

“A New Dawn” breaks at Arabian Travel Market 2021

As of Sunday, thousands of tourism, hospitality and aviation executives have gathered at Dubai's World Trade Center for the Arabian Travel Market, the region's biggest travel and tourism event. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, president of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and CEO of Emirates Group, declared the event open. A new hybrid format will mean a virtual event will run for an extra week, helping to ensure a larger audience.

The theme of this year's show is “A new dawn for travel and tourism.” Featured will be the latest COVID-19 news from around the world, from vaccine rollouts to the current state of the industry and the outlook for the future.

A total of 62 countries are represented on the exhibition floor, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Germany, Cyprus, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, the Maldives, the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and the US.

This year's event features 67 conference sessions with over 145 local, regional and international speakers. Included are a hotel industry summit; dedicated buyer forums for Saudi Arabia and China; an International Tourism & Investment Conference; and an aviation panel.

RAKTDA investments

As part of this “new dawn,” Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) in partnership with RAK Hospitality Holding and RAK Chamber of Commerce and Industry announced the investment of US\$136 million in 20 new sustainable projects. Raki Phillips, Chief Executive Officer of RAKTDA, said at the Arabian Travel Market 2021.

These projects will all be purpose built with sustainability standards and processes, and will focus on the emirate's nature, leisure, adventure, accessibility and authenticity.

Phillips stated that the emirate's tourism market declined 25% year-on-year in 2020, as opposed to 75% globally. “The reason for our success is we are a nature-driven destination, we are a great getaway. Domestically we fared quite well, we went from being a 30 percent domestic destination, to a 60% domestic destination,” Phillips said. “This multi-million investment plan further demonstrates our resolve and commitment to tourism, despite the global challenges faced this past year that continue to shake our industry today.

“These projects also align with our vision and strategy moving forward with our new brand identity,” Phillips said. This new branding features a mountain motif.

Statements on post-COVID era

“Events like this clearly demonstrate that the worst is over. We're thinking very much about a post-COVID era,” said Scott Livermore, Chief Economist at Oxford Economics Middle East, on the first day of the Arabian Travel Market. “And looking over the longer term, with growth and diversification plans across the region, travel and tourism is a key pillar of those strategies.”

“Dubai has definitely shown a great deal of resilience over the last year,” said Helal Al Marri, Director General of the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing. “When COVID first started,

from May last year, we opened to domestic tourism and in July we opened to international tourism.”

“Technology plays a critical role in facilitating the restart of global travel and tourism in the wake of the COVID-19 bounce back,” said Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market. “The discussions taking place at ATM Travel Forward highlight the readiness of travel businesses to face the new realities of the industry and provides a valuable forum for identifying the new technologies and innovations essential to restore travel confidence.”