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Chris K. Franzen

🕒 19 January 2018

👤 Savvas Kammitis (/2015-10-06-15-40-04/rendezouvs/itemlist/user/1302-savvaskammitis)

📁 Rendezvous (/2015-10-06-15-40-04/rendezouvs)

Q&A with Chris K. Franzen, General Manager, Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villa

CONSIDERING THE GROWING POPULARITY OF BUSINESS TOURISM AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MICE IN QATAR, CHRIS FRANZEN, GENERAL MANAGER, GRAND HYATT DOHA & VILLAS, DISCUSSES HOW THE HOTEL CONTINUES TO ADAPT ITS SERVICES TO CORPORATE TRAVELLERS.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: How was 2017 in terms of business and how does this compare to the previous years?

CHRIS FRANZEN: The first half of 2017 was excellent for us in terms of occupancy, we were able to bring in more guests to the country and to Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villas. This success was mainly due to city-wide events in the first quarter followed by the school holidays and corporate travel. The leisure sector fared particularly well because of our beach-facing location, competitive pricing and our strategic marketing activities. [...] Due to the current situation, we saw notable drops in visitor numbers

from our key source markets, i.e., UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. What worked in the hotel industries benefit is the sheer support the country showed to the leadership, as most Qataris and residents remained within the country, resulting in a record breaking summer period.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: Who is your main source market?

CHRIS FRANZEN: While aforementioned markets broke away, we saw a healthy growth from markets such as the US, UK and Italy. We see this as a new opportunity for new business in addition to other strong emerging markets such as Turkey, China, Russia and CIS countries etc.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: How important is the MICE sector to your business and in your opinion to the ongoing success and ambitious targets of Qatar's tourism industry?

CHRIS FRANZEN: The Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector is a hugely important segment of the tourism business and is important to us as well. It provides profitability for rooms and event space that not only helps us to have a strong base business but also provides us an opportunity for high yielding transient business. Apart from bringing in various economic benefits, it also benefits a destination by providing opportunities for knowledge-sharing, country brand development and network building.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: Qatar Tourism Authority aims to triple the number of business events tourists by 2030. In your opinion what is it that makes Qatar stand out as a MICE destination?

CHRIS FRANZEN: Qatar has already become a regional hub for conferences and exhibitions and with over 90 percent of visitors to Qatar coming for business, most individuals come to attend a conference, a meeting, or an exhibition. QTA is investing in tourism infrastructure, including the construction of luxury hotels, resorts and meeting facilities. Qatar is already known for world class venues such as Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), one of the largest single exhibition buildings in the world, which is located in Doha's prime business district to cater to larger conventions. Another venue, the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) located in Education City, features nearly 40,000 m2 of exhibition space divisible into seven individual halls. Qatar is also very well connected with global air networks, this is due to the continuing efforts of the government to create the best in air transport facilities and the highest standards of exhibition space.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: What kind of facilities / services do you offer to cater for the MICE client?

CHRIS FRANZEN: Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villas is one of the largest convention hotels in the city. Our ballroom can seat up to 1,000 guests for a lavish banquet or a large conference with different set up options such as banquet, classroom or conference. Al Silia ballroom is also divisible into three separate rooms for more intimate gatherings. The hotel also has 11 meeting rooms that are located on the fifth floor and from 22 to 104 m2 conveniently located adjacent to a dedicated foyer area. Our meeting rooms offer flexible space and can accommodate eight to 80 people depending on set-up. The hotel also features 249 elegantly appointed rooms and suites, mixing contemporary décor with warm Arabian hospitality and 91 luxurious villas all with a private access to the 400 m private beach, gardens and swimming pool.

TRAVEL TRADE WEEKLY: What are your future plans which aim to further boost MICE sector in the country and attract more corporate travellers from the regional and international market?

CHRIS FRANZEN: With the Qatar government's efforts to position itself on the global map as a destination for MICE, it is expected that Qatar's hospitality market for MICE business will show growth owing to its mainly tourism-related development. We are now actively seeking to stage MICE events with

the help of our strong Hyatt Sales Force network and active participation in global MICE fairs.