

WELCOME

Confession: Although I grew up in the GCC – I’ve lived in the UAE for almost 30 years, through various chapters of my life – and I have thus far travelled to more than 65 countries (encompassing both the most popular as well as more hidden corners of the world) – I had never actually been to Saudi Arabia until this year. Even though it was right next door.

In my defense, I wasn’t able to go there before – not the way that I can now. Prior to 2019, when the country opened up to wide-scale tourism through an e-visa available to tourists from 49 countries for the first time, travel to the kingdom was mostly restricted to those with visas for business travel, expatriate workers, and religious pilgrims heading to the holy cities. As a woman, I also would have been required to follow a series of more stringent rules for female visitors, such as needing to be met at the airport by a husband, a sponsor, or a male relative to enter the country.

The tourism reforms that came as part of Saudi Arabia’s ambitious plans for the future, including its spectacular Vision 2030 initiative, were a truly groundbreaking change. Not only did they open the destination up as a place that more people could visit, but they also created a major ripple effect in the country’s transformation on a global scale. They ushered in a new era of development for its hospitality, aviation, tourism, and related industries, and enabled a radical shift in the global perception of this great kingdom. In 2024 – when Saudi Arabia will celebrate the five-year anniversary of that catalysing tourist e-visa – the country is known for fostering some of the most jaw-dropping projects in the world, from futuristic destination developments worthy of a science fiction film, to the preservation and restoration of locations that honour the country’s rich history, stunning spots that inspire you to dream of the stars and beyond (p44), thriving cities that buzz with business and world-class dining (p64), and everything in between. With a tourism plan that has received an US\$800+ billion investment, an ever-growing list of incredible destination hotels that are doing things nobody has ever done before (p60), and with a goal of attracting around 70 million international visitors per year by 2030, it’s an epic tale of transformation (p14).

There is a curious phenomenon among many travellers and expats wherein we rarely tend to explore places in our own backyard, whether it’s because we take them for granted, or because our time there is often swallowed up by other obligations. But among the many exceptional places to explore in the great world out there (p47 & p50), there is a special magic to discovering the spellbinding treasures closer to home. We’re delighted to give you a taste of that, through a kingdom fast becoming a travel capital of the future. Enjoy the issue.



Yi-Hwa Hanna

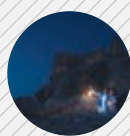
Yi-Hwa Hanna
Editor

THIS ISSUE'S PICKS



YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE

In-flight safety, from life-saving manuals to marketing
(Page 34)



A JOURNEY TO THE STARS

Astrotourism: the stellar trend redefining travel
(Page 44)



VENICE: BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

New ways to discover Italy's famous floating city
(Page 50)

Business Traveller MIDDLE EAST

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

MOTIVATE MEDIA GROUP

Editor-in-Chief **Obaid Humaid Al Tayer**
Managing Partner and Group Editor **Ian Fairservice**
Chief Commercial Officer **Anthony Milne**

Editor **Yi-Hwa Hanna**
Art Director **Clarkwin Cruz**
Editorial Co-ordinator **Londresa Flores**
Contributors **Ayla Lucia Tosun, Gemma Greenwood, Hannah Ralph, Jeff Wallach, Sarah Jones, Hayley Alexander**

General Manager - Production **S Sunil Kumar**
Production Manager **Binu Purandaran**
Production Supervisor **Venita Pinto**

Group Sales Manager **Chaitali Khimji**
Senior Sales Manager **Murali Narayanan**

BUSINESS TRAVELLER MEDIA LTD.

Managing Director **Julian Gregory**
Group Publisher **Rania Aphthorpe**



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: btme@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: Regus Offices No. 455 - 456, 4th Floor, Hamad Tower, King Fahad Road, Al Olaya, Riyadh, KSA
Tel: +966 11 834 3595 / +966 11 834 3596
Email: motivate@motivate.ae

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



BUSINESS TRAVELLER MEDIA LTD.
Ink, Blackburn House, Blackburn Road, London, NW6 1RZ

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Email: subscriptions@motivate.ae; Tel: +971 4 427 3542
businesstraveller.com/middle-east

[f](#) [@](#) [in](#) [@](#) [businesstravellerme](#)

[X](#) [btmiddleeast](#)

