

تجاره Tejarah Talks

REAL
CONVERSATIONS
REAL
IMPACT



4 8 12 16 18 22 24 28 32 34 38

ASTRO TOURISM	ECO DIVING	CONCERT TRAVEL	BIOHACKS	AI	SKIP-GEN TRAVEL	SILENT TRAVEL	MICE	WILD FEASTING	FRONTIER TOURISM	ONE ON ONE
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About Tejarah Talks

INSPIRE EDUCATE ENTERTAIN

Tejarah Talks is organized by Oman Business Forum in association with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion. With a firm focus on Oman's current and future business, export and investment environment, Tejarah Talks is a series of informal, interactive evening discussions that brings together some of Oman's most inspirational and innovative thinkers and doers to share their stories, insights and ideas with an enthusiastic crowd. It is a platform for positive interaction.



GOLD PARTNER



SUPPORTERS



PODCAST PARTNER



SESSION PANEL



Panelist His Excellency Azzan Al Busaidi
Undersecretary, Tourism
Ministry of Heritage & Tourism



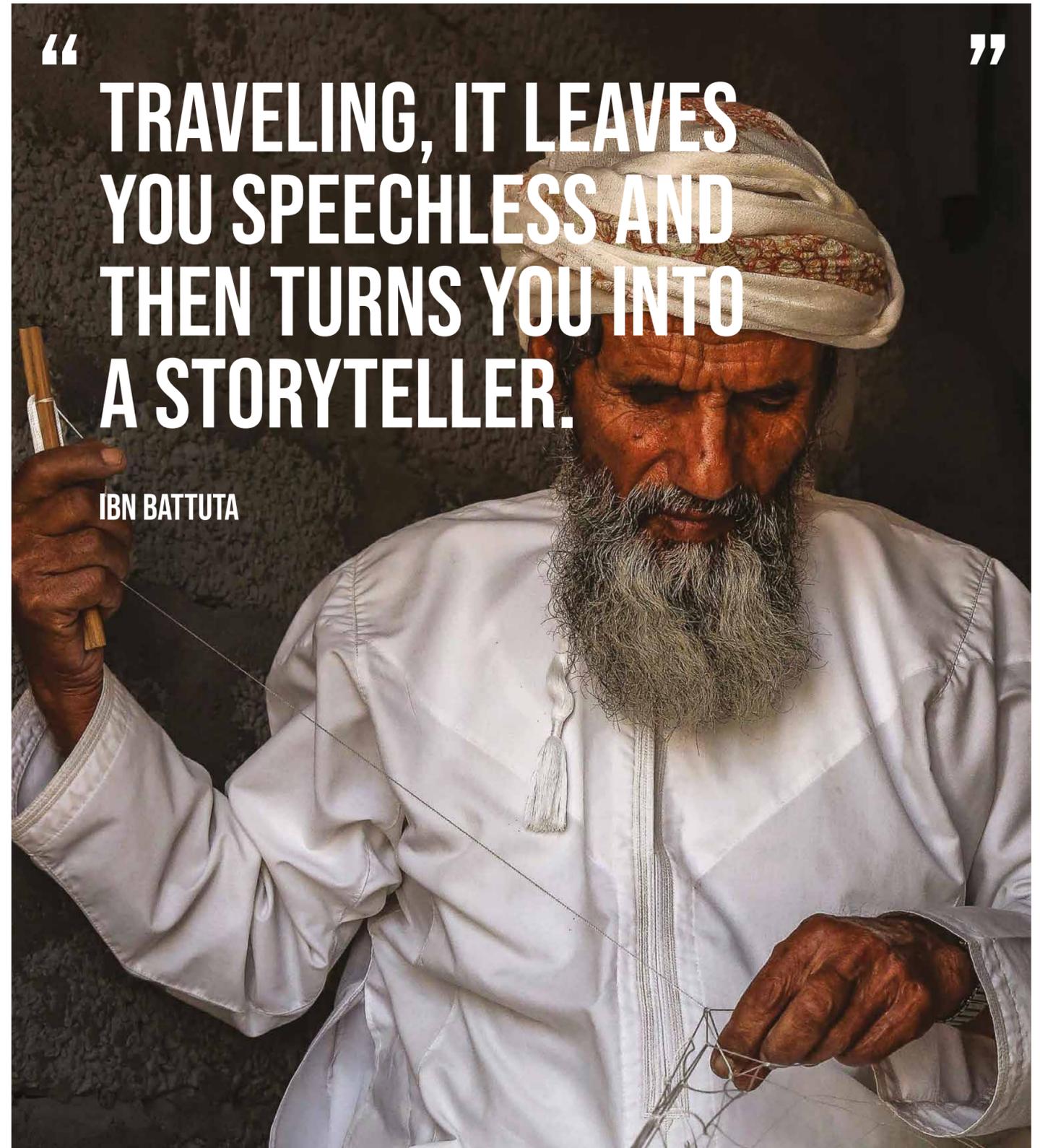
Panelist Eng. Said Al Shanfari
CEO
Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre



Panelist Shabib Al Maamari
Managing Director
Visit Oman

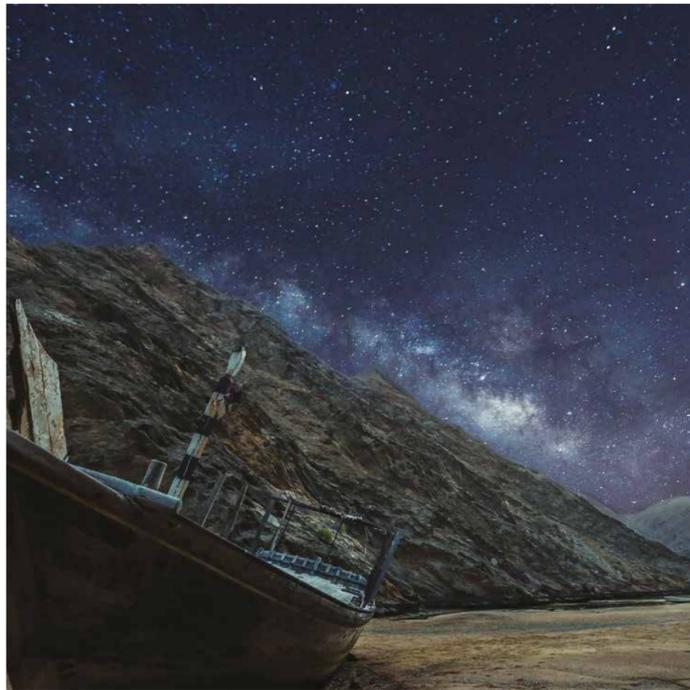


Moderator Jamal Al Asmi
Executive Producer
RealityCG



Talking Point 1

ASTRO TOURISM



Today, the more we fall deeper into an ever-expanding virtual world, the more we feel a need to broaden our horizons in the real universe. Astro tourism is all about travelling with the aim of catching sight of astronomical phenomena – disappearing to locations devoid of pollution, crowds and traffic, where travellers can focus on the skies above and while away hours gazing at the stars, planets and constellations overhead.

Increasingly, wellness-centric hotels and spas are creating the space for guests to gaze upwards, watching for comets, spying constellations and identifying patterns in the great expanse. In the UK, Port Lympne has opened the Lookout Bubble, a glass dome allowing guests to sprawl out on king-sized beds and study the stars.¹ In Qatar, the Zula Wellness Resort is surrounded by the expanse of the desert – the ultimate destination for pollution-free astromancy, with dedicated workshops and stargazing sessions for families and children looking to learn more about the cosmos.²



Safari company Desert & Delta organises trips for travellers looking to soak up the stars across Botswana and Namibia, where guests can sleep in tents at remote locations such as the Makgadikgadi Pans, one of the world's largest salt flats and spend nights with uninterrupted star vistas.³ And 2024 happens to be a big year, astronomy-wise, from eclipses to spectacular meteor showers – plus, scientists are predicting the best displays of the northern lights in 20 years.⁴

Footnotes

- 1 aspinalfoundation.org
- 2 zula.com
- 3 desertdelta.com
- 4 National Geographic, 2024 May Bring the Best Auroras in 20 Years
- 5 Dark Sky, 80% of the World's Population Lives Under Skyglow
- 6 Dark Sky, Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park



The Night Sky

Dark sky tourism relies on places with a lack of man-made light pollution. This is more of an issue than might be assumed. In 2016, a report in Science Advances found that 80% of the world's population lives under light-polluted skies, while 99% of people in Europe and the US live under skies nearly 10% brighter than their natural starry state.⁵

Money Earner

Astro tourism is no longer a niche sector. In today's screen-led age, increasing numbers of people are recognising stargazing as a chance to reconnect to something deep and magical – a travel experience that puts existential awe above Instagram likes. For example, Northumberland National Park and neighbouring Kielder Water and Forest Park is the UK's first and biggest, Dark Sky Park. With a combined 1,502 square kilometres, it is Europe's second-largest protected night-sky area and earns the county an estimated US\$32 million a year in astro tourism revenue. It offers expert-run observatories, dedicated events and even stargazing accommodation packages.⁶

Profound Appeal

Astro tourism appeals to a wide range of audiences, from amateur astronomers and adventure travellers to families seeking educational holidays and individuals looking for wellness or spiritual experiences. Its allure lies in the opportunity to witness astronomical phenomena such as meteor showers, eclipses and the Milky Way in some of the darkest skies in the world. These experiences offer a profound sense of wonder and a deeper connection with the universe, which is increasingly rare in today's light-polluted world. The importance of dark skies cannot be overstated, as they are not only crucial for astronomical observation but also for the health of the planet's biodiversity and our own well-being.

80%
OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION
LIVES UNDER LIGHT-POLLUTED
SKIES



Talking Point 1 - Astro Tourism

Perseids & Geminids

Astro tourism's appeal is significantly enhanced by special astronomical events. For example, meteor showers such as the Perseids and Geminids offer spectacular viewing opportunities each year. Eclipses, both solar and lunar, attract visitors from around the globe, with total solar eclipses offering a particularly unique experience. The variety of these events, from the more frequent meteor showers to the rarer total solar eclipses, provides numerous opportunities for Oman to attract visitors at different times of the year.



Star Gazing Potential

Oman, with its vast deserts and mountainous regions, possesses natural dark skies that are ideal for astro tourism – assets that can be used to develop infrastructure and services tailored to astro tourists, such as observatories, guided tours and accommodation options like eco-friendly campsites and lodges that offer stargazing opportunities. Promoting astro tourism in Oman could involve highlighting the country's unique cultural heritage alongside its astronomical offerings, creating a comprehensive travel experience that combines science, nature and culture.

Incorporating astro tourism into Oman's tourism portfolio would not only diversify the country's attractions but also contribute to sustainable tourism practices by encouraging the preservation of natural dark skies and promoting environmental awareness among visitors. Collaboration with organizations like DarkSky International could help Oman achieve recognition as a premier astro tourism destination and ensure the conservation of its night skies for future generations.

As travellers continue to seek connections with the natural world beyond the confines of their digital lives, astro tourism offers a pathway to rediscovering the wonder of the universe. Oman, with its pristine natural environment and cultural richness, is well-positioned to become a leading destination for astro tourists from around the world, seeking to gaze upon the stars and ponder the mysteries of the cosmos.



Footnotes

7 Kerry Lotzof, Lisa Hendry & Emily Osterloff, Meteor Showers to Look Out for in 2024, Natural History Museum



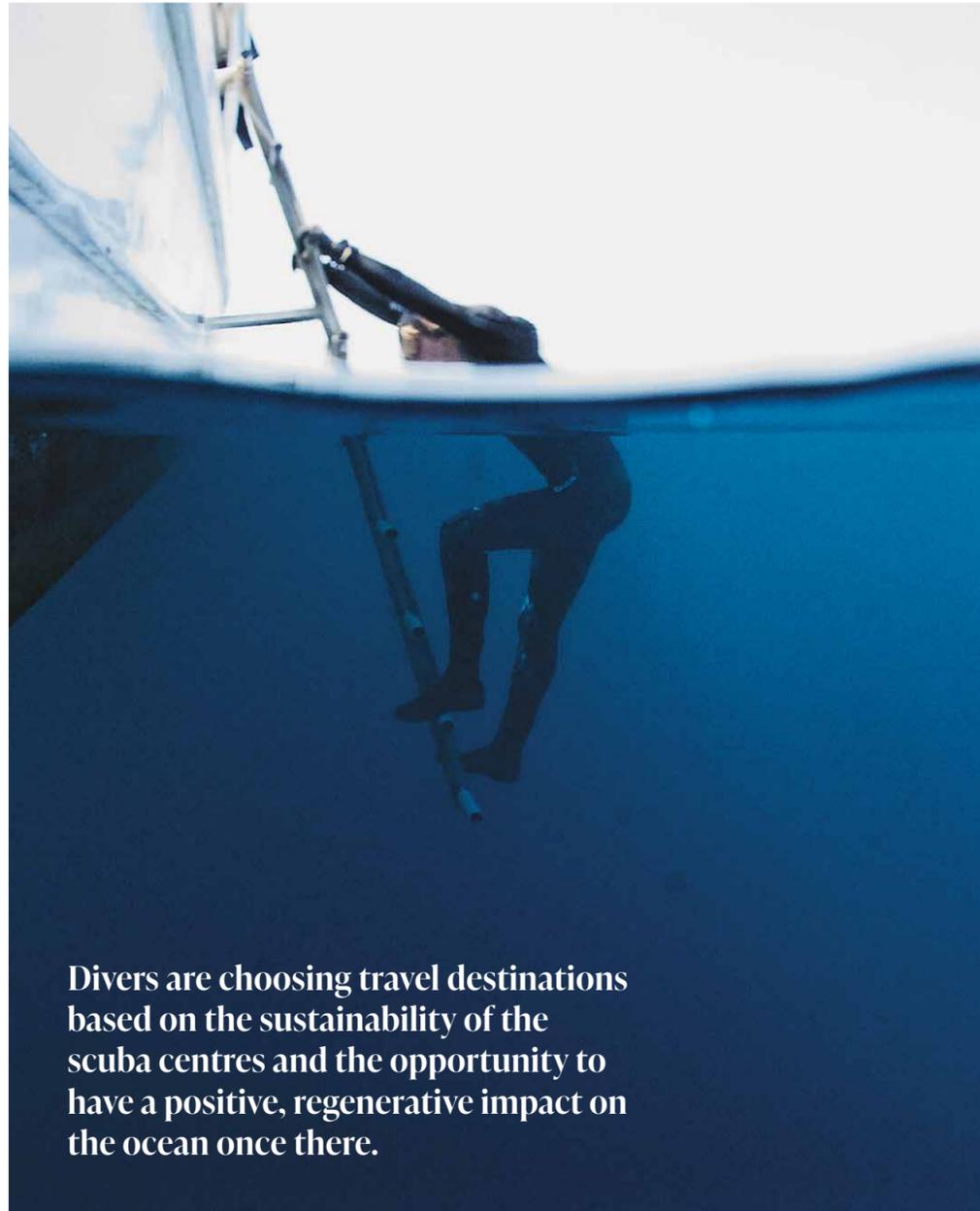
Meteor Showers to Look Out For in 2024

April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
The Lyrids, due to peak 22 - 23 April with around 18 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet Thatcher	The Eta Aquariids, due to peak after dusk 5 May with up to 50 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet 1P/Halley		The Delta Aquariids, due to peak 30 July with up to 25 meteors per hour, possibly from the trail of comet 96P/Machholz	The Perseids, due to peak 12 - 13 August with 100 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle		The Draconids, due to peak on 8 - 9 October with usually less than 10 meteors per hour from the trail of comet 21P/Giacobini-Zinner. This shower is best seen in the evening	The Northern Taurids, due to peak on 12 - 13 November with around five meteors per hour from the trails of comet 2P/Encke or associated objects	The Ursids, due to peak 22 - 23 December and usually produces fewer than 10 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet 8P/Tuttle?
						The Orionids, due to peak 21 - 22 October with up to 25 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet 1P/Halley	The Leonids, due to peak 17 - 18 November with 10 meteors per hour from the trail of the comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle	

Promoting astro tourism in Oman could involve highlighting the country's unique cultural heritage alongside its astronomical offerings, creating a comprehensive travel experience that combines science, nature and culture.

Talking Point 2

ECO DIVERS



Divers are choosing travel destinations based on the sustainability of the scuba centres and the opportunity to have a positive, regenerative impact on the ocean once there.

Why will this matter? In 2022, UK marine ecology charity The Reef-World Foundation found that 95% of divers wanted to book with sustainable operators, but struggled to do so.⁸ In response to this, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) launched its Eco Center accreditation on World Earth Day 22 April 2023, with the United Nations Environment Program and Reef-World.⁹ The steps required to earn this green status are rigorous – including sharing evidence of conservation activities and a real reduction in environmental footprint – PADI advised operators to allow at least 12 months to meet the criteria.

Footnotes

- 8 The ReefWorld Foundation, Sustainability in a Recovering Travel World
- 9 pros-blogpadi.com
- 10 Baja Whale Ecology, ecologyproject.org
- 11 PADI, Help US Protect Sharks: AWARE Introduces Global Shark & Ray Census
- 12 Dive Curacao, Curacao Dive Industry: A Vision for the Future
- 13 Constructive Voices, Oman Biodiversity: Animal & Plant Species and What is Under Threat

After an initial figure of just 11 worldwide, there are now more than 100 eco accredited dive centres with PADI setting a goal of reaching 660 by 2030. South East Asia currently has the highest density - more than 20 - along with the Caribbean. Those in the Caribbean offer coral replanting programs, key for regenerating coastlines. In Baja, Mexico they have developed citizen science courses, collecting data for whale conservation.¹⁰ There are also a number of new PADI courses being launched for divers to take anywhere, including the Global Shark and Ray Census, as well as the relaunch of the Coral Reef Conservation Specialty course.¹¹ These initiatives are designed to engage divers in conservation efforts directly, contributing valuable data for marine conservation and participating in activities like coral restoration.

Economic Impacts & Benefits

The economic implications of eco-diving tourism are substantial. Eco-diving tourists contribute to local economies through spending on accommodation, food, transportation and diving excursions. Moreover, eco-diving tourism supports job creation, not only within dive centres but also in related sectors such as hospitality and conservation organizations.

A notable example of economic benefits can be seen in Curaçao in the Southern Caribbean, off the coast of Venezuela where eco-dive tourism has been used to boost revenue for local businesses and create employment opportunities, stimulating economic growth and diversification of the tourism industry. A recent economic impact study conducted by the Curacao Hospitality & Tourism Association concluded the diving industry contributes approximately US\$41 million annually to the local economy.¹²



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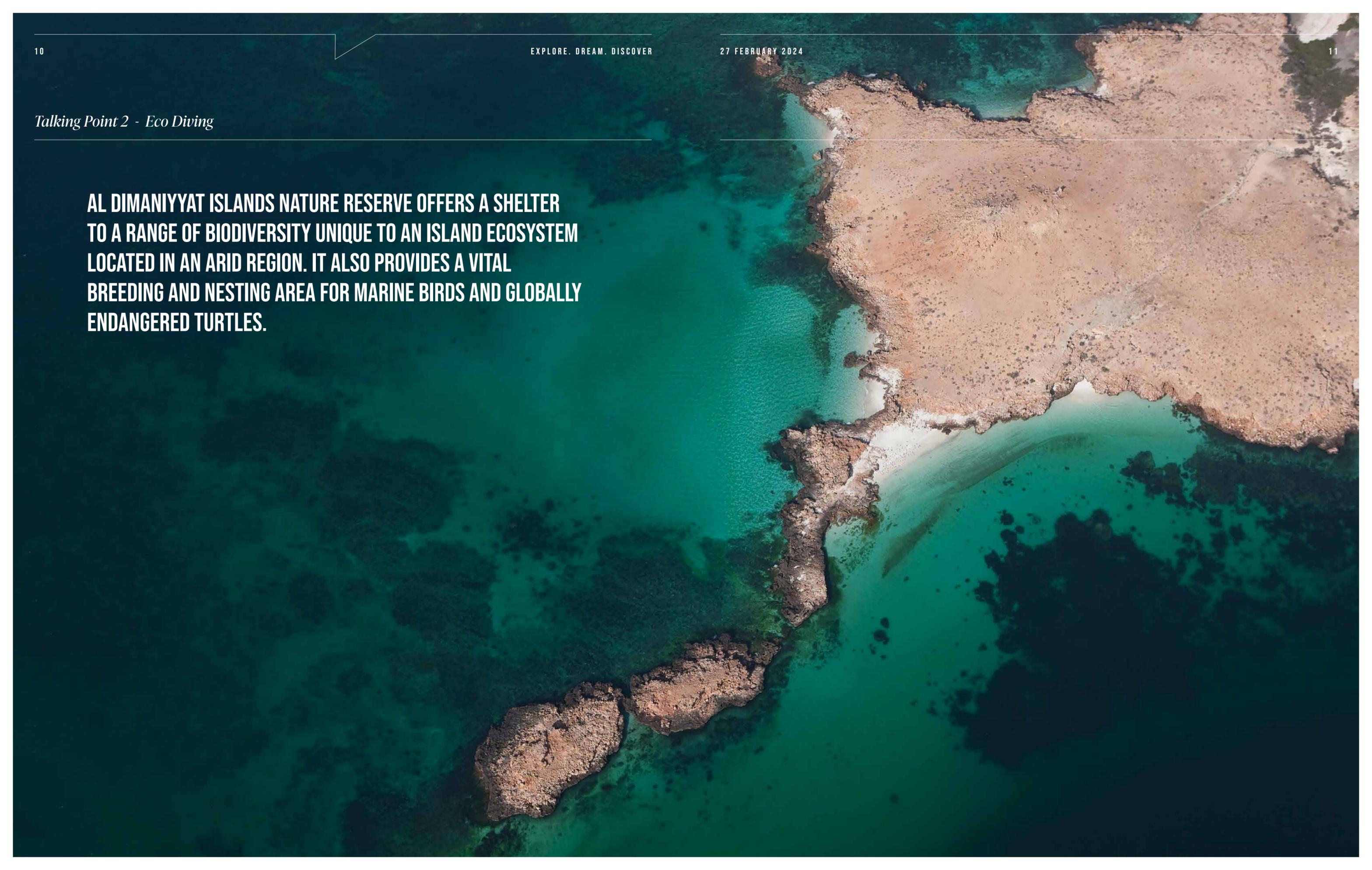
Making Waves

Thanks to Oman's National Coral Reef Management Plan, extensive efforts are under way to preserve the natural richness, variety and quality of Oman's stunning coral reef areas. Protecting the country's coral reefs is important because they are one of the richest habitats for animal life on earth. Indeed, the health of the oceans and planet depend on their survival.¹³

Eco-diving tourism represents a significant shift towards more sustainable and responsible travel practices. With the increasing demand for environmentally friendly diving options, destinations like Oman have an opportunity to harness this trend for environmental conservation and economic development. Organizations such as PADI play a crucial role in this transition, offering accreditation and courses that support eco-diving tourism. As this trend continues to grow, it will undoubtedly contribute to the long-term sustainability of Oman's marine ecosystems and the country's eco-focused tourism industry.

Talking Point 2 - Eco Diving

AL DIMANIYYAT ISLANDS NATURE RESERVE OFFERS A SHELTER TO A RANGE OF BIODIVERSITY UNIQUE TO AN ISLAND ECOSYSTEM LOCATED IN AN ARID REGION. IT ALSO PROVIDES A VITAL BREEDING AND NESTING AREA FOR MARINE BIRDS AND GLOBALLY ENDANGERED TURTLES.



Talking Point 3



Taylor Swift's Eras tour, Beyoncé's Renaissance tour and Madonna's Celebration tour have fans worldwide seeking out tickets to see their favourite stars and research shows they are willing to travel further afield to witness the spectacle.

Footnotes

- 14 edm.com
15 elevenexperience.com
16 flokistudios.com
17 rhythmandsails.com

Music fans are realising they can pay less and have a more memorable experience by seeing their favourite artists perform in cities such as Amsterdam or Milan. Tours from performers such as Pearl Jam, U2 and Doja Cat will anchor trip itineraries, while music festivals – Glastonbury sold out in less than an hour – will be major catalysts for travel.



New music festivals, including Untold in Romania's Cluj-Napoca are introducing travellers to undiscovered destinations.¹⁴ Hotels and travel companies have taken note and creating the equivalent of backstage VIP experiences for guests. Global adventure collective Eleven has recently introduced Music with Eleven.¹⁵ The program's dedicated team of music-industry insiders custom design itineraries that include sitting in on a recording session at Flóki Studios, just outside the Arctic Circle at Deplar Farm in Iceland.¹⁶ While Rhythm & Sails hosts musicians on its catamarans.¹⁷ The company's music director, Anders Beck curates the line-up of artists who perform sessions on-board and in ports as clients island hop around the Caribbean.

Unique Destinations

Concert tourism, a dynamic segment of the global travel industry, has surged in popularity, driven by fans seeking to experience live music performances in unique destinations. This form of tourism not only offers an immersive cultural experience but also presents significant economic benefits to host locations. By intertwining the allure of travel with the universal appeal of music, destinations worldwide have harnessed the power of gig tourism to attract a diverse audience, enhance local economies and promote cultural exchange.

Exotic Locations

The primary allure of concert tourism lies in the unique combination of live music and travel. Fans are drawn to the opportunity to see their favourite artists perform in iconic or exotic locations, transforming a typical concert experience into a memorable adventure. This trend is propelled by the scarcity of tickets for high-demand shows in home countries, prompting fans to seek opportunities abroad where access may be easier and the experience can be coupled with the exploration of a new destination.

Who Attends?

The target audience for concert tourism is remarkably diverse, encompassing all ages and demographics. However, it particularly appeals to millennials and Gen Z demographics, who value experiences over material possessions and are inclined towards cultural exploration and social media sharing. Music enthusiasts who follow specific genres or artists also represent a significant portion of this audience, often willing to travel great distances for a once-in-a-lifetime live music experience.

Talking Point 3 - Concert Travel

Economic Force

Concert tourism injects substantial revenue into local economies through various channels. Beyond ticket sales, it spurs spending on accommodation, dining and transportation contributing to job creation and economic diversification. Additionally, it promotes off-season tourism, helping balance tourist flows throughout the year. The presence of international visitors for concerts also raises the profile of the destination, potentially boosting future tourism.

The City of Festivals

Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival is an event powerhouse with attendance numbers reaching 540,00 in 2021 - proving to be a major economic boost for Indio, California and the broader Coachella Valley region. In 2022, the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership stated that Coachella and Stagecoach, organized by the same producer, generated approximately US\$704 million in economic activity with US\$106 million in Indio alone. This illustrates the festival's role not just as an entertainment event but as an economic force within the region.¹⁸

Concert Tourism

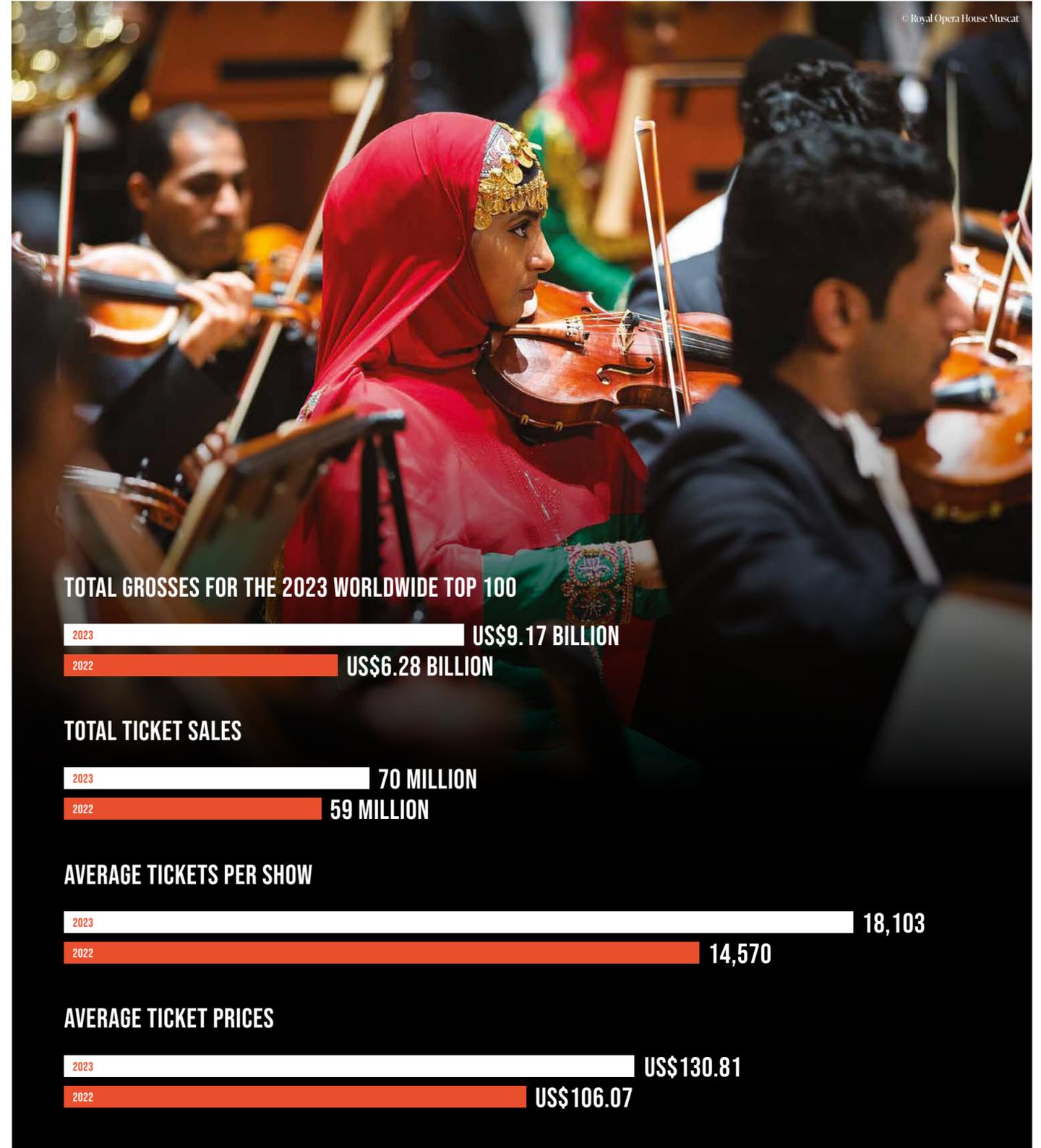
Oman, with its rich cultural heritage, stunning natural landscapes and state-of-the-art convention and exhibition centre is ideally placed to capitalize on the concert tourism trend. To attract global music events and festivals, Oman can leverage its unique venues, from historic forts to spectacular outdoor settings, offering not just a concert but a culturally immersive experience. Developing infrastructure and partnerships with international music promoters, coupled with targeted marketing campaigns, could place Oman on the global concert tourism map.



Coachella and Stagecoach generated approximately US\$704 million in economic activity with US\$106 million in Indio alone.



Footnotes
18 Investor's Podcast Network, Coachella Economy



Talking Point 4

BIOHACKS

Longevity is the latest wellness trend thanks to best-selling books such as *Outlive* and the hit Netflix documentary *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones*. Between 2021-22, VC investment in longevity clinics more than doubled from US\$27 million to US\$57 million globally. Now, the science of extending life and optimising health has become the focus at hotels. Blue Zones retreats are the new boot camps.¹⁹

Beyond Diet & Exercise

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, feeling good trumps looking good. People have become aware of the critical importance of developing a more proactive, preventive approach to health on all levels. This means a new willingness to go beyond diet and exercise and embrace bio-regenerative treatments such as ozone therapy and hyperbaric oxygen chambers. And luxury hotel brands are enthusiastic about this trend. Six Senses Ibiza has teamed up with biotech company RoseBar to offer guests full diagnostic testing.²⁰ Maybourne Hotel Group is collaborating with wellness tech pioneer Virtusan to help guests boost performance.²¹ And Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea administers treatments such as stem cells and NAD+ - aka the fountain of youth - through its partnership with Next Health longevity centre.²² At 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay in Kauai, guests are welcomed with a B12 shot and the resort's new wellness-specific rooms come with recovery-boosting mod cons including infrared light mats.²³

Indeed, the modern traveller's quest for well-being is diversifying, transcending traditional relaxation methods to embrace a holistic approach towards physical and mental health. Recognizing this shift, hotels and resorts worldwide are expanding their wellness offerings, catering not just to the body but also to the mind and spirit. Terms like forest bathing and sound healing have become mainstream, reflecting a growing preference for experiences that blend the natural with the technological, where the tranquility of nature meets the precision of science.

Footnotes

- 19 Biospace. Investors Fuel Fountain of Youth Research with Longevity Company Funding
 20 sixsenses.com
 21 maybourne.com
 22 fourseasons.com
 23 1hotels.com
 24 Remedyplace.com

Centre Stage

Biohacking, a concept once relegated to the fringes of wellness, has now taken centre stage, merging longevity with lifestyle modifications to optimize health. The practice, which includes interventions like light therapy, intermittent fasting and ice baths, is gaining legitimacy, backed by advancements in AI and wearable technology. Establishments like Six Senses have been pioneers, offering an array of biohacking modalities designed to enhance the holiday experience, proving that cutting-edge health optimization is not just for Silicon Valley elites but accessible to all.

However, wellness today is not just a solitary pursuit it is increasingly social. Clubs like Remedy Place and wellness-oriented hotels are fostering environments where health and socializing intersect, challenging the notion that wellness activities are inherently solitary.²⁴ This sense of community extends to group fitness classes, run clubs and nutritional workshops, reflecting a broader trend towards social wellness where experiences are shared and connections made.

Personalized Well-being

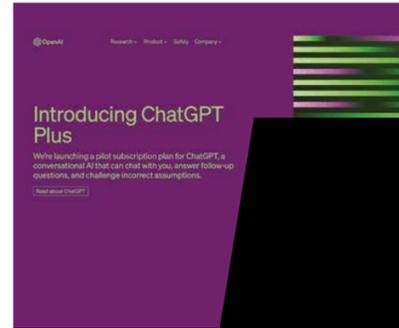
Even as the social aspects of wellness thrive, the need for personal space and individualized wellness routines has not diminished. The rise of in-room fitness amenities, from yoga mats to Peloton bikes, caters to those who prefer the privacy of their own space. This trend towards personalized well-being extends to the realm of sleep, with hotels offering specialized sleep-enhancing accommodations, underscoring the critical role of rest in the wellness equation.

Outdoor activities, too, are being reimagined, with resorts offering unique experiences that immerse guests in local culture and traditions, from guided lassoing workshops in Texas to paddle boarding in the picturesque English Lake District. These offerings not only provide physical benefits but also foster a deeper connection with the environment and community.

Wellness tourism will continue to evolve, driven by a deeper understanding of health and well-being. From biohacking to social wellness, personalized fitness and outdoor experiences, the future of travel is unmistakably holistic, promising journeys that nourish the body, mind and soul. In this era of wellness, the pursuit of health is not just a trend but a transformative movement, reshaping the way we travel and experience the world.



Talking Point 5



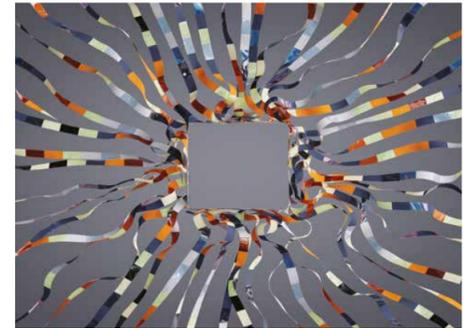
Early in 2022, after OpenAI's ChatGPT broke the record as the fastest-ever growing consumer app, travellers started experimenting with AI chatbots to get inspiration on where they could travel.

More recently, major travel booking platforms have started to integrate AI chatbots into the booking experience.²⁵ But if 2023 was the year of AI chatbots planning holidays, 2024 will be all about how AI aspires to be everyone's travel guide. A wave of new AI-powered features and products aims to support travellers on the ground – all while raising concerns around the potential negative impacts as AI becomes more widely integrated with travelling. AI will start to make more real-time interventions in 2024. One practical example is live translation which Samsung plans to launch on its 2024 Galaxy devices.²⁶ Imagine calling somewhere you want to visit to get information without worrying about whether staff speak the same language as you.



Footnotes

- 25 Oman Economic Review, How Artificial Intelligence Is Becoming a Gamechanger In The Travel & Tourism Sector In Oman
26 CNET, Samsung's Unpacked Event Promises a First Look at Galaxy AI: What We Know So Far



Reshaping the Landscape

As we move into the future, the integration of AI will reshape the landscape of Oman's travel sector, marking a pivotal shift in how services are rendered and experienced. Following the global trend, where AI-driven chatbots and real-time translation services have begun to revolutionize the travel experience, Oman is already harnessing AI to enhance its tourism offerings, improve operational efficiencies and create personalized experiences for visitors.

Personalized Travel Experiences

The main impact of AI on Oman's tourism sector will likely be in delivering highly personalized travel experiences. With data analytics and machine learning, AI systems can analyze vast amounts of data to provide tailored recommendations to tourists. From suggesting the best times to visit the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque based on crowd-source data to offering customized itineraries that include a mix of popular and hidden gems like Wadi Bani Khalid or Jabal Al Akhdar, AI can significantly enhance the visitor experience. By understanding individual preferences and behaviour patterns, AI can offer personalized travel and accommodation options, optimize travel routes as well as suggest activities that align with the visitor's interests and budget.

Real-time Assistance

Real-time translation services, for example, will become a game-changer for international tourists visiting Oman. The ability to overcome language barriers instantly will not only ease the travel experience but also deepen the interaction between visitors and locals, enriching cultural exchange. Real-time assistance goes beyond translation, encompassing AI-driven chatbots available 24/7 to assist with queries, offer recommendations, or solve issues in real-time, further smoothing the travel experience in Oman.

Talking Point 5 - AI



Cultural Heritage & AR

AI, coupled with Augmented Reality (AR) offers an unprecedented opportunity to bring Oman's rich history and cultural heritage to life. Imagine visiting the ancient Omani settlement of Salut and using an AR-powered app to see the site as it once was, complete with virtual guides narrating its history in multiple languages, all powered by AI. This technology can transform educational tourism, making it more interactive and engaging, thereby attracting a diverse range of visitors interested in Oman's cultural offer.

Sustainable Tourism Through AI

As concerns around climate change and environmental conservation gain traction, AI can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism practices in Oman. Through data analysis and predictive modeling, AI can help manage natural resources more efficiently, monitor ecological impacts and suggest ways to minimize the carbon footprint of tourism activities. For instance, AI can optimize energy use in hotels and resorts or analyze patterns to suggest less congested, eco-friendly travel routes.

Operational Efficiency & Revenue Management

For Oman's hospitality sector, AI can revolutionize operational efficiency through smart inventory management, dynamic pricing models and predictive analytics for demand forecasting. AI systems can analyze past booking patterns, current market trends and events to adjust prices dynamically, maximizing revenue while ensuring competitiveness. Moreover, AI-driven resource management can help in staffing, reducing waste and enhancing the customer service experience by anticipating needs before they are communicated.

AI-powered surveillance systems can monitor tourist spots for unusual activities, ensuring the safety of visitors and preserving Oman's reputation as a secure destination.



Security Enhancements

AI's integration into the tourism sector also extends to enhancing security measures. Facial recognition technology, for instance, can be used for identity verification in hotels and airports, speeding up check-ins and improving security. Similarly, AI-powered surveillance systems can monitor tourist spots for unusual activities, ensuring the safety of visitors and preserving Oman's reputation as a secure destination.

Challenges & Considerations

While the benefits of integrating AI into Oman's tourism sector are manifold, it is crucial to navigate the potential challenges thoughtfully. Privacy concerns, data security and the ethical use of AI are paramount considerations. Ensuring transparency in how data is collected, used and stored will be critical in maintaining trust among tourists. Additionally, there is the challenge of balancing technology with human touch - ensuring AI enhances rather than replaces the irreplaceable value of human interaction in hospitality.

Looking Ahead

AI stands as a powerful ally in transforming Oman's tourism sector into a more personalized, efficient and immersive experience. The successful integration of AI will require ongoing investment in technology, training for the workforce and a regulatory framework that safeguards ethical and privacy considerations. By embracing AI, Oman can not only enhance its appeal as a premier travel destination but also set a benchmark for innovative and sustainable tourism practices globally.

AI can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism practices in Oman.



Talking Point 6

SKIP-GEN TRAVEL

Skip-gen travel describes when grandparents holiday with grandchildren. There has been a rising trend of grandparents taking grandchildren away, often to places that have a sentimental meaning to them.



Travel agencies are creating itineraries to cater specifically for this demand. Skip-gen safaris, for example, are emerging as a micro-trend in Europe, reflecting a niche traveller group now well established in the US luxury market. Grandparents are usually in their 70s and still active enough to embrace a fully guided safari adventure. Original Travel, has relaunched its Bonding Holidays Collection, featuring trips focused on discovering something new together, such as its 14-day Family Ranching itinerary in the American West.²⁷ Some of this growth can be attributed to the global ratio of living grandparents to grandchildren is higher than ever, thanks to a combined increase in life expectancy and drop in the number of children per person. We are even said to be living in the age of the grandparent” – there are estimated to be 1.5 billion grandparents in the world, up from 0.5 billion in 1960. As a share of the population they have risen from 17% to 20%. By 2050, it is projected there will be 2.1 billion grandparents – 22% of humanity – and slightly more grandparents than under-15s.²⁸

20%
OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION
ARE GRANDPARENTS

Footnotes

27 originaltravel.co.uk

28 Franklin Templeton, The Age of the Grandparent Has Arrived



Marketing strategies should emphasize the safety, comfort and accessibility of travel in Oman, along with the enriching experiences that await both generations.

Two Distinct Generations

For Oman to successfully tap into the skip-generation travel market it has to capitalize on its unique offer while addressing the specific needs of this group. This involves creating travel packages that are not only appealing and accessible to seniors but also engaging and educational for younger travellers. Oman's rich heritage, diverse landscapes and hospitality can be showcased through curated experiences such as cultural tours, nature adventures and interactive learning opportunities that highlight Oman's history, biodiversity and traditions.

Marketing strategies should emphasize the safety, comfort and accessibility of travel in Oman, along with the enriching experiences that await both generations. Developing partnerships with travel agencies specializing in family and multi-generational travel could further enhance Oman's visibility in this market. Additionally, fostering a family-friendly tourism infrastructure, with accommodations, restaurants and transportation options catering to the needs of both older adults and children will be key to attracting skip-generation travellers.

Testimonials

Promotional efforts could highlight testimonials and stories from grandparents and grandchildren who have experienced Oman's offerings, providing a personal touch that resonates with potential travellers. Social media campaigns targeting baby boomers and featuring engaging content about Oman's suitability for skip-generation holidays can also drive interest and bookings.

To ensure a seamless experience, Oman could offer training for tour operators and hospitality staff on catering to the needs of multi-generational travellers, ensuring they understand the dynamics of skip-generation travel and can provide exceptional service to this unique group.

By focusing on tailored experiences, safety, comfort and targeted marketing, Oman can position itself as a prime destination for skip-generation travellers. This not only taps into a growing trend but also promotes Oman's cultural and natural assets to a wider audience, contributing to the diversification and growth of the country's tourism industry.

Talking Point 7

SILENT TRAVEL

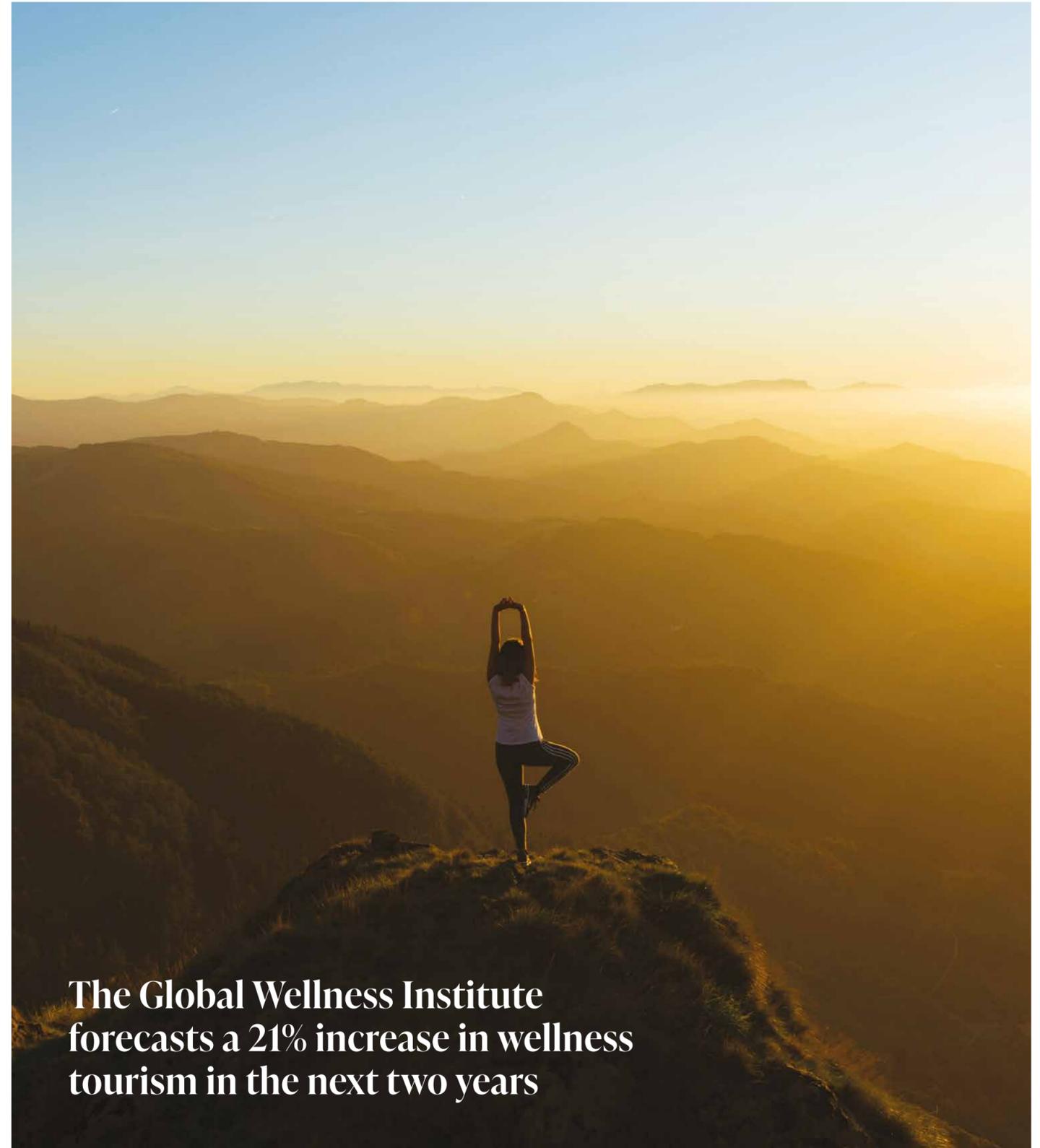
In an age of over stimulation, silence is what a lot of people are searching out. Offering a chance to restore and reset, silent travel represents a more mindful kind of trip, one that does not leave the traveller needing a holiday to recover from the holiday. Silent meditation retreats are an increasingly popular wellness trend, but silent travel also encompasses secluded nature resorts, sleep retreats, quiet hotels and silent discos.



Saturated with stress and screen time, many people are looking for ways to disconnect. The silent walking trend that took TikTok by storm reflects a growing impulse to escape the noise of our tech-fuelled lives and embrace the quiet, with promising implications for wellbeing.²⁹ One 2015 study suggests silence may help stimulate brain development.³⁰ With the Global Wellness Institute forecasting a 21% increase in wellness tourism in the next two years, what better counter to the chaos of our always-on lives than silence?³¹ Silent travel is also part of a move towards more sustainable tourism. Quiet Parks International for example, offers unique nature experiences in dedicated quiet spaces, reducing noise pollution for the surrounding wildlife.³²

Footnotes

- 29 'Silent Walking' Is the New Hot Girl Walk — Here's Why It's Taking Over TikTok, According to Therapists
 30 Inke Kirste, Is Silence Golden? Effects of Auditory Stimuli & Their Absence on Adult Hippocampal Neurogenesis, Brain Structure & Function
 31 Global Wellness Institute, The Big Picture: Huge Growth Ahead
 32 quietparks.org



The Global Wellness Institute forecasts a 21% increase in wellness tourism in the next two years

Talking Point 7 - Silent Travel

Popularity & Appeal

The appeal of silent travel lies in its ability to offer an antidote to the stress and over stimulation prevalent in modern life. Activities like silent meditation retreats, silent walking tours, and stays in secluded nature resorts provide a space where silence aids mental clarity and well-being. The growing popularity of silent travel is reflected in the diverse offerings, from Vipassana courses in India,³³ which immerse participants in deep introspection, to quiet resorts in Swedish Lapland, where tranquility is a luxury.³⁴ Moreover, silent travel encourages creativity and personal growth by offering the space and serenity needed for self-expression and exploration.



Silent travel encourages creativity and personal growth by offering the space and serenity needed for self-expression and exploration.

Eco-conscious & Affluent Clientele

For resorts and destinations, the silent travel trend presents a unique economic opportunity. By catering to this niche, properties can distinguish themselves in a crowded market. Resorts that offer silent retreats or digital detox cabins, for instance, attract visitors seeking refuge from the digital world, thereby tapping into a segment willing to pay a premium for such experiences. The emphasis on wellness and eco-tourism associated with silent travel also aligns with a broader consumer shift towards sustainable and responsible travel, potentially drawing a more environmentally conscious and affluent clientele.

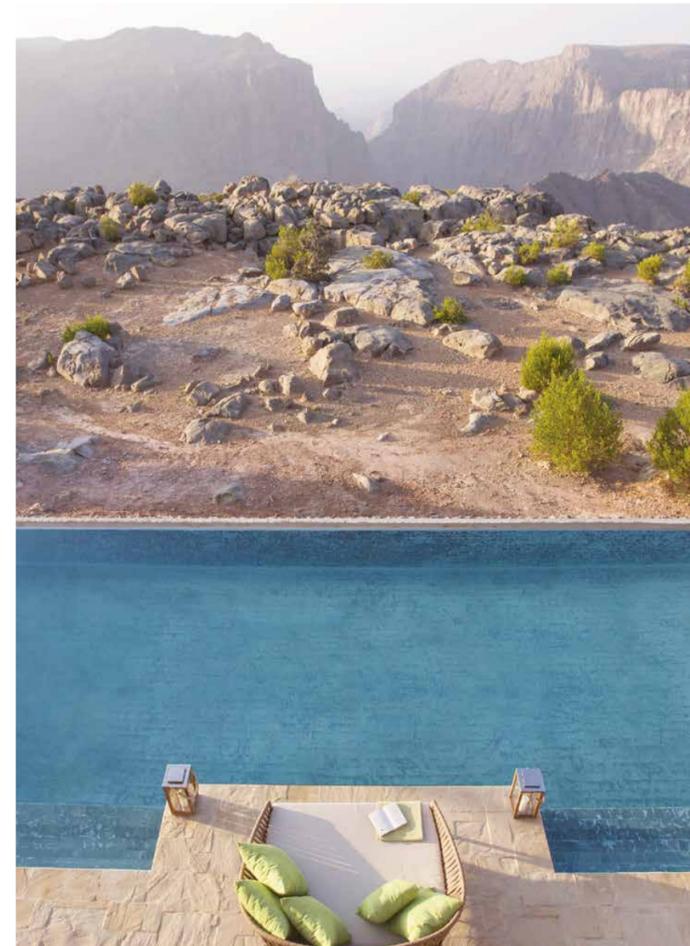


Footnotes

33 dhamma.org/en
34 swedshlapland.com

Global Hotspots

Silent travel has gained traction globally with destinations across the world capitalizing on their natural tranquility or curating silent experiences. India, with its deep-rooted spiritual traditions, offers authentic silent meditation retreats, while European destinations like the Italian Alps and Swedish Lapland provide serene backdrops for silent introspection and nature immersion. This trend is not limited to remote locations - urban areas too have seen the emergence of quiet hotels and silent spaces, catering to those seeking a momentary escape without venturing far from city life.



Opportunities for Oman's Tourism Industry

- Develop and promote silent retreats that incorporate local culture and traditions, offering an authentic and unique experience to visitors.
- Create silent zones or resorts in areas of natural beauty, emphasizing sustainability and conservation to attract eco-conscious travellers.
- Offer silent walking tours and nature hikes that allow visitors to explore Oman's natural beauty in contemplative silence.
- Market Oman as a destination for digital detox, highlighting its secluded landscapes as ideal settings for disconnecting and recharging.
- By aligning with the principles of silent travel, Oman can attract a demographic of travellers seeking solitude, wellness and a deep connection with nature, positioning itself as a leading destination within this niche market.

Talking Point 8

The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry represents a significant component of global tourism and has shown remarkable growth, particularly in the Middle East.



The industry not only brings economic benefits in terms of income, employment and investment but also fosters intellectual development, cultural exchange and international cooperation. As destinations around the world vie for a share of this lucrative market, Oman has positioned itself as a premier destination for MICE tourism, leveraging its unique offerings and strategic investments in infrastructure and services.

Talking Point 8 - MICE

Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) welcomed 1.5 million visitors in 2023, a 25% rise on 2022 attendance. It successfully hosted 201 events - 8 regional and 11 international conferences, 38 exhibitions and 144 institutional events as well as 19 graduation ceremonies. In the process it supported over 90 SMEs. Looking at the economic impact, it is noteworthy that in 2023, direct total income generated from MICE tourism in Oman was estimated at around US\$1.9 billion. Such figures highlight the sector's contribution to the national economy, driven by the high spending patterns of business travellers compared to leisure tourists. In fact, business travellers tend to opt for premium accommodations and business-class travel options, underscoring the MICE sector's role in boosting higher-end tourism services.

OCEC IN FIGURES

1.5MN	VISITORS IN 2023
25%	VISITOR INCREASE ON 2022
8	REGIONAL CONFERENCES
11	INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
38	EXHIBITIONS
144	INSTITUTIONAL EVENTS
19	GRADUATION CEREMONIES
90	SMEs SUPPORTED
1.9BN	US\$ IN INCOME GENERATED

Oman's strategic approach to developing its MICE industry, including substantial investments in infrastructure like the OCEC and partnerships with key stakeholders, will continue to attract a growing number of international and regional events. These efforts not only enhance Oman's image as a safe, attractive and welcoming destination but also promise a multiplier effect across the tourism sector and the broader economy.

Oman's MICE industry clearly plays a key role in the country's tourism and economic strategy. Through targeted investments, strategic partnerships and a focus on quality and diversity of offerings, Oman is well-placed to capitalize on the growing demand for MICE tourism globally. This not only brings immediate economic benefits but also supports the long-term goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Economic Impact

The MICE industry is a major economic driver, generating substantial revenue worldwide. In 2023, the market size was approximately US\$971 billion and is forecasted to grow to US\$1.5 trillion by 2030, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of 7.5%.³⁵ This growth supports direct economic activities through event organization, accommodation, transportation and food and beverage services, indirectly stimulating economic growth in hospitality, transportation and retail.

Tourism Promotion

The industry plays a crucial role in promoting Oman's rich tourism offer by attracting international visitors to conferences, exhibitions and incentive travel programs, generating revenue for the tourism sector and promoting cultural exchange and international goodwill.

Job Creation

A report jointly published by the Association of Event Organisers, Association of Event Venues and the Event Supplier and Services Association highlights the substantial contributions the MICE industry makes to the UK economy. According to the report, the exhibition industry contributes over US\$14 billion to the UK economy and supports over 114,000 jobs, while attracting more than 9 million visitors and servicing almost 180,000 exhibitors.³⁶

Footnotes

³⁵ Gran View Research, MICE Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report by Event Type (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events), By Region (Asia Pacific, North America, Central & South America, Europe) & Segment Forecasts, 2023 - 2030
³⁶ UK Events, EIA Publishes UK Exhibitions Economic Impact Study Events

Trade & Investment

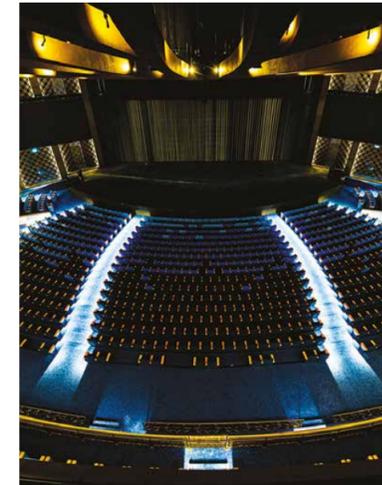
MICE events facilitate international trade and attract foreign investment by bringing together buyers and sellers from around the world. They provide opportunities for networking, deal-making and showcasing Oman as an attractive investment destination.

Business Development & Innovation

Conferences and exhibitions serve as platforms for businesses to showcase innovations, share knowledge and engage with new technologies and trends. This not only stimulates business development and innovation but also drives economic growth and competitiveness.

Infrastructure Development

Hosting MICE events can lead to investments in infrastructure, including convention centres, hotels and transportation networks, enhancing a city's or country's attractiveness for future events and tourists, contributing to long-term economic development.



Sustainable practices in the industry can lead to innovations that reduce the environmental impact of business travel and events



Professional Development

MICE events contribute to professional development across various industries through educational seminars, workshops and networking opportunities, enhancing workforce skills, productivity gains and economic growth.

Environmental Sustainability

Despite facing challenges related to environmental sustainability, the MICE industry is increasingly focusing on green meetings and events. Sustainable practices in the industry can lead to innovations that reduce the environmental impact of business travel and events, contributing to the broader goals of sustainable economic development.

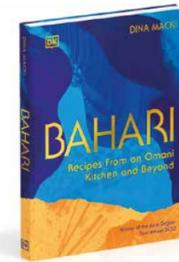
Overall, the MICE industry is a vital component of the global economy, offering multifaceted benefits ranging from direct economic contributions to long-term impacts on business innovation, job creation, foreign investment, infrastructure development and sustainability.

Talking Point 9

WILD FEASTING



Wild feasting is emerging as a trend that reconnects people with nature through the culinary experience of foraging and cooking in natural environments. This movement draws on the human tradition of hunting and gathering, infusing modern dining with the primal joy of consuming foods in the context of their origin. It is not merely about eating outdoors – it is a deeper, more involved process that includes identifying, harvesting and preparing local and wild ingredients.



A culinary exploration of the rich flavours and history of Omani cuisine.

Foraging

In the forests and wild spaces of the world, from the vast wildernesses of Canada to the rich biodiverse landscapes of the Balkans, chefs and food enthusiasts are turning to foraging as a way to bring unique, local flavours to the table. Restaurants and culinary ventures are increasingly employing professional foragers or engaging their chefs in the direct sourcing of ingredients from the wild, demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and the celebration of local ecosystems.

Curated Outdoor Dining

The trend extends beyond the professional kitchen. Culinary experiences offered in various parts of the world allow travellers to participate in curated outdoor dining experiences where they can forage for their ingredients and cook them in scenic locations. This approach to food not only enriches the dining experience but also fosters a closer relationship with the environment and a better understanding of food sources. Indeed, wild feasting represents a shift in how we perceive and engage with food. It is about more than just the flavours on the plate it is about the story of each ingredient, from its roots in the soil to its role in local traditions and ecologies. This trend highlights a growing desire for travel and tourism experiences that are authentic and mindful of the planet's well-being.

Through wild feasting, individuals have the opportunity to explore the taste of the wilderness, learning not only about the ingredients themselves but also about sustainable harvesting practices that ensure these wild resources remain for generations to come. It is a movement that speaks to the heart of culinary creativity, environmental stewardship and the innate human connection to the natural world.



Oman Grown

The economic benefits of this trend for Omani resorts and destinations are multifaceted. It attracts a niche market of travellers willing to pay a premium for unique, sustainable and immersive experiences. Resorts that integrate wild feasting into their offerings can differentiate themselves in a competitive market, enhancing their appeal to eco-conscious and culinary-focused tourists. This can increase occupancy rates, higher per-guest spending and enhanced destination loyalty. Moreover, by fostering local food economies through the sourcing of hyper-local ingredients, resorts can contribute to sustainable development and environmental stewardship in their regions.

For Oman's tourism industry, capitalizing on the wild feasting trend presents an opportunity to showcase the country's diverse natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage and unique culinary traditions. By developing curated culinary experiences that highlight Oman's indigenous ingredients and traditional cooking methods, the country can offer compelling, authentic experiences that resonate with the values of modern travellers. These experiences can be marketed through storytelling that emphasizes the connection between the land, its people and their culinary heritage, appealing to those seeking more than just a meal but a story and a memory that lasts.

To maximize the potential of wild feasting, Oman's tourism sector could collaborate with local chefs, foragers and artisans to create experiences that also include educational elements about local ecosystems and sustainability practices. Promoting these experiences through social media and travel platforms, leveraging influencers and culinary tourism ambassadors, could further amplify Oman's visibility as a destination for wild feasting and sustainable culinary adventures.

Talking Point 10

One person's frontier is another's back yard
it is all a matter of perspective. For some, this
could mean being the first to camp under the
stars in a remote landscape, or hike an ancient
trail that has been off the map for centuries.

FRONTIER TOURISM



Talking Point 10 - Frontier Tourism

It is still possible to get a place on a Kamba African Rainforest Experience in the Republic of the Congo, being one of just 12 people to explore a game park the size of Belgium.³⁷ Black Tomato, meanwhile, is designing an intrepid new expedition to the remote Mitre Peninsula in Argentina, along with a trip in Peru navigating the Sacred Valley of the Incas by raft. This sort of adventure goes beyond bragging rights and is more akin to self-empowerment and the gratification of pushing personal horizons.³⁸ The Ultimate Travel Company is also heading to Peru, a country repositioning itself for luxury travellers, with stays at Puqio, its first tented exploration camp in the remote Colca Valley in the Southern Peruvian Andes.³⁹ Wilderness camping is also pegging out fresh terrain in Kyrgyzstan with yurt stays on the steppes. Oman, Albania, Mongolia and Pakistan are also on the radar for an increasing number of frontier travellers.⁴⁰



Niche Market

Frontier tourism is a niche yet rapidly expanding segment of today's travel and tourism industry that pushes the boundaries of exploration to the world's most remote and extreme environments. This type of travel is not just about seeking new landscapes it is about experiencing the planet's outermost limits - from the depths of the oceans to the towering peaks of the highest mountains, the expansive polar ice caps and the vastness of space. While the concept of exploring uncharted territories is as old as humanity itself, with historical endeavours ranging from Omani navigators exploring vast oceanic expanses using the stars to European explorers venturing beyond known maps, today's frontier tourism has evolved into a lucrative business attracting attention worldwide.



Footnotes

- 37 classicportfolio.com
38 tomplinsconservation.com
39 theultimatetravelcompany.com
40 wildfrontiertravel.com

Oman, Albania, Mongolia and Pakistan are on the radar for an increasing number of frontier travellers.



Adrenalin Junkies

The attraction of frontier tourism lies in its ability to overstimulate the senses, offering an exclusive, extreme form of adventure that is both expensive and exhilarating. The popularity of such experiences has surged in recent years, fueled by social media's travel content and a collective eagerness to experience the world post-COVID-19. Images of crowded summits on Mount Everest, viral videos of treacherous crossings like the Drake Passage and the growing space tourism industry illustrate the increased fascination with conquering new frontiers.

But what is driving frontier tourism? The answer lies in the human brain's response to risk, which can induce feelings of euphoria and accomplishment. These activities, whether it is scaling mountains, diving into polar waters or crossing deserts, not only provide a physical challenge but also offer a psychological one, pushing individuals to confront their fears and, in doing so, undergo a transformative experience. Moreover, the untouched and pristine nature of these remote locations adds an element of allure, offering travellers a chance to experience places few others have.

Extreme Adventures

However, the appeal of frontier tourism is not without its consequences. The environmental impact of such travel, especially in vulnerable areas like the polar regions, cannot be overlooked. The strain on local communities and the potential dangers involved - exemplified by tragic events like the Titan voyage - raise important questions about the sustainability and ethics of pursuing such extreme adventures.

Despite these challenges, the thirst for unique experiences in unexplored territories continues to drive the industry forward. Innovations in technology and safety measures have made previously unthinkable journeys more accessible, though not without risks. The industry's response to these dangers varies, with some companies prioritizing safety through controlled and simulated experiences, while others continue to push the limits of real-world adventure.

Travel Ethics

As frontier tourism grows, the responsibilities of those offering and participating in these experiences become increasingly complex. The debate around the ethics of such travel, the impact on natural environments and the safety of participants underscores the need for a careful balance between exploration and preservation. The question of whether some frontiers are better left unexplored remains pertinent, challenging us to consider the true cost of our quest for the ultimate adventure.

In essence, while frontier tourism opens the door to extraordinary experiences, it also presents fundamental questions about our relationship with the planet's most extreme environments. As we venture further into the unknown, the lessons learned from past explorations and the challenges faced today can guide us toward a more responsible and sustainable approach to satisfying our ever-present desire to explore the final frontiers of our world.

Q&A

HE AZZAN AL BUSAIDI
UNDERSECRETARY, TOURISM,
MINISTRY OF HERITAGE & TOURISM



How did Oman tourism and travel perform in 2023?

We are very happy with the development of our visitor figures and see most of our target markets recovering post-COVID, with some even outpacing those of 2019. In total, 4 million tourists arrived in Oman in 2023, up from 2.9 million in 2022, a rise of 37.9%.

+37.9%

INCREASE IN VISITORS TO OMAN - 2022 - 2023

**ONE
ON
ONE**



Oman was this year's official ITB Berlin host country. What did you highlight at the show?

We highlighted Oman's unique, and may I say renowned, hospitality which is in fact regarded as one of our national characteristics. It is something that expresses itself in the heartfelt warmth, openness to international visitors and genuine curiosity everyone has to learn more about the cultures of those who come to our shores. We made sure ITB visitors got a taste of this hospitality for themselves as we shone a light on our traditions with a variety of events. These ranged from a special performance by the superb Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra at Philharmonie Berlin to shared coffee, dates and halwa with visitors to our pavilion. Speaking of sweet treats, Oman's many gastronomic delights were also showcased at ITB

We made every effort to impress with memorable experiences and special shared moments that encompass the personality of Oman.

What are the fastest growing segments in the travel and tourism industry in Oman at present?

Our outdoor segment is growing very fast. Oman has so much to offer in this regard - from hiking in the beautiful Al Hajar Mountains and canyoning in one of our 60 wadis to snorkelling and diving along our stunning coastline, much of which is practically untouched. And let us not forget the array of opportunities for wild camping adventures in lush green oases, golden desert dunes and untouched beaches. I am speaking here about all markets but looking specifically, the wedding segment is particularly strong with India and for Germany, the cruise market is growing year-on-year with many cruise lines incorporating Oman in their itineraries.

What are the most important inbound markets? Which markets are you targeting specifically for growth?

On a global scale, the GCC states, India and Germany are our top three inbound markets. Looking at Europe, Germany, UK and Italy are strongest for us. We see a lot of potential for growth in the Russian market where the numbers have more than doubled since 2019, as well as Switzerland, Poland and the Nordic countries.

Q&A

Are there any particular events which travellers can look forward to in 2024?

Most definitely. We have a full and varied calendar of events throughout the year. For instance, there are the fabulous musical performances at the Royal Opera House Muscat while on the sporting side, there are lots of exciting competitions for runners and triathletes. Take, for instance, the Xterra Musandam or Ironman 70.3 Oman in Salalah not to mention the incredibly popular Muscat Marathon and the Tour of Oman. For those on a culinary journey, there are food festivals Muscat Eat and Salalah Eat. I should mention that Salalah Eat is part of the Salalah Tourism Festival in July and August, a very special celebration of the khareef season with its cooler temperatures, mountain mists and abundant greenery. It is particularly popular with domestic tourists and visitors from around the Gulf region. In 2023 it attracted over 760,000 people.

I must share with you too that the Omani coastal town of Sur is the Arab Tourism Capital 2024. We are thrilled to have this outstanding chance to showcase our rich heritage, especially the maritime traditions of this historic seafaring town with its ancient dhow building techniques. Of course, the festivities to celebrate this honour will go on in Sur all through 2024.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the exceptional new experiences that the visitor to Oman can enjoy. Amongst them the 1.8 kilometre long double zipline in Khasab, the longest in the world over water and launched less than a year ago. Coming up shortly is the opening of the Oman Botanic Garden located just outside Muscat, a must-visit for every traveller interested in the environment and Oman's incredible treasure chest of biodiversity. I should draw your attention to the highly anticipated opening of new accommodation offerings from the St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort and Mandarin Oriental in Muscat. All in all, there is a lot to look forward to in Oman in the year, indeed years, ahead.



Xterra Musandam



Sur - Arab Tourism Capital 2024



The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort

Looking to the future. What is your long-term vision and what are some of the key challenges that you foresee? What is your plan to overcome these challenges?

We have ambitious plans in place, with US\$5.9bn committed to 363 projects. These range from the construction of integrated tourism complexes and luxury resorts – places like the Envi Al Jabel Al Akhdar Ecolodge, Yiti's Nikki Beach resort and Spa and the Mandarin Oriental Muscat at Marina Bandar Al Rowdha – to the preservation of heritage sites and historical monuments. And we currently have some 40 adventure projects – from ziplines and cable cars through to mountain trails and campsites – in progress.

I should like to emphasise that when we make plans for tourism development, we are fully committed to sustainable practices and as all this takes shape, we are mindful of the responsibility we have to preserve Oman's natural beauty and protect our globally significant treasure chest of biodiversity – a heritage we are enormously proud of.

A challenge we are acutely aware of, something that is tremendously important to us, is maintaining the authenticity of our appeal. This can so easily be lost as tourism develops. With this in mind, the empowerment of local communities is at the heart of our operating plan, helping keep our tourism offer authentic, sustainable and inclusive. Wonderful examples of this is the outstanding ETO-lauded village of Misfat Al Abriyeen and the vibrant town of Nizwa, both within easy reach of Muscat and both offering visitors the chance to genuinely experience our culture and heritage through ecosystems of accommodation, art and folklore. These popular attractions have been developed by the communities themselves; the Ministry's role has simply been facilitation and promotion.

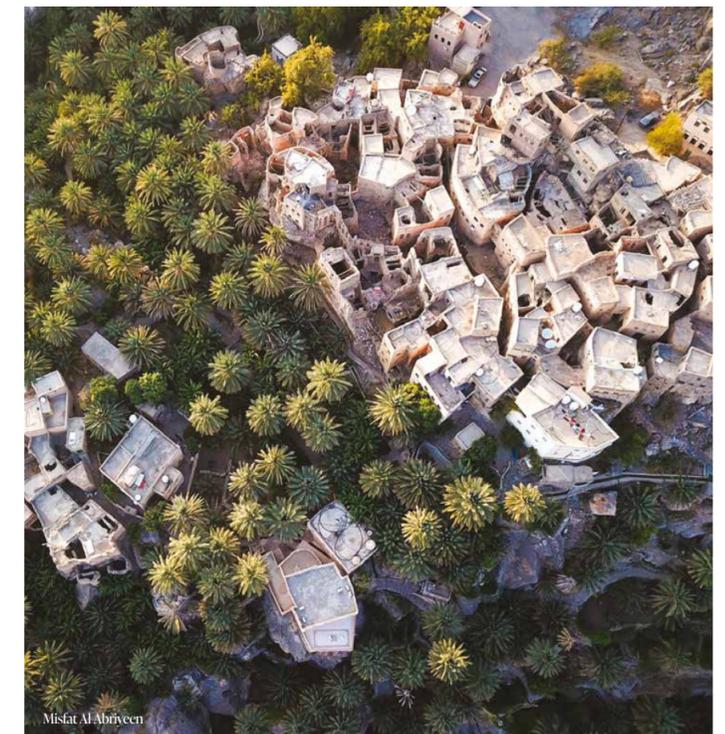
**US\$5.9BN
COMMITTED
TO 363
PROJECTS**



experience
oman

Why is it so important for the industry to meet face to face at events like ITB Berlin?

I believe it is absolutely essential to meet in person, to establish genuine connections in order to build trust and a relationship with partners. This is important throughout the world, but speaking as an Omani, I have to say sitting down, sharing a coffee and having the chance to establish personal bonds and friendships is something we relish. It is in many ways, part of our culture. Over the years, I have learnt that face-to-face meetings make communication so much easier and so much more rewarding.



Misfat Al Abriyeen

Tejarah Talks are held at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre



THANK YOU TO OUR PANELISTS & ALL THOSE WHO ATTENDED

- 1. Session begins
- 2. HE Azzan Al Busaidi
- 3. Eng. Said Al Shanfari
- 4. Tejarah Talks attendees
- 5. Shabib Al Maamari



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@ombusinessforum



Contacts

Ministry of Heritage & Tourism	mht.gov.om
Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre	ocec.om
Visit Oman	visitoman.om
Reality CG	realitycg.com

For further details on Tejarah Talks contact:

Team Tejarah Talks
OBF Office
Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion
PO Box 550
Muscat, 100
Sultanate of Oman

(+968) 9242 7219
tt@tejarah.gov.om



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