



UAE leads the Middle East online travel race

New research released by Travelport as it launches its pioneering Travelport Universal API technology in MEA

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The UAE is spearheading the surge in Middle East online tourism with 60% of all web-based travel bookings originating from the Emirates, Travelport co-sponsored research has revealed.

New figures from the study – carried out by global travel market research company PhoCusWright – show that online travel bookings in the UAE represented \$4.7bn in 2011 and are expected to double to \$9.4bn by 2014.

Saudi Arabia follows the UAE as the second largest country for online travel sales in the Middle East with 13% of all online bookings made in the Kingdom and Qatar is third with 9% (in 2010).

The new numbers provide further insight into the changing habits of Middle East travellers following earlier figures from the study, which demonstrated the unprecedented growth in online travel in the region with total web sales expected to reach \$15.8bn by 2014.

Travelport – which has been providing business services to the travel industry in the Middle East for the last 20 years – says population demographics and high Internet adoption in the region have a key role to play in online travel growth.

“Travelport has been supporting travel agencies and suppliers in the Middle East for over 20 years,” said Rabih Saab, President and Managing Director, Travelport, Middle East and Africa. “In the recent years, we have seen the online industry grow at an incredible rate and there are a number of factors fuelling this growth.

“One of these is the high level of Internet penetration in the region – in the UAE alone 78% of people are online. This, coupled with the predominantly young and highly diverse population in the Middle East, provides an ideal environment for online travel to flourish.”

Currently, one fifth (20%) of all travel bookings in the UAE are made online, with 16% in Saudi Arabia and 12% in Qatar. This trend is providing an additional boost to regional travel providers, with an increasing number of travel agencies looking to develop their online presence.



To support this growth, Travelport has announced the roll-out of its industry-leading Travelport Universal API (uAPI) technology in the Middle East and Africa.

Now available in select countries across the region, Travelport uAPI enables travel agencies to streamline the booking process by re-aggregating currently fragmented content from the GDS and other sources. It also offers the broadest range of content available with full access to Travelport's GDS air, hotel and car content, as well as High Speed Rail suppliers and Low Cost Carriers.

As an open platform, Travelport Universal API works side-by-side with existing APIs, allowing agents to build customised applications that enhance their online capabilities.

“Agents across the Middle East and Africa now have access to Travelport GDS technology of the future,” said Saab. “Travelport uAPI aggregates content and travel related services from multiple sources through a single connection, giving our customers easy access to a world of content and functionality in a very simplistic and efficient way. It removes the need to manage multiple API connections and simplifies travel distribution by streamlining the process and reducing associated costs and complexities.”