

### Travelport reveals fastest-growing destinations for UAE travellers

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The countries that have seen the greatest growth in flight bookings from travellers in the UAE in the last 12 months are Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh, according to an analysis conducted by Travelport, a leading travel commerce platform.

From April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019, bookings made in the UAE through all global distribution systems (GDS) to Pakistan increased by more than 130,000, up 31 per cent on the previous 12 months. Bookings to second-placed Nepal rose by over 25,000, up 37 per cent. This follows an increase of 15,000 flight bookings to the country the previous year (April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, vs April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017). Third-placed Bangladesh saw flight bookings increase by just over 18,000, up 7 per cent.

Global distribution systems (GDS) are vast hi-tech reservation networks that allow travel agents, travel management companies and large corporations, among others, to search and book airline seats, hotel rooms, rental cars, and other travel related items. Globally, in 2018, Travelport alone processed 1 trillion transactions through its platform. The company also delivers mobile services and apps to the travel industry, as well as advanced analytics products such as Travelport Business Intelligence.

Kathryn Wallington, Travelport's country manager for the UAE, said: "Increased airline capacity, economic growth, political stability, and rises in demand from leisure travellers are all major drivers of growth in flight bookings. Most of these factors will have had a role to play in each of the rises we're looking at here."

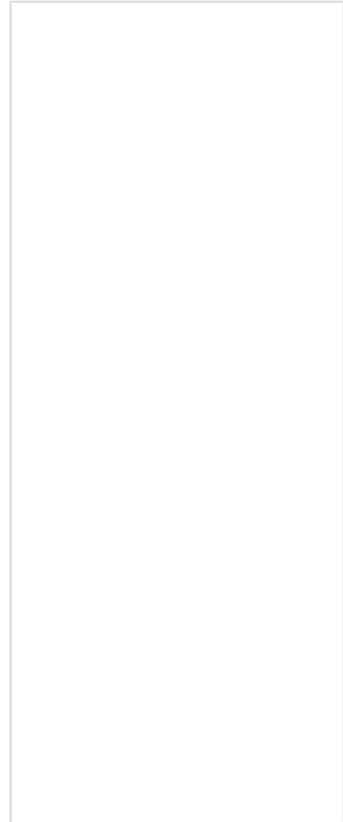
Wallington continued: "Pakistan has seen an uplift in tourism in general in recent years. According to Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, tourism in the country increased three-fold from 2013 to 2017. Furthermore, the World Travel and Tourism Council's latest forecast was that the sector's contribution to GDP would rise by nearly 6 per cent in 2018, suggesting it had another strong year. Pakistan has also received more recognition for its tourism offering recently. For example, it was rated as the world's top travel destination for 2018 by the British Backpacker Society, a story which carried across the globe. Pakistan's plans to ease visa restrictions this year should mean the upwards trend in tourist numbers continues in 2019. With the recent expansion of Travelport's partnership with Pakistan International Airlines, we're delighted to be playing a part in helping the carrier and the country fulfil their international tourism aspirations."

The countries in the Middle East and North Africa that experienced the greatest increases in flight bookings from the UAE over the last 12 months were Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco. Saudi Arabia saw an increase of just over 18,000 (up 6 per cent) bookings through all GDS, while Egypt and Morocco both recorded rises of nearly 5,000 (up 3 per cent and up 10 per cent respectively).

Wallington concluded: "Staying on top of evolving traveller demand is critical in the travel and tourism industry. Even basic analysis can allow travel agents to ensure the packages they offer are in line with the latest demand trends and help airlines ensure they have the right capacity planned for their routes. The analysis that can be done today, however, can, of course, go much deeper and agencies, airlines and others in the industry are becoming increasingly astute at finding the kind of insights that can give them a real competitive advantage." - **TradeArabia News Service**



Kathryn Wallington, Travelport's country manager for the UAE



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