracting thousands of tourists annually, what are your plans to increase these numbers? Are you targeting new markets such as Asia or Africa?

Our future plan relies on diversifying markets and destinations, and we have already begun to strengthen our presence in Asia, particularly through the opening of our representative office in India. We are also targeting emerging markets in Africa and South America, with a focus on promoting authentic and sustainable travel experiences.

How do you balance the promotion of cultural tourism (such as museums) with recreational tourism (like marine events) in the Emirate of Sharjah?

We strive to achieve a dynamic balance between promoting Emirati culture, such as museums and heritage sites, and recreational tourism through marine events and sporting activities. We believe that Sharjah, in particular, offers a comprehensive model that combines culture and entertainment, and we aim to highlight this diversity in our marketing campaigns.

A final word for our readers who are travel enthusiasts?

My message to your readers who are travel enthusiasts is: The world is full of treasures waiting to be discovered. Let travel be your passport to gaining experience, inspiration, and openness to the cultures of the world. We at Al Rais Travel Group will always be your trusted partners in making your dreams come true, no matter where your destination is.

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Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman of the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

> عندما يسير الزائر في أزقة قلب الشارقة، فإنه لا يرى الطين والحجر فقط، بل يستمع إلى حكايات الأجداد، ويستشعر نبض الماضي، ويُدرك الفرق بين الأصالة والتقليد

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa speaks to "Al Rehla": Sharjah Inspires the World... From Culture to Sustainability at the Heart of Arabian Travel Market

- **A New Visual Identity Captures the Emirate's Spirit and Redefines Tourism**
- **1.6 Million Hotel Guests and Double-Digit Growth: Numbers That Confirm the Path Forward**
- **The Heart of Sharjah: Where History Becomes a Living Experience**
- **Specialized Tourism Media: A Strategic Partner, Not Just a Marketing Tool**

Sharjah Raises the Bar at Arabian Travel Market: A Vision Like No Other

At the heart of Arabian Travel Market 2025, Sharjah's participation was far from a routine appearance at one of the world's major tourism events. It was a powerful announcement of a new era in tourism development based on sustainability, cultural belonging, and experiential innovation.

Led by the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, this vision was reflected in every detail of the pavilion, every meeting, and every partnership signed.

Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Chairman of the Authority, did not hide his enthusiasm, emphasizing that Sharjah has moved beyond the foundation stage into a phase of empowerment and leadership in value-added tourism.

"We are not merely competing for numbers; we are building a new tourism model that reflects Sharjah's cultural and intellectual identity and meets the aspirations of global visitors seeking meaning, not just images," Al Midfa said.

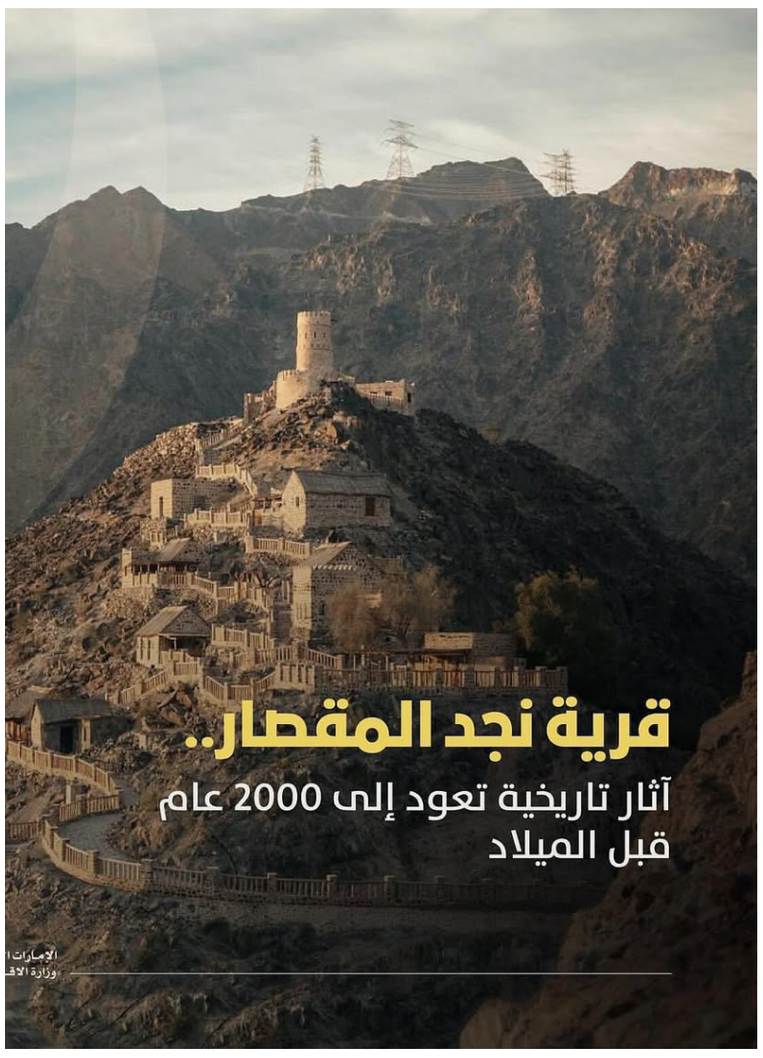
A New Visual Identity for Sharjah: From Logo to a Full Experiential Journey
At the exhibition, the Authority unveiled a new visual identity for Sharjah as a tourist destination — a launch that was not just a design shift but a strategic move encapsulating years of fieldwork, visitor behavior research, and

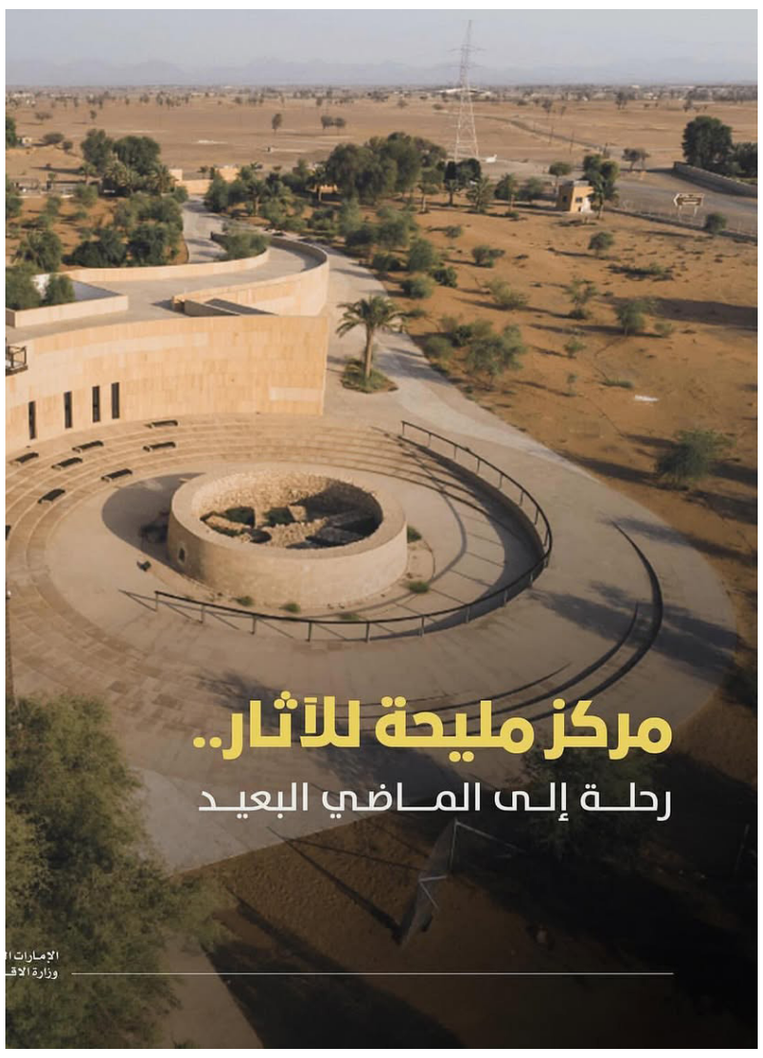
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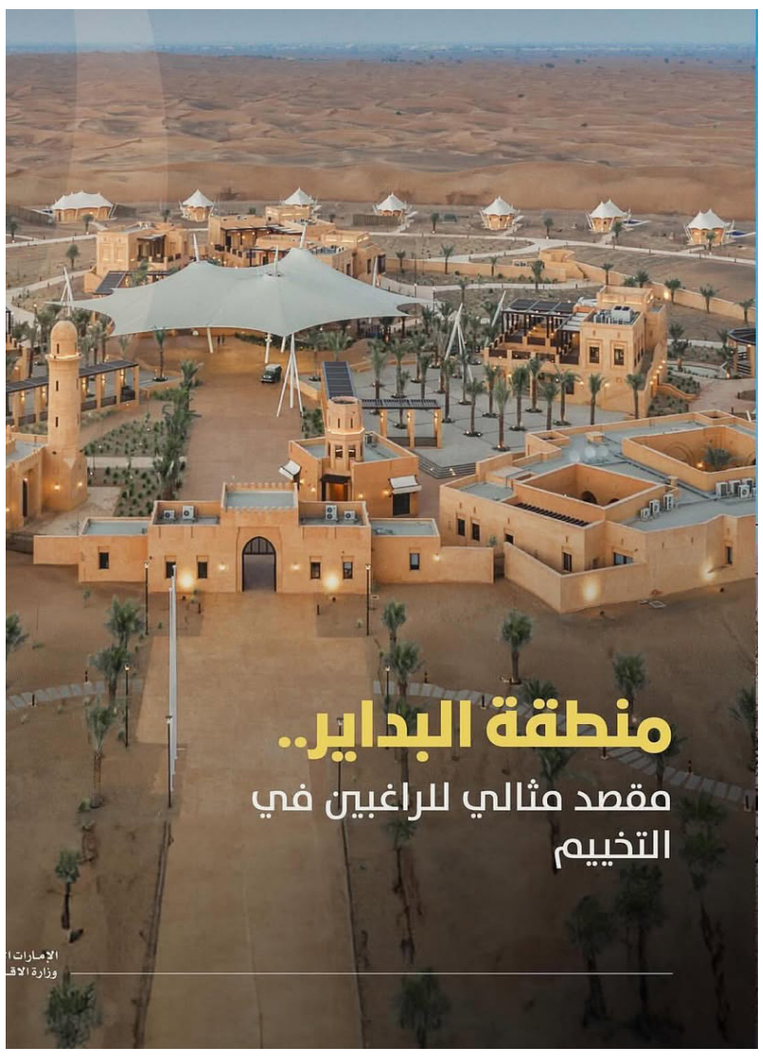




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experience analysis. "The new visual identity embodies the visitor's journey in Sharjah," said Al Midfa. "Every color, shape, and visual element is linked to aspects of life in the emirate – from heritage and nature to innovation and authentic hospitality."

This new identity introduces a fresh approach to digital promotion, interactive experiences, and authentic content creation, active across all platforms from official websites to the visitor's physical journey in hotels and museums.

Growth Numbers Tell a Story of Success: 1.6 Million Guests in 2024 and 11% Growth

Numbers don't lie. In Sharjah's case, they confirm that the strategic plan is hitting its targets.

Over 1.6 million hotel guests stayed in the emirate in 2024, marking an 11% increase over the previous year. Hotel occupancy rates rose to 66%, with over 2.2 million overnight stays.

Al Midfa stressed that these numbers are not the result of temporary campaigns but the fruit of a long-term integrated strategy focused on diversifying tourism offerings, boosting international partnerships, developing infrastructure, and improving service quality.

"We work to ensure a seamless visitor experience, from booking to hotel check-out," he said, emphasizing the small details that make a big difference in visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

The Heart of Sharjah: Streets That Tell Stories

The Heart of Sharjah project is not merely urban development; it is a national cultural endeavor that redraws the old city's landscape, turning it into a living museum. Al Midfa considers this project the cornerstone of Sharjah's cultural tourism philosophy, reflecting the vision of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, to preserve heritage while integrating it into modern life.

"When walking through the alleys of the Heart of Sharjah, visitors experience the pulse of history – feeling the soul of the past rather than seeing mere structures," Al Midfa said.

Tourism Media is a Strategic Asset, Not a Luxury

In today's fiercely competitive global tourism market, it's no longer enough to rely on advertisements or fleeting promotions. Sharjah recognizes that specialized tourism media is a genuine partner in building the emirate's image. Al Midfa stressed the Authority's focus on collaborating closely with specialized media, both locally and internationally, to craft a comprehensive narrative that highlights not just attractions, but the spirit, people, and values that define Sharjah.



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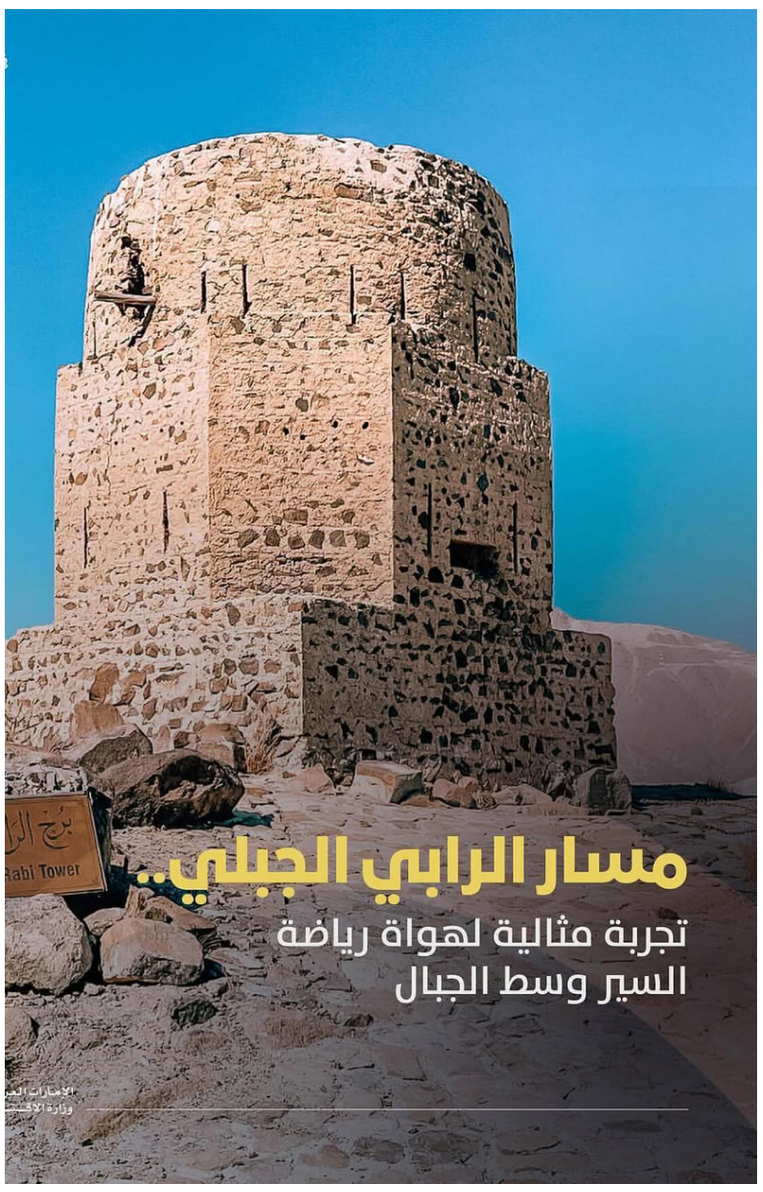
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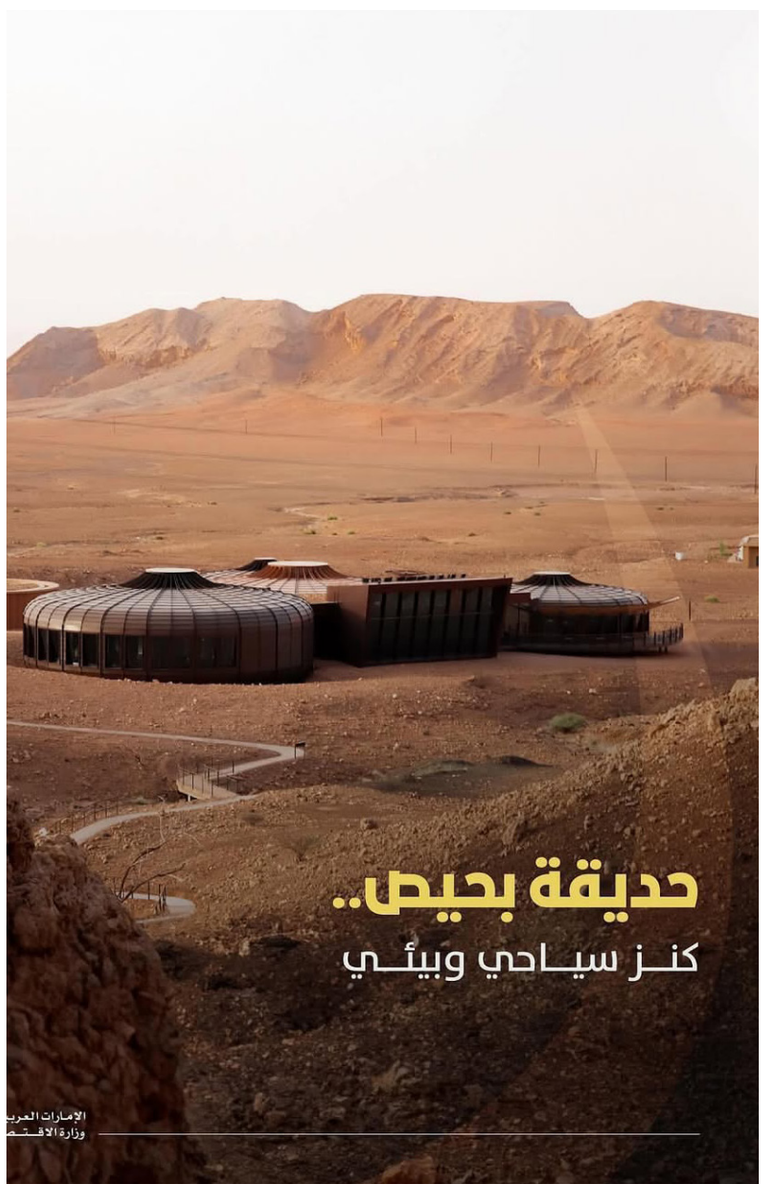
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"We don't just seek coverage; we want writers who understand, live, and narrate our philosophy," he explained, emphasizing the need for long-term relationships with journalists, influencers, and creative storytellers.

Diversifying Tourism Markets: From Gulf Families to European and Asian Travelers

Sharjah's strategy doesn't focus on a single market; it views the entire world as an opportunity, customizing its promotional programs to each demographic.

While maintaining strong appeal among Gulf and Arab families, Sharjah is actively growing its presence in European and Asian markets.

In recent years, visitor numbers from Russia, India, China, and Germany have risen sharply, aided by specially designed packages highlighting eco-tourism, cultural activities, and desert adventures to cater to their tastes.

"We don't just aim to attract tourists; we want them to feel understood, welcomed, and valued," said Al Midfa, noting the Authority's emphasis on data analysis, service quality upgrades, and continuous experience refinement.

Eco and Sports Tourism: A Promising Future and Long-Term Investment

With a global shift toward sustainable tourism, Sharjah has positioned itself as a pioneer in offering unique ecological experiences, from Kalba's mangrove reserves to Wasit Wetland Centre and mountainous adventures in Khorfakkan.

Moreover, Sharjah is boosting its presence in the sports tourism scene, hosting major events like the F1 Powerboat World Championship, which has become an annual highlight for water sports enthusiasts.

"Sports are a new gateway for tourism, attracting younger audiences and stimulating service sectors," Al Midfa added.

A New Generation of Tourism Leaders: Building Skills and Shaping the Future

A key pillar of Sharjah's tourism vision is investing in young national talents.

The Authority has launched training and development programs to empower local cadres to lead the sector's future.

Al Midfa believes tourism requires a renewed mindset, openness to diverse cultures, and professional expertise.

"We want a generation that sees tourism not as luxury but as a national responsibility," he said, encouraging youth to specialize in destination management, digital tourism transformation, and experiential product development.

Awards Are Not the Goal but the Result: Forbes Recognizes Al Midfa Among Top Tourism Leaders

In 2023, Forbes Middle East named Khalid Jasim Al Midfa among the 100 most powerful leaders in the tourism and travel sector. Receiving the accolade with notable humility, Al Midfa attributed the honor to the dedication of his team, leadership support, and partner collaboration.

"The award adds responsibility and reassures us that we're on the right path," he said, stressing that true success lies in sustainable growth, expanded impact, and an enhanced holistic visitor experience.

Sharjah After a Decade: A City That Inspires the World

When asked about his vision for Sharjah in ten years, Al Midfa doesn't speak of skyscrapers or records. Instead, he envisions a balanced community that cherishes its past, invests in its present, and dreams uniquely about its future.

"We want visitors to remember Sharjah as a city that inspired, taught, and made them feel they belonged," he said, concluding with an optimistic view rooted in his deep belief that tourism is not merely an industry but a civilizational message.

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Markus Aklin

Vice President of Development for Asia-Pacific and the Middle East at Langham Hospitality Group

> We have successfully attracted significant interest from local developers seeking partnerships with a brand that possesses a rich heritage and a deep understanding of the finest details of the hospitality experience

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Between Ambition and Vision ... Langham Hospitality Maps Its Expansion in the Gulf

- From Asia to the Gulf: Lessons Learned and the Journey of Building Strategic Partnerships
- Beyond Hotels: A Holistic Vision Towards Integrated and Sustainable Travel Experiences
- A New Reading of the Gulf Market: Where Do the Real Opportunities in Hospitality Lie?
- Towards a New Horizon: How Langham Contributes to Achieving 2030 Tourism Visions

On the sidelines of the "Arabian Travel Market 2025," Al-Rehla newspaper had an exclusive meeting with Mr. Markus Aklin, Vice President of Development for Asia-Pacific and the Middle East at Langham Hospitality Group, who spoke with transparency and passion about the group's journey, its future aspirations, and its vision for the Gulf market amidst the rapidly evolving dynamics of the global tourism sector.

In the bustling exhibition corridors teeming with vitality and new ideas, Aklin affirmed that Langham's participation in this global event goes beyond brand promotion and awareness.

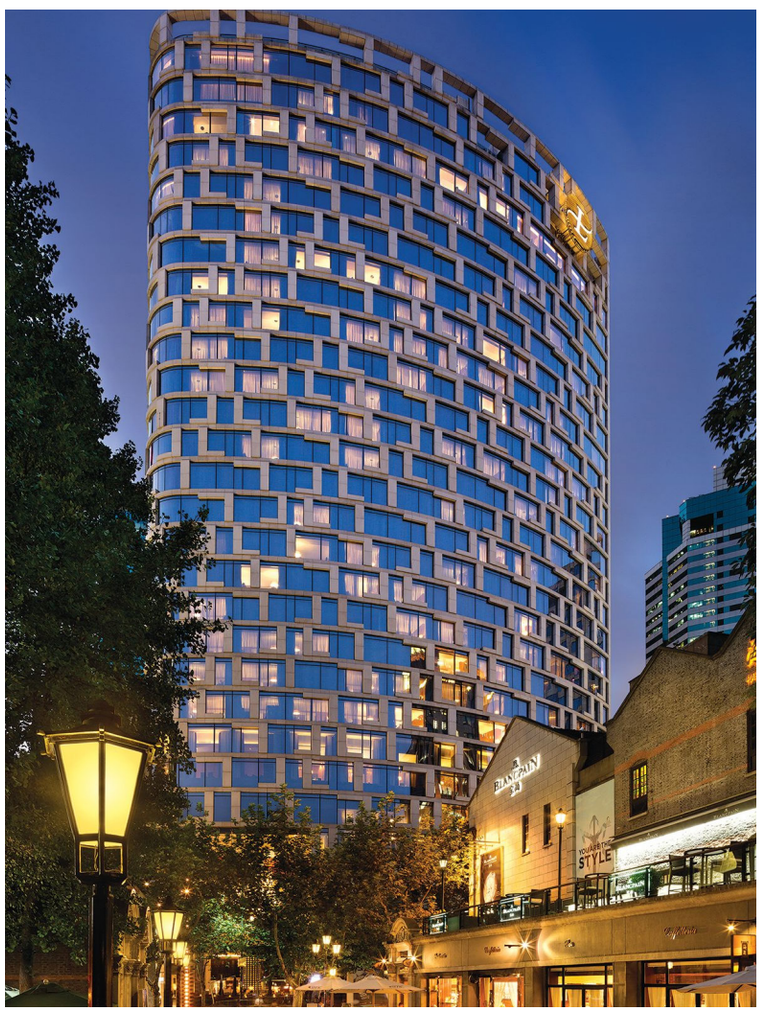
"Our participation in Arabian Travel Market is a strategic platform to strengthen the group's presence in the Gulf region," says Aklin, pointing out that the exhibition offers them the opportunity to meet with key investors and decision-makers and to align with the ambitious tourism development plans adopted by GCC countries, in line with Langham's goals.

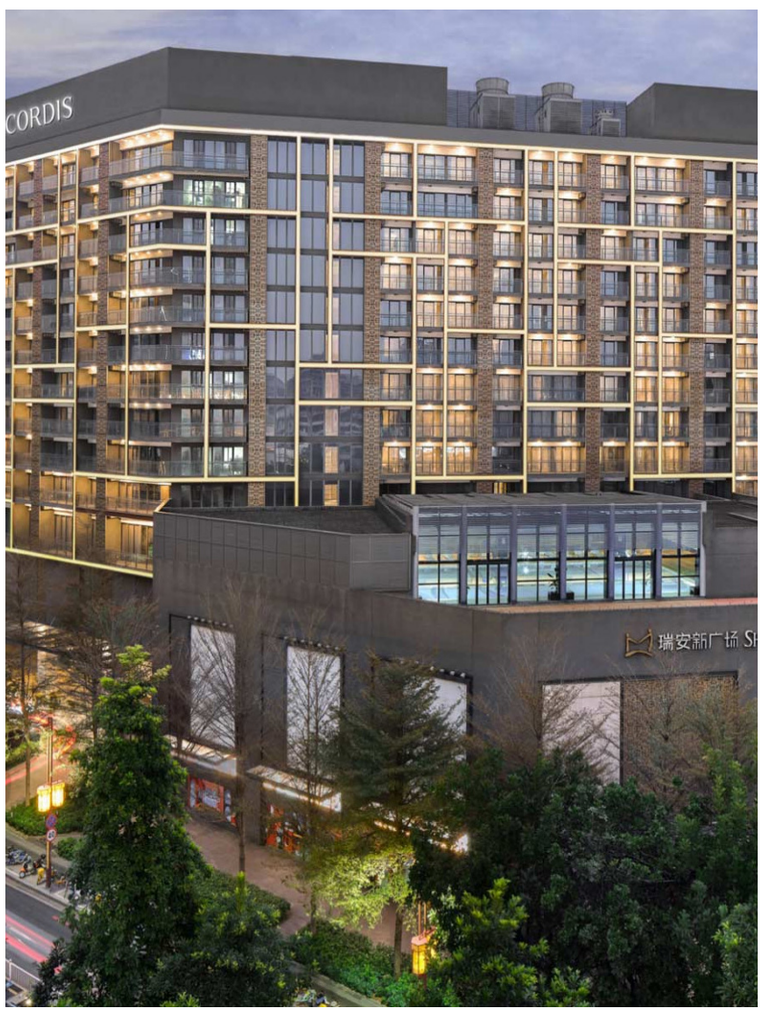
With major projects on the future agenda, most notably the anticipated opening of "The Langham Dei-ra" in 2029, Langham appears determined to establish its presence as a major player in the regional hotel scene.

"We are working to offer a hospitality experience that blends classical luxury with contemporary sensibility, giving special importance to local culture and excellence in service," Aklin adds. When discussing priority markets, the Gulf stands at the forefront of Langham's expansion plans. Thanks to a booming tourism sector and a strong business travel base, Aklin sees the region as an ideal environment for their luxury brands like "The Langham" and the contem-

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porary luxury brand "Cordis."

He adds: "We have successfully attracted significant interest from local developers seeking partnerships with a brand that possesses a rich heritage and a deep understanding of the finest details of the hospitality experience."

While many hotel brands rely on conventional replication of global hospitality experiences, Langham stands out by infusing a refined Asian sensibility into gastronomy and wellness offerings, resonating particularly with Gulf visitors seeking authentic and renewed experiences.

As for his assessment of the maturity of the Gulf tourism sector compared to the well-established markets in Asia and Europe, Aklin sees the regional scene as exceptionally dynamic. "It is true that the history of tourism in the Gulf does not stretch back centuries like in Europe or Asia, but today it is witnessing a qualitative evolution supported by massive investments and a clear vision," he says confidently.

Aklin believes that this momentum will enable Gulf countries to compete globally as major centers for luxury travel and unique experiences in the coming years.

Amidst this rapid growth, regional exhibitions and forums like Arabian Travel Market play a pivotal role.

"These events are not merely promotional showcases but genuine platforms for forging long-term strategic partnerships," Aklin confirms.

He adds that direct meetings with government entities and developers accelerate the process of turning theoretical plans into tangible projects, thus fostering sustainable tourism development in the region.

Regarding the criteria Langham uses to select its future destinations in the Gulf, Aklin explained that the process is based on meticulous analyses, including the growth of tourism source markets, the competitive landscape, economic stability, and the compatibility of the brand identity with each destination.

He did not overlook the importance of infrastructure, air connectivity, travel seasons, and the commitment of local partners to high design standards and operational discipline.

"We look forward to seeing The Langham and Cordis hotels becoming landmarks in key cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Cairo, and Muscat, with special attention also given to emerging resort destinations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia," Aklin adds enthusiastically.

As for potential future participations in other events such as Riyadh Travel Fair or Dubai Hospitality Show, Aklin hinted that the group carefully evaluates these events, choosing what aligns with its strategic priorities and stages of growth.

If the Gulf increasingly serves as a source of inspiration, the evolving expectations of travelers here have had a clear global impact on Langham's future strategies.

"We are witnessing growing interest in unique personal experiences, wellness, and sustainability, which are trends shaping our expansion decisions worldwide," Aklin explains.

He adds that observing the evolving tastes of Gulf travelers provides the group with a genuine window into where and how their hotel brands should grow.

Speaking of major national visions like Saudi Vision 2030, Aklin emphasized that Langham looks forward to being an active part of realizing these ambitions.

"Through projects like The Langham Deira, we are keen to offer a harmonious blend that combines local heritage with global luxury," he says.

He also stressed the group's commitment to supporting human capital development through advanced training programs aimed at empowering Gulf nationals with the skills necessary to assume leadership roles in the hospitality industry in the future.

Aklin concluded his talk with a profound forward-looking perspective, pointing out that maintaining the Gulf as a global destination requires a focus on developing local talent, enhancing authentic cultural experiences, and improving connectivity between GCC countries to facilitate the movement of tourists across them.

With a smile reflecting boundless ambition, Aklin said: "The hospitality of the future is not merely about building hotels, but about building bridges between cultures."



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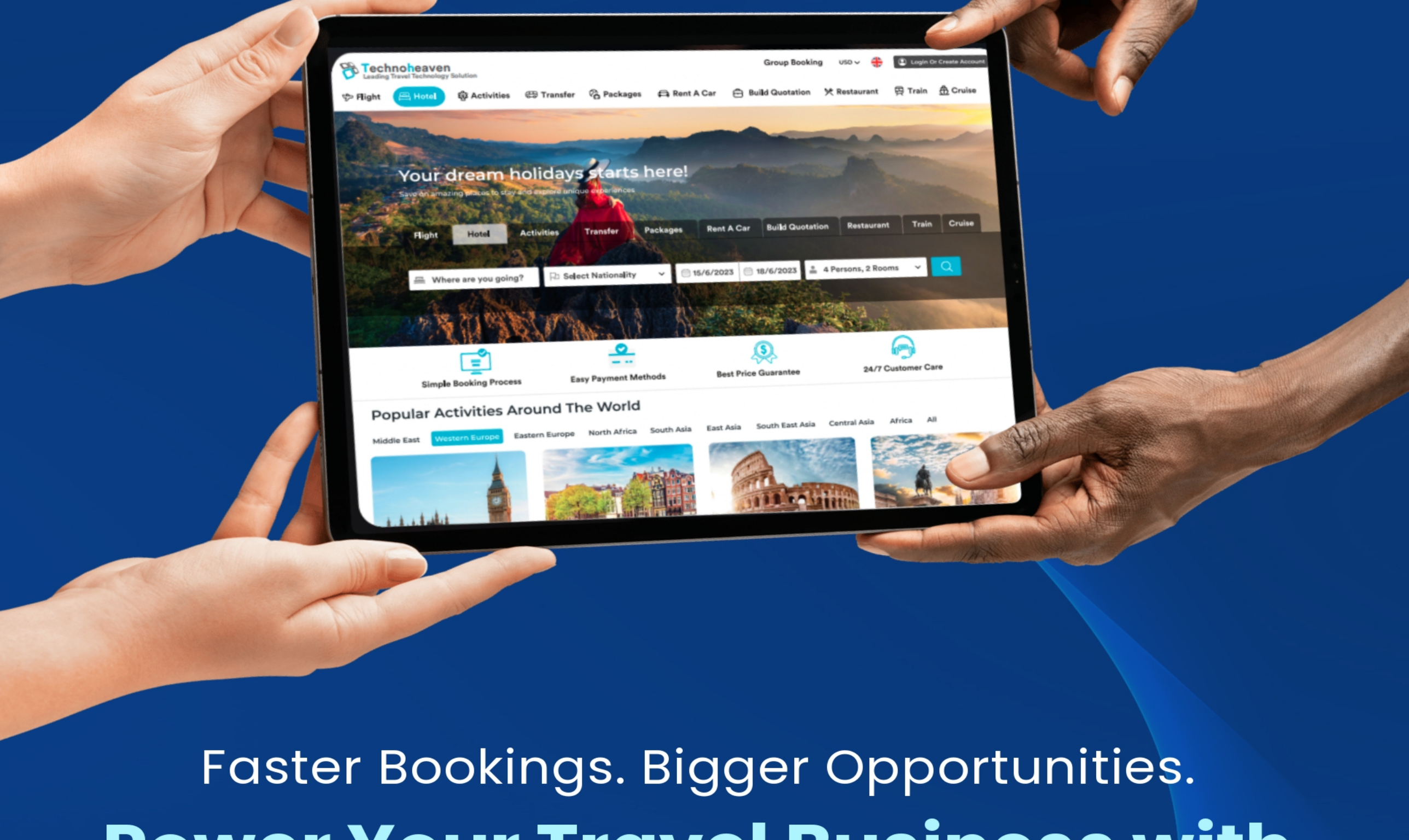


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