

Business Traveller

MIDDLE EAST

NOVEMBER 2023

businesstraveller.com

CLEAR THE RUNWAY

UAE's national airline Etihad Airways turns 20 this month

PREMIUM ECONOMY

A report on global carriers offering this cabin class

WELLNESS IN MALDIVES

In search of tranquillity at these luxury resorts

PLUS

*Elevator Pitch • Lifestyle
• Tried & Tested*



*Sustainability in business
travel rises to the fore*

RESPONSIBLE CHOICES

AIRSIDE

TÜRKİYE

A COUNTRY OF WONDERS



TURKISH AIRLINES

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



REGULARS

06 UPFRONT

The latest airline, hotel and travel news

10 SUSTAINABLE TRAVELLER

Best practices from across the region

12 GLOBAL NEWS

An update on international travel

28 HOTEL VIEWS

Aldert van Zyl, general manager of Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh Convention and Exhibition Center

34 ELEVATOR PITCH

Dale MacPhee, general manager of Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis

36 OPINION

How to use technology on the pathway to net zero

52 LIFESTYLE

Shaving products and accessories to raise your grooming game

66 POSTCARD

NEOM unveils Leyja in Saudi Arabia

FEATURES

22 PREMIUM ECONOMY UPDATE

From brand-new cabins to Michelin-starred dining, global carriers have continued to evolve this offering over the past 12 months

30 TO ABU DHABI AND BEYOND

As Etihad marks its 20th anniversary this month, CEO Antonioaldo Neves outlines where the real opportunities for growth lie for the airline

40 LUXURY TREADING LIGHTLY

The line between environmentalism and luxury travel is slowly blurring

46 A NEW WELLNESS FRONTIER

These picturesque resorts in the Maldives offer a host of opportunities to recharge and rejuvenate yourself

ON THE COVER



16

THE CHANGE IS COMING

The region's aviation, hospitality and destination stakeholders are coming together to drive a green future



THE REPORT

TRIED & TESTED HOTELS

58 Bab Al Shams, Dubai

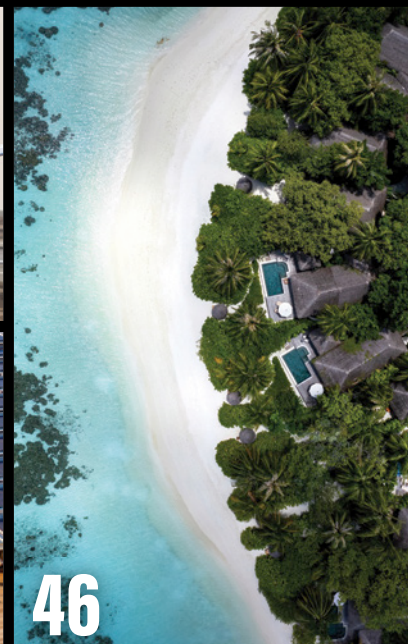
59 Pullman Dubai Downtown

60 Maison Delano Paris

62 Radisson RED London Heathrow

SMART TRAVELLER

64 Our guide to...wifi in the air





The world is watching. This month, as the COP28 summit takes place in Dubai and representatives of countries from around the world gather to

discuss the way forward for a more sustainable future, this region isn't waiting on the change. The Middle East has been proactive in charging forward with its net zero emissions targets, with countries such as the UAE and Saudi

Arabia taking the lead. Business travel, and its many stakeholders including airlines, hotels and entire destinations themselves, are rising to the occasion and showcasing a roadmap where growth isn't sacrificed at the expense of going green. Read more about them in this month's cover story (pg16).

Come mid-November, and you'll find us gazing skywards taking in the aerobatic displays and the flypasts that are characteristic of the Dubai Airshow. Whispers of mega deals being signed off during the biennial event are growing ever louder. On the aviation front, UAE's national carrier Etihad turns 20 this month. Its CEO Antonoaldo Neves took charge of the airline last year and he has since then been presiding over an unprecedented growth phase for the carrier. It recently acquired a brand-new 787-10 Dreamliner which is the first of a total of four 787 Dreamliners set to be delivered this year, has announced network expansions to the likes of Boston and Copenhagen, and will move to its new home of Terminal A at Abu Dhabi International this month. Read our exclusive interview with Neves (pg30) where he explains what comes next for the airline.

Meanwhile, we're weeks away from our winter vacation, and putting together a wishlist of where we'd like to be at that time seems like a good idea. If locations within the Indian Ocean appeal to you, be sure to read our feature on the Maldives and a few of its stunning properties that prioritise wellness (pg46), and also read more about how resorts in the Maldives are trying to be among the most sustainable on the planet (pg40).

Enjoy planning your winter travel schedule. Enjoy the issue.

Varun Godinho, Editor

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



PREMIUM ECONOMY

The latest updates on carriers offering this cabin class
(Page 22)



ETIHAD @ 20

An exclusive interview with the airline's CEO Antonoaldo Neves
(Page 30)



WELLNESS IN MALDIVES

Recharge and rejuvenate at these luxury resorts
(Page 46)

Business Traveller Middle East

Business Traveller Middle East is jointly published by Motivate Media Group and Panacea Media Ltd

MOTIVATE MEDIA GROUP

Editor-in-Chief Obaid Humaid Al Tayer
Managing Partner and Group Editor Ian Fairservice

Editor Varun Godinho

Art Director Clarkwin Cruz

Editorial Co-ordinator Londresa Flores

Contributors Tamsin Cocks, Mark Caswell, Jeremy

Tredinnick, Sarah Joseph, Camille Macawili, Iain

Akerman, Hannah Brandler, Gemma Greenwood

General Manager - Production S Sunil Kumar

Production Manager Binu Purandaran

Production Supervisor Venita Pinto

Chief Commercial Officer Anthony Milne

Group Sales Manager Chaitali Khimji

Senior Sales Manager Murali Narayanan

PANACEA MEDIA LTD

Managing Director Julian Gregory

Associate Publisher Middle East Rania Apthorpe



**MOTIVATE
MEDIA GROUP**

HEAD OFFICE: Media One Tower, Dubai Media City, PO Box 2331, Dubai, UAE; Tel: +971 4 427 3000; Fax: +971 4 428 2266; E-mail: btm@motivate.ae

DUBAI MEDIA CITY: SD 2-94, 2nd Floor, Building 2, Dubai, UAE; Tel: +971 4 390 3550; Fax: +971 4 390 4845

ABU DHABI: PO Box 43072, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Tel: +971 2 677 2005; Fax: +971 2 657 3401; Email: motivate-adh@motivate.ae

SAUDI ARABIA: Office 452, Regus Offices, 4th Floor, Al Hamad Tower, King Fahad Road, Al Olaya, Riyadh, KSA; Tel: +966 11 834 3595 / +966 11 834 3596; Fax: +966 11 834 3501; Email: motivate@motivate.ae

LONDON: Motivate Publishing Ltd, Acre House, 11/15 William Road, London, NW1 3ER, UK; E-mail: motivateuk@motivate.ae



Panacea Media Ltd

41-43 Maddox Street, London, W1S 2PD;
Tel: +44(0)20 7821 2700; businessstraveller.com

Panacea Publishing Asia Ltd

#2408 24/F Dominion Centre, 43-59 Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hong Kong; Tel: +852 2594 9300; Fax: +852 25196846

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Email: subscriptions@motivate.ae; Tel: +971 4 427 3542

businessstraveller.com/middle-east



[businessstraveller.me](https://www.businessstraveller.me)

[btmiddleeast](https://www.btmiddleeast.com)



RENEWING OUR PLEDGE TO SUSTAINABILITY



At Rove Hotels, we have always been passionate about sustainability.

In anticipation of COP28, we've pledged to plant 28,000 trees, one for each room booked during the event. Being environmentally conscious is woven into our daily practices; from replacing plastic with glass water bottles, reducing paper usage by over 90% through digital processes and composting 100% of our food waste, we have achieved many milestones in our path towards net-positive hospitality. As such, all Rove Hotels boast the prestigious Green Key eco-label.

Stay with us to see first-hand how we're making a difference.
For more information visit rovehotels.com.

EXPLORING
WITHOUT
BORDERS

[ROVEHOTELS.COM](https://rovehotels.com)

R O V E
H O T E L S

All-business Beond airline to begin operations imminently



AN ALL-BUSINESS CLASS airline is set to commence operations this month with its hub in the Maldivian capital of Male. Initially, the airline will operate flights from Munich, Riyadh and Zurich to Velana International airport (MLE), followed by services from Milan and Dubai to Male in March 2024.

From Riyadh, the inaugural flight will depart on November 9 and will operate as a twice-weekly service every Thursday and Saturday. The first flight from Munich to Male will commence on November 15, operating every Wednesday and Sunday, with a refuelling stop at Al Maktoum International (DWC) in Dubai wherein guests will remain on-board.

Similarly, flights from Munich will also start from November 15, operated every Tuesday and Friday. That service will also have a refuelling stop at DWC en route to Male and on the way back too.

Beond will initially operate just one Airbus A319 aircraft in a single cabin class configuration fitted with 44 180-degree lay-flat seats. Additional Airbus A321neo aircraft, which Beond expects to receive in 2023, will feature 68 seats in a 2-2 configuration. The airline says that it aims to have 32 aircraft and connect 60 destinations within five years.



Saudia unveils new brand identity

SAUDI ARABIA'S flag carrier Saudia recently showcased its new brand identity and livery. The previous dark blue tailfin and capitalised 'SAUDIA' on aircraft fuselages has now been replaced with a green colour on the tailfin and engines, and a green and blue stripe across the fuselage, alongside the 'Saudia' name. Other elements of the rebranding include new uniforms for cabin crew and ground staff, the launch of an artificial intelligence virtual assistant, and locally inspired cuisines on-board its aircraft.

Marriott announces two new properties in NEOM's Trojena

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL has signed an agreement with NEOM to open two luxury properties including Saudi Arabia's first W Hotel and a JW Marriott hotel in Trojena. The W Hotel in Trojena will feature 236 guest rooms, including 47 suites, with views of the mountains and a freshwater lake.

Also, a new JW Marriott Hotel in Trojena will be situated in The Bow. Immersed inside the lake and surrounded by mountains, Marriott says that the substructure will be designed to withstand the weight and pressure of the surrounding water. The JW Marriott property will include 500 rooms and suites, as well as meeting spaces, five dining venues, swimming pools and a spa.





MAJOR EXPANSION PLANNED FOR ABHA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

SAUDI ARABIA has revealed a master plan for a major expansion of its Abha International airport. The project will involve expanding its terminal area to 65,000 sqm, compared to 10,500 sqm currently existing at the airport, as part of the first phase which is expected to be completed by 2028.

The airport's capacity will also increase to accommodate more than 13 million passengers annually – a nearly tenfold increase from its current 1.5 million capacity. Furthermore, it will handle in excess of 90,000 flights per year, a significant increase from its current capability of 30,000 flights per year. The project involves the construction of passenger boarding bridges, self-service facilities, and high-capacity parking zones. The airport will also feature 20 gates, along with 41 check-in counters with seven new self-service check-in points.



New Anantara property to open in Abu Dhabi

MINOR HOTELS has announced the upcoming opening of a new ultra-private luxury resort in the UAE. The 22-key Anantara Santorini Abu Dhabi Retreat will launch in Q4 2023 and will include the option for exclusive use buy-outs too. The low-lying white buildings will house a range of accommodation offerings with sea views. The resort will have a private beach, an expansive outdoor pool and an indoor cinema where on-demand private screenings can be arranged. With this upcoming opening, Minor Hotels will have eight Anantara hotels and resorts in the UAE and a total of 11 in the region.

Qatar Airways gets new group chief executive

BADR MOHAMMED AL-MEER has been named as the new group chief executive for Qatar Airways. The most recent position held by Al-Meer was that of chief operating officer of Hamad International airport. Al-Meer replaces Akbar Al Baker who was appointed as CEO of the airline in 1997 and has been with the country's national carrier for 27 years.

Qatar Airways said in a statement that Al Baker will be stepping down from his current position as group chief executive effective November 5, 2023. Apart from Qatar Airways, the outgoing group CEO Al Baker also held a key role in the country's tourism department. Saad bin Ali bin Saad Al Kharji will now replace Al Baker as chairman of Qatar Tourism.





Red Sea Global to develop new island resort

8

RED SEA GLOBAL (RSG) has revealed plans for Thuwal Private Retreat, an exclusive buy-out-only island destination set to welcome its first guests next year. Located on a 1.7-hectare sandy islet on the Red Sea coast, these guests can access the island resort via a private jetty. It will have a main three-bedroom villa, three one-bedroom suites, a beach club, a gym and a wellness centre.

RSG is the developer behind The Red Sea and Amaala destinations. Thuwal Private Retreat is independent of those two destinations, but will be a wholly RSG-owned entity. In a first for RSG, it says that there are no third-party hospitality or hotel operators involved in this development. "It is the first time we are creating a destination owned and operated end-to-end by the expert team here at Red Sea Global, from development and planning to accommodation and guest services," said John Pagano, group CEO of Red Sea Global.

TUS AIRWAYS COMMENCES FLIGHTS TO DXB

TUS AIRWAYS, the largest airline in Cyprus, began flights to Dubai from Larnaca last month. The carrier operates an Airbus A320 aircraft on this route.

Significantly, the new service between Larnaca and Dubai represents TUS Airways' first scheduled service to the Middle East. It will operate flights between Larnaca and Dubai International's Terminal 1 twice per week, on Thursdays and Sundays. On average, one-way fares start at Dhs530, including taxes.



BRITISH AIRWAYS TO RESUME FLIGHTS TO ABU DHABI

BRITISH AIRWAYS is set to Abu Dhabi for the first time since early 2020. Daily year-round flights will restart on April 20, 2024, operated by its Boeing 787-9 aircraft, complementing the carrier's services to Dubai which operates up to three times daily.

Flight BA73 will depart Heathrow at 10.25pm, arriving in Abu Dhabi at 8.30am the following day, with the return leg BA72 leaving the UAE capital at 10.10am and landing back in London at 3.20pm. In the UAE's capital, the carrier will operate from the newly-opened Terminal A at Abu Dhabi International airport.



Curating world-class living experiences in hospitality

The Ascott Limited



Seventh-time winner of 'Middle East's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand 2023, and Sixth consecutive winner of 'Saudi Arabia's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand 2023' by World Travel Awards.

Home to global living spaces that whisper comfort, elegance and prestige, international leading lodging owner-operator, The Ascott Limited is spearheading not only on its growth-front, but also in recognition across its portfolio within the region.

Catering to the needs and aspirations of business and leisure travellers, the brand offers guests 14 addresses to choose from within the bustling cities of Abha, Al Khobar, Doha, Dubai, Manama, Muscat and Riyadh. Each property offers serviced apartments that feature well-defined living and dining areas, fully equipped kitchenettes and world-class amenities.

These properties include Ascott Park Place Dubai, Citadines Culture Village Dubai and Citadines Metro Central Dubai (Franchise) in the UAE; Citadines Al Ghubrah Muscat in Oman; include Citadines

Abha; Somerset Al Fateh in Bahrain; Somerset West Bay Doha and Somerset Al Mansoura Doha (Franchise) in Qatar; and Citadines Abha, Ascott Rafal Olaya Riyadh, Ascott Corniche Al Khobar, Somerset Downtown Al Khobar in KSA.

All properties are a participant of the brand's worldwide loyalty programme – '*Ascott Star Rewards*', that offers guests the best booking prices, points redemption, complimentary upgrades, birthday vouchers and more. Non-members can download the 'Discover ASR' app and join the complimentary membership today.

The Ascott Limited has recently been awarded 'Middle East's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand' 2023 for the seventh time this year, and 'Saudi Arabia's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand' 2023 for the sixth consecutive year, by the renowned World Travel Awards, recognizing their excellent services, continuing its promise to offer guests memorable homes in the cities they choose to live within the region.



discoverasr.com
asr ascott
star
rewards



THE UNLIMITED
COLLECTION

citadines



PRÉFÉRENCE
HOTELS

Oakwood

FOX
HOTELS



HARRIS
HOTELS

somerset

pop!
HOTELS

The Crest Collection

Vertu
HOTELS

yello
HOTELS.COM

A trusted hospitality company, Ascott's presence extends across Asia Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the USA. Its diversified accommodation offerings span serviced residences, coliving properties and hotels. Ascott's award-winning brands include Ascott, Citadines, lyf, Oakwood, Quest, Somerset, The Crest Collection, The Unlimited Collection, Preference, Fox, Harris, POP!, Vertu and Yello.

www.discoverasr.com | +971 800 272 688

Emirates strikes deal for blended SAF at Dubai International

Shell Aviation has reached an agreement with Emirates to supply the airline with more than 300,000 gallons of blended Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) for use at the airline's hub in Dubai (DXB). Its delivery will commence before the end of the year and it is the first time that SAF will be supplied through the DXB airport fuelling system. The airline will track the fuel's delivery and its use data through Avelia, a blockchain-enabled platform.

Separately, Emirates also recently expanded its partnership with Neste for the supply of more than three million gallons of blended Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel at two key airports – one each in Amsterdam and Singapore. The SAF will be blended with conventional jet fuel and supplied over the course of 2024 and 2025 for Emirates flights departing from Amsterdam Schiphol and Singapore Changi airports.



NH COLLECTION LAUNCHES VEGAN-FRIENDLY ROOMS IN DUBAI

NH COLLECTION DUBAI THE PALM

has launched its vegan-friendly rooms, in what it says is the first of its kind initiative in Dubai. These rooms will feature a wide range of sustainable and vegan amenities. The rooms will offer duvets, pillow fillings, and mattress toppers made from sustainable materials.

Guests will also find a selection of compostable amenities in the room, along with vegan snacks. The hotel says that its in-room wet amenities are 100 per cent vegan, while the dry amenities are made from sustainable products, free from animal-derived ingredients and have never been tested on animals. For guests dining at the property, they would also be able to find multiple vegan culinary options across its food and beverage outlets.

Atlantis Dubai announces latest 1USD conservation programme beneficiaries

ATLANTIS DUBAI has selected nine conservation and sustainability projects to receive funding from its Atlantis Atlas Project 1 USD initiative. From June 2022 to May 2023, for every marine animal experience participated in by a guest at the resort, Atlantis Dubai contributed US\$1, resulting in a US\$140,000 fund.

The beneficiaries of this year's funding mainly work on fields related to wildlife, sharks, dolphins, and corals as well as those addressing two key threats to the ocean including unsustainable seafood and plastic pollution. This year, the 1 USD contribution fund will continue to support five organisations from among the programme's beneficiaries last year, as well as three new organisations.

The new project partners for 2023-2024 include Emirates Environmental Group, Fujairah Research Centre and the Veterinary School of Toulouse. The six partners that Atlantis Dubai will continue to support this year after having done so the previous year include the United Arab Emirates University (for two programmes), the Zayed University, Goumbook, IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group and New York University Abu Dhabi.



INTERCONTINENTAL DUBAI MARINA PARTNERS WITH SIEMENS ON ENERGY REDUCTION INITIATIVE

INTERCONTINENTAL DUBAI MARINA recently partnered with Siemens on a project to help reduce the property's energy consumption. Siemens undertook a retrofitting project encompassing the hotel's air conditioning, hot water systems and energy control systems throughout the InterContinental Dubai Marina Hotel and Residence Suites building. InterContinental says that the measures are projected to reduce the hotel's annual energy costs by 15 per cent – or in real-world terms, a reduction that equates to an annual elimination of 648 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

"The completion of this initiative represents a significant milestone in our hotel's journey towards environmental sustainability and energy conservation. It aligns seamlessly with the IHG global Green Engage Program and underscores our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint by using energy and water more efficiently," says the hotel's general manager, Antje Sahling.



SIX SENSES ZIGHY BAY GROWS CORAL RESTORATION PROGRAMME

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, Six Senses Zighy Bay in Oman's Musandam Peninsula initiated a two-year coral restoration programme. Coral fragments were collected by the resort's dive centre from nearby sites and attached to ten metal frames in the sea. Approximately 50 coral fragments were added to each of the frames, which were in turn made from recycled construction material.

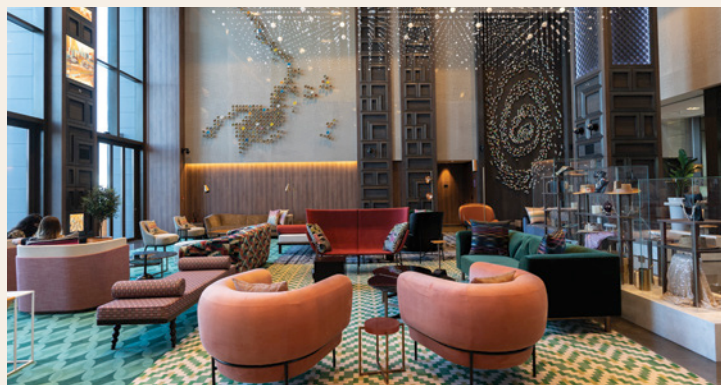
Six Senses says that the ultimate goal of this project is to re-introduce the two main coral species previously present on the reef known as *Acropora* and *Pocillopora*, to group the coral fragments to lend them a higher chance of survival, and wait until they reach maturity, spawn and repopulate the entire reef.

The property has also encouraged its guests and members of the Environment Authority to participate in this programme with some of them assisting in attaching coral fragments to the frames.

Hyatt Centric Jumeirah Dubai hosts Veganologie pop-up

LAST MONTH, Hyatt Centric Jumeirah Dubai organised a pop-up on its premises of the UAE-based Veganologie brand led by Angana Maheshwari. Veganologie uses raw materials such as plastic bottles and apple peels to create stylish accessories including handbags, wallets, crossbody bags, laptop cases and card holders. "At Hyatt Centric, we believe that travel in style and environmental responsibility can coexist. Every day, we strive to improve our initiatives for more sustainable hospitality. While we acknowledge we still have a long way to go, we remain optimistic and committed to searching for ideas and trends to improve our footprint continuously for a brighter and greener future," says Britta Leick-Milde, the hotel's manager.

The property has been making attempts to become increasingly sustainable through initiatives such as using condensation water to meet its irrigation needs, having 15 per cent of the property's hot water requirements powered by solar energy, waste management and segregation practices, the use of 100 per cent plant-based bottles of Al Ain drinking water, switching dry amenities from plastic to wooden and a Conserve Program that reduces the frequency with which bathroom and bedroom linen are changed for guests.





1



United Airlines begins WILMA boarding process

United Airlines has changed the way it boards passengers.

The US carrier is now employing the so-called 'WILMA' method, which sees customers boarded in the order of window, middle then aisle. The trials of this method, the airline said, showed a saving of up to two minutes on the time taken to board passengers.

2



Air Canada unveils upgraded A321 aircraft

Air Canada has revealed its redesigned A321 aircraft featuring a new cabin interior and enhanced tech features. In a first for narrowbody aircraft, its exterior tail and belly cameras are now connected to the IFE system. Additionally, the seatback monitors are Bluetooth-enabled and customers can also watch live TV.

3



New MICHELIN Key for hotels introduced

The MICHELIN Guide has announced the MICHELIN Key for hotels. These hotels will be anonymously reviewed. MICHELIN said its teams had selected more than 5,000 properties worldwide, and are currently "in the field". The inaugural MICHELIN Key selection will be published in the first half of 2024.

4



Minor Hotel's Avani opens in Venice

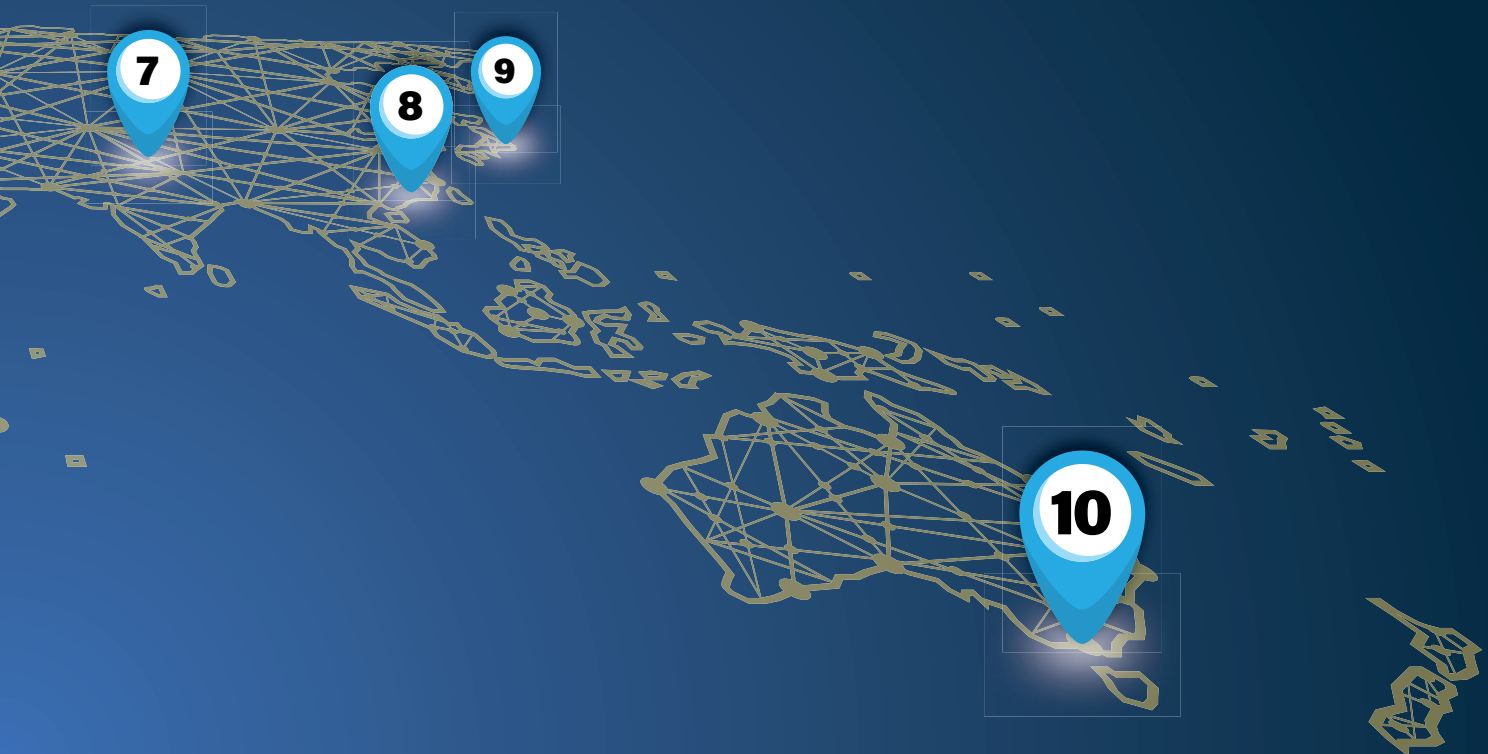
Avani Rio Novo Venice is a 144-key hotel that recently opened in the Dorsoduro district. For meetings and events, the property's 8 Millimetri Cicchetti & Wine cinematic-themed restaurant can be combined with dedicated meeting spaces on the ground floor. These flexible event spaces can accommodate up to 130 participants.

5

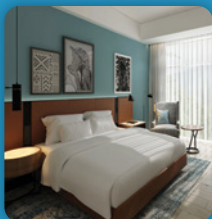


EGYPTAIR introduces Shanghai route

Star Alliance member EGYPTAIR will launch a new Cairo-Shanghai route on November 16. It will deploy a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft on the thrice-weekly service to Shanghai every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. It marks the airline's fourth destination in China, with the others being Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou.



6



Four points by Sheraton enters Uganda

Four Points by Sheraton has debuted in Africa with a new opening in Uganda. Four Points by Sheraton Kampala features 142 guestrooms, eight hybrid event spaces including a 250sqm ballroom, a fitness centre, heated rooftop pool and three dining concepts. The hotel is located in the capital's upscale Kololo area.

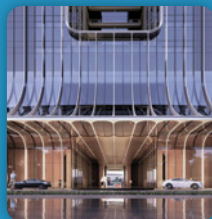
7



Atmosphere Core expands into India

Atmosphere Core has announced eight properties in India and plans for a total of 25 by 2025. The eight confirmed properties will include brands such as The Ozen Collection and Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts. They are slated to open over the next three years in locations such as Goa, Bengaluru, and Kolkata, among others.

8



ME by Meliá to debut in Asia-Pacific

Meliá Hotels International has signed an agreement with Guangzhou Aocheng Investment for the first ME by Meliá hotel in the Asia Pacific region. Set to open its doors in 2027, ME Guangzhou will feature 120 rooms and suites and will be designed to cater to the needs of both business and leisure travellers.

9



JAL showcases A350 first and business class seats

Japan Airlines has unveiled the new seating products which will feature on its 13 A350-1000s. Each aircraft will include six first class suites designed by Safran Seats. A wide sofa converts into a double bed and it also features built-in headrest speakers. Business class seats meanwhile will feature a sliding privacy door.

10



dnata sources locally in Australia

dnata has said that it uses local suppliers to provide ingredients for the over 175,000 meals it produces every day throughout Australia. Its ingredients are sourced from 120 producers across the country, who provide 329 tonnes of red meat, 117 tonnes of seafood, as well as 2,700 tonnes of fruit and vegetables annually.

ONLY IN
Madrid

Inside the real Madrid

The capital of Spain, and its greater region, is filled with undiscovered gems that provide visitors with unique experiences that few outsiders have known about until now

Madrid is an exciting and energetic city that has transformed itself to cast a wide appeal not only to visitors from Europe and the Americas, but also the rising tide of well-heeled visitors from the GCC countries and the Middle East. Madrid promises visitors experiences that, arguably, cannot be had at any other European destination. It offers a welcome contrasting sensory experience where a contemporary edge to the city co-exists with five UNESCO

World Heritage Sites. It is a mesmerising European capital with several medieval towns only a 30-minute-drive from the city centre. It is a destination that prioritises lifestyle experiences and also has golf courses within its heart. The city's hospitality sector has risen to the occasion too with luxury brands increasing their presence within Madrid over the last few years. Four Seasons opened a hotel in the central Puerta del Sol while Marriott reopened its Santo Mauro Palace, and the Ritz has been elevated to a Mandarin Oriental Ritz.

Madrid has a sweeping range of attractions from gastronomy, sports and historic sites, among others. Only here could you imagine starting the day with a breakfast of churros and chocolate, spending your morning at a world-class museum, making your way to a medieval



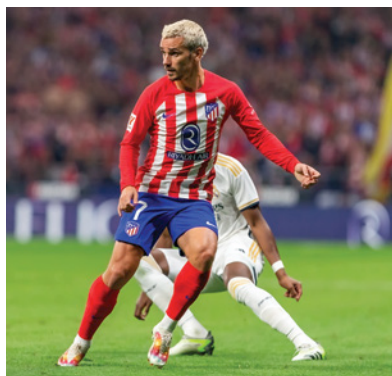
town to spend the rest of the afternoon and then returning to the city centre for a Michelin-Starred dining experience that same night.

SHOPPING

For those who would like to indulge in some retail therapy, Madrid serves as a haven. You could enjoy a high-end luxury shopping experience at Galería Canalejas within the setting of a historic building, or roam the streets of the Salamanca neighbourhood to find independent designers. You can even visit El Corte Inglés, which is headquartered in Madrid, and is among the biggest department store groups in the world. However, if you want to steal a bargain, consider heading to Las Rozas Village where you will find top-tier brands at a great value for price.

DINE

Madrid, a city that is home to the world's oldest restaurant called Casa Botín, also has modern and avant-garde culinary offerings. It has 24 Michelin-Starred restaurants. Among the little-known gems are Coque and Paco Roncero. Coque, a two Michelin-Starred restaurant, is a family-owned enterprise now operated



by the third generation of the Sandoval brothers. The restaurant's interiors are designed by Jean Porsche and offers a captivating sensory experience which is spread across four main areas including the cocktail bar, wine cellar, dining room and kitchen. The 15-course tasting menu, which also has vegan options, regularly imbibes seasonal ingredients including shrimp from Motril, teardrop peas from Guetaria and wild Galician clams. Paco Roncero meanwhile also has two Stars and has a terrace that adds a great ambience to your meal which will consist

of preparations such as desserts with surprising ingredients including black garlic and beetroot.

SPORTS EVENTS

Sports and sporting events are a theme that resonates strongly with Madrid's residents and is also a major draw to those visiting Madrid. The city, after all, is home to teams Real Madrid and Atlético de Madrid whose games draw in thousands of fans.

These travellers, along with their families, who come to Madrid are often

in search of further sporting activities to partake in themselves. They need to look no further than the city's world-class golf courses namely Real Club de Golf La Herrería and Club de Golf Moraleja. The first is an 18-hole golf course located on a plot of land that spans 75 hectares and also includes tennis courts and swimming pools. The second meanwhile is one of Spain's most iconic golf clubs and its largest too – it comprises four 18-hole golf courses designed by Jack Nicklaus.

DISCOVER THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF MADRID

Visitors to Madrid will find that the appeal of the destination extends to its greater region, surrounded by picturesque towns and medieval castles. A short drive from the city centre will take you to the breathtaking town of Manzanares El Real whose magnificent Castle dates back to 1475 and which has been featured in several movies. The Town Square here meanwhile has been an area where social gatherings take place with its residents coming together to interact with visitors and fill them with stories of their ancestry and culture.

Chinchon, another town that lies around 50km southeast of Madrid, has a main square that was earmarked as a Heritage Site in 1974. The beautiful town has several historic structures whose architectural styles vary from the 15th century Castillo de Casasola which showcases Gothic architecture, to the Convent of the Poor Clare from 1653 that shines a spotlight on Spanish Baroque architecture as well as the Castle of the Counts that makes an impression with its Renaissance architectural style.

Only in Madrid will you find a European destination that offers a full and rounded experience for visitors and never fails to surprise, entertain and enthrall – all in equal measure.



WORDS VARUN GODINHO

THE CHANGE IS COMING

While drastically cutting emissions and implementing cutting-edge green technologies, the region and its key stakeholders are collectively moving towards a more sustainable future

The UAE is set to host the COP28 summit later this month with countries from around the world gathering to deliberate the impact of climate change on economies, lives and even entire continents. Two years ago, the UAE announced ambitions to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Its neighbouring country of Saudi Arabia has set itself a target to achieve that same goal by 2060 and earmarked investments to the tune of a staggering US\$180 billion to get there. All the facets of business travel – from airlines and hospitality to destinations themselves – will necessarily play their part in helping the region to reduce its overall carbon emissions. Here's how they intend to do so.



AVIATION

According to the International Energy Agency, last year, aviation accounted for 2 per cent of worldwide CO₂ emissions. The need for the sector to rapidly decarbonise cannot be understated. Fortunately, this region, including its airlines and airports, are going all in. Emirates is one of the world's largest airlines with a fleet of around 260 aircraft comprising A380s and Boeing 777s. In May, it announced a US\$200 million sustainability fund to finance research and development projects that are specifically aimed at reducing the impact of fossil fuels in commercial aviation. "Our US\$200 million fund is earmarked for R&D, and not for operating costs like the purchase of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) or carbon offsets to tick regulatory boxes – activities we consider business-as-usual," said Sir Tim Clark, president of Emirates Airline, at the time of the announcement.

On the SAF front, Emirates also recently signed an agreement with Shell Aviation for the supply of over

ABOVE: Red Sea International airport in Saudi Arabia is being developed to be carbon neutral

RIGHT: Hamad International airport features several green spaces

BOTTOM: Emirates operated its first flight with 100 per cent SAF in one engine earlier this year



300,000 gallons of blended SAF at its hub of Dubai International airport (DXB). The airline added that it would track the SAF's use data through the blockchain-powered Avelia platform. It follows months after Emirates completed its first test flight with 100 per cent SAF in one engine this January.

Emirates went beyond Dubai last month to expand a partnership with Neste for the supply of more than three million gallons of blended Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel. The fuel will be supplied over 2024 and 2025 for the carrier's flights departing from Singapore Changi and Amsterdam Schiphol airports.

However, the supply of SAF remains a major concern as it is currently produced in minuscule quantities. The oneworld Alliance, for example, whose members include Qatar Airways and Oman Air among others, has set a target to ensure that 10 per cent of the alliance's combined fuel use is SAF by 2030. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), in 2022, SAF production reached

300 million litres, which although a 200 per cent year-on-year increase still constituted only 0.1 per cent of aviation's total kerosene consumption last year, thereby highlighting the chasm that exists between demand and supply of the product.

Emirates' fellow UAE carrier, Etihad Airways, has had its Greenliner programme in place since 2019 to test advanced technologies related to making aviation more sustainable. In a bid to drive up production of SAF, Etihad signed an agreement in January with Masdar, ADNOC, BP and Tadweer to jointly undertake feasibility studies on the production of SAF in the UAE using municipal solid waste and renewable hydrogen.

In some cases, the airlines have gone beyond SAF to explore other areas where it could become more sustainable. Last year, Emirates' flight catering division opened the world's largest vertical farm near Al Maktoum International airport at Dubai World Central. The 330,000 sqft facility has been built to produce more than one million kilograms of vegetables →



annually, while requiring 95 per cent less water compared to conventional agriculture and saving more than 250 million litres of water each year.

Apart from airlines, airports too are chipping in with major initiatives to go green. Last year, DXB kicked off a fresh waste management programme to help divert 60 per cent of all waste from the airport away from landfills. Annually, it aims to capture and compost more than 2,000 tonnes of food waste, while pointing out that decomposing food waste left in landfills releases methane gas which is 72 times more harmful than CO₂ to the environment.

Doha's Hamad International airport (HIA) completed its first phase of a major revamp project last year, and one of the star attractions it unveiled at the terminal was the Orchard – an indoor tropical garden that includes more than 300 trees and 25,000 plants obtained from sustainable forests globally. HIA noted that 40 per cent of the waste generated at the airport in the fiscal year of 2022–2023 was reused or recycled, including a staggering 736 tonnes of plastic waste. It added that 100 per cent of the wastewater generated at the airport was subsequently reused for landscape irrigation, with zero wastewater discharged to the sea.

Over in Saudi Arabia, the new Red Sea International (RSI) airport recently welcomed its first scheduled passenger flight. That airport, when fully operational, is expected to be carbon neutral as well as powered 100 per cent by renewable energy. It is being designed keeping in mind a future where electric or carbon-minimal aircraft become the norm, rather than the exception. RSI is being prepared to eventually service hydrogen-powered seaplane variants as well as electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. Last year, hydrogen-electric aircraft developer Zeroavia signed an MoU to partner with Red Sea Global to research the possibility of fitting Cessna Caravan seaplanes with hydrogen-electric propulsion technology.



HOSPITALITY

The Sustainability Hospitality Alliance which counts the likes of Accor, Four Seasons, Jumeirah, Marriott, Wyndham and Radisson, among several others, as its members, has said that its research indicates that the hotel industry would need to decrease its carbon emissions by 66 per cent per room by 2030 – and by 90 per cent per room by 2050 – to ensure that the growth forecast for the industry does not lead to an inevitable corresponding increase in carbon emissions too.

Dubai grew its number of international overnight visitors in 2022 to 14.36 million, a 97 per cent increase year-on-year. Its hotel inventory at the end of December 2022 stood at 146,496 rooms at 804 hotel establishments, compared to 126,120 rooms and

ABOVE: Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental Abu Dhabi unveiled its vegan rooms earlier this year

BOTTOM: The Vertical Farm at The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi Grand Canal

751 establishments at the close of December 2019. Factoring in the current growth rate, Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) relaunched its Carbon Calculator tool earlier this year for the hospitality industry in the emirate to measure and track its emissions. Every month, hotels are mandated to report their consumption along nine key carbon emission sources: water, electricity, liquefied petroleum gas, district cooling, landfill waste, petrol, diesel, recycled waste and refrigerants.

Major hospitality brands are taking their own unique routes towards the goal of reducing their carbon footprint. "We are the first major hotel company to establish science-based targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

We are also taking steps toward reducing our environmental footprint through our 'Watts, Water and Waste' programmes – and we aim to cut emissions intensity by 75 per cent in our managed portfolio by 2030, helping us drive toward a net zero future," says Emma Banks, vice president for F&B Strategy and Development for the EMEA at Hilton.

Here in the region, Hilton has undertaken several initiatives to reduce overall carbon emissions with much of its focus driven towards its F&B sector. "Food waste reduction is a key priority. This year, we collaborated with the United Nations Environment Program West Asia and Winnow to launch 'Green Ramadan' – a pioneering campaign at three hotels which resulted





in a 61 per cent reduction in food waste. Each of the hotels aimed to close the loop across the food value chain by focusing on composting, local sourcing, sustainable gastronomy, and food donations,” notes Banks. Hilton has also launched a ‘Green Breakfast’ initiative to reduce food waste across breakfast operations in 13 UAE-based hotels with the data gathered between August and November this year serving as a baseline for its future roadmap.

Banks says that the group’s Conrad Abu Dhabi Etihad Towers property installed a vertical hydroponic farm this year too whereby the hotel’s Michelin-recognised restaurant Li Beirut uses produce from that farm.

Having an on-site farm significantly helps to reduce emissions related to the transport of produce. “We recognise the importance of local sourcing, and earlier this year renewed our partnership with UAE-based agritech platform Fresh on Table. Through this partnership, we expect to source more than 700 tonnes of local produce annually. This extended partnership will result in a saving of over 175 million food miles, with local produce comprising more than 30 per cent of the total basket for our UAE-based hotels,” says Banks.

The UAE-headquartered Jumeirah Group also realised the significance of local sourcing. It said that it saved 20,842,910 food miles by switching to locally sourced produce. Its Jumeirah Zabeel Saray property in Dubai operates Arcadia, a venue that integrates an onsite urban hydroponic farm with a unique dining concept. Jumeirah says that the hydroponic

farm reduces water consumption by up to 70 per cent for each yield compared to conventional techniques as no soil is required for farming. The farm, spread across 55 sqm, can harvest up to 250kg of more than 30 varieties of leafy greens and herbs per month, and guests at Arcadia can have its produce served straight to them at their table located within the farm’s premises. Guests visiting any of the resort’s signature restaurants can also receive fresh produce from that farm.

Jumeirah has also pushed forward with on-site filtration and water bottling plants for several of its properties. It says that it has by way of this initiative already removed more than nine million single-use plastic bottles from reaching landfills or the ocean as a result of switching to reusable glass bottles instead.

Other hospitality groups such as Marriott, have gone ahead and implemented class-leading technology to get innovative with its sustainability initiatives.

The Delta Hotels by Marriott, Dubai Investment Park property, for

example, collaborated with AirOWater to transform humidity in the air into drinking water for hotel guests by way of AirOWater’s Atmospheric Water Generators (AWG).

“In September 2021, Marriott International announced that it was committed to a net zero future, reducing all our carbon emissions across every element of our operation by no later than 2050,” says Sandeep Walia, chief operating officer for the Middle East at Marriott International. “Across our 8,000-plus properties, we aim to reduce water intensity by 15 per cent, carbon intensity by 30 per cent, waste to landfill by 45 per cent, food waste by 50 per cent, achieve a minimum of 30 per cent renewable electricity use, responsibly source 95 per cent of our food (in our top 10 categories) and locally source 50 per cent of all produce by spend.

“Our 2023 Marriott Bonvoy Travel Trends Research study for the UAE and Saudi Arabia indicated that sustainability is now a key factor when it comes to travel plans, with 85 per cent in the UAE and 80 per cent in Saudi Arabia saying environmental considerations now have some impact on their arrangements. Forty-three per cent of those in the UAE said environmental considerations define their travel plans and they will only spend money with companies that have a positive environmental impact, whilst the figure is 38 per cent in Saudi.”

Outside of the UAE, Marriott has implemented initiatives such as →



We aim to cut emissions intensity by 75 per cent in our managed portfolio by 2030

EMMA BANKS, vice president for F&B Strategy and Development for the EMEA at Hilton

TOP: Hilton’s Green Ramadan campaign was undertaken earlier this year

RIGHT: Al Manara, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Saraya Aqaba



DESTINATIONS

Entire cities and tourism destinations are moving towards a sustainable future. The Dubai 2040 Urban Masterplan, for example, aims to double the recreational and green spaces in the emirate, ensure that rural natural areas and natural reserves comprise 60 per cent of the emirate's total area, and create green corridors linking workplaces, residential and other zones.

In Doha, Msheireb Downtown Doha, the flagship project of Msheireb Properties, is being touted as “the world's first sustainable downtown regeneration” project. “The whole concept and vision of Msheireb Downtown Doha relies on protecting and enhancing our environment, consuming fewer resources, generating less waste, and reducing our carbon footprint,” says Ali Al Kuwari, CEO of Msheireb Properties.

Al Kuwari points out that the use of technological innovations such as passive cooling, energy and water conservation, renewable energy, and a reduction of carbon emissions has made this city district certifiably sustainable. He goes on to note that even the placement of buildings is such that they shade one another and are painted in light colours to reduce overall cooling requirements. “On the outside, we have 6,400 rooftop solar panels to provide on-site energy generation and 1,400 solar panels to secure hot water, which generate around 25 per cent of power for many buildings,” he says. “Throughout Msheireb Downtown Doha, we demonstrate how you can build both in one space – the world's largest certified sustainable community and a place where citizens want to live, work, and play.”

Rather than retrofitting destinations with sustainability initiatives years after it has developed, some destinations are being conceptualised with sustainability features from the very beginning. Two destinations that are going flat out to cement their sustainability credentials



Sustainability can lead to long-term cost savings and operational efficiencies

PAUL BRIDGER,
COO of Rove Hotels

installing solar power panels at its Riyadh Marriott Hotel. Marriott and Sheraton hotels in Jordan are completely powered by solar energy plants resulting in a total CO2 of only 4,000kg. Thermal solar panels were installed too in Dead Sea Marriott in 2007 and Amman Marriott in 2014. The total annual reduction in CO2 emissions as a result of it, says Marriott, is 3,939,778kg. The Westin and Le Meridien City Centre Bahrain meanwhile completed the installation of wind turbines in 2022, making them the first two hotels in Bahrain to do so. In Saudi Arabia, The St. Regis Red Sea Resort, which will open imminently, will have its guests transported by hydrogen-powered seaplanes and Lucid electric cars.

Introducing fresh twists on overall sustainability, Mandarin Oriental

introduced vegan rooms earlier this year at its property in Abu Dhabi while Minor Hotels more recently unveiled its own vegan-inspired rooms at NH Collection Dubai The Palm.

Rove Hotels, meanwhile, whose Rove Expo 2020 property will be the only hotel inside the COP28 Blue Zone, has pledged to plant a tree for every room booked during the

COP28 period across all its hotels, with a goal of planting at least 28,000 trees by the end of the year. All Rove hotels have received the Green Key certification, and Rove recently joined the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. Paul Bridger, the chief operational officer for Rove Hotels, acknowledges the challenges of going green, but defines the benefits too. “Adopting and implementing sustainability standards in the hospitality sector can be challenging due to high upfront costs, lack of awareness, and operational complexities. It's important for businesses to understand that sustainability can lead to long-term cost savings and operational efficiencies, which can offset the initial investment and ensure a win-win situation for companies, consumers and the environment,” says Bridger.

TOP: Paul Bridger,
COO of Rove Hotels

BELOW: The launch
of Etihad Marriott
Mangrove Forest in
Abu Dhabi





are The Red Sea and Amaala, both currently being developed by Red Sea Global, in Saudi Arabia. The two projects are built on the concept of regenerative tourism – tourism that doesn't just ensure that existing sustainability benchmarks for a region are preserved, but instead aims for the enhancement of a destination's sustainability outlook with the baseline being the condition it was in before development began within it. The Red Sea and Amaala are therefore aiming to achieve a 30 per cent net conservation benefit by 2040. Both destinations will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy throughout the day, every day of the year. It has already installed more than 760,000 photovoltaic panels to power the first phase of The Red Sea. It is also implementing the world's largest battery storage facility with a capacity of 1,200 megawatts per hour to help it achieve complete grid independence.

Elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, the US\$63.2 billion Diriyah project in Riyadh is being constructed with the Najdi architecture style that relies on the use of mud bricks. A few weeks ago, the first phase of its masterplan was awarded Platinum Level LEED for Cities Certification by the US Green Building Council. The accreditation in LEED for Cities

ABOVE: Blacklane's all-electric fleet in the UAE

TOP AND TOP RIGHT: Msheireb Downtown Doha in Qatar

BOTTOM: The sustainable destination of Diriyah in Saudi Arabia

and Communities is the first time a project within the Middle East has received the accolade.

While projects such as Red Sea Global and Diriyah are backed by the government, the private sector too is stepping up within the region with its green initiatives. Luxury chauffeur-hailing service Blacklane launched an all-electric fleet, including Mercedes EQS vehicles, in Dubai earlier this year. Its most recent round of funding saw it raise €34 million to further expand its fleet in the more than 50 countries in which it operates,



including the UAE. "Our UAE operations have experienced a tenfold growth in just 12 months, establishing an impressive industry standard. We successfully launched our inaugural fleet of all-electric vehicles in Dubai earlier this year, contributing to the Year of Sustainability in the UAE," says Nicolas Soucaille, general manager of Blacklane Middle East. "While the UAE's regulatory framework has been pivotal in advancing our green initiatives, this sustainability drive extends to all of Blacklane's operational regions. As a result, our strategy not only enhances the passenger experience but also reduces carbon emissions on a global scale."

Driving a green agenda has inherent limitations, not least for Blacklane whose electric fleet has a limited range before it needs to be recharged. "It is true that operating an all-electric fleet does traditionally raise concerns about potential limitations on the number of rides each car can provide in a day. However, we've effectively addressed this challenge by implementing our in-house supercharging network. Each vehicle typically requires between 25 to 40 minutes with our superchargers twice a day, which means that the electric factor doesn't impact the revenue generated from each vehicle. Our all-electric UAE fleet can operate on a robust revenue model," says Soucaille.

Collectively, aviation, hospitality and destinations themselves are increasingly innovating to make the future of business travel far more sustainable than it is today. **BT**

Premium economy update

From brand-new cabins to Michelin-starred dining, the premium economy offering among global carriers has continued to evolve over the past 12 months

WORDS TAM SIN COCKS
AND MARK CASWELL

Premium economy has become a given on most long-haul carriers these days, increasingly sought after by airlines for the favourable yield benefits, and a popular choice for business travellers looking to reduce costs in the current economic climate.

In the last year we've seen new carriers enter the market, while others have completely revamped their existing offerings. There's also been a focus on improving the overall experience, with numerous airlines enhancing dining options, IFE and amenities.

Here we look at the latest updates to premium economy cabins in the last 12 months. For a full up-to-date list of premium economy offerings, visit [businessstraveller.com](https://www.buysidestraveller.com)

AIR FRANCE

Air France's original premium economy product featured a fixed-shell design offering 40 per cent more space than economy, available on long haul A330, Boeing 777 and 787 aircraft. This year, the carrier debuted a new premium economy cabin design on its latest A350 aircraft and began retrofitting its Boeing 777

fleet. The product features a more traditional reclining seat (at 124 degrees). Highlights include high-end amenity kits and excellent noise-cancelling earphones. Negatives are the F&B provisions – premium passengers currently receive a slightly modified economy meal, though the airline aims to upgrade this next year. Passengers can use Sky Priority channels in the airport, enjoy faster boarding, and retrieve their luggage quicker on arrival.

WIDTH 19in/48cm

LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm

RECLINE 124 degrees

AIR INDIA

Air India launched its first premium economy offering in April 2023, with Boeing 777 aircraft leased from Delta featuring the US carrier's Premium Select seating. The cabin offers 48 leather-upholstered seats with five inches of recline, an adjustable leg and footrest, and winged headrests. Looking further ahead, Air India is set to launch its own premium economy seating, as part of a US\$400 million programme to refurbish its entire widebody fleet, starting in 2024. Few details have been released about this seat, but a teaser video

FROM TOP: Air France's premium economy features a generous recline; ANZ's sleep pods will provide a lie-flat sleep option for passengers at an extra cost

shows premium economy seats upholstered in a rich red colour scheme and configured 2-4-2.

WIDTH 19in/48cm

LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm

RECLINE 5in/12.7cm

AIR NEW ZEALAND

The Kiwi carrier abandoned its "Spaceseat" for a more conventional premium economy product in 2017, with generous leather seats offering armrests, legrests and foot support arranged in either a 2-3-2 or 2-4-2 configuration across the long-haul fleet of Boeing 787-9,





777-200 and -300 planes. Next year, ANZ is due to launch its innovative Skynest “sleep pods” on the Boeing 787 aircraft: a bank of six bunkbeds that can be booked in four-hour slots by economy or premium economy passengers. Each pod will include a fully-flat bed, full-size pillow, sheets and blanket, ear plugs, a separate reading light and personal device USB outlet and ventilation outlet. Bedding will also be changed between each passenger. These are due to launch on ultra long-haul routes to New York and Chicago in September 2024. Premium economy passengers also get premium check-in, priority baggage and a generous

baggage allowance, priority boarding, and amenity kits.

WIDTH 19.3in/49cm

LEGROOM 41in/104cm

RECLINE 9in/23cm

AMERICAN AIRLINES

AA launched its first premium economy product in 2017 on its Boeing 787-9s and 777-200 aircraft, which was then rolled out to its 777-300s and 787-8s. American Airlines will debut new premium economy cabins on all Airbus 321 XLR and Boeing 787-9 deliveries from 2024. There will be 32 seats on the 787-9 and 12 on the A321XLR, featuring headrest wings to increase privacy, double the amount of in-seat

storage space and larger entertainment screens.

Passengers also receive priority check-in, security, boarding and luggage, as well as “chef-inspired” meals and spirits. Passengers can take advantage of spacious black leather seats, noise-reducing headphones, USB ports and amenity kits.

Measurements differ between aircraft but are as follows:

WIDTH 19in/48cm (Boeing 777-300 and 787-9); 18.5in/47cm (Boeing 777-200 and 787-8)

LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm

RECLINE 5-6in/12-15cm

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES

Austrian launched its premium

economy seat in 2018, initially fitting its six Boeing 777 aircraft with a cabin of 24 premium economy seats (configured 2-4-2), and its three 767-300ER aircraft with 18 seats (configured 2-2-2). It has subsequently increased the number of premium economy seats on both aircraft – up to 40 on the carrier’s 777s, and 30 on its 767-300ERs, which have been accommodated by reducing the size of its business class.

Features of the premium economy seat include 38 inches of legroom, a footrest, 12-inch TV screen, plus individual power outlets and USB ports. Passengers also receive an amenity kit. →



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Premium economy cabins on British Airways, American Airlines and Cathay Pacific

New F&B updates will see passengers enjoy three- or four-course menus, with two main dish options. On all long-haul flights, an additional light dish or a small breakfast will also be served. Passengers also benefit from checking in two pieces of luggage, each weighing up to 23kg, free of charge.

WIDTH 9in/48cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 40 degrees

BRITISH AIRWAYS

BA's World Traveller Plus cabin was last refreshed in 2019. The more modern product can be found on the Boeing 787, A380 and some Boeing 777s, while an older version is present on the rest of the long-haul fleet. Passengers get seven inches of extra pitch compared to economy, and one inch of extra width. The newer product features a navy padded fabric, footrest and headrest with wings. A 10.5-inch touchscreen comes with a personal handset and noise-cancelling headphones, to enjoy the IFE offering, which BA doubled earlier this year.

Passengers also receive an amenity kit with socks,

an eye mask, ear plugs and toothbrush/paste. In July, BA also reinstated pre-take-off sparkling wine for World Traveller Plus passengers.

WIDTH 18.5in/47cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 7-8in/18-20cm

CATHAY PACIFIC

Cathay's premium economy seats were introduced in 2012, featuring a full-length legrest, leather-padded footrests, retractable armrest and a headrest. The 32 seats are configured in a 2-4-2 layout. The 10.6-inch IFE screens (12.1-inch on the A350) come with noise-cancelling headphones and amenity kits.

This year the carrier has revamped its F&B offerings. In premium economy this includes a partnership with plant-based restaurant Veda by Ovolo for wellness-focused dining (until June 2024). The carrier has also partnered with Hong Kong-based Pirata Group to introduce new Italian fare to its premium economy menu, which passengers can enjoy with a glass of Prosecco, and with Coffee Academics to introduce a "Cathay Coffee" blend for altitude. Passengers also receive priority boarding and a 46kg baggage allowance across two pieces of luggage.

DESTINATION

WIDTH 18.5-19.3in/47-49cm

LEGROOM 38-40in/
 96.5-101.5cm

RECLINE 8-9in/20-23cm

CHINA AIRLINES

The Taiwanese carrier offers eight rows of premium economy in a 2-4-2 layout on its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, while the A350-900, which flies to Australia, the UK and most of Europe, features four rows in a 2-3-2 layout, with an additional three seats in the middle front of the cabin. The fixed-back shell seat features a legrest, a 12.1-inch touchscreen, a water bottle holder, a drinks holder and a USB port. Passengers also receive an amenity kit. Designer Ray Chen has added Chinese aesthetic touches throughout, with the premium economy

cabin featuring walls lined with a wood texturing effect. In April, the airline announced an F&B partnership with Le Palais, Taiwan's only three-starred Michelin restaurant, for an upgraded inflight dining experience with Cantonese classics such as steamed chicken and rice wrapped in a lotus leaf.

WIDTH 19in/48cm

LEGROOM 39in/99cm

RECLINE 118 degrees

DELTA AIR LINES

Delta has Premium Select on its A350, A330 and Boeing 767 aircraft. The wider seat comes with an adjustable footrest and legrest, 13.3-inch seatback screens and individual power ports. There is also an upgraded amenity kit, noise-cancelling



FROM TOP: China Airlines fixed-back shell seat; Delta Premium Select passengers can enjoy wider seats and upgraded service

headsets, a blanket made from recycled materials and memory-foam pillow. Last September, the airline introduced a revamped meal service, with main courses served on bagasse plates made from sugarcane plant fibre, with linen tableware and napkins, and silver cutlery. A new 'bubbles and bites' service is also now offered shortly after takeoff, consisting of sparkling wine, water and a snack.

Since October, passengers have received handmade amenity kits from Mexican apparel brand Someone Somewhere, with products by Grown Alchemist. Premium Select travellers also qualify for Sky Priority security, boarding and bag delivery.

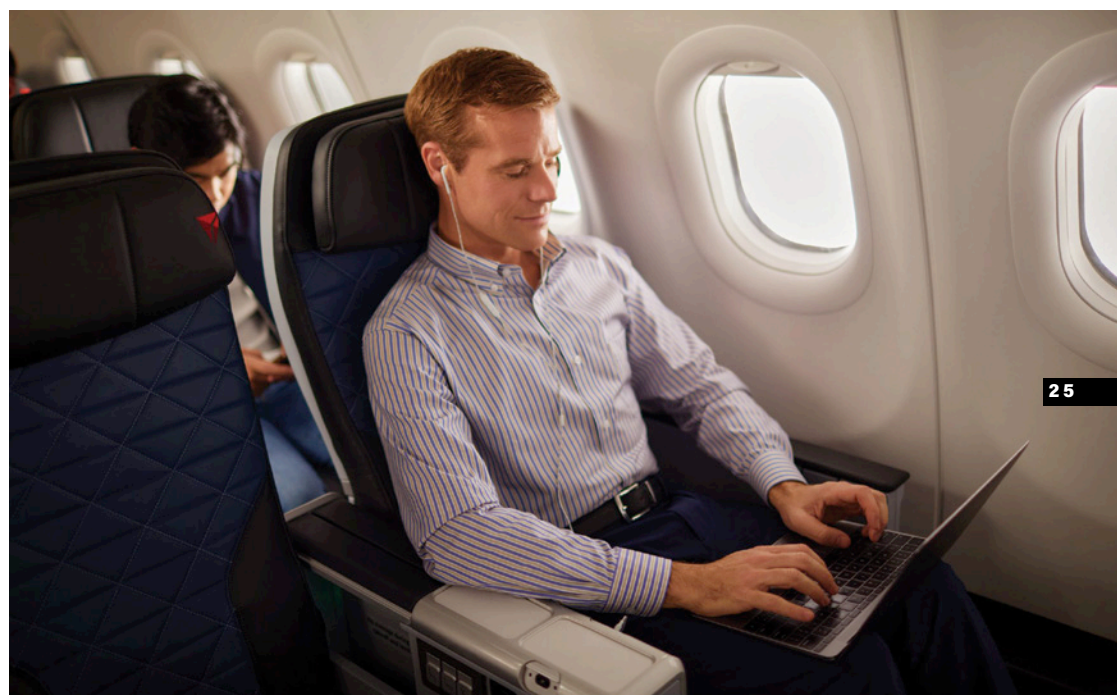
WIDTH 19in/48cm (18.5/47cm on A350)

LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm

RECLINE 7in/18cm

EMIRATES

Emirates launched its premium economy cabin in August 2022, becoming the first Gulf carrier to offer this cabin class. It's configured with a total of 56 seats in a 2-4-2 layout. Features include 40 inches of seat pitch, 19.5 inches of seat width, eight inches of recline, a 13.3-inch IFE screen, in-seat charging, a wide fold-out dining table, and a side cocktail table. Premium economy passengers can also expect impressive dining with a glass of bubbles. So far around 20 of the airline's superjumbos offer premium economy, but the seat is expected to be available on 120 of the carrier's A380 and Boeing 777 aircraft by 2025. The cabin is currently offered on flights to and from



25

13 cities – London (Heathrow), Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, Christchurch, Singapore, Los Angeles, New York (JFK), Houston, San Francisco, Bengaluru and Mumbai from its Dubai hub. Next, it will offer premium economy on its São Paulo route starting this month as well as to Tokyo Narita from December. The seat is also set to be installed on "some" of the Boeing 777X aircraft, due to join the fleet from 2025.

WIDTH 19.5in/49.5cm

LEGROOM up to 40in/102cm

RECLINE 8in/20cm

EVA AIR

The Taiwanese airline was

one of the first carriers to offer premium economy (originally branded Elite Class) on its Boeing 777-300 fleet. The seats feature USB ports, plug sockets, mood lighting and 11-inch LCD touchscreens. Toiletries by Canadian brand Escentis are also provided, along with pillow and blanket sets. In September 2022, the carrier rolled out new inflight dining options, with a focus on plant-based meals plus "Taste of Taiwan" dishes. Passengers can now preview menus and pre-select their main meals. From mid-2024, EVA also plans to update and reconfigure its Boeing 787-9 aircraft and add premium economy to the

current two-class configuration of economy and Royal Laurel (business), with the aircraft serving long-haul routes to Europe and North America. The 17 Boeing 787-10s will remain in a two-class configuration serving the Asia-Pacific region.

WIDTH 19.5in/49.5cm

LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm

RECLINE 8in/20cm

FINNAIR

The carrier launched its premium economy cabin last year, with a 'Vector Premium' seat by HAECO. The seat has 38 inches of legroom, memory foam cushions, eight-inch recline, legrest and





FROM TOP: Emirates' new premium economy product, Lufthansa's Allegris rollout coming soon; Vector Premium seats on Finnair

six-way headrest. There is a meal tray for work and dining, plus a cocktail table, individual reading lights, PC power and USB-A ports and a 13-inch touchscreen. The product is being rolled out to all long-haul routes on the A330 and A350 fleets. Customers receive a three-course meal (with two main options) and a lighter meal or snack, depending on the route. It is served on chinaware by Finnish design icon Iittala, with a selection of complimentary drinks (excluding sparkling wine). Passengers also receive a Marimekko-designed amenity kit with L:a Bruket toiletries.

WIDTH 18in/45.7cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 8in/20cm

IBERIA

Iberia's premium economy is available on long haul A330-300 and A350-900 fleets. The seat is 11.6 per cent wider than economy and offers 20 per cent more legroom, 40 per cent more recline and a larger IFE screen. On the A350s, "wings" have been added to the headrests, and there is a new IFE remote control with a touchscreen navigation panel. Passengers also benefit from

priority check-in and boarding, a larger luggage allowance, upgraded meal service, amenity kits and noise-cancelling headphones.

WIDTH 18-19in/49cm
LEGROOM 37in/95cm
RECLINE 7.1in/18cm

ITA AIRWAYS

ITA Airways' premium economy seats are currently only available on its A330s. The seats were launched in 2010 by Alitalia, and originally branded as Classica Plus. The cabin features 17 seats which recline to 120 degrees (9 inches) and offer up to 40 per cent more legroom (compared to economy). Passengers receive a two-piece baggage allowance up to 23kg, dedicated check-in desks and priority boarding; a night kit with blanket and pillow, and a 10.6-inch TV screen. In June, it was announced

that ITA Airways has signed a cabin retrofit agreement with Airbus Services to upgrade its six A350-900s with the installation of a brand new premium economy class section. This will involve replacing some of the economy cabin with a 2-4-2 configuration of premium economy seats, as well as new overhead storage, carpets, IFE connectivity and reading lights. This is expected to complete in mid-2024.

WIDTH 20.1in/50cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 9in/23cm

KLM

The Dutch flag carrier unveiled its long-awaited premium economy seating – branded Premium Comfort – in May 2022, with its first route to New York JFK launching in September. The carrier plans to fit the seat to all its Boeing 787-10, 787-9, 777-200 and 777-300ER aircraft by June 2024, with between 21 and 28 seats in the cabin.

The new seat offers up to 17cm more legroom than standard economy and up to 20cm recline, as well as movable leg and footrests, in-seat power and a 13-inch IFE screen. Premium economy passengers also enjoy an "elaborate menu" and SkyPriority boarding.

WIDTH 18.5in/47cm
LEGROOM 39in/99cm
RECLINE 7.8in/20cm

KUWAIT AIRWAYS

Kuwait's flag carrier is set to become the second Middle Eastern airline after Emirates to launch premium economy.

Earlier this year, the airline confirmed on its social media pages that it would offer a premium economy cabin on its forthcoming A330-900 aircraft, of which it has seven on order – the first being due to arrive in the third quarter of 2024.

LUFTHANSA

Lufthansa's current premium economy seat does not have a separate cabin, but seats are up to an inch wider than economy, with "50 per cent more space" and a configuration of 2-4-2 rather than 3-4-3 in economy. Earlier this year, the carrier announced the rollout of its new Allegris cabin products, which includes a revamp of the premium economy offering featuring the ZIM privacy seat as seen on sister carrier SWISS. Most notably, these seats will be enclosed in a hard shell, meaning you won't be disturbed if the passenger in front reclines. Other adjustments include a seat pitch of 99cm (2.5cm larger than the current version), a fold-out legrest,





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Premium economy offerings from Qantas, Virgin Atlantic and SWISS

SWISS unveiled its premium economy seat in 2021 on its 12 Boeing 777-300ERs. The carrier's four A340 aircraft were subsequently retrofitted with the seat earlier this year. The ZIM Privacy seat is a fixed shell seat with an integrated privacy shield, adjustable armrests, a cocktail table, personal reading light and "extra-large IFE screen". The carrier has also announced it will expand its premium economy cabin on the forthcoming A350 aircraft, with 38 seats.

WIDTH 18-19in/45.5-48cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 40 degrees

UNITED AIRLINES

United's Premium Plus offers passengers noise-reducing headphones, a Saks Fifth Avenue blanket and pillow, and an amenity kit. On the Boeing 777-300ER and 777-200ER aircraft, the premium economy cabin is in a 2-4-2 configuration, with a 2-3-2 configuration on the Boeing 787-10s, and a 2-2-2 layout on the 767-300ER.

WIDTH 19in/48cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 6in/17cm

VIRGIN ATLANTIC

It was one of the first airlines to introduce premium economy. On its new A330 neo aircraft, there are 46 premium economy seats in burgundy faux leather, with a 38-inch pitch and a 13.3-inch touchscreen with Bluetooth audio. In-seat wireless charging pads have also been added (though these are shared, with one in each set of seats in the 2-3-2 configuration). Amenity kits are provided on night flights and sparkling wine is available at an extra cost.

WIDTH 21in/53cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 8in/20cm **BT**

a larger IFE screen at 15.6 inches with noise-cancelling headphones, double armrests in between each seat, and wireless charging available under the armrest. The head cushion will also be adaptable and a more cosy blanket will be added. This will appear on new Boeing 787s by the end of this year, followed by new A350-900s next year and the Boeing 777-9s in 2025. Retrofitting of existing A350 aircraft and the 747-800s will begin in 2024, and extend to the rest of the fleet.

WIDTH 18-19in/45.5-48cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 40 degrees

QANTAS

Qantas introduced a new premium economy seat on

its Boeing 787s in 2017, which followed on its A380s. Seats are dressed in charcoal grey and recline into a "Z" shape with a hammock to support your feet. Seatbacks have 13.5-inch screens, plus slots for your own tablet. There are also noise-cancelling headphones and amenity kits. Passengers can use dedicated check-in counters, a priority boarding lane and early disembarkation.

Menus are created by Neil Perry to be enjoyed with sparkling wine. Coming on its A350s in 2025 will be a new premium economy cabin with 40 seats in a 2-4-2 layout, featuring a 40-inch seat pitch, three amenity and personal storage pockets, a calf rest and an 8-inch winged

privacy headrest. A much-touted Wellbeing Zone will also be positioned between the economy and premium economy cabins, and will offer integrated "stretch handles", on-screen exercise programme and hydration station.

WIDTH 19.5in/49.5cm
LEGROOM 38-42in/96.5-106.5cm
RECLINE 9in/23cm

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Configured 2-4-2, SIA's premium economy seat has 38 inches of legroom. Features include water bottles, cup holders, calf and footrests that fold out, two USB sockets per person, and 13.3-inch HD monitors. There's a glass of complimentary Champagne, and passengers enjoy fast-track check-in, boarding and baggage handling. Travellers can stow one piece of checked luggage up to 35kg.

WIDTH 18.5-19.5in/47-49.5cm
LEGROOM 38in/96.5cm
RECLINE 8in/20cm

SWISS

Lufthansa Group carrier



Business zone

INTERVIEW VARUN GODINHO

Aldert van Zyl, general manager of Radisson Blu Hotel, Riyadh Convention and Exhibition Center, oversees a property situated in a coveted location within Saudi Arabia's capital city

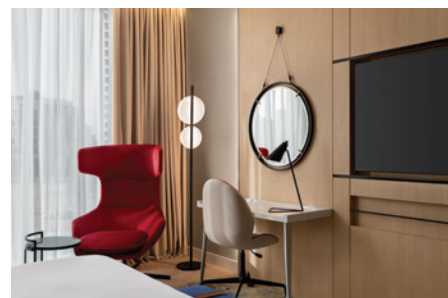
What makes this Radisson property unique in Riyadh? Firstly, due to its prime location, it has easy access to Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center. Our extensive meeting and event spaces, fully equipped with state-of-the-art video walls, high-resolution cameras and high-fidelity speakers, are perfectly suited for hybrid meetings. The design elements of the hotel, from the breathtaking entrance to the tasteful decor in the guest rooms, deliver a feeling of modern luxury. Lastly, our service culture goes beyond the ordinary by taking ownership of guest experiences, anticipating their needs and delivering personalised service.

What are some of its features that specifically appeal to business travellers? Guests staying in our executive rooms and suites can take advantage of our 24-hour business lounge which provides business travellers with additional amenities such as a private check in/check out facility, complimentary breakfast as well as tea, coffee and snacks served throughout the day. Over at Camel Step Café, it doubles up as a coworking space which offers daily rates for startup founders and freelancers looking for a quiet place to work and network with like-minded entrepreneurs. The daily rates include unlimited coffee and snacks, business centre

services, high-speed wifi, valet parking, complimentary printing services and use of the meeting room for one hour. We also have a variety of high-tech meeting and event spaces that can cater for conferences, seminars, or any business gatherings.

What are the primary challenges that you face when operating this property? Operating in a fast-growing environment like Riyadh where new hotels pop up almost every second day, it is only natural that one would experience employee turnover challenges. We have created an environment where we prioritise the training and development of each employee and show them a career path. Through this, we are empowering our team to make decisions without any fear of consequences. This enables us to have a positive work culture and environment where our employees have room to be themselves. Not only does this curb employee turnover, but it also has multiple positive effects on the guest experience.

What are your property's key leisure as well as F&B options? Key leisure offerings include B-Shred Club which is a state-of-the-art separate male and female fitness centre offering tailored personal training for guests and local residents, a luxurious spa that offers a variety of massages and treatments, and a stunning indoor swimming pool. As for restaurants, on the second floor, The Terrace has delightful tapas-style barbeque comfort food, accompanied by a massive screen to showcase sports. Camel Step Café in the lobby serves locally roasted, single-origin speciality coffee and pastries. Al Diriyah



Restaurant meanwhile presents international cuisine infused with local flavours.

What are some of the key source markets for visitors to your hotel? Due to our location and being connected to the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center, we have quite a wide variety of source markets and it very much depends on the specific events or exhibitions taking place there. Domestic travellers from within Saudi Arabia are an important source market – they include event attendees, government officials, and individuals visiting for leisure purposes. Furthermore, the GCC visitors are important to us especially the large consulting firms travelling frequently to Riyadh on business.

What are the upcoming plans for your hotel? We are excited to announce that we have plans to expand our catering division and launch outside catering services. We will provide a variety of offsite menu options that will cater to all types of events such as sit-down dinners, barbeque evenings, cocktail functions and coffee breaks. We will also launch our garden as a venue for functions and events in the coming winter months. **BT**

DIRIYAH

THE CITY OF EARTH



As Etihad Airways celebrates its 20th anniversary this month, CEO **Antonoaldo Neves** outlines where the real opportunities for growth lie for the airline over the coming period

Twenty years ago, an Airbus A330-200 took off for a ceremonial flight from Abu Dhabi International airport flying over all seven emirates of the UAE before landing in Al Ain. That flight marked the inauguration of a brand-new airline. A few days later, Etihad Airways began commercial services by operating two of those aircraft. Its first international flight took place from Abu Dhabi to Beirut on November 12. Over the last two decades, the national airline of the UAE has come a very long way. "In terms of passenger numbers, this year we expect to serve more than 13 million passengers, an increase from 10 million last year. We're on a journey to expand over the next seven years and have a roadmap to fly 30 million passengers a year by 2030," Antonoaldo Neves, the chief executive officer of Etihad Airways, told *Business Traveller Middle East*.

Neves was appointed to the top role at Etihad in October last year, replacing Tony Douglas who departed to lead Riyadh Air. Neves is an aviation industry veteran having previously served as the CEO of TAP, Portugal's national carrier, and also as president of Azul Airlines in Brazil which he guided to an IPO on the New York Stock Exchange. Formerly, as a partner at McKinsey & Company, he was also involved in strategising long-term planning for Brazil's aviation sector.

Joining Etihad at a time when Abu Dhabi had nearly lifted all its Covid-19-restrictions, accompanied by the concurrent surge in demand for global air travel towards the end of last year, Neves was forced to hit the ground running. "I have learned from my experience at all the airlines I have worked for that meeting and exceeding the requirements of stakeholders will always lead to success. Etihad is now in a place where it is growing to meet the demands of our customers and of Abu Dhabi. We are making sure our network, our frequencies and our infrastructure are tailored to meet their needs," says Neves.

Neves adds that the airline is currently flying to more than 70 destinations, and it has this year alone announced 11 new destinations including Copenhagen, Dusseldorf and Osaka.

WORDS VARUN GODINHO

TO ABU DHABI AND

BEYOND



By March 31 next year, it will operate four-time-weekly services to Boston. It will be the carrier's fourth destination in the United States – the others being Chicago, New York and Washington. A major draw of flying to the US with Etihad is that passengers can clear US immigration in Abu Dhabi itself before boarding their flight – Abu Dhabi is the only airport within the Middle East to offer such a facility, and is one of only 15 US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Preclearance locations worldwide.

Neves outlines where the next phase of its network growth will likely stem from. "Already this year, we've announced we're going double daily on many of our routes. For growth, we're primarily focused on connecting short to medium routes with medium to long-haul destinations – so, for example, connecting Asian markets such as India, with European cities such as London, Paris or Frankfurt.

"As people from China travel more, it is perhaps more a key market for opportunity now than it ever was. We have a strong relationship with India and that's an important and growing market for us too."

China and India are major markets for the carrier. This year marked the 15th anniversary of the airline's flights to China and Beijing. In March, it started operating to Beijing Daxing International airport having previously operated to Beijing Capital International airport.

India, meanwhile, with a domestic population to match that of China, has an aviation sector that is rapidly expanding



This year, we expect to serve more than 13 million passengers, an increase from 10 million last year

ANTONIOALDO NEVES,
chief executive officer of
Etihad Airways

too. Historically, it has been deeply connected to destinations in the GCC. Currently, Etihad flies to eight cities in India. Not surprising then that the carrier appointed Bollywood actor Katrina Kaif as its ambassador in September.

Etihad is also diligently growing its fleet in tandem with its network. In June last year, it introduced the A350-1000 to its fleet, one of five that are now present within its portfolio. This year, it began the process of reinstating four A380s into its fleet to meet demand. "While we launch new destinations, we've also added aircraft to our fleet, with the A380s returning on our routes to London. We've also just taken delivery of a brand-new 787-10 fresh out of the Boeing factory in Charleston in the US. We have a further three 787-9s due to →



LEFT: An Etihad Airways A380 superjumbo at Abu Dhabi International

TOP RIGHT: An Etihad aircraft pictured here shortly before the airline began operations in November 2003

BOTTOM RIGHT: Etihad's cabin crew members

be delivered this year, and these feature our new business class cabin. This year we've expanded the fleet by 15 additional aircraft," observes Neves.

The new Business Studio was first showcased on Etihad's A350 last year, and this year's Dreamliner deliveries feature an enhanced version of it. Each of the business seats has direct aisle access. "This cabin interior takes the inflight experience to the next level for our guests. Our guests in business class will enjoy an increased level of privacy, space and comfort in a beautifully designed cabin." Part of elevating that inflight experience also meant that earlier this year, Etihad launched free and unlimited inflight social media messaging access across its entire widebody fleet.

To accommodate the increasing number of aircraft it is acquiring, it has also this month shifted its base to the sprawling new state-of-the-art Terminal A at Abu Dhabi International. Etihad will be among a total of 28 airlines that will begin operating at Terminal A this month. "This move to Terminal A is a key facilitator in our growth plans, providing us with the space to accommodate additional passengers and aircraft. The new Terminal A is an architecturally stunning building and we're really looking forward to operating out of our new home. There is going to be an excellent passenger experience for our guests, which is borne from deploying the latest technologies, such as our self-bag drop facilities. We also have kerbside drop off and dedicated check in and security facilities for our guests travelling in premium cabins," says Neves. The terminal, once fully operational, will be able to accommodate up to 45 million passengers annually.

To achieve its growth targets, Etihad isn't looking to fly solo. Neves who has worked within the framework of the EU and South American aviation sectors is conscious of what striking the right codeshare and interlines could mean for any airline. Etihad signed an MoU with Air France-KLM Group earlier this year to expand its existing interline and codeshare agreements with them. More than 40 new routes across Europe, Australia, the Middle East and Asia Pacific instantly opened for booking for flights as early as this year itself. By way of the MoU, the entities explored the ideas of cooperating further on their loyalty programmes, ground handling processes, reciprocal lounge access and terminal co-location – all necessary to build an integrated and cost-efficient operational model for each of them.

Under Neves, another major partnership was struck this May when Etihad and Emirates reached an interline agreement. The 'open jaw' arrangement allows customers of either airline to purchase a single ticket to fly into either Dubai or Abu Dhabi, and return via the other airport. "Forging strong partnerships with the right airlines will continue to be important as we grow. We're excited to be

The new Terminal A is architecturally stunning and we're really looking forward to operating out of our new home

partnering with Emirates to bring more guests into the UAE to visit both Abu Dhabi and Dubai – our teams are working together on launching this," says Neves.

That deal is reportedly the first of its kind between two UAE carriers and was almost necessary when you consider that high-profile airlines including Riyadh Air and NEOM Airlines are planning their own debuts and will join other major players from the region including SAUDIA and Qatar Airways. "The ecosystem of the Middle East aviation sector is strong and growing and, from the customer's perspective, that can only be a good thing. We respect our peers, of course, but we are focused on what Etihad has to offer. That means a continued focus on quality and ensuring we have a network and frequency allowing our guests to visit Abu Dhabi and global destinations as seamlessly as possible."





As the national airline of the UAE, Etihad is aware of its environmental responsibilities and has already pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. To get there, it is striving to reduce its emissions intensity by 50 per cent by 2035, with 2019 as its baseline year. "One achievement we're particularly proud of is reducing CO2 emissions per Revenue Tonne Kilometre by 26 per cent to 482g compared to the 2019 baseline.

"Another example from our guest experience this year was when we introduced new dining equipment in our economy cabins which not only improves the guest experience, but also removes single-use plastic waste. The new dining ware is part of a smart closed loop recycling system – when the products are too old for use on board, they are cleaned, ground down and the powder used to make new replacement products." Last year, Etihad operated its first flight using sustainable

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Etihad's latest Boeing 787-10 joins the fleet; The Residence on-board its A380; Etihad has partnered with Armani Casa; The new business class seat on Etihad's Boeing 787 aircraft; Katrina Kaif was appointed as brand ambassador earlier this year

fuel supplied by Neste and ITOCHU Corporation for a service from Tokyo Narita to Abu Dhabi. Neves points out that Etihad has also been working with Satavia on contrail avoidance research and technology to support the reduction of climate impact for the entire industry.

It's been just over a year since Neves took the reins at Etihad and there have already been several successful aircraft deliveries including the A350s and Dreamliners, a revamp of its cabin offering on key aircraft, and a robust network expansion. What's next on Neves' roster? "We're celebrating our 20th anniversary, a pivotal moment for us. As we roll out Etihad's Journey 2030 strategy, we have a very clear roadmap of our priorities. We're focused on building a strong network which makes it convenient for our guests to travel across the world as well as bringing them to Abu Dhabi." **BT**

THE ELEVATOR PITCH

Business Traveller Middle East gives Dale MacPhee, general manager of Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis, five minutes to pitch her property to prospective guests



34

“A first in Egypt and the African continent, Waldorf Astoria recently debuted in Cairo bringing world-class hospitality to this vibrant city. Opened in August 2023, Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis is a beacon of personalised hospitality, inspired by Egyptian legacy. A tranquil oasis complete with beautiful botanical gardens, we invite guests to unwind and enjoy authentic experiences away from (yet within convenient reach of) the bustling streets of downtown Cairo.

Close to the main presidential palace in Heliopolis, guests can easily explore popular attractions and key corporate hubs. Featuring 252 luxurious rooms and suites, the hotel boasts four restaurants and bars taking guests on a culinary journey.

Drawing on influences from the city's history, the hotel reinterprets ancient Egyptian references in a modern way to invoke a deep sense of place. The interiors are inspired by the Art Deco era. Guests will immediately feel a sense of place upon arrival as they enter a soaring glass-walled atrium lobby curved into the shape of the eye of the Pharaonic deity, Ra.

The iconic Waldorf Astoria clock – a signature feature of Waldorf Astoria hotels across the globe – takes centre

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Peacock Lounge; The Premier One Bedroom suite; The pool at the property

“Drawing on influences from the city's history, the hotel reinterprets ancient Egyptian references in a modern way”

stage in our lobby, displaying the time within two rings of flowing water, inspired by the Nile.

A bespoke Personal Concierge service awaits all our guests. It begins pre-arrival as the team works with guests to tailor their stay to their exact preferences and requirements. When they arrive, guests receive a personal welcome at check-in and an escort to their room, as well as assistance with any special requests. Upon departure, our team will help with a complimentary bag packing service and a swift checkout.

Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis is a true culinary destination too. Our signature restaurant, Brasserie Ayda, serves an eclectic menu complemented by stylish interiors designed to resemble a Mediterranean

garden. With an open kitchen, vibrant bar and terrace and lively music, guests can enjoy the best of Mediterranean and French cuisine all made with fresh and seasonal ingredients.

For those looking to enjoy coffee and artisanal pastries, or indulge in an

afternoon tea experience, Peacock Lounge is a signature space found at Waldorf Astoria properties around the world.

Named after the ancient Egyptian sun deity, Bar Raa meanwhile offers an intimate and elegant atmosphere. Guests can enjoy some of Cairo's most creative cocktails and premium beverages matched with eclectic jazz music and live performances.

Opening soon, Waldorf Astoria Spa is the perfect place for our guests to enjoy wellness treatments. The spa will feature four state-of-the-art treatment suites – each with its own private relaxation zone – one multipurpose treatment room, and a traditional Hammam scrub experience.

For MICE needs, our dedicated team of event planners will help ensure the smooth running of any event or celebration. We have six fully equipped meeting rooms and a ballroom that accommodates up to 2,000 guests.

Bringing Waldorf Astoria's iconic legacy to Egypt opens up a host of opportunities for those looking to explore the exciting city of Cairo which is steeped in history. We are delighted to begin welcoming guests to create memories that will last a lifetime and explore all the wonderful things this city has to offer. **BT**



EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL



Calling all podcasters and content creators!

Whether you are looking to record, edit or manage your podcast, our fully equipped podcast and video recording studio has it all.



MOTIVATE STUDIO

BOOK YOUR STUDIO

+971 4 427 3000 | podcast@motivate.ae



motivatemediacom.com

How to use technology on the pathway to net zero

Here's how technology can play a leading role within the hospitality industry to make it greener than it has ever been before



INGE HUIJBRECHTS, GLOBAL SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR SUSTAINABILITY, SECURITY AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AT RADISSON HOTEL GROUP

Many companies around the world are starting their net zero transformation and have outlined their targets to reach net zero by 2050.

According to the United Nations, science shows that to avert the worst impacts of climate change and preserve a livable planet, global temperature increase needs to be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Currently, the Earth is already about 1.1°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s, and sadly we continue to break temperature records as emissions continue to rise. To limit global warming to levels called for in the Paris Agreement, emissions need to be reduced by 45 per cent by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

The year 2050 might seem far away, but the task is immense, and actions need to

happen now, at scale and speed. For many companies, to achieve net zero, they require a reduction of approximately 50 per cent in their footprint by 2030. Achieving this goal will be challenging for companies, so we need to harness all the technological tools in our arsenal, including innovation, digitisation, strategic levers and AI.

So how does one integrate digital transformation measures into their sustainability plans? Here are seven ways to point you in the right direction:

Analyse the data: What is the starting point for your company? For example, real-time measures and information from utility meters, IoT measurement points on technical equipment, etc. This gives you an accurate picture of where your current position is, and the concrete measures you need to put in place to achieve your goal.

Forecast data: Look at specific levers including energy, water, and food waste/consumption. Technology (and AI) can help us forecast data better and create digital twins of the most resource-intensive companies (hotels in our case) and forecast their utility consumption behaviours.

Sustainable stays: Technology can be used to forecast consumers'/guests' behaviour and help with eco-friendly suggestions, for example guiding them towards sustainable stay options.

Staff and guest engagement: Technology can be used to engage people and encourage them to make sustainable choices by

showing the impact of their choices and decisions and creating a self-reinforcing loop of even more impact.

Simplify processes: Alongside simplifying processes, eliminate repetitive tasks so we can serve our clients better, leading to less waste, paper use, food waste, etc. If processes are dealt with automatically or online, this frees

up time for value-added tasks to serve guests, such as assistance for less mobile clients and tailored local tips on the destination.

Traceability: With technologies such as blockchain, we can trace items, be more selective in our purchasing, calculate menu footprints, be smart about modelling, and reduce overall food related footprints.

We can also trace the origin of materials that go into furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Personalisation: For example, in a hotel setting, we can use technology to better understand the needs of a client staying in a hotel for business or leisure, and whether the client prefers green choices such as green housekeeping. This can generate additional cost savings and revenue.

Technology opens a world of possibilities. Often, for companies it's simply a matter of prioritising, finding the right partners and dedicating resources and time to pilot those measures and then scale them. The transition to a net zero world can only be done with a complete transformation of how we produce, consume, and move about our planet. Technology is the key tool to drive our common journey to net zero by 2050. **BT**

Currently, the Earth is already about 1.1°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s



BRINGING THE CITY TO YOU

Citadines Culture Village Dubai



Second consecutive winner of 'Dubai's Leading Serviced Apartment Brand 2023' by World Travel Awards.

Perched scenically in the city of entertainment and dreams, Ascott's stylish address – Citadines Culture Village Dubai is home to vibrant guests who are constantly on the look out for local experiences and opportunities.

Featuring global spaces, the property is located within the historical Al Jadaf neighbourhood, offering serene views of the Dubai Creek and is ideal for both business and leisure, solo or duo travellers. Seasoned travellers can also enjoy access to art galleries, performing arts centres, museums, restaurants and designer boutiques, situated near the premises.

Offering guests a well-balanced take on living within



its premises, the Citadines is equipped with global amenities that include a swimming pool, fitness corner, breakfast lounge, resident's lounge and business corner.

Citadines Culture Village Dubai is part of Ascott's worldwide programme, 'Ascott Cares', a sustainability framework that is centred around five pillars - Community, Alliance, Respect, Environment and Supply Chain.

Citadines Culture Village Dubai received the honour of 'Dubai's Leading Serviced Apartments 2023' for the second consecutive year, by the renowned World Travel Awards - a commitment to its heart-warming hospitality.

citadines
Culture Village
Dubai

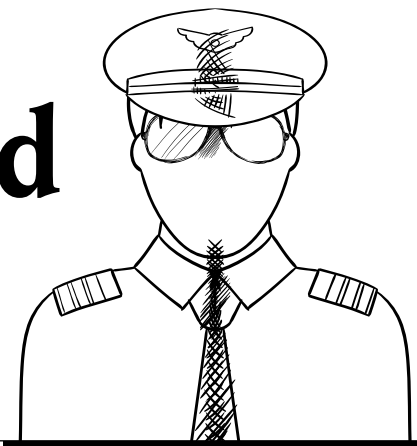


discoverasr.com
asr ascott
star
rewards

Citadines Culture Village Dubai is managed by The Ascott Limited, a member of CapitaLand Investment. It is one of the leading international lodging owner-operators with properties across Asia Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the USA. Its portfolio of serviced apartment, coliving and hotel brands include Ascott, Citadines, lyf, Oakwood, Quest, Somerset, The Crest Collection, The Unlimited Collection, Préférence, Fox, Harris, POP!, Vertu and Yello.

What goes around comes around

Our undercover pilot offers insight into a routine procedure that can cause anxiety for travellers



You are seconds from landing, thinking about where your passport or car keys are, when suddenly the aircraft engines go to full power and a steep climb is initiated. From a passenger perspective this can be quite alarming, particularly if you are a nervous flyer. You might be thinking: what happens next and why has the pilot said nothing?

What you're experiencing is known as a go-around. For pilots, it's something that we practice in the simulator every six months and occasionally on the aircraft for real, so it's quite a routine manoeuvre.

There are numerous reasons why a go-around occurs, which generally fall into four categories. These are weather-related, air traffic control (ATC), technical issues or an unstable approach. We never just land and hope for the best – calculations are made before we start every descent to ensure that the aircraft can land and stop safely. If that is ever in doubt, a go-around will be actioned and the situation re-evaluated. Typically this will happen between 1,000 feet until landing, which for a commercial jet is about 1.5 minutes to landing.

Weather-related incidents are one of the most common reasons. Examples include if the crosswind is too high for the certification of the aircraft, gusty winds destabilising the aircraft flight path,

visibility not being good enough to see the runway (such as with fog), a thunderstorm causing unpredictable and dangerous winds, or snow that has made it difficult to see the runway edges or too slippery to stop.

ATC can also instruct pilots to perform a go-around. The most common reason here is the aircraft that landed ahead of you has been too slow to clear the runway. Other factors could include debris or even an animal roaming around on the runway. Flocks of birds in the vicinity of the airport could also present a hazard.

Technical issues can occur anytime during a flight and will be dealt with accordingly. But should this happen in the late stage of the approach to land, the pilots may need to perform a go-around to deal with the situation and assess what impact it may have on the landing. Examples could be an engine failure or a defect affecting the braking system.

Weather-related incidents are one of the most common reasons for a go-around

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT

The final category is an unstable approach. Each airline has a set of requirements when the aircraft reaches 1,000 feet. This includes setting the correct speed, ensuring flaps are on the landing setting, the wheels are down, the aircraft is not too high or low on the glide path, and that the passengers are all secure. If a passenger was in the loo or out of their seat at 1,000 feet, a go-around would need to be flown – and you will not be popular if you are that passenger.

If a go-around were not actioned there is a possibility the aircraft wouldn't be able to stop on the runway, it might hit another aeroplane, or a passenger could be injured. Landing on the runway is always preferable to ending up in the grass, which makes disembarkation quite difficult!

NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

So why does the pilot take forever to say something and reassure passengers that all is under control? The simple answer is that they are initially very busy. They have to change their mindset from landing to go-around mode. Actions will involve applying power to the engines while pitching the aircraft into a climb. The flaps will need adjusting for a climb and the wheels need to be raised. Additionally they are communicating with ATC, dealing with the reason for the go-around and deciding on the best plan of action, which is usually to have another attempt. However, if it's weather-related it may be necessary to enter a holding pattern and await improvement. If a second go-around occurs due to weather, then a diversion would be considered as it is too stressful for passengers to endure yet another failed landing attempt. Once this has all been figured out, the pilot will usually then speak to the passengers to explain the situation.

In my 27 years as a pilot, I've flown no more than 20 go-arounds, so it doesn't happen that often. But hopefully now, if it does happen, you will have a better understanding as to what is occurring, know that things are under control, and be reassured that as with all things in aviation, it is to keep you safe and secure. **BT**



An elevated experience

Alexander Musch, general manager of Pullman Dubai Downtown, outlines why his property significantly appeals to visiting business travellers

What are some of the main incentives to encourage business travellers to stay at your property? Pullman Dubai Downtown extends a range of enticing incentives to cater to business travellers, with a special focus on our esteemed Accor loyalty programme members. Through this programme, guests accumulate valuable points with each stay, which can be redeemed for an array of benefits. These include complimentary stays, room upgrades, and exclusive access to premium amenities.

Give us an overview of the meetings and events facilities present here.

The hotel features three state-of-the-art meeting rooms, each equipped with cutting-edge technology and amenities to facilitate seamless presentations and discussions. Additionally, our elegant ballroom offers a picturesque view of the canal, serving as an exquisite backdrop for gatherings of up to 450 attendees. This versatile space is ideal for varied social events.

In addition to these exceptional facilities, many of our esteemed corporate clients choose to host their exclusive cocktail events and private social functions in our top-tier venues. Lolita Rooftop Bar, with a generous capacity of 120 guests, provides



a chic outdoor atmosphere for intimate gatherings. For larger events, Couquley French Brasserie can accommodate up to 150 attendees, offering a blend of French cuisine excellence and a refined ambiance. Meanwhile, Honeycomb Hi-Fi Izakaya Listening Bar provides a unique audio experience, making it an excellent choice for dinners that demand a more upbeat, urban experience.

What percentage of your guests are business travellers and are there any specific trends that you have noticed when they book a stay with you?

Approximately 40 per cent of our guests are business travellers who often express specific preferences and requests. These preferences include rooms on higher floors and convenient access to the metro system, Dubai Trade Center, and business districts. We also ensure complimentary access to premium wifi, along with a diverse selection of breakfast options. Additionally, we offer early breakfast service for guests too. Our strategic location in proximity to major transportation routes, coupled with attractive offerings and business club lounge facilities, further enhance our appeal to business guests. For those who require secluded workspaces without the need for a full meeting room, we offer private areas ideal for conducting calls or working remotely.

What are the current challenges to attracting more business travellers to stay at Pullman?

Presently, one of our key challenges lies in the highly-competitive market landscape characterised by aggressive pricing strategies and occasional price reductions offered by our competitors. This underscores the need for a strategic approach to maintain our appeal to business travellers, ensuring that the value and experiences offered by Pullman Dubai Downtown remain distinct amidst the market dynamics.

What are your predictions for the growth of business travel to your property for the remainder of this year?

We're anticipating a notable uptick in business travel, especially with the upcoming significant conferences and Dubai Airshow on the horizon. We are forecasting a 3 per cent increase in business traveller bookings for the fourth quarter of this year. These high-profile events will certainly draw an influx of professionals to the UAE, solidifying Pullman Dubai Downtown's position as a preferred choice for discerning business travellers seeking both convenience and sophistication during their stay.



Luxury treading lightly

The line between environmentalism and luxury travel is slowly blurring, with technological advances and real commitment to positive change

40

WORDS JEREMY TREDINNICK

NOVEMBER 2023



The sand is warm and soft between my toes, a balmy breeze ruffles the leaves in the palm trees, my stomach is full after an exquisite dinner, and the sky is putting on a colour-saturated show as the sun sinks below the horizon. It's easy to see why the Maldives is considered to be the island holiday of a lifetime.

Since its tourism industry began in 1972, the Maldives has become possibly the most glamorous and famous destination for affluent holidaymakers. But the growing awareness of climate change has brought into focus how industries such as resort tourism need to adapt their business models toward greater environmental sustainability.

The unavoidable truth is, of course, that a tropical island holiday can never be environmentally beneficial if you have to fly there – you're carbon

positive before you even set foot on the ground. But it's equally true that we aren't going to stop travelling for pleasure, plus there are important economic benefits to tourism for many nations, the Maldives included. So the question becomes: how can we minimise our impact on the environment?

Taking the lead

Hotels around the world have realised the need to operate more efficiently and less wastefully. It's common these days to see glass water bottles, bathroom products in refillable bottles, and signs in bedrooms asking you to consider reusing your towels and bedsheets. But there are more comprehensive and far-reaching initiatives possible – and a perfect case study for these can be found in the Maldives, for

whom the climate crisis presents an existential threat to its very future.

Understanding that rising sea levels and the increasing severity of storms pose serious problems for the archipelago, the Maldivian government has become a leader in advocating emission reduction policies. It has declared a net zero target of 2030, and in June 2022 initiated a strategic plan to phase out production, import and sales of single-use plastics by the end of this year and promote the use of sustainable alternatives.

There are also strict rules and regulations for all the resorts scattered across its many atoll islands. According to Patrice Aira, general manager of the Hurawalhi Island

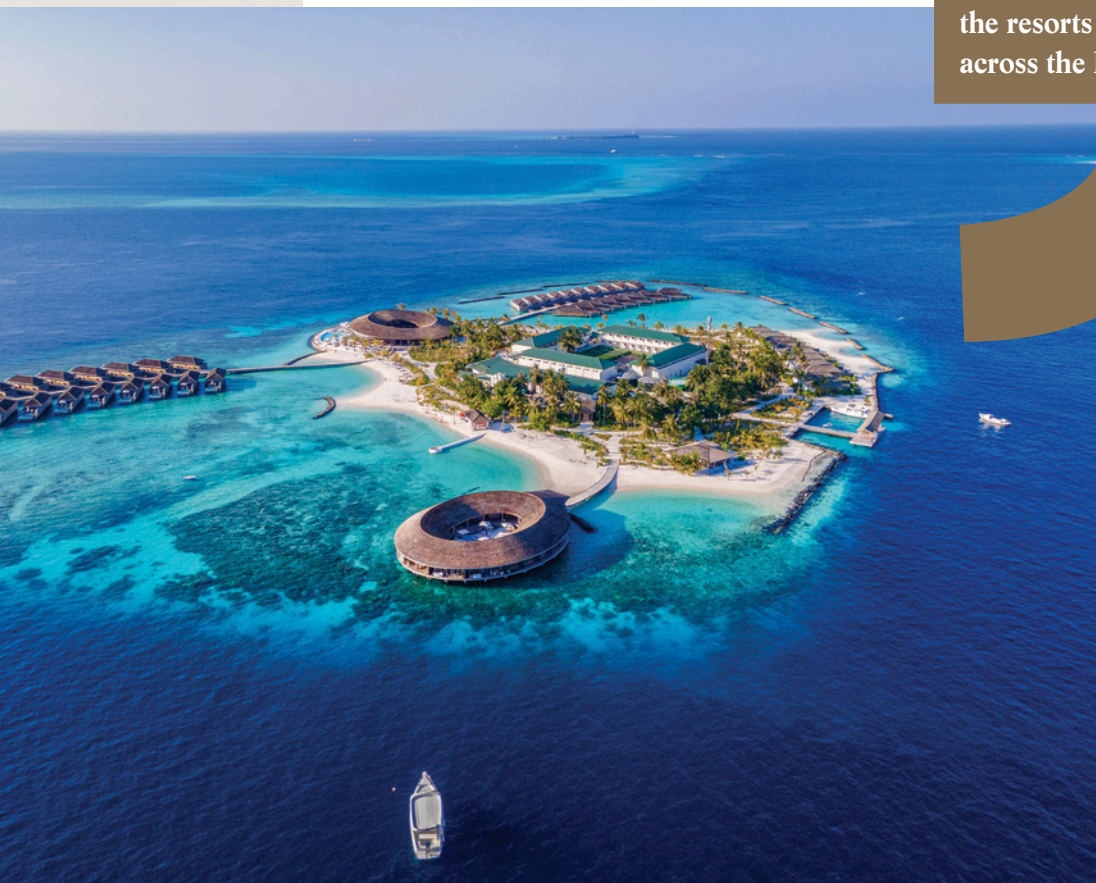
Resort and Kudadoo Private Island, both located in Lhaviyani Atoll: "Government bodies have strict policies for developing a resort, and these must be implemented for all aspects of the environment. Every year, the Ministry of Tourism, together with the Health Protection Agency and Ministry of Defence, inspect all resorts' operations to check their compliance of environmental and safety guidelines."

The two resorts mentioned above are owned by Crown & Champa Resorts, a Maldivian/Swedish joint company with a diversified portfolio of properties spread across a number of atolls, but all rooted in Maldivian heritage and united in their fierce commitment to utilising the most advanced technologies and business practices to reduce emissions and waste, and ensure as little impact on their fragile environment as possible.

KAGI: Boutique benefits

All of the typical environmental initiatives (glass bottles, paper straws, beach cleanups) can be found on →

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: With a net zero target of 2030, the Maldives is working hard to protect its barefoot luxury legacy; Kagi Maldives Resort & Spa in the North Malé Atoll



The government has strict rules and regulations for all the resorts scattered across the Maldives



The 2,655 solar panels at Hurawalhi produce up to 816 kilowatts of electricity on a sunny day



42

Kagi Maldives Resort & Spa, but I quickly discover other clever ideas. From small things like my room key card being made of wood rather than plastic (as are the comb and toothbrush in my overwater villa), to more significant technological applications, such as the fact that villa doors and sliding French windows are fitted with sensors to turn the air conditioning off if left open – a huge boon to energy conservation. The resort also uses LED lighting throughout, which saves up to 1,000kWh of electricity per day.

Fresh water is produced via a reverse osmosis desalination plant (drinking water is mineralised), and hot water is provided through a high-efficiency heat recovery system whereby waste heat produced by chillers is converted into thermal energy to enable hot showers without a negative impact on the environment. This simple but effective method saves an estimated 804kg of emissions every day.

Further investigation reveals a lot more going on behind the scenes. Out of sight in the staff-only portion of the island, a recycling centre processes glass, plastic and cardboard. Glass

goes into a crusher to make powder, while cardboard and plastic is compacted before being sent to a recycling company in Malé. The result is a reduction of 75 per cent in incinerator requirements.

“We have an extensive waste management programme that includes reducing waste and maximising recycling through our own waste management plant,” says Jorg Weytjens, general manager of Kagi Maldives Resort & Spa. “This results in very limited waste needing to be disposed of via waste barge and ultimately in landfills.”

Disposal of waste water is another focus. “We have a full microorganism sewage treatment plant within the resort. This turns used water into grey water which we then use for garden irrigation,” adds Weytjens.

Providing the sort of fine-dining cuisine expected of a five-star resort inevitably means sourcing a lot of high-quality produce from overseas – with the accompanying carbon issues

from plane/ship fuel, and so on. But there are many ways that this, too, can be minimised. Within the heart of the circular Noo Faru restaurant building is the resort’s herb garden, which produces fresh produce for the resort’s kitchens. It is fertilised with organic waste from those same kitchens, created by using a state-of-the-art composting machine. Around 100kg of compost is produced per day – and used in the resort’s gardens.

Over a delectable dinner at the Italian restaurant Nonna, the resort’s executive chef Denis Placereani explains the Kagi philosophy: “Our company brief for food is ‘as local as possible and packed with flavour’. We source every ingredient from as close as possible to the resort. When it’s not from the Maldives, then we’ll source

FROM TOP LEFT: Solar panels installed at Hurawalhi Island Resort’s boat jetty; Snorkellers enjoy the crystal clear water

COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY

A snapshot of other resorts doing their bit for the environment

Anantara Kihavah

Maldives has a solar system providing 26 per cent of its energy needs, an orchid garden, a coral regeneration programme, and a biomass system for food waste.

Coco Collection is home to the ORP Marine Turtle Rescue Centre and a team of resident marine biologists in charge of ocean restoration.

Dusit Thani Maldives has extensive solar panels on the roofs of its main buildings.

Four Seasons Resort at Landaa Giraavaru uses 3,105 solar panels, has a marine rehabilitation

programme with resident marine biologists, and works with NOW Force for Good Alliance and Earth Check.

LUX* South Ari Atoll

has a floating solar power plant at sea, and a marine biology centre that works to safeguard whale sharks.

Patina Maldives, Fari Islands

has zero-waste kitchens; an on-site organic permaculture garden where guests can forage; and dining menus that promote plant-based diets.

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands has launched a drone project that works with a government-approved

research programme to develop drone methods to search for and investigate plastics in the Maldives and wider Indian Ocean.

The St. Regis Maldives

Vommuli Resort has started a coral propagation programme with Reefscapers.

Six Senses Laamu has opened the Sea Hub for Environmental Learning in Laamu (SHELL), a centre for the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI), a marine conservation group comprising marine biologists and partner NGOs such as The Manta Trust and the Olive Ridley Project.

As we walk down the Hurawalhi boat jetty I notice its roof has a peculiar pattern. It turns out to be made from solar panels. In fact, the resort has 2,655 panels in various locations that can produce up to 816 kilowatts of electricity on a sunny day. As Hurawalhi boasts 180 villas both beach-based and overwater, plus extensive leisure and restaurant areas, a spa, activities-based buildings and staff accommodation, this cannot provide all the power needed, but it does cover 30-35 per cent of it – a reduction of carbon emissions equal to 766,531kg per year.

The resort also has wood suppliers who source sustainably, and the majority comes from 100 per cent sustainable forestry and FSC-certified companies in New Zealand. As I wander the lush island grounds I notice regular bins for both general waste and recyclable products, and the vehicles used to transport guests or other materials are either electric or bicycle powered.

Hurawalhi uses all the same technologies as Kagi for its water treatment and desalination, waste management, composting and compacting, but its greater size allows for a more expansive vegetable garden – as large as a football field. Here an impressively diverse range of fruit and vegetables is grown,

produce from Sri Lanka or India, and so on. Suitable food waste is sent to a nearby island where animals are kept, including goats, chickens, geese, and we also have a hydroponic garden planned for salad vegetables.”

With only 50 villas and an island area of just 4.24 hectares, Kagi is a beautiful yet compact resort – but its size in some instances restricts it from certain environmental initiatives, for example solar energy supply. The current high cost of solar panels and batteries can make this an unfeasible source of cheap energy... but if you are a larger resort, the numbers can add up.

HURAWALHI: Economy of scale

After a short flight in a seaplane (yes, more carbon requiring offsetting) we arrive in the northern part of Lhaviyani Atoll, where both Hurawalhi Island Resort and Kudadoo Maldives Private Island are located, about 15 minutes' boat ride apart. We are met by the convivial



general manager of both resorts, Patrice Aira.

“We understand the importance of implementing sustainable practices and preserving our environment, hence all our operational policies invest more than the minimum requirements set by the government, while various non-governmental organisations and auditing firms provide assurances of our commitment to the environment.”

ABOVE: Overwater villas at Hurawalhi Island Resort

fed by both treated waste water and organic fertiliser from composted food wastage.

This greater harvest is necessary because of the higher volume of guests, but there is no getting past the fact that much of a luxury resort's food must come from other countries. “Eighty per cent of our fish is from the Maldives, but we cannot rely on local fishermen for the highest-level cuisine, so much of our menu in →



Kudadoo's main point of focus is apparent as the boat glides towards the jetty. The huge two-storey, over-water building known as The Retreat is an architectural masterpiece by Yuji Yamazaki, and home to the resort's restaurant, bar, wine cellar, spa, gym, and even a Himalayan salt chamber.

But although the main communal space and social centre for the island, it's The Retreat's 2,000 sqm roof that fascinates and impresses, because it is covered entirely by angled solar panels that provide 100 per cent of the resort's power needs. This is possible for two reasons: there are only 15 villas catering to a maximum of 50 people; and this being a "fully inclusive luxury experience" resort, the prices are correspondingly astronomical.

Kudadoo is the embodiment of what Crown & Champa Resorts' COO Mohamed Solah means when he states that, "design and sustainability are at the core of our properties". For those who can afford this type of uber-luxury – where you

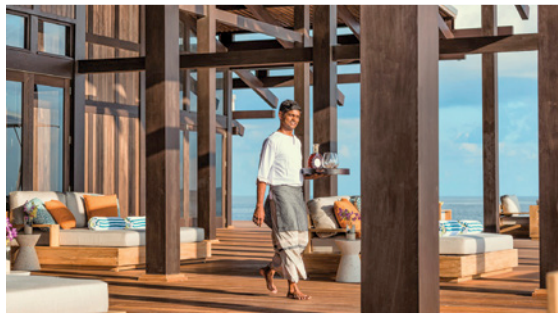
5.8 consists of overseas fish, such as the Patagonian toothfish, the Canadian lobster and the Japanese king crab you are eating now," says Eric Henri Drogueux, the resort's executive chef.

Drogueux is referring to 5.8, the world's largest all-glass undersea restaurant, located off the jetty at a depth of 5.8 metres – hence the name. I am savouring a superb seven-course meal, with perhaps a little guilt, but the reality is that guests paying top dollar for a real luxury experience at Hurawalhi expect fine dining.

The view from 5.8 is an underwater kaleidoscope of colourful fish on a coral reef nursery, which is monitored by the resort's two resident marine biologists. Given that the Maldives' abundant marine life is both a major draw for tourists and a key resource for the nation's population, keeping the underwater ecosystem healthy is as vital as all the efforts going on above water.

"The Manta Trust started in 2005 in the Maldives, and its flagship project is here," says Frances Budd, a project manager for the trust. "We now have 25 affiliate projects around the world, all working towards the conservation and protection of manta rays and other mobulid rays, and the areas they inhabit."

"The Trust's core pillars are research, education and collaboration," Budd



continues, "and we all have a shared goal of saving this environment, so there is continuous sharing of information both regarding mantas, and other related projects."

One such initiative is a coral restoration project managed by Paula Dominguez. "At Hurawalhi, we have a nursery comprising 114 frames with an average of ten coral fragments on each frame," she says. "We have two stages: the first site was planted in 2021, and the second a little deeper in 2022. We monitor them every two weeks to check for bleaching, and so far the results have been much better than we expected, which is great."

KUDADOO: Small is beautiful

My last stop is on Kudadoo Maldives Private Island. This property has only 15 "Ocean Residences" reached from a half-moon walkway curling around one side of its tiny island but



FROM TOP: Kudadoo is entirely powered by solar energy; Staff serve just 15 Ocean Residences; An aerial shot of the resort

can order a US\$12,000 bottle of Pétrus from the 2,000-bottle wine cellar, and call on your own exclusive butler 24 hours a day during your stay – it must be satisfying to know that your chosen destination comes with a Triple A energy rating.

I am being facetious; the example being set is one we should hope to see at all luxury resorts, whether in the Maldives or anywhere else in the world, to help us leave as light an eco-footprint in the sand as Kudadoo does. **BT**



Culinary elegance

Saurabh Tiwari, general manager for Taj Dubai, elaborates on the property's F&B outlets and its new outdoor catering service too

The Legendary Treehouse and Miss Tess have recently reopened. What's new this time around? The award-winning Treehouse has gone through a complete design and offerings makeover. In line with the company's sustainability strategy Paathya, Treehouse now embodies a chic, vibrant and trendy green oasis. Miss Tess, on the other hand, retains its loyalty to subtle Asian craftsmanship with sophisticated oriental design and an expanded pergola-style terrace.

Both outlets have introduced enhanced menus. Miss Tess now extends exquisite Asian dining with a focus on contemporary Chinese, traditional Japanese and popular Thai dining experiences. We've also incorporated vegan options there. Treehouse meanwhile offers Mediterr-Asian cuisine, but with a twist. Its menu is a balanced blend of the best from the Mediterranean and South American regions with Asian flair and a signature Taj twist.

You've just introduced the Gala by Taj Dubai catering service. Tell us about that. Gala By Taj Dubai is an opportunity to bring the legendary Taj service to your doorstep. This is a bespoke catering service that allows you to experience the essence of Tajness in the privacy of your home, office or even a yacht. It caters to a diverse range of events – from the grandeur of weddings and anniversaries

to office gatherings, the joy of birthday celebrations, the elegance of award ceremonies, and the cosy ambience of intimate dinners. And all that with a dedicated fleet of butlers, bartenders, waiters, chefs and AV services for a complete 360-degree experience.

How will Gala by Taj Dubai differentiate itself from other high-end catering services in Dubai? Taj Dubai

has the unique advantage of eight years of in-depth experience catering to Dubai's elite.

We've tailored our culinary and events services and coupled that with our extensive experience in bespoke catering. Another point to highlight is our multi-cuisine offerings. While

many caterers might specialise in a particular cuisine, Gala by Taj Dubai curates dining options from India, the Middle East, and South East Asia. It also features options ranging from Peruvian to progressive Mediterranean classics, ensuring that every palate is catered to, every taste is celebrated. Beyond the food, our 'Welcome Experience' sets the tone for any event. Our 360-degree catering service encapsulates everything – from menu planning to the final presentation.

How does the hotel deal with excess food and minimise food waste?

Aligned with our CSR policy and in line with IHCL's Paathya vision, all our outlets

and Gala by Taj Dubai follow a robust food waste management plan. At Treehouse and Miss Tess, for example, instead of discarding leftover fruits and vegetables, our teams repurpose them into homemade garnishes and concoctions for our cocktails. We've empowered our culinary department with the training and tools to determine and serve the optimal portion sizes and thereby minimise the chances of leftovers. Also, instead of offering daily buffets for every meal, we limit our buffet service to breakfast only. Bombay Brasserie, our signature restaurant and kitchen serving Indian cuisine, offers a unique Interactive Dining Experience featuring a set-menu that is cooked in front of guests, allowing them to witness the creation of the real magic. The set-menu option allows us to control portion sizing and reduce waste.



What are the upcoming plans for the hotel's F&B offerings? Treehouse and Miss Tess have just launched their new Saturday Brunch, while Miss Tess will offer a lunch service too. Our award-winning gastro pub, The Eloquent Elephant, is upgrading its outdoor experience on the terrace and guests there can look forward to a new weekend brunch. Meanwhile, Bombay Brasserie is all set to introduce a new retro Bollywood glam brunch too. With the upcoming festive season, our F&B outlets will offer themed menus, festive decorations as well as a series of events so there's definitely more reasons than one to come visit us soon.

WORDS SARAH JOSEPH

A NEW WELLNESS

Take the plunge and immerse yourself in a host of unique experiences within some of the most picturesque resorts in the Maldives

FRONTIER

With an overwhelming work schedule, long hours in front of the screen or a back-to-back itinerary of events, finding the time to breathe and take a break, doesn't come easy – especially if you live in bustling metropolitan cities. Hence, an idyllic escape and wellness break might not only be the perfect option, but also one bordering on necessity.

For a rejuvenating wellness journey, guests can discover a profound connection between physical activity and mental equilibrium at any one of these palm-fringed paradise resorts in the Maldives.



Joali Being Bodufushi

This property offers you personalised wellbeing programmes. From the minute you enter, this wellness sanctuary focuses on finding out which aspect of yourself from the Mind, Microbiome, Skin and Energy needs attention. Home to a total of 68 guest villas, consisting of 33 beach villas and 35 water villas, each accommodation comes with its own private infinity pool. Guided by a team of wellbeing experts, culinary maestros, herbalists, tea sommeliers, and personal trainers, among others, guests can fully immerse in the island's

elemental therapies and healing experiences. Inspired by the joy of spice markets is Aktar, also known as the herbology centre to treat any ailments naturally. For an immersive wellbeing experience, Areka provides recreation facilities with alternative healing treatments.

Hero experience: For healing through water, the Watsu therapy takes place in the Kaashi and focuses on the art of letting go with the therapist who stretches you through free-flowing exercises. All you have to do is trust the process.

joalibeing.com

Six Senses Laamu

Surrounded by beautiful coral reefs, the accommodation options include a mix of overwater and beach villas. Prioritising privacy and seclusion, this resort is situated in the Laamu Atoll, a 25-minute speedboat ride from Velana International. Visitors can discover their dosha with Ayurveda and enjoy nourishing local Maldives spa treatments and restorative facials. Each post-treatment relaxation session ends with a gut-cleansing smoothie at the juice bar to top up the experience. From the meals you relish to the way you sleep and the earth beneath your feet, wellness is seamlessly integrated into your overall Six Senses experience.

Hero experience: Through a non-invasive wellness screening process, guests can book a consultation with the experts to understand what their body needs and then avail of a personalised spa treatment to cater to their specific needs. Through biohacking, the team at the resort can optimise the body's natural processes to recover quicker, helping the guest to look their best and make the most of their brief stay at the resort. The biohacks include compression therapy, pain relief and instant tension release.

sixsenses.com/resorts/laamu



48

Cheval Blanc Randheli

From a series of specially crafted experiences to exploring the marine-life-rich waters, this rejuvenating resort focuses on a results-driven renewal with three bespoke wellness journeys. The first is a Well-being Journey that encourages gentle restoration through healing activities; the second is a Detox and Fitness Journey which sheds light on de-stressing and blends healthy dieting with diverse spa, fitness and sports practices; and the third is the Family Well-being Journey for the full family to accomplish their goals together through spa lessons and a teamwork culinary session.

Hero experience: Try the Moon Salutation Yoga for a soul-nourishing session at the Spa Yoga pavilion surrounded by the shimmering waters of Noonu Atoll. The session is followed by a Carte Blanche dining experience in the privacy of your villa. chevalblanc.com

Baros Maldives

One of the oldest resorts in the Maldives, guests here can put wellness at the forefront with experiences such as a complimentary morning yoga class on The Lighthouse Deck. The waves will lap gently on the sandbank shore as you stretch and breathe. The Serenity Spa therapists can expertly tailor a series of treatments to suit individual guests to deliver maximum benefit during their holiday at Baros

Maldives. For soothing one's mind and spirit, private yoga and meditation sessions can be arranged in the air-conditioned spa pavilion, on the guest's villa deck, on the Lighthouse Deck or at sunrise and sunset on a sandbank.

Hero experience: The property's resident yoga therapist takes guests on a yoga journey with advanced poses on the deck, where they are surrounded by crystal-clear water. baros.com



Finolhu

This property is situated in the Baa Atoll, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the Maldives. The resort's Wellness Centre allows guests to enjoy a refreshing yoga session or an invigorating workout in an oceanfront setting amidst lush surroundings. With activities such as the semi-submarine, visitors can enjoy this experience to witness nature first-hand. Whether guests are staying as couples, family, or a group of friends, Finolhu is designed as an island playground with a choice of immersive experiences for everyone.

Hero experience: Cool down by sweating with the Hydrotherapy that instantly cleans the skin and ensures you feel relaxed. The facilities at Fehi Spa after an intense workout help to reduce muscle soreness the next day, with the plunge pool hydrotherapy being an absolute must-try.

finolhu.com



Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas

This state-of-the-art resort works on healing from the inside out through the healing properties of indigenous plants and fruits. With restorative facials and vitamin IV infusions, including other detoxification therapies, its luxurious water villa spa goes back in time to rely on 5,000-year-old natural Ayurvedic healing techniques. From holistic treatments to a customised rejuvenation journey with the resident Ayurvedic Master, visitors here can elevate their wellness experience at the resort's stunning overwater Maldives spa.

Hero experience: Try the Kativasthi which is a unique spinal herbal bath where a small natural paste reservoir is created on the lower back with the bare skin acting as its base. The medicated oil remains there for 45 minutes and is used to treat chronic or acute back pains including spinal disorders, lumbar spondylosis, sciatica and osteoporosis.

anantara.com/kihavah-maldives →



DESTINATION

Soneva Soul

This transformative wellness concept uses uplifting ancient healing wisdom coupled with the latest in science and innovation to connect the mind and soul. The resort's experienced therapists create a personalised wellness experience that empowers each guest to achieve long-term wellness goals. With its nature-inspired design, the island's wellness sanctuaries blend integrative medicine and complementary therapies to promote true healing and attempt to release visitors from unexplained stress and chronic illnesses.

Hero experience: The Medicinal Herbal Bath layers guests with both fresh and dry elements to boost their mood, calm the mind, soothe sore muscles, open pores, soften skin and promote a restful sleep.

soneva.com/soneva-soul



Jumeirah Maldives Olhahali Island

Situated in the heart of Olhahali Island, this picturesque resort stands out for its Mediterranean chic design. Guests can take their pick with the therapeutic spa treatments or access the 24-hour fitness centre with captivating views of the crystal waves. Located just an hour by speedboat, or 15 minutes by seaplane,

from Velana International, this property set in a beautiful archipelago is curated with calming interiors and lush green vegetation all around for nature to play its part in your wellness journey.

Hero experience: For an elevated wellbeing experience, opt for the Tibetan Crystal Healing Massage that allows the power of the Tibetan

Singing Bowl and Healing Crystals to take root. As the treatment focuses on the vibrational sound that aids the vital energy to achieve a deeper sense of relaxation, the crystals interact with the body's energy field, creating balance and alignment.

jumeirah.com/stay/maldives/jumeirah-maldives **BT**

Proudly associated with



BORN IN
Africa...

ENJOYED
AROUND
THE WORLD



Our Amarula Original Classic Cream Liqueur is infused with the exotic fruit of the African Marula tree. Get back to your roots with its iconic velvety smoothness and wild hints of toffee and vanilla. Perfect over ice, in a decadent dessert, luscious cocktail, or hot drink.

Discover what makes Amarula Cream liqueurs so special. Visit amarula.com

Enjoy responsibly

COMPILED CAMILLE MACAWILI



A Clean Shave

Perfect your grooming regime for the big night

1. The Moisturizing Matte Lotion, 50ml, **Dhs1,200**, La Mer, bloomingdales.ae; 2. Nourishing Beard Grooming Oil, 30ml, **Dhs145**, Kiehl's, bloomingdales.ae; 3. Shaving Cream, 120ml, **Dhs148**, Le Labo, cultbeauty.com; 4. Research Cleansing Concentrate, 125ml, **Dhs505**, Tom Ford Beauty, ounass.ae; 5. Terre d'Hermès After-shave Lotion, 100ml, **Dhs365**, Hermès, hermes.com; 6. No.88 Shaving Set & Stand, **Dhs2,020**, Czech & Speake, harrods.com; 7. Peppermint Beard Conditioner, 120ml, **Dhs75**, The Art of Shaving, theartofshaving.com; 8. Celestial Black Diamond Cream, 50ml, **Dhs2,655**, 111Skin, mrporter.com; 9. Anti-Bump Treatment Serum, 30ml, **Dhs105**, Baxter of California, baxterofcalifornia.com

Well Suited

Impeccable classic cuts and trend-led renditions of a wardrobe staple for this year's events season

COMPILED CAMILLE MACAWILI

1. Slim-Fit Shawl-Collar
Double-Breasted
Cotton-Velvet
Tuxedo Jacket
Dhs13,500
Brunello Cucinelli
brunellocucinelli.com

2. Check Texture
Suit Blazer
Dhs599
Zara
zara.com

3. Formal Wool
Jacket
Dhs14,300
Berluti
berluti.com

4. Cold Wool
Suit Blazer
Dhs1,399
Massimo Dutti
massimodutti.com

5. Shelton Grain de
Poudre Wool and
Mohair-Blend
Tuxedo Jacket
Dhs15,460
Tom Ford
mrporter.com

6. Asymmetric
Wool Blazer
Dhs13,800
Alexander McQueen
mytheresa.com



①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥



Hennessy

PARADIS

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

PARADIS IS ON EARTH



Gulf Business Awards 2023

SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

FIND OUT MORE



VOTE HERE



CONNECT WITH US



GulfBusiness

#GulfBusinessAwards

FOR EVENT SPONSORSHIP, TABLE BOOKINGS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES

manish.chopra@motivate.ae | sangeetha.js@motivate.ae

Sponsor

Associate Sponsor

Venue Partners

Beverage Partner

Vote Processing Partner

Presented By

CENTURY
FINANCIAL

YARDI



PALAZZO
HOSPITALITY
SERVICES LLC

afrikan+eastern
INSPIRING GREAT BLENDS



JACOBSONS
better experiences

MOTIVATE
MEDIA GROUP

Business
Traveller Middle East

the report

**Tried,
Tested,
Tasted.**

TRIED AND TESTED HOTELS

Bab Al Shams, Dubai **58**
Pullman Dubai Downtown **59**

Maison Delano Paris

60

**Radisson RED London
Heathrow**

62

SMART TRAVELLER

Our guide to...
Wifi in the air

64

Bab Al Shams, Dubai

BACKGROUND A longstanding favourite among residents and visitors alike, Bab Al Shams originally opened back in 2004. One of the first resorts of its kind in the UAE, it closed in early 2022 and underwent an extensive refurbishment. The property reopened in April this year under Kerzner's new Rare Finds collection.

WHERE IS IT? Bab Al Shams is a 45-minute drive from downtown Dubai. Within easy reach of Al Qudra Lake and Endurance City, it is accessible via the D63, which leads all the way from Umm Suqeim. In English, Bab Al Shams means 'Gateway to the Sun,' which will give you an idea of the kind of peaceful seclusion to expect.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? Inspired by the traditional architecture of the Arabian Peninsula, the resort features 115 rooms and suites that have been subtly updated with elegant Moorish details. The colour palette is neutral, with brushed gold accents and exposed wooden beams helping to create a renewed sense of refined luxury. There are courtyards with elegant water features, private balconies, lush palm gardens, and winding alleyways. Together, they create a sense of peace and tranquillity in the heart of the desert.

ROOMS All rooms are a combination of contemporary design and Arabian flair. We stayed in a Deluxe Garden View room featuring a king-sized bed, built-in window seat, studded wooden shutters, and a single piece of visual art. Outside was a small terrace and chairs. A marble-clad bathroom with a walk-in shower provided all the accessories you'd expect, while a large flatscreen television supplied the requisite in-room entertainment.

FOOD AND DRINK The renovated resort has placed renewed emphasis on dining. For our first night, we headed to Al Hadheerah, a huge open-air buffet that revels in the myriad delights of Arabic cuisine. There are live cooking stations,



BEST FOR
An exceptional Arabian experience

DON'T MISS
Sunset drinks at Anwā

PRICE
Internet rates for a midweek stay in November start from Dh\$1,530 for a Deluxe Garden View King room

CONTACT
Al Qudra Road, Dubai;
+971 4 809 6100;
babalshams.com

BUSINESS Bab Al Shams' renovation has led to a reduction in the amount of business space. There are now three meeting rooms, each with the ability to accommodate up to 18 people. There is also a dedicated outdoor courtyard and foyer.

LEISURE The pool – or should we say pools – is the epicentre of the resort. The whole area is an elaborate affair,

with more bathing spots than we knew what to do with. And that's just the lazy stuff. Hot air balloon rides, horse riding, camelback trekking, falconry, guided nature walks, archery, and desert safaris are on offer too. We made the most of the latter, which involved an exciting and sometimes hair-raising drive into Al Marmoom Desert Conservation Reserve. There's the Bab Al Shams Spa and Hammam too, but that hadn't yet opened to the public at the time of our visit.

VERDICT It's a perfect spot to escape it all. The refurbishment has worked wonders, bringing a resort that was in danger of losing its grandeur back into the limelight.

Iain Akerman

All rooms are a combination of contemporary design and Arabian flair

hot and cold mezze, kebabs by the bucketload, and desserts to die for. There is also live entertainment in the form of music and dance. The following afternoon we brunchd at Zala, a Mediterranean restaurant with a penchant for both Turkish and Greek flavours, before heading to Anwā later that evening. A sunset lounge that offers a selection of pan-Asian dishes, we savoured every mouthful of Anwā's crispy duck with pomegranate and white miso dressing. The sweet and sour chicken tacos and the hamachi ceviche will also be fondly remembered.

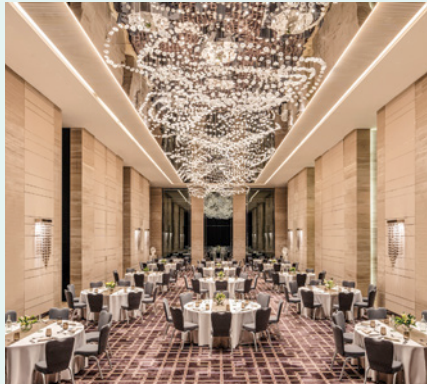
Pullman Dubai Downtown

BACKGROUND At the start of 2021, Accor's Pullman took over the former Steigenberger property in Downtown Dubai. Two years on, the hotel has undergone a multi-stage thorough renovation and refurbishment exercise that extended to all its rooms, common areas and leisure facilities.

WHERE IS IT? An absolutely prime location, it is located on Marasi Drive and is not more than a 10-minute drive from key destinations including Dubai Mall, DIFC and the Dubai World Trade Centre. It isn't close to a metro station, so getting here by public transport would likely require you to take a taxi instead.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The lobby has tall ceilings and the art installation behind the front desk is carried over from the property's Steigenberger era. There are cosy seating areas along the edges of the lobby. The elevators to the right of the check-in desks, just beyond the entrance to Brothaus Bistro and Bakery (another Steigenberger legacy feature) will whisk you up the 19-floor property.

ROOMS We stayed in the Deluxe suite which we were told was previously two rooms, but now combined into one suite with one room serving as the living area and the other as the bedroom. The refurbishment of the hotel was carried out under the 1980s Memphis design theme – which would explain brightly-coloured geometric shapes and patterns along the headboards above the bed. There were two



large TV screens in the suite – one each in the living room and bedroom. The TV, housed within a large wooden frame, had Netflix inbuilt, and pairing my device to it took not more than 20 seconds. A floor-standing cabinet in the living room also had the Memphis-design vibe to it and was stocked with a mini fridge and Nespresso machine. Our room looked out onto the serene Dubai Water Canal.

FOOD AND DRINK We dined at the Couqley French Brasserie. The hotel's operations team takes care of the buffet breakfast there, while Couqley's own team steps in to handle the lunch and dinner service. Couqley is an excellent French restaurant with refined service. Worth a special mention are the Onion

The refurbishment was carried out under the 1980s Memphis design theme

Soup Gratinée, the Filet De Boeuf with the tenderloin done to our exact specifications, and a mighty shout-out to the excellent Pain Perdu, hands down one of the best we've had in Dubai. Lunch can be a leisurely informal affair poolside at Lolita Pool Bar and Lounge with the nachos, maki rolls and chicken katsu bowl all being great choices to order.

MEETINGS On the first level of the property, there are three meeting rooms – two of which can be combined to accommodate larger groups. On the same floor, you will find a large ballroom with the capacity to host around 200 guests. Meanwhile, to one corner of the lobby on the ground floor, a co-working space is free for the hotel's residents to use. For those whose room package includes access to the executive club lounge on the 19th floor, that space too could be used to conduct meetings.

LEISURE On level three, there's the Belladonna salon to your left as soon as you exit the elevator. Turn right and you will head towards the spa which has four treatment rooms. Go past the reception of the spa and you'll find the well-equipped gym with Life Fitness equipment, which is also from where you can access the squash court – the hotel rents out rackets for Dhs20. The pool, with great views of the Burj Khalifa, has a spa bath alongside the main pool.

VERDICT This is a hotel that has done a great job of refurbishing and revamping itself to give it a far more contemporary and "Pullman" edge allowing it to fiercely compete with the many luxury hotels in Downtown Dubai. *Varun Godinbo*



BEST FOR

Views of Downtown Dubai and the Canal from the rooms

DON'T MISS

A quintessentially French dinner experience at Couqley

PRICE

Internet rates for a midweek stay in November start from Dhs1,275 for a Deluxe suite

CONTACT

Marasi Drive, Dubai; + 971 4 369 0000; pullmandubaidowntown.com

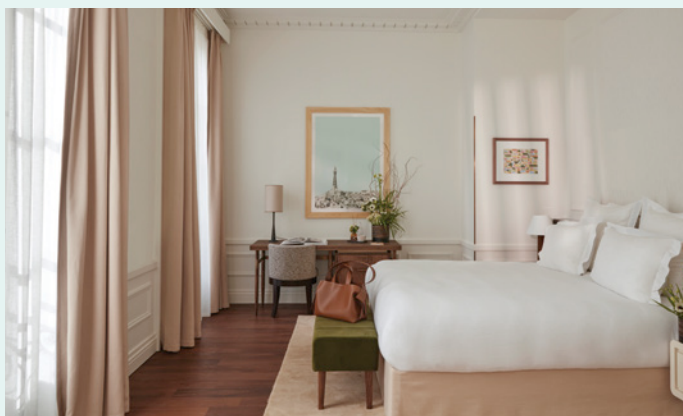


Maison Delano Paris

BACKGROUND Iconic Miami-born hospitality brand Maison Delano, part of the Ennismore group's Lifestyle Collective, made its French debut with the April 2023 opening of Maison Delano Paris. Housed in an 18th century mansion, it is owned by Qatar-based Katara Hospitality.

WHERE IS IT? On Rue d'Anjou, in the heart of the prestigious 8th arrondissement, also known as the Golden Triangle – a shopping haven encompassing Avenue Montaigne, Avenue des Champs-Élysées and Avenue George V. Famous landmarks and attractions, including Place Vendôme, Place de la Concorde, Tuileries Garden, Musée d'Orsay and the Louvre, are all within walking distance.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? All of Delano's brand and service hallmarks are encapsulated at this new flagship property, with a Parisian twist, of course. It's an urban sanctuary with historical grace, blending sophistication and style with a residential-like ambience. Service is attentive, yet laid-back, and although it's just footsteps from the glamour of the famous high-end shopping strip, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, its modest side-street location and historical context create an air of privacy – you feel as if you are staying in your very own home. A design triumph, the décor showcases leading names in contemporary design, orchestrated by interior designer Lázaro Rosa Violán.



ROOMS There are 56 rooms and suites, each envisaged as a refined intimate space. This is reflected in shades of white, beige and grey, which contrast with the rich green velvet benches, elegant dark-wood furnishings, and black-and-white minimalistic bathrooms. I stayed in a 35 sqm Prestige Room, which felt spacious and overlooked the historic courtyard. The bedroom with textured wall finishes and modern art, featured a king-size bed with luxurious white Tessicasa linen and cotton bedding, a desk, a small table with chair, a mini bar and a TV enabling you to stream your own content. The good-sized bathroom with a walk-in shower, offered robes, slippers and MALIN+GOETZ bath and shower amenities. The room also had a closet with plenty of hanging space, a safety box, hairdryer and steamer. Other amenities included a Lavazza coffee machine, complimentary mineral water, tea and coffee, and a Geneva sound system.

You feel cocooned at Maison Delano Paris

FOOD AND DRINK The gastronomic offering is the centrepiece at Maison Delano Paris, with La Chambre Bleue, a new restaurant concept by chef Dani García, taking diners on a tour of Spain to explore his Andalusian roots – think exquisite



fish, seafood and rice dishes with Mediterranean flair and French influence. Menu highlights include inventive mains for two – goat, dry-aged beef, grilled red tuna or whole roasted turbot – or delicious paellas, choosing from organic baby chicken, grilled octopus, smoked eel, roasted rabbit, red mullet or a Normandy beef bone marrow special. La Chambre Bleue, named after Pablo Picasso's famous painting (the artist and chef are both Malaga born), is not one venue, but a series of lounges, open kitchens and two wine cellars that encircle the main courtyard, all bedecked in Spanish-influenced interiors, dominated by blues, with references to the sea. It is a welcoming spot, and has a street entrance too, for locals in the know.

BUSINESS Meet clients or colleagues for informal drinks, a business lunch (dedicated menu available), or a private dinner. It will certainly impress.

LEISURE There's a small 24/7 gym with a good range of cardio and strength-training equipment. The concierge is very helpful and informative, providing suggestions and assisting with bookings.

VERDICT You feel cocooned at Maison Delano Paris, yet multiple Paris hotspots are on your doorstep. It's elegant, but not too stuffy, sophisticated, but friendly, and the homely atmosphere is soothing after a busy day in the city. Ideal for business or leisure, short or long stays, it feels like a hidden gem, and La Chambre Bleue is a culinary experience that adds extra sparkle.

Gemma Greenwood

BEST FOR
Any occasion

DON'T MISS
Dining at La
Chambre Bleue

PRICE
Internet rates for
a midweek stay
in November start
from €720 for a
Prestige room

CONTACT
4 Rue d'Anjou, Paris;
+33 183968888; paris@
maisondelano.com

identity DESIGN AWARDS 2023

VOTING OPEN

VOTE HERE



VIEW THE SHORTLIST



identity.ae @ f @ in identityae #IdentityDesignAwards

Platinum Sponsor

CASAMIA

Silver Sponsors

BLACKLANE
CHAUFFEUR HAILING

STUDIO
971

Artemide

Bronze Sponsors

COSENTINO

LUTRON

Venue Partners



PALAZZO
HOSPITALITY
SERVICES LLC

Beverage Partner



Trophy Partner

SANS SOUCI

Floral Partner

DARCEY
FLOWERS

Vote Processing Partner

JACOBSONS
better experiences

Presented By



FOR EVENT SPONSORSHIP, TABLE BOOKINGS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES

sharmine.khan@motivate.ae | suha.sabith@motivate.ae

Radisson RED London Heathrow

BACKGROUND This dual-branded Heathrow property opened in 2020 with Radisson RED and Radisson Hotels in two separate wings. The hotels received a £16 million investment and include 858 rooms plus extensive meeting facilities.

WHERE IS IT? On the hotel-packed Bath Road, a ten-minute drive to Heathrow's terminals. You can get a Hotel Hoppa bus to terminals 2, 3 and 5 between 4.15am and 10pm daily, with a journey time of 20-30 minutes. The hotel has a partnership with WeKnowLondon, an electric car company, for punctual transfers to the terminals – my trip to Terminal 5 at 5am took ten minutes.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The modern hotel is well signposted from the main road. Closer to the entrance, a glam driveway features a mirrored ceiling, with a terrace to the right.

The RED branding is evident throughout, with design featuring pops of red and nods to London – a red Mini Cooper car is parked



by reception, while red phone boxes act as self check-in and check-out booths.

The reception has a showbiz-like feel, with exposed filament light bulbs, while photography throughout the hotel showcases well-known British stars.

The open-plan lobby comprises a casual bar and dining area to the right of reception, along with a sociable lounge area.

Check-in takes place at 3pm, with check-out at 11am (there's a key drop-off option), though queues were long. Members of Radisson Rewards can use a separate lane. Lifts are to the far-right of the ground floor, with ramp access.

ROOMS The Radisson RED wing has 258 rooms featuring the brand's playful design with contemporary decor and splashes of red, while more than 600 rooms have the Scandi-inspired Radisson brand style. Noteworthy is the 'Park, Dream and Fly' rates, which include parking for up to four, eight or 15 days, though this may be offsite.

Red phone boxes act as fun self check-in and check-out booths

Rooms at RED range from 30 sqm to 61 sqm suites, with Executive rooms and suites having lounge access. Select rooms offer tarmac views.

Executive rooms are well-designed for business thanks to high-speed wifi and a comfortable desk area with USB ports, plug sockets and targeted lighting.

The king-size bed at the centre of the room is comfortable, with bedside USB and plug sockets and a red rotary phone.

Amenities include a Smart TV, iron, ironing board, safe, bathrobe and slippers, tea and Nespresso coffee facilities, two complimentary bottles of water, large-size toiletries and a powerful rain shower.

The downside with the room was that the air conditioning unit didn't work, so my room was very hot. I was unable to get in touch with the team via the phone and queues at

reception were long. A technician was sent to fix the problem, but it still would not budge below 23 degrees. The blackout curtains were good, but I could hear planes despite the triple-glazed windows.

FOOD AND DRINK RBG Bar and Restaurant is the hotel's lobby venue which serves a breakfast buffet (for £11) and an à la carte menu for lunch and dinner.

Italian restaurant Filini offers pasta, stone-baked pizzas, and a few meat and fish dishes. Service was cold, with stained paper menus or the option to order and pay via a QR code. I was not impressed with the wild mushroom gnocchi (£15) which was gloopy and expensive for a small portion. That said, it was in its soft opening phase in mid-May.

MEETINGS There are two multipurpose conference centres and 41 meeting rooms, plus an executive lounge on the fifth floor, which offers complimentary drinks and snacks from 6-8pm.

LEISURE The ground floor's Pace Leisure Club has a gym, pool, sauna and steam room.

VERDICT This well-located hotel has extensive meetings facilities for business travellers, though its F&B spaces need improvement. *Hannah Brandler*

BEST FOR

Its location close to the airport terminals, with a bright and fun design to kickstart a business trip

DON'T MISS

An electric car transfer to make an early flight

PRICE

Internet rates for a flexible midweek stay in November starts from £175 for an Executive Room with lounge access

CONTACT

Bath Road, West Drayton, Heathrow UB7 0DU; London; +44 208 283 2030; radissonhotels.com



**EXCLUSIVE
PAINTINGS,
SCULPTURES,
PHOTOGRAPHY
AND TIMEPIECES
FROM
AWARD-WINNING
INTERNATIONAL
ARTISTS**

SHOP NOW

INTERNATIONAL DELIVERY

TheArabianGallery.com

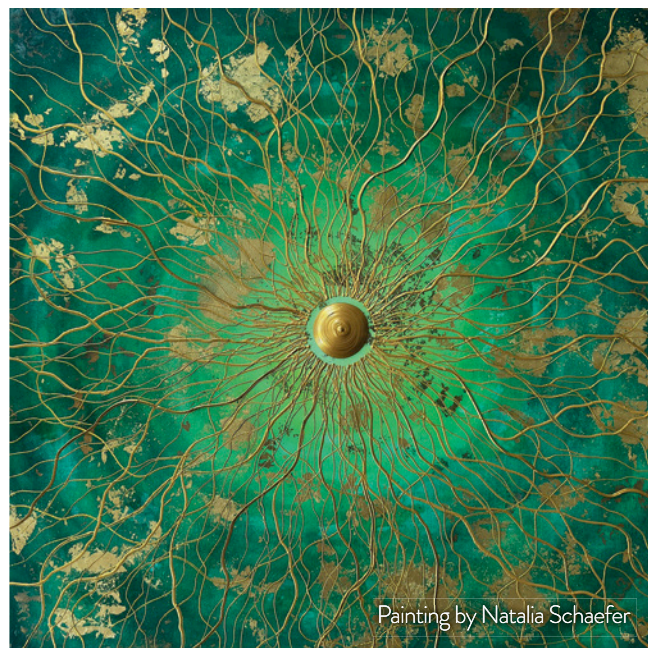
© TheArabianGallery The Arabian Gallery
+971 4 427 3040



Photograph by Yousif Alharmoodi



The 50th Anniversary Arabian Falcon Navigator Clock
by David Galbraith



Painting by Natalia Schaefer



Our guide to... Wifi in the air

Taking a flight used to mean being out of comms for the duration of the journey, but things have drastically changed. Not only do most airlines now offer wifi connectivity, many are also starting to offer this service for free, meaning it probably won't be long before they all do. Until then, we've compiled a list of wifi packages on board some of the main carriers. (See [businessstraveller.com](https://www.businessstraveller.com) for a full, up-to-date list). To access, passengers need to open their device settings and select the wifi network onboard the aircraft. If there are paid-packages available you can choose the one you want and enter your payment details. Wifi providers often vary between aircraft, so packages and services provided by an airline may differ. Coverage and speeds may also change depending on things like the location, with some parts of a route network being patchy.

WORDS HANNAH BRANDLER

AER LINGUS

Aircraft with wifi: On all A321 neo LR and most A330 aircraft.

Is it free? Wifi is complimentary for business class customers and AerClub Concierge members.

Paid packages available: Messaging: from £2.99 for one hour (£4.99 for entire flight). Web browsing: from £11.99.

Is there a data cap? Upload capacity of approx 5Mbps, download capacity of 1Mbps.

Can I use multiple devices? You can switch between devices.

AIR CANADA

Aircraft with wifi: Most of its fleet, apart from the Boeing 737 MAX 8. The airline also says wifi access is only available on select North American and international Air Canada-operated flights.

Is it free? There is free texting for Aeroplan members, and free wifi for T-Mobile or Sprint customers. To access, add your Aeroplan number to your booking before checking in. To access free wifi, select the 'In-Flight Connection On Us' option and enter your Sprint or T-Mobile phone number.

Paid packages available: One hour CAD\$6.50; entire flight CAD\$21; monthly plan (between airports in Canada, US and Mexico) CAD\$65.95.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

AIR FRANCE

Aircraft with wifi: All of its fleet. **Is it free?** No, but the airline offers free messaging on all flights with wifi access.

Paid packages available: Surf Pass: €3 (short haul), €5-10 (medium haul), €8 (long haul for one hour), €18 (long haul for the entire flight). Stream Pass: €10 (short haul), €15-20 (medium haul), €30 (long haul).

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? No.

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Aircraft with wifi: A320 neo, Boeing 777s and the majority of the 787s. The airline is extending wifi technology to more of its fleet throughout 2023.

Is it free? Yes.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? Yes.

AMERICAN AIRLINES

Aircraft with wifi: All apart from single-cabin regional jets.

Regional aircraft can only support texting and limited browsing.

Is it free? No.

Paid packages available:

The airline says it is available on "almost all routes for as little as

US\$10". A monthly plan costs US\$49.95 and is valid on most domestic flights operating between airports within the US, or between the US and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean or Central America. To purchase a wifi subscription plan you must be a member of the AAdvantage programme.

Is there a data cap? No. **Can I use multiple devices?** You have to switch between them, or you can buy a two-device monthly plan for US\$59.95.

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Aircraft with wifi: Wifi is progressively being rolled out across the whole fleet.

Is it free? Yes for first class passengers. All passengers can use wifi to view flight information or manage their booking and Executive Club account.

Paid packages available: "Messaging" and "Browse and Stream" packages.

Messaging includes instant messaging and emails without attachments. Browse and Stream additionally includes emails with attachments, browsing social media and the web, and streaming music, video content and films. Prices depend on length of flight.

Short-haul Messaging: £1.99-£2.99; Browse and Stream: £4.99-£11.99; Long-haul Messaging: £2.99-£4.99;

Browse and Stream: £4.99-£21.99.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? No.

CATHAY PACIFIC

Aircraft with wifi: All A350 and A321 neo aircraft, progressively being rolled out across Boeing 777 and A330 aircraft.

Is it free? No.

Paid packages available:

One-hour pass: US\$9.95; Message pass (for instant messaging services) for flights under six hours: US\$3.95.

Full flight under six hours (includes browsing the web, emails and online shopping, but not video streaming): US\$12.95. Full flight over six hours (includes browsing the web, emails and online shopping, but not video streaming): US\$19.95.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

DELTA AIR LINES

Aircraft with wifi: All domestic US flights by December 31, 2023 and entire global fleet by the end of 2024.

Is it free? Yes, there is free wifi for SkyMiles Members on most domestic US flights. All passengers can benefit from free messaging. SkyMiles members will need to log in with their

SkyMiles number and password for free wifi.

Paid packages available:

One hour pass: US\$7; All day pass: US\$19 for 24 hours of continuous internet access on any domestic wifi onboard serviced flight.

Monthly global plan: US\$69.95; Monthly domestic plan: US\$49.95; Annual domestic plan: US\$599.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? Yes.

EMIRATES

Aircraft with wifi: Entire fleet.

Is it free: All Emirates Skywards members can access some form of free wifi. Emirates Skywards Blue members can access "Unlimited Chat" to use WhatsApp and other messaging services. Emirates Skywards Blue members travelling in first, or Emirates Skywards Gold or Silver members travelling in business or first class can access full complimentary wifi. Emirates Skywards Platinum members can enjoy free wifi throughout the flight in any cabin class.

Paid packages available:

Unlimited chat: US\$2.99-US\$5.99 (depending on the length of the flight), includes access to messaging services.

Wifi for the whole flight: US\$9.99-US\$19.99 (depending on flight length); Easy connect: US\$9.99 for

30 minutes with no data limit.

Is there a data cap? No, although bandwidth is shared and some services may be restricted.

Can I use multiple devices? Yes.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS

Aircraft with wifi: On all aircraft apart from the A320 and A321.

Is it free? Etihad Guest members get access to a free Chat package for the entire flight. Etihad Guest Platinum and Exclusive tier members as well as first class passengers get complimentary Surf wifi access. Etihad Guest Gold members receive a 25 per cent discount on the Surf package.

Paid packages available: Flights under seven hours: Chat package US\$2.99; Surf package US\$9.99; flights over seven hours: Chat package US\$4.99; Surf package US\$19.99.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

No, but you can switch devices.

FINNAIR

Aircraft with wifi: On all Airbus aircraft.

Is it free? Business class passengers and Finnair Plus Gold members get complimentary access for one hour on long-haul flights/30 minutes on short-haul flights. Finnair Plus Platinum members get free access for the entire long-haul flight (30 minutes on short haul). All Finnair Plus members will get free messaging on short-haul European flights in 2024.

Paid packages available: Narrowbody fleet – flights under two hours: Browsing €5.95, Streaming €12.95; flights over two hours: Browsing €9.95, Streaming €24.95; Widebody fleet – one hour: €7.95, three hours: €14.95, full flight: €25.95.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? No.

IBERIA

Aircraft with wifi: On 95 per cent of its fleet.

Is it free? There's free messaging for business class passengers and Iberia Plus members – you must enter your Iberia Plus number to

make use of the free service.

Paid packages available: Messaging: €3.49 for one hour, €5.99 for full flight.

Browse and streaming: €5.99 for one hour, €13.49 for four hours, full flight €24.99.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? No.

JETBLUE

Aircraft with wifi: Entire fleet.

Is it free? Yes. Fli-fi is available on all domestic US flights and most Caribbean and Central America routes, where passengers can use social media, surf the web and stream content. Airbus A321 LR aircraft also offer this on the carrier's transatlantic services.

Is there a data cap? No, although some passengers may receive temporarily reduced speeds if excessive data usage is detected, such as apps downloading in the background.

Can I use multiple devices? Yes.

KLM

Aircraft with wifi: All apart from select Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

Is it free? No, but free messaging is available on flights with wifi.

Paid packages available: Surf Pass: €8 (entire flight in Europe), €8 (one hour intercontinental flights), €18 (entire intercontinental flight) – enables you to surf the internet, send and receive emails and text messages. Stream Pass: €12 for entire flight in Europe (€30 for intercontinental flights) – enables you to surf the internet, send and receive emails including large attachments, send and receive messages including photos, videos and audio files, stream music, audio and video.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? No.

KOREAN AIR

Aircraft with wifi: The airline is rolling out wifi onto all aircraft. At the moment it is available on all international flights with the new Boeing 737-8 aircraft.

Is it free? No.

Paid packages available: Messaging for full flight: US\$4.95 (short and medium haul), US\$5.95 (long haul).

Web browsing for two hours:

US\$10.95 (medium and long haul); full flight: US\$11.95 (short haul), US\$13.95 (medium haul), US\$20.95 (long haul).

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

LUFTHANSA

Aircraft with wifi: All apart from some regional aircraft.

Is it free? Miles & More members get 30 minutes of free messaging on short or medium-haul flights until the end of the year – you will need to enter your membership Travel ID to make use of this. First class passengers get complimentary access.

Paid packages available:

Short and medium-haul flights Chat package: €3 for entire flight. Mail and Surf: €5 for flights under 90 minutes, €7 for flights over 90 minutes.

Stream: €10 for flights under 90 minutes, €12 for flights over 90 minutes.

Long-haul flights

Chat package: €5;

Two-hour web surfing: €15;

Full flight web surfing: €25.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

MALAYSIA AIRLINES

Aircraft with wifi: All A350 aircraft and progressively being rolled out on the A330 fleet. Not available on Boeing 737 aircraft.

Is it free? The airline has launched a trial to offer 100MB of free wifi to all business suite and business class passengers, as well as Platinum members of the Enrich frequent flyer programme until December 31, 2023.

Paid packages available: Lite (send and receive messages): US\$2; Social (Light browsing and messaging): US\$10; Business (emails; messaging; browsing – video streaming not recommended): US\$25.

Is there a data cap? Yes:

Lite: 10MB/200kbps; Social:

50MB/512kbps; Business:

200MB/512kbps.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

QANTAS

Aircraft with wifi: All domestic services and some international routes (Singapore, Denpasar, Jakarta, Manila, Port Moresby) operated by an A330-200 or Boeing 737 aircraft when travelling over Australia.

Is it free? Yes

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices? Yes.

QATAR AIRWAYS

Aircraft with wifi: The A350-900, A380, A350-1000, Boeing 787-8, 787-9 and select Boeing 777 aircraft. Wifi is progressively being rolled out on all aircraft.

Is it free? Privilege Club

members get an hour of complimentary wifi. On some aircraft types there is complimentary messaging.

Paid packages available: US\$8 in advance and US\$10 onboard.

Is there a data cap? There are multiple data-volume/time-based internet plan options on flights which you can select during the initial sign-up process.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices on some aircraft.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Aircraft with wifi: Virtually the whole fleet, apart from seven Boeing 737-800s operating short-haul flights to Phuket, Penang and Kuala Lumpur

Is it free? As of July 1, wifi is free for all passengers who sign up to the KrisFlyer loyalty programme. Passengers need to input their membership details at the time of booking or checking in to access the free wifi.

Paid packages available:

Non-KrisFlyer members: one-hour Surf Plan US\$3.99; three-hour Surf Plan US\$8.99; full-flight Surf Plan US\$15.99.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

THAI AIRWAYS

Aircraft with wifi: Selected A350-900, Boeing 787-8, 787-9, selected Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Is it free? No.

Paid packages available:

Unlimited chat: US\$7.99; Unlimited surf: US\$24.99; Unlimited streaming: US\$39.99.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

UNITED AIRLINES

Aircraft with wifi: The majority of the airline's fleet, apart from 30 CRJ-900 aircraft, the ERJ-145s and CRJ-200s.

Is it free? Yes, for T-Mobile or Sprint customers on an eligible plan. All passengers get free messaging and access both to united.com and the app.

Paid packages available:

US domestic and short-haul flights cost US\$8 (or 800 miles) for MileagePlus members, US\$10 for everyone else.

Day Pass: MileagePlus members can purchase a Day Pass for their trip. This starts one hour before the first flight and expires 24 hours later. It costs the same as it would to buy wifi for each individual flight in the 24-hour period.

Wifi subscriptions: for North

America and Central America: US\$49 (or 7,500 miles) per month; US\$539 (80,000 miles) per year.

For global coverage: US\$69 (or 10,500 miles) per month; US\$689 (100,000 miles) per year. MileagePlus Cardholders get 25 per cent back on all wifi subscription purchases.

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC

Aircraft with wifi: The entire fleet, though streaming is not guaranteed on A330-300 or A350-1000 aircraft.

Is it free? No, but all customers on the new A330-300 fleet can access 20 minutes of free wifi in exchange for watching a short advert.

Paid packages available:

Pricing and packages vary per aircraft and start from £2.99 (full flight pass costs £20.99).

Is there a data cap? No.

Can I use multiple devices?

You can switch between devices.

FRAME THE STORY



NEOM unveils new Leyja destination in Saudi Arabia

NEOM has revealed plans for a stunning new sustainable tourism destination called Leyja in Saudi Arabia. It extends from the Gulf of Aqaba coast in the west inland towards a valley amidst 400m high mountains. In a bid to preserve the natural beauty of this striking region, NEOM says only five per cent of it will be developed. It will comprise three hotels that will offer a combined total of 120 boutique rooms and suites, split equally with 40 keys at each of them.

The Adventure Hotel has a deconstructed design that NEOM says "ascends the walls of the wadi like a staircase" and will facilitate activities including rock-climbing in the surrounding area. The Oasis Hotel (pictured here) is the second property and will sit at the heart of the wadi's largest oasis. Its distinctive architectural feature will include a staircase ascending from the canyon to the entrance of the hotel. The Wellness Hotel meanwhile will serve as an immersive wellness retreat that promotes longevity. Its design will include a reflective façade mirroring the surrounding natural landscape, allowing it to blend in. neom.com



Capila
pool bar & grill

KEEP IT COOL BY THE POOL

Dive into a day of Splashing times,
Latin bites, free-flow beverages,
and live entertainment.

From AED 210 per person
Every Sunday | 1 PM - 4 PM

Reservation is recommended
T: 052 254 76318 | E: dineatcapila@hilton.com


Hilton
ABU DHABI YAS ISLAND



Bridging the distance, expanding horizons

We're committed to removing barriers to travel,
creating free flows of trade and tourism and
enhancing connectivity between different cultures.

flydubai.com