

# TravelTrendz

International

August 2023

*a travel lifestyle publication*

## AIUla

The Night Skies

## Poland

Natural Beauty

## Baku

Tradition Meets Modernity

## Slovakia

Wellness Paradise

## Hungary

Enchanting Treasures



ISSN 1752-6256



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Image: Wild Wadi



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**Published by**  
Al jasar Advertising Ltd.  
United Kingdom  
Unit G OYO, Business Park,  
Hindmans Way, Dagenham,  
Essex RM9 6LN, London  
Tel : +44 208 526 7779,  
**Distributed in UK & Europe**  
PostScriptum  
Distribution & Marketing Service  
London, UK

The regional Travel Trade industry is buzzing as it is the summer season. The opening of China is a big relief to the Industry. The entire industry is looking to find ways to offset the losses. There are some hindrance including the political issues in Europe that is not helping at all.

In this issue as always, we as always offer new and exciting options to our readers. The top destinations and Hotels are being introduced as never before. Do not miss the article on Namibia, Africa. Learn more about the amazing Baku, Azerbaijan. The article on AllUla is a must read. We have a very special article Brescia, Italy. We have interesting features on Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

We have covered the top notch hotels in this issue such as the amazing property Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara. We have also featured the Cinnamon Wild Yala in the enchanting Sri Lanka and Luxus Hunza in the amazing North of Pakistan. We have also featured the amazing Al Habtoor Polo Resort in Dubai. Please do not miss the feature regarding the innovative environmental Initiatives at the Bahi Ajman Palace and Coral Beach Sharjah.

As always, read about the news and views relating to the hospitality industry plus learn about what is happening in the Airlines and Aviation Industry.

So, have a good time reading...

**Ken Chapman**  
Editor



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# CHARTING THE NIGHT SKIES

*Navigating the Ancient Mystery of the AlUla Starscape*

**A**lUla's night skies offer an alternative way to experience 200,000 years of largely unexplored human history. Standing at the crossroads of ancient civilisations, AlUla has been called home by cultures as diverse as those of the Dadanites, the Lihayans, and the Nabataeans.

Throughout the pre-Islamic period, civilisations relied on empirical observations of the rising and setting of the stars – an astronomical study known as 'anwa'. While little is known about the significance of the cosmos for the ancient kingdoms of Dadan and Lihyan - which ruled from the end of the 7th century BCE to around the early 3rd century BCE - it is certain that the night skies had an important part to play. With this powerful ancient kingdom forming the nexus of northern Arabia's caravan trade, travellers across the region would have navigated the shifting desert sands by the stars alone.

Later, during the Nabatean period, which prospered from the 4th century BCE until the 1st century CE, research points to the importance of astral elements in the civilisation's religion. While the focus of academia has thus far rested on Petra, a 2013 study claims that several monuments in the Nabatean capital city of Petra, located in what is now modern-day Jordan, were purposely built to align with solstitial and equinoctial events which could have been used to mark times of worship and to create a calendar. In the absence of scientific evidence to the contrary, it can only be assumed that the same principles were applied in the construction of Hegra, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO site, which was once the Nabatean's principal southern city.

While so much of today's knowledge remains swathed in the historical mists, it is a fact that the modern starscape has shifted over time. As the Earth rotates, it shifts slightly on its axis - a process called precession of the equinoxes whereby its celestial poles trace a circle across the sky - causing its position to change over the centuries. Due to this, there was no North Star in the pre-Islamic Arabian night skies. Instead, to navigate after sunset, travellers were reliant on a trio of stars located in the North Celestial Pole. These were Polaris, today's North Star, referred to in

pre-Islamic times as 'Goat Kid', along with a stellar duo dubbed the 'Two Wild Cow Calves' – today known as Pherkad, from al-farqadan, and Kochab, from kawkab, meaning 'star'.

#### The AlUla Starscape

As was the case for civilisations around the globe, the night sky had an important part to play in daily life during the pre-Islamic period, with the motions of the stars watched closely as their positions at specific times of the night indicated seasonal changes. In the Arab world, oral folklore, or starlore, tells us that ath-Thurayy rising in the east as the Sun set in the west pointed to the onset of colder weather. The position of the setting of stars at the end of the night were also used to predict seasonal changes, with the autumn rains heralded by the dawn setting of two stars known as the 'Two Vultures'.

Today's celestial skies still bear names with etymological roots embedded firmly in Arabic; indeed, two-thirds of the common names for stars in star catalogues around the world are Arabic in origin. This includes the brilliant red star Aldebaran (alpha Tauri), which was attested during the pre-Islamic period, before 610 CE. The Arabic name of this star, 'ad-dabaran' translates to 'the Follower', so named because it follows on the heels of the most renowned celestial cluster in the ancient Arabian night sky, ath-Thuraya; a star so highly celebrated by the culture of the time that it was often simply referred to as the 'star' (an-najm).

Known today as the Pleiades, oral history tells us that ath-Thuraya was enamoured by the Follower but was thwarted by



the presence of the star commonly referred to today as Capella, then known as the 'Impeder', which forever blocked their path to true love. Several additional modern star names point to the storied arms of ath-Thurayya (kaff ath-Thurayya), including Caph (from kaff, meaning 'hand'), Mirfak (al-mirfaq - from mirfaq, meaning 'elbow') and Menkib (al-mankib - from mankib, meaning 'shoulder'). Other modern astronomical terms still recognised by their Arabic names include Alhidade, Azimuth, Almucantar, and the stars of the Summer Triangle- the Vega, Altair and the Deneb.

#### EXPERIENCE ALULA'S NIGHT SKIES

Today, AlUla remains an ideal spot to experience the majesty of the Arabian night skies whilst reflecting upon the great heritage of astronomy that endures to this day. Being remote and far away from city lights, the wide-open spaces of AlUla's remote desert terrain make for some of the world's clearest dark skies. In particular, the remote Gharameel area offers excellent stargazing conditions. Surrounded by mystical rock formations, Gharameel was once a large mountain that has slowly fragmented over time, now consisting of thin iron-oxide-rich spires that tower overhead to form a dramatic and alien landscape. Harrat Viewpoint is another prime location for stargazing, affording magnificent views from the top of Harrat Uwayrid across Dadan, AlUla Old Town, AlUla Fort, and the AlUla Oasis, and equipped with an outdoor seating area and telescopes with which to survey the terrain below and the stars above. Arrive just before sunset to watch the landscape transform as the setting sun gives way to a sparkling tapestry of stars.



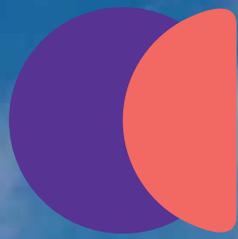
# Exploring the Vibrant Tapestry of Culture and Shopping in Baku

## Where Tradition Meets Modernity

Welcome to an exciting journey to a land of stunning landscapes and rich culture as we delve into Azerbaijan's tourism potential. With its extraordinary transformations and unique offerings, Azerbaijan is a destination that inspires and captivates visitors from all across the globe.

The cosmopolitan capital Baku boasts historical sites, art galleries, shopping malls, and authentic restaurants. Prepare to be captivated by the diverse architectural legacy of the city, where history comes to life before your very eyes. A blend of west and east, ancient and modern exteriors will create an experience beyond your expectations. In Baku, you will discover the mediaeval atmosphere in the cobbled streets of UNESCO inscribed Old Town together with Maiden Tower and Shirvanshah's Palace, and relish magnetic contemporary architecture such as elegant Flame Towers and futuristic Heydar Aliyev Centre. Just outside of Baku, visitors can learn about prehistoric human society at the UNESCO-listed Gobustan State Historical and Cultural Reserve, home to an astonishing collection of over 7,000 ancient petroglyphs. Depicted scenes of people, warriors, animals, boats, dances, hunting, camel caravans and more, they chart ways of life between 5,000 and 20,000 years. What's more, just a short drive away lies the mystery of Azerbaijan's many mud volcanoes, which boast unearthly, moon-like landscapes. Azerbaijan is home to 700 out of the 1700 known mud volcanoes on Earth, including the world's largest mud volcano, Toraghay.

In addition to the historical and cultural sites that Baku has to offer, the city's impressive iconic locations such as Icheri Sheher host a myriad of shopping spots. These establishments serve as repositories of cherished memories for visitors, as they offer a range of culturally significant items, such



# azerbaijan

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK



as pottery exemplars, crafted souvenirs, and vibrant, miniature carpets. The presence of folk-art stores within the cobblestone streets further enriches the historical ambience of the city. One notable location, Yashil Bazar (Azerbaijani Green Bazaar) brags with a world of aromas - those fascinating flavors from different regions of the country that generate delicious local cuisine. Notably, the bazaar allows buyers to sample traditional compotes and jams, dried fruits and nuts, as well as the renowned Baku caviars and saffron before making a purchase. This unique opportunity not only enriches the shopping experience but also offers insight into the culinary traditions of the region.

Baku, as a city encompassing a harmonious blend of contemporary and historical architectural marvels, presents an array of modern shopping centres. Among these, Port Baku Mall stands out as an epitome of luxury, offering diverse plenty of internationally renowned brands and a choice of top-notch restaurants. Also, for those seeking a more picturesque shopping experience along the shores of Baku Boulevard, the charming Deniz Mall is a must-visit. Brimming with an abundance of brand stores, restaurants, coffee shops, and cafes, this mall offers a diverse array of services for visitors to savour. Moreover, with three entertainment centres, both children and adults can partake in amusement through a variety of attractions and sports activities.

# BAKU

## Stunning landscapes and rich culture



azerbaijan  
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# Iftikhar Hamdani

A positive force to Sustainability





Being in the hospitality industry for over two decades, Iftikhar Hamdani, Area General Manager of Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel has proven that the role of sustainability in the industry is rolling and prime concerns on everyone's mind.

Iftikhar performs as the positive force to his team towards the sustainability of Coral Beach Resort Sharjah and Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel. Standing proud along with his team, the two hotels pioneered exciting and innovative environmental and community initiatives.

March 2021, they launched "Be Green, Go Green" energizing the CSR and take positive actions for environment. One of the greatest staff engagements run by Iftikhar is tree planting activities. From mangrove planting projects to supporting the Emirates Environmental Group's "For Our Emirates We Plant" in Ras Al Khaimah and 110 trees planted around the world by the staff in their home countries, have been remarkable.

Iftikhar constantly integrated sustainable practices into the operations. There are several environmental activities implemented, amongst which are – its staff were given reusable

bags made of the hotels' discarded linens to avoid the use of plastic bags; reduce waste to landfill through waste segregations system. The recyclable waste materials are sent to organizations that will help to convert these into useful ones, i.e., our PET waste bottles are converted into yarn through the DGrade Simply Bottle Campaign. While the other wastes like cans, cartons, use gadgets are given to Emirates Environmental Group.

As a testament of sustainability practices, Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel achieved the Green Key certification. Additionally, Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel bagged the Hotel of the Year 2021 for Green Initiative and Coral Beach Hotel Sharjah as the Hotel Team of the Year 2021 at the ME Hospitality Excellence Awards.

Continuing Iftikhar's journey to sustainability, Coral Beach Resort Sharjah is on its way to a "Plastic-Free Drinking Water", replacing plastic bottles with a reusable glass bottle with complete bottling system that allows proper cleaning and refilling. Next is to sustainably divert the food waste through Composter or Digester machines.

Iftikhar Hamdani will continue to drive positive force to lead and motivate not only his team but the hospitality industry.



# Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara

## Feel the Rain this Khareef Season



**S**alah/Oman, 1 June 2023: Discover the magic of Khareef season at a luxurious retreat in the heart of Salalah. Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara invites you to feel the rain while taking in the stunning natural beauty of the resort and its surroundings. This wondrous destination is a must-visit during Khareef season, a welcome relief from the summer temperatures across the Middle East.

### **Witness the Natural Beauty**

Guests at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara can feel the rain while witnessing the resort gardens in full bloom. The lush landscape, the lagoon and the beach provide a breath-taking backdrop for guests to take a stroll in the cool mists. Nestled in the heart of Salalah, the resort is ideal for romantic getaways, family vacations or solo adventures.

### **Experience Oman's Unique Culture**

Take a boat ride to feel the rain on your skin from Mekong Jetty at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara to the Frankincense Museum. The resort is located near the Al Baleed Archaeological Park which offers a glimpse into the rich history and culture of the region. Wander this UNESCO World Heritage Site.



### Fun for Little Ones

The Albahara Kids Club at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara is the perfect place for children to have an enjoyable Khareef time. Our skilled team will guide children through a range of exciting workshops and activities that cater to both indoor and outdoor interests. Kids can feel the rain and also partake in indoor activities like cooking classes, and arts and crafts, providing them with an outlet for creativity, socialisation, and skill-building. With daily fun-filled pastimes, children are sure to make new friends and create lasting memories. Al Mina Restaurant will also offer a live fire show and kids entertainment in the evening.

### Explore Salalah's Nature

Khareef season offers guests the opportunity to feel the rain while exploring the picturesque natural sights of Salalah. From guided tours with our Salalah Guru of cascading waterfalls and rain-filled wadis, guests can admire the wonders of nature and enjoy the refreshing rain while enjoying a picnic.

### Unwind in World-Class Luxury

Select a spacious villa at our sophisticated lagoon side resort and feel the rain as you unwind in your private pool. Enjoy total relaxation in privacy with a barbecue prepared delivered on your terrace or sink into a bath full of bubbles as you watch the Khareef droplets run down the windows.

### Witness Salalah's Seasonal Cultural Celebrations

Salalah is known for its cultural celebrations during Khareef. The resort provides an excellent base to observe events like the Salalah Khareef Festival, where you can enjoy live music, dance

performances, and traditional Omani crafts, and feel the rain as you immerse yourself in the rich cultural experiences.

### Relax and Recharge at Anantara Spa

Khareef season at Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara provides the perfect ambiance for rejuvenation. Feel the rain through authentic spa journeys that invoke ancient Omani beauty wisdom and use the bountiful local resources to nourish your skin.

### Taste Local Specialities

The resort's restaurants offer a range of international and local cuisine. A sumptuous buffet breakfast is an excellent beginning for any Khareef day. Embark on an enticing culinary voyage and submerge yourself in the vivacious flavours of Al Mina by Dina, curated in partnership with the esteemed culinary specialist, Dina Macki, during the enchanting Khareef season. Delight in authentic Omani cuisine, including the tantalising Shuwa, a lamb dish slow cooked to perfection. Indulge in Asian signature dishes at Mekong.

### Save on Your Khareef Escape

Make unforgettable memories and feel the rain this Khareef season when you choose Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara.

Enjoy 20% savings on luxury accommodation with complimentary daily breakfast for two persons. Prices start from OMR 169 per night, please email [res.aabs@anantara.com](mailto:res.aabs@anantara.com) or call +968 23228222 for more information or reservations. [www.anantara.com](http://www.anantara.com)



# Cinnamon Wild Yala

## Unleashing the Spirit of Adventure in Sri Lanka



Yala National Park is a renowned wildlife tourist destination situated in Sri Lanka, a heaven for all local and foreign wildlife enthusiasts, popular for its diverse ecosystem and the wealth of wildlife. Spanning over an extensive area of 378 Square Miles, Yala National Park is home to an impressive array of Sri Lankan endemic wildlife and a notable site for Leopard sightings.

Nestled alongside the renowned Yala National Park, Cinnamon Wild Yala beckons to those seeking an unforgettable adventure amidst nature's vibrant marvels. For wildlife and adventure enthusiasts, Cinnamon Wild Yala is the ultimate retreat – offering with an extraordinary array of thrilling excursions that allow guests to explore the untamed side of Sri Lanka. The quintessential Yala National Park safari takes visitors deep into the heart of the wilderness, where they can encounter magnificent Sri Lankan elephants, elusive leopards, and a myriad of aquatic birds. Birdwatching at the nearby Bundala National Park provides an opportunity to marvel at the diverse domestic avian species. Guided nature walks and visits to historical monasterial sites further enrich the experience, immersing guests in the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region.

After an adventurous day in the safari, guests can indulge in a delectable buffet at Tuskers, the resort's all-day dining restaurant. Tuskers showcases a delightful fusion of international and native



cuisine, satisfying every palate. For a more intimate dining experience, Pugmarks offers a sumptuous à la carte dinner, featuring an exquisite selection of culinary delights. Meanwhile, the Peacock Bar serves specialty beverages that perfectly complement the ambiance, allowing guests to unwind and recount their adventures.

One of the key experiences offered by Cinnamon Wild Yala is the unique destination dining experiences. Guests get an unforgettable opportunity to savour delicious meals while catching glimpses of wildlife roaming freely nearby with the 'Dine in the Wild' experience. For a more romantic touch, a champagne breakfast on the beach creates an unforgettable memory against the backdrop of crashing waves.

Cinnamon Wild Yala includes an assortment of Beach & Jungle chalets, each offering picturesque views of either the Yala National

Park or the Indian Ocean. These well-appointed accommodations provide the utmost comfort for guests, ensuring a peaceful night's sleep after a day filled with excitement and exploration. Equipped with top-notch amenities, the chalets serve as a cozy sanctuary, allowing guests to recharge and rejuvenate before their next adventure.

Cinnamon Wild Yala provides a gateway to the untamed beauty of Sri Lanka, where wildlife enthusiasts and adventure seekers can immerse themselves in a world of wonder. With its diverse range of exhilarating activities, exceptional dining experiences, and comfortable accommodations, Cinnamon Yala is the perfect base for those yearning to unleash their spirit of adventure and create unforgettable memories in the heart of nature.

[www.cinnamonhotels.com](http://www.cinnamonhotels.com)

# NAMIBIA

## Etosha National Park



**D**ie internationally renowned Etosha National Park – undoubtedly Namibia’s most popular tourist attraction -is the heart of north-central region of the country.

Etosha was born from a drying lake that filled up with sediment and was shape by wind the scouring effects of wind erosion. Etosha owes its unique landscape to Etosha Pan, a vast, shallow chalky white depression of approximately 22 912 square km. Once a large inland lake fed by rivers from north and east, which dried up 120 million years ago as continental drift changed the slope of the land and course of the tributaries.

Etosha was first proclaimed a game reserve if 1907. The Etosha Pan covers 23% of the surface area of the park. It is the largest saltpan in Africa, visible even from space. The park hosts 114 mammal species and 340 bird species, several are rare and endangered, such as black rhino and cheetah, and the lesser-known blackface impala,

which is endemic to north-western Namibia and south-western Angola. Etosha’s current population of black rhino represents one of the largest populations of black rhino in the world.

A series of waterholes along the southern edge of the pan draws herds of plains game, elephant, rhino, giraffe, predators and birds, making it one of the most varied and prolific wildlife experiences in Africa.

The park is also a pivotal part of Namibia’s incredible wildlife recovery story, in its more than a century of existence. Etosha has always been a wildlife haven and has become a beacon of success in terms of conservation. Other than the Big five(elephant, rhino, lion, leopard, and the buffalo ) Etosha is home to 642 species of terrestrial vertebrates.

Etosha is a great all-year around destination. Namibia’s low rainfall

means that sunny days are the rule. The sparse vegetation makes it easy for game spotting, however it is advisable to plan your visit during winter months, when water is scarce and most of the animals congregate around the waterholes. Alternatively, the summer months are a foray into the "Etosha nursery" with game giving birth to their newest herd members, younglings everywhere.

The question frequently asked, how long is long enough to see every corner of the park so large that it takes up more space than some countries? No amount of time can ever be enough to enjoy

the vast scope of Etosha National Park.

Even discounting the parts closed off to visitors, even by following the marked roads and visiting the designated waterholes still requires a lot of time to experience it all.

Etosha National Park is one of the most famous national parks on the Africa continent and one of the best wildlife experiences in the world.



# Discover the Enchanting Treasures of Hungary

## A Journey through Beauty, History, and Culture

by: Hazel Saldanha

Nestled in the heart of Central Europe, Hungary is a land of breathtaking beauty, rich history, and vibrant cultural heritage. From its awe-inspiring architecture to its picturesque landscapes, the destination offers a delightful blend of culture, nature, lifestyle, and cuisine that will captivate every traveler's heart.

The country boasts a cultural tapestry woven with influences from its Roman, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian past, creating a unique blend of traditions and customs. The capital city, Budapest, is a treasure trove of architectural marvels, featuring iconic landmarks such as the magnificent Hungarian Parliament Building, the neo-Gothic Matthias Church, and the majestic Buda Castle. The historic district of Castle Hill, a UNESCO World Heritage site, offers a glimpse into Hungary's royal past. It includes the Royal palace and a fascinating history museum. Art lovers will find themselves immersed in the rich collection of Hungarian masterpieces at the Hungarian National Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts, showcasing works by renowned artists.

Throughout the region, vibrant folk traditions come alive in the form of music, dance, and art. Visitors can witness captivating performances of traditional Hungarian folk dances, characterized by their energetic movements and colorful costumes. Music is a vibrant tapestry woven with a rich history and diverse influences. From classical compositions to folk melodies, Hungary's musical heritage has captivated audiences for centuries. The country boasts world-renowned composers like Franz Liszt and Béla Bartók, whose works continue to inspire musicians around the globe and has influenced genres like jazz and contemporary pop.

Hungary's natural beauty is a well-kept secret, with diverse landscapes that will leave travelers in awe. The stunning Lake Balaton, known as the "Hungarian Sea," offers a peaceful retreat with its crystal-clear waters and charming surroundings. Nature enthusiasts can explore the enchanting Danube Bend, where the Danube River carves its way through lush forests and towering hills. The Hortobágy National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, beckons with its vast grasslands, meandering rivers, and unique wildlife. Here, visitors can witness the traditional Hungarian "puszta" lifestyle, as well as spot rare bird species, including the graceful grey heron and the majestic white-tailed eagle. Explore the Great Hungarian Plain, where horseback riding and traditional equestrian shows showcase the country's strong equestrian heritage. Engage with locals, savor traditional dishes, and embrace the welcoming spirit that permeates Hungarian society.

Delectable Hungarian cuisine is a tantalizing fusion of flavors, combining influences from neighboring countries with its own



traditional dishes. Indulge in hearty goulash, a rich meat and vegetable stew seasoned with paprika, which has become a national symbol of Hungarian cuisine. Sample delectable sausages, or savor the famous "rétes," a mouthwatering pastry filled with sweet fillings.

The country offers a warm welcome to visitors from the GCC, and strives to provide a comfortable and inclusive experience. In Budapest, you'll find numerous halal restaurants and mosques, such as the Great Mosque of Budapest and the Rumi Mosque, offering places of worship and spiritual solace. Many hotels and

accommodations cater to specific dietary requirements, ensuring halal food options and prayer facilities. Hungary's commitment to hospitality and respect for diverse cultures make it an inviting destination for visitors of all backgrounds and faiths.

The true richness of the country lies in its people, who exude a prevailing spirit of acceptance, hospitality and kindness. With lively festivals celebrating music, dance, food and crafts galore, Hungary offers a full slate of family-friendly fun and memories in the making.

[visithungary.com](http://visithungary.com)



# Poland

## A Land of History, Culture, and Natural Beauty

by: Hazel Saldanha



Poland, a fascinating country located in the heart of Europe, is a land brimming with rich history, vibrant traditions, and breathtaking natural beauty. From its medieval castles and picturesque towns to its verdant landscapes and tranquil lakes, Poland offers an enticing blend of cultural and outdoor activities for every traveler. Embark on a journey through this enchanting nation and discover a world of wonders.

At the epicenter of Poland lies Warsaw, a vibrant metropolis that seamlessly blends the old with the new. Step into the annals of history as you traverse the enchanting streets of the UNESCO World Heritage site, the historic Old Town. Here, you will be transported back in time, meandering through cobblestone pathways, marveling at architectural splendors. Don't miss the iconic Royal Castle, an emblem of Poland's rich heritage that stands as a testament to the nation's storied past.

A short jaunt from Warsaw lies Krakow, hailed as the cultural capital of Poland, a treasure trove brimming with history and art. Embark on an exploration of grandeur at the awe-inspiring Wawel Castle, immerse yourself in the ambiance of the historic Kazimierz district, and pay a solemn visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, a haunting reminder of the nation's tumultuous history. Let the vibrant atmosphere of the Main Market Square envelop your senses as you admire the breathtaking St. Mary's Basilica and peruse the local crafts showcased at the Cloth Hall.

Nature enthusiasts are in for a treat, as Poland boasts an array of stunning national parks that offer a sanctuary of natural splendor. Prepare to be awed by the majestic Bialowieza National Park, situated in the northeastern part of the country. This UNESCO-listed site, one of Europe's last primeval forests, grants you the opportunity to witness the regal European bison in





their undisturbed habitat. And after a day filled with adrenaline, luxuriate in the region's thermal spas, allowing the mineral-rich waters to caress your weary body while the picturesque mountain vistas serenade your soul—an idyllic manifestation of nature's bliss.

As you traverse the cultural landscape of Poland, do not overlook the country's culinary treasures. Polish cuisine is a symphony of robust flavors, comforting ingredients, and time-honored recipes passed down through generations. Indulge in the quintessential dish that embodies Poland's gastronomic prowess—the pierogi. Whether you savor them at a humble street corner bistro or an opulent fine dining establishment, these delectable dumplings, filled with luscious combinations of potatoes, cheese, mushrooms, or meat, and served with melted butter, epitomize comfort food that will leave you yearning for more.

Poland embraces diversity and strives to create an inclusive environment for all visitors. It has garnered appeal for its ability to cater to the ethno-cultural needs of travelers from the Arab region and offers an array of services to make one and all feel at home. Halal friendly dining is easily available, along with dedicated mosques in all the major cities.

Whether you find yourself exploring the historic cities, immersing in the natural wonders of national parks, or basking in the tranquility of the Baltic Sea, Poland promises to etch indelible memories upon your heart, leaving you with a profound appreciation for its rich heritage. Embark on an unforgettable journey and discover the magic of this remarkable country.

[www.poland.travel/en](http://www.poland.travel/en)



# Slovakia

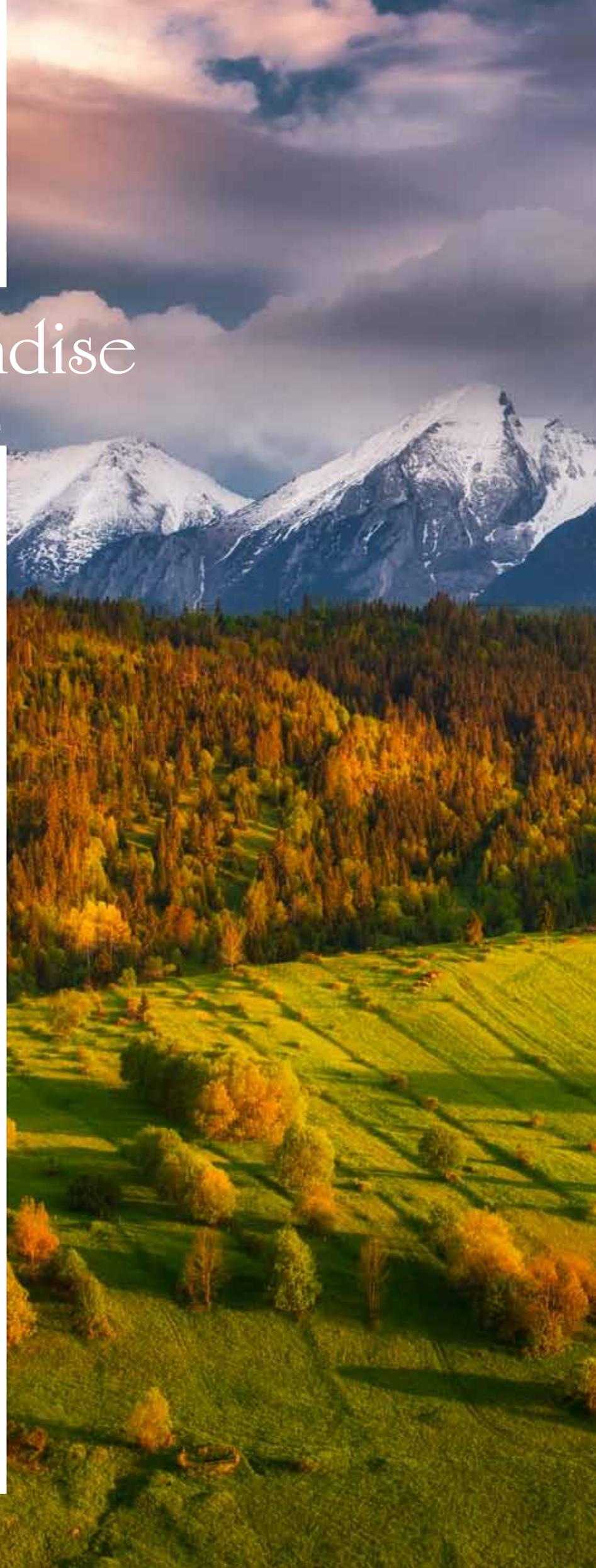
## A Wellness Paradise

by: Hazel Saldanha

Slovakia is a hidden gem that offers a delightful blend of natural beauty, rich culture, and rejuvenating wellness experiences. The capital Bratislava is about 45 minutes away from Vienna, which offers several convenient international connections to the GCC region. This enchanting country is often overlooked by travelers, but those who venture here are rewarded with breathtaking landscapes, soothing spas, vibrant culture, and captivating UNESCO World Heritage sights. Let us embark on a virtual journey through the wonders of Slovakia.

One of Slovakia's biggest draws is its abundance of natural wonders. From towering peaks to pristine lakes and lush valleys, the country's diverse landscapes will leave you spellbound. The High Tatras, part of the Carpathian Mountain range, is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. Hiking trails wind through alpine meadows, dense forests, and dramatic cliffs, leading to awe-inspiring vistas. Don't miss the chance to explore the stunning Slovak Paradise National Park, with its intricate system of gorges, waterfalls, and ladders that allow you to traverse the park's breathtaking terrain.

After immersing yourself in Slovakia's natural beauty, it's time to indulge in some well-deserved relaxation at one of the country's renowned spas and wellness retreats. Slovak thermal springs have been revered for their healing properties for centuries, and today, the tradition of spa culture continues. Head to the picturesque town of Piešťany, famous for its thermal baths and mud treatments, which are believed to alleviate various ailments. The natural hot springs of Rajecké Teplice and the spa town of Bardejov offer serene settings for unwinding and rejuvenating mind, body, and soul.





Slovakia's rich cultural heritage is another aspect that captivates visitors. Bratislava, the capital city, boasts a charming historic center with cobbled streets, grand palaces, and a magnificent castle overlooking the Danube River. Immerse yourself in the local culture by attending traditional folk festivals, where lively music, colorful costumes, and spirited dances come to life. Slovakia is also home to countless castles, such as the imposing Spiš Castle and the romantic Orava Castle, offering a glimpse into the country's medieval past.

For history and architecture enthusiasts, UNESCO World Heritage sites are a must-visit. In the historic town of Banská Štiavnica, you can explore the intricate network of mining tunnels and marvel at well-preserved Gothic and Renaissance buildings. The medieval town of Bardejov is known for its beautifully preserved fortifications and the exquisite St. Egidius Basilica. And no visit to Slovakia is complete without visiting the stunning wooden churches of the Carpathian Mountain region, which showcase unique architectural styles and are a testament to the country's spiritual traditions.

Slovakia's allure lies in its ability to cater to a wide range of interests. Whether you seek adrenaline-pumping adventures in the great outdoors, a peaceful escape in nature, a cultural immersion, or a wellness retreat, Slovakia offers it all. With its picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage, soothing spas, and UNESCO World Heritage sites, this captivating country is ready to welcome you with open arms. Pack your bags for an unforgettable journey to Slovakia, where beauty, wellness, and culture blissfully converge.

[slovakia.travel/en](https://slovakia.travel/en)



# The magic of Brescia

From the Valley of Signs to the lakes, here are a thousand and one reasons to discover a province that will capture your heart



Thanks to its proximity to the airports of Milan, Verona, and Bergamo, it is extremely easy to reach Brescia. In the middle of a marvellous circuit of cities of art, Brescia welcomes you for a journey across time following thousands of unique stories, all different yet intertwined.

Brescia is above all a Land of Lakes: the diverse souls of Lakes Garda, Iseo, and Idro represent three different ways of interpreting a vacation which is at the intersection of a Mediterranean holiday and a quaint mountain resort. Well-equipped beaches, boat excursions, and outdoor strolls are some of the charming suggestions that these sites, praised by poets and loved by those who are looking for out-of-the-ordinary places, inspire you to do. Water sports or nature walks, their offering ranges from an almost seaside atmosphere to high mountain landscapes.

Speaking of mountains, Camonica, Trompia, and Sabbia Valleys are Brescia's incarnation of a mountain that can elegantly wear summer as well as winter clothes. Trekking and mountain biking are just some of the myriads of activities that sports lovers can enjoy just steps from the sky. Every season, this offering changes and culminates with the over 100 km of alpine ski slopes of the Pontedilegno Tonale ski area, served by modern ski lifts. To those who interpret active holidays as a way to relax surrounded by nature, Brescia offers an incredible golf circuit and renowned thermal spas, such as Boario and Sirmione, a real jewel on the lake that enchanted Romans and divas like Maria Callas.

It isn't hard to understand why there are so many UNESCO World





Heritage Sites in a region as rich of landscapes as Brescia, which will capture your heart and soul. On top of the incredible gallery of over 200,000 Rock Engravings in Camonica Valley, the province boasts a portion of the Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps and also obtained recognition for the Santa Giulia Museum in Brescia, included in the national project Longobards in Italy. Places of Power (568-774 A.D.).

Moreover, Brescia will be the the Italian Capital of Culture in 2023 together with Bergamo.

Finally, you certainly won't go hungry in Brescia. This is a shared opinion among food and wine lovers who can enjoy the DOP and DOC certified products in every corner of the province, starting from Lakes Garda and Iseo's olive oil and continuing with Slow Food presidia, Earth Markets, Michelin-starred restaurants, traditional trattorias, and osterias featuring traditional dishes as well as our renowned wines. Known all over the world, Franciacorta is the epitome of how vine cultivation and wine making are conceived in the region.

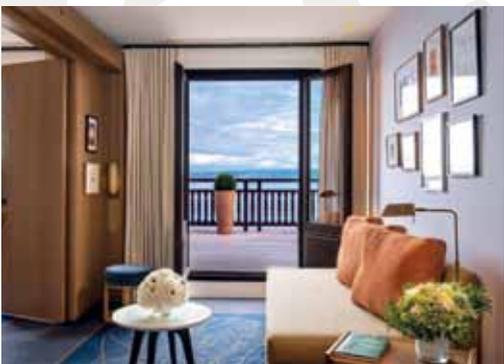
Your holiday in Brescia can be further enhanced with the many experiences that Visit Brescia has gathered on its website, organized in the sections MAKE and TASTE IN BRESCIA. Browse through them to understand the wealth of opportunities that this region offers, from discovering how handcrafted paper is made on Lake Garda to learning the technique to make fishing nets on Lake Iseo.

[www.visitbrescia.it](http://www.visitbrescia.it)

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# A PERFECT BLEND OF ARABIAN HOSPITALITY, COMFORT AND LUXURY



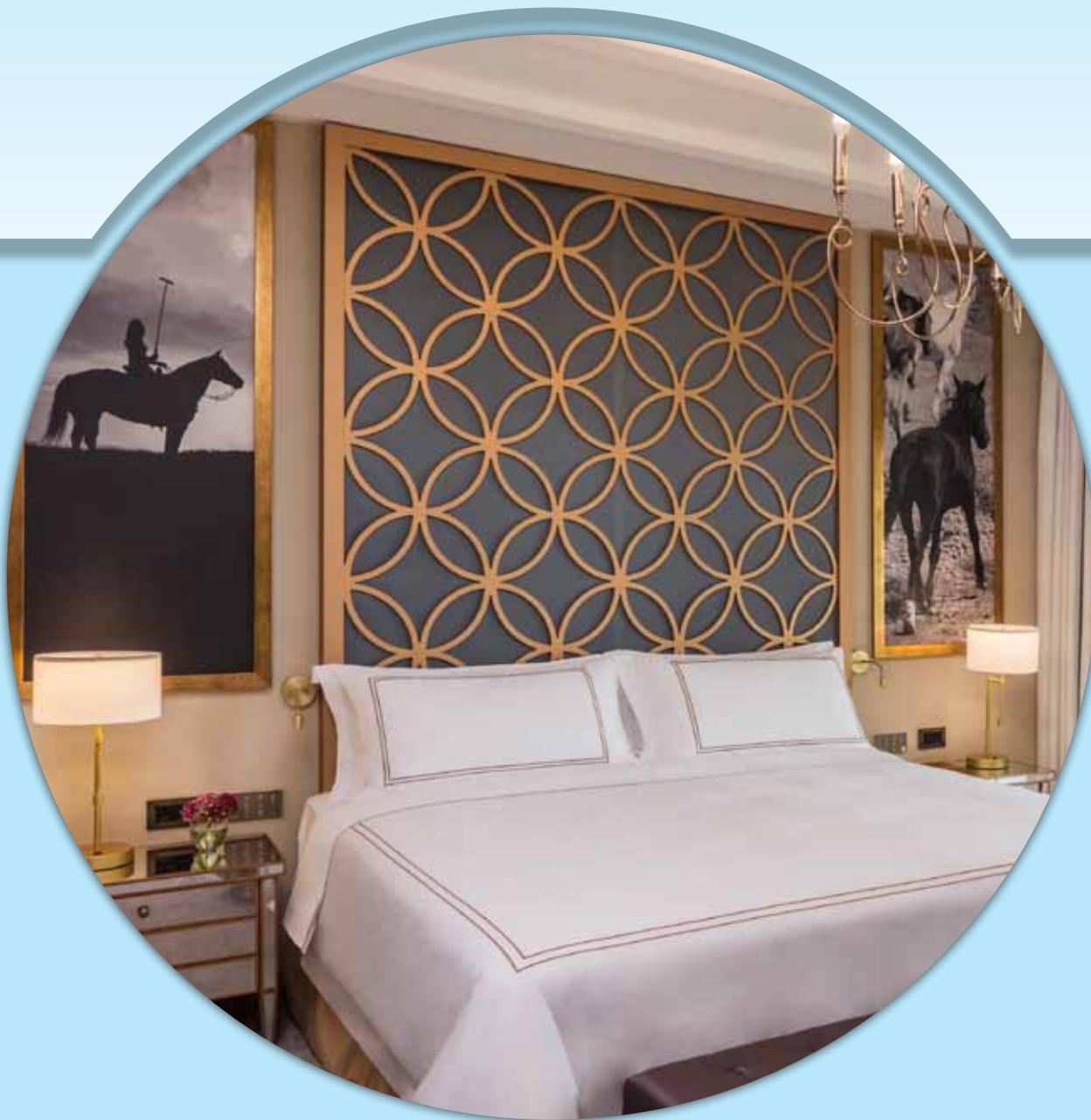
The **Hotel Holiday International** is a 4-star hotel situated beside Sharjah's scenic Khalid Lagoon and Al Majaz Water Front. It offers convenient proximity to both Dubai and Sharjah International airports, just a 20-minute drive away. The hotel has a large complex with 249 luxurious rooms, including newly renovated suites that have a modern appearance and breathtaking views of Sharjah. The high-quality furnishings and elegant decor cater to the needs and preferences of both business and leisure travelers. It's worth noticing that Hotel Holiday International is situated right next to Marbella resort villas, at a walking distance.



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# Al Habtoor Polo Resort The Villas



**T**he Villas at Al Habtoor Polo Resort offer guests an exceptional stay in Dubai. Nestled within the resort's sprawling equestrian facility, these villas provide guests with a unique blend of tranquility and excitement.

Each villa is exquisitely designed with a spacious living area, elegant bedrooms, and state-of-the-art amenities. Guests can enjoy breathtaking views of the surrounding polo fields and landscaped gardens from their private balconies and outdoor spaces.

The polo facilities at Al Habtoor Polo Resort are among the best in the world and attract top athletes and enthusiasts from around the globe. Guests can watch matches from the comfort of their villas or take part in polo lessons and clinics with experienced instructors. The resort also hosts international polo tournaments, adding to the excitement of staying at this exceptional property.

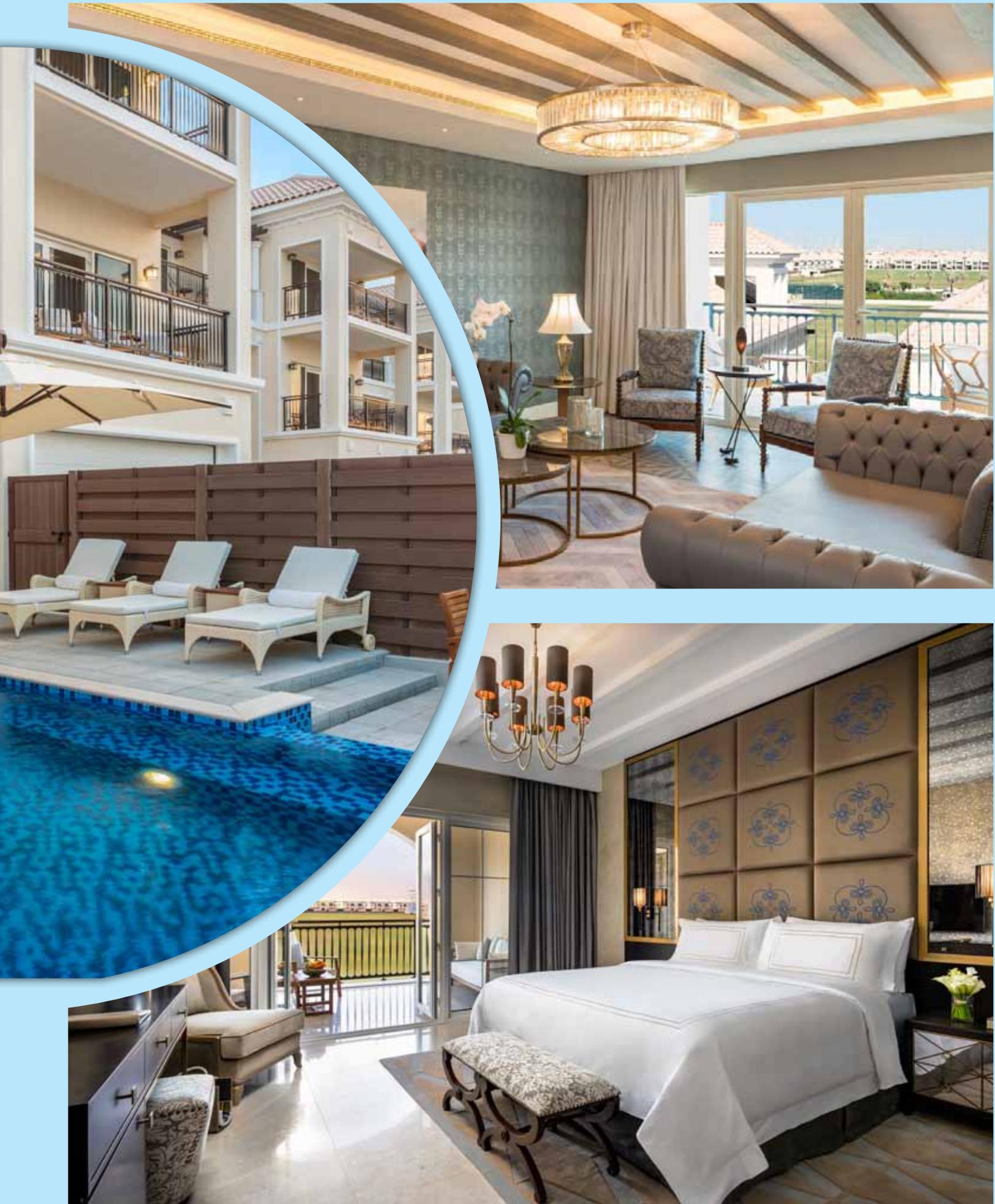
In addition to polo, the resort offers a range of other activities, including tennis, horseback riding, and a variety of water sports. Guests can also relax and rejuvenate at the resort's world-class spa and fitness center or enjoy gourmet cuisine at one of the on-site restaurants.

The villas themselves are a highlight of the resort, offering guests a luxurious and comfortable stay. Each villa is equipped with modern amenities, including a fully equipped kitchen, living and dining areas, and an outdoor barbecue area, making it easy to entertain guests or relax in style.



The resort also provides personalized butler service, ensuring that each guest's needs are met during their stay. Whether guests require assistance with reservations, transportation, or other needs, the dedicated butler team is on hand to provide top-notch service.

Overall, the Villas at Al Habtoor Polo Resort provide guests with a luxurious and unforgettable experience in Dubai. With their exquisite design, stunning views, unparalleled amenities, and exceptional polo facilities, these villas are the perfect choice for those seeking a truly unique and unforgettable stay in this vibrant city.



# CORAL

Beach Resort Sharjah



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Whether you seek the tranquility of the sea or the dynamic bustle of a modern city, **Coral Beach Resort Sharjah** is ideally located to offer both. Perched on a scenic beach, merely 17 KM from Sharjah International Airport and 25-KM from Dubai International Airport, within close proximity to Ajman Port and Hamriyah Free Zone, the deluxe resort features 156 spacious rooms equipped with the finest amenities. Exceptional conference and banquet venues, excellent choice of restaurants and state-of-the-art fitness and recreation facilities make your stay truly enjoyable.



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