

MEDIA RELEASE

Ras Al Khaimah: successful Start-up Innovation Camp & Summit promotes sustainable tourism and honours four start-ups

Lucerne, 21th January 2022 – **Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, and organised by the World Tourism Forum Lucerne, the international Start-up Innovation Camp & Summit was held in Ras Al Khaimah on 18th and 19th January 2022. Steps towards a more sustainable future for tourism were discussed in workshops and a public conference with 150 participants. Twelve start-ups, which had to qualify in an intense competition, were also invited to showcase their innovative ideas for moving the travel and hospitality industries forward. The best four of them were presented with an award.**

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne entered into a strategic partnership with the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) three years ago. This was done not only because Ras Al Khaimah is the fastest-growing tourist destination in the Middle East but also, and in particular, because the visionary emirate is engaged in numerous initiatives designed to make it a regional market leader in sustainable tourism by 2025. It was therefore entirely fitting that the emirate should put itself forward to host the internationally minded Start-up Innovation Camp & Summit, where innovations for more sustainable tourism are encouraged and promoted.

Commenting on the event, **Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority**, said: “We pride ourselves on being a dynamic and forward-looking Emirate, eager to adapt and embrace the changes required for the future success not only of the tourism industry but the wider business landscape. It is our goal in Ras Al Khaimah to nurture a tourism industry which is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable and we place a huge importance on fostering growth and development of start-ups within the Emirate to help achieve that vision.” Adding: “The WTFL start-up innovation summit was a great platform to cultivate an inclusive and productive forum to encourage innovation for future generations and drive positive change across the industry. I feel enthusiastic and hopeful for the dialogue we have started at this summit and for the future of tourism.”

International experts

The public conference attracted many high-calibre experts from all over the world, who came to share their expertise in fascinating talks and debate the future of tourism together. For instance, Samih Sawiris, member of the board of directors of *Orascom Development Holding*, revealed what he looks out for when investing in a start-up and explained that customers also need to learn that sustainability has its price. John Scanlon, chair of the *Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime*, spoke about the many endangered species of animals in the world, why a loss of biodiversity is also a threat to humanity and how we can support the diversity of animal life. And Michael O’Shea, founder and owner of the international investment firm *Kerten Group*, highlighted the importance of networks such as that of the WTFL and of cultivating contacts with people, including young talent.

Getting start-ups integrated into the industry in this way is also a top priority for **Martin Barth, President and CEO of WTFL**: “In this fast-changing world, it’s more important than ever to bring start-ups with their new business model together with investors, but also with established companies. This is the only way we’ll transform the tourism industry into something more sustainable that is capable of surviving in the long term even when faced with a constant stream of new trends and new needs, like it is at the moment.”



Start-ups with groundbreaking ideas

The twelve top start-ups that were invited along had previously been picked by a panel of experts, having had to fight off over 400 competitors from 74 countries in a fierce qualifying round. The Innovation Camp gave them the opportunity to take part in a range of workshops and get one-to-one coaching in areas such as fundraising, marketing and sales, as well as presentation and communication skills.

They also benefited from the chance to talk directly to the tourist industry heavyweights that were at the event and succeeded in impressing their audience with their ideas and business models. The best performers were crowned the four winners, who received a sum of prize money plus entry into the World Tourism Forum Lucerne's global network of start-ups:

- *Aguardio* ("Hospitality" category) has developed interactive, Internet-enabled sensors that help reduce water and energy consumption in bathrooms without sacrificing comfort or convenience.
- *Tashi* ("Transaction" category) offers a no-code tool that, for instance, enables individual tourist regions – even without any knowledge of coding – to create their own digital marketplace where all available offers can be integrated and viewed by customers.
- *PashooPakshee* ("Destination" category) lets local artisans and communities in remote areas sell their hand-crafted souvenirs in tourist hotspots.
- *Spark* ("Mobility") makes car parks easier to use by allowing vehicles to be checked in and out in a contact- and paperless process and parking charges to be paid directly via a mobile app.

Ongoing screening of start-ups

WTFL regularly holds national and international Innovation Camps, such as the one in Ras Al Khaimah, to promote the best start-ups and give them a platform. This is possible thanks to the ongoing screening of fledgling companies that has led WTFL to build up an unparalleled network of start-ups over the years. With its Dealflow tool, WTFL has also created a digital platform that makes it even easier to bring young talent together with investors, CEOs and other individuals with industry experience. This is because, in tourism like in many other sectors, the success stories of tomorrow will be built on innovative business models, agility and strong partnerships.

More WTFL events in Ras Al Khaimah

On the back of the highly promising partnership between WTFL and Ras Al Khaimah, the emirate will also be hosting two more major events in 2022. The first of these is the "Talent Boost", which will be all about how the industry can attract and retain enough talented individuals and how the new issues that tourism is having to contend with can be tackled in training and apprenticeships. The second event will see the "WTFL Think Tank" assemble in Ras Al Khaimah, where leading personalities from the worlds of politics, business and academia will discuss key topics of the future. This time, the focus will be on biodiversity.



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About Ras Al Khaimah

One of the world's fastest growing tourism destinations, Ras Al Khaimah boasts a rich culture and long-standing history dating back 7,000 years. The Emirate boasts an array of archaeological sites and breath-taking natural vistas, from golden sand beaches, awe-inspiring terracotta dunes and a green belt of date palms to Jebel Jais, the highest mountain in the UAE.

About Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA)

The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority was established in May 2011 under the government of Ras Al Khaimah. The authority aims to develop the emirate's tourism infrastructure and establish Ras Al Khaimah as a world-class destination for leisure and business travel, creating sustainable investment opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. In order to achieve its goals, the RAKTDA has a government mandate to license, regulate and monitor the emirate's tourism and hospitality industry.

About World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL)

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is the leading engagement platform in the industry, where CEOs, Ministers, Academics, Financiers, Start-Ups, interact with the next generation of talent as a strong multi-stakeholder community to shape the future of travel, tourism and hospitality.

