

Island resorts leading recovery in global leisure travel, says ATM

Island resorts around the world will lead the recovery in leisure travel, according to research carried out ahead of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2021, which takes place, with an in-person event from 16-19 May at the Dubai World Trade Centre and the virtual event to be held the following week, from 24-26 May.



Image Supplied.

Many island economies are dependent on tourism and nowhere is this more apparent than in the Indian Ocean islands of the Maldives (28% of GDP) and the Seychelles (over 55% of GDP), which are both expecting a bumper Easter holiday period. With both islands less than four hours 30 minutes away, Emirates has added an extra four flights taking its weekly schedule to 28 flights.

Meanwhile, Air Seychelles is launching a weekly flight to Dubai to cope with the increased demand, which is in addition to two extra flights a week that Emirates is adding to its existing schedule of five weekly flights to Mahe.

"Both islands tick all of the proverbial boxes for tourists," says Danielle Curtis, exhibition director ME, Arabian Travel Market. "Even though demand maybe pent-up, visitors will still want direct flights, easy access, reasonable restrictions, low Covid cases, good vaccination rates, open and in some cases isolated resorts, with a natural environment including quiet beaches," adds Curtis.

The Maldives is expecting to have its 500,000 inhabitants vaccinated by August and with less than 100,000 citizens, while the Seychelles is hoping for 100% vaccination within the coming months.

And although both countries have a list of approved countries, the Seychelles and the Maldives only require visitors to provide a negative PCR test 72 or 96 hours respectively, prior to arrival, no proof of vaccination or quarantine is required.

"And after a standard temperature check upon arrival at the hotel, guests in the Maldives can roam freely, they only need to wear a mask indoors, with similar restrictions applicable in the Seychelles," adds Curtis.

However, many travel professionals feel that the real game-changer is that both countries will accept any fully vaccinated visitors. And with the global rollout expected to accelerate, as more vaccines are approved and manufactured, island nations will be the catalyst for increased international leisure travel.

Other islands with great potential for the Middle East's outbound market are Sri Lanka, Cyprus and the Greek islands. Emirates and Etihad operate seven flights a week to Colombo and visitors need a negative PCR test 96 hours before arrival and then two further tests within the next seven days.

The Sri Lankan government aims to have the entire country of over 21 million vaccinated by the end of 2021, currently, that figure stands at around 500,000.

"With three weekly flights from Dubai, Cyprus is another interesting case and from April, it will welcome Israeli tourists who have had both vaccination doses," says Curtis.

The Greek authorities aim to vaccinate the vast majority of their 10.35 million population by this summer (more than 725,000 have been vaccinated so far) to help revive their tourism sector and again Greece is well connected with five weekly flights between Dubai and Athens.

Exhibitors from island territories participating at ATM this year include the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, Greek National Tourism Organisation, Cyprus Ministry of Tourism, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, Philippines Department of Tourism and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, among others.

Now in its 28th year and working in collaboration with DWTC and Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), the theme of ATM 2021 will be *A New Dawn for Travel and Tourism*.

[Registrations for ATM 2021 are open.](#)

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