

With a 15 million visitor target to reach

Emirates seeks more flight rights to capitalise on Dubai's growth

by Ian Jarrett

WHEN a high-powered airline delegation from Emirates begins knocking on doors in Canberra later this year, it will have a clear message for politicians and transport bureaucrats. Simply, it is this: Please allow us to increase capacity out of Australia.

"We need to know what capacity we will have in the future because we need to plan ahead," says Richard Vaughan, Emirates senior vice-president of commercial operations for East Asia and Australasia.

Currently, Emirates operates 49 services out of Australia. "Five years ago no-one thought that would happen but now we're screaming for more capacity," said Vaughan, who is well aware that Qantas will be lobbying

Canberra hard to block any expansion to Emirates' services.

The requirement for Emirates to plan ahead is obvious as Dubai builds its dream destination out of the desert sands. Dubai would like to add another 100,000 hotel rooms by 2010 when it expects to reach its visitor target of 15 million per year.

The hotels will be looking for Emirates to fly in the customers, while Emirates in turn will hope the attraction of Dubai's leisure and business event products will persuade passengers to fill its A380 mega-jumbos which are due to begin flying to Australia in September next year.

Dubai has not only set its sights on becoming the leading leisure destination in the world, it is also adding the product and facilities to stake a claim as the world's No 1 MICE destination.



This year's ATM showstopper was the Bawadi project...

Each year at Arabian Travel Market there is at least one new development to take your breath away. Previously it has been the Palm Islands, the man-made offshore islands, the first of which — The Palm Jumeirah — will be handing over keys to villa residents by the end of the year.

Last year Dubailand was the head-spinner. On completion, Dubailand will be twice the size of Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, making it the biggest

theme/amusement park in the world.

It will be divided into six theme parks, including the world's biggest Snow Dome, and Sports City, which will have dedicated soccer, rugby and cricket stadiums capable of hosting major international sporting events.

This year's ATM showstopper was the Bawadi project that will create 31 themed hotels and other leisure facilities in the next eight years. At the centre of

continued page 46

Ski slopes among developments

From page 44

this 10km strip development is Asia-Asia - a 65,00 room hotel shaped like Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers.

Its neighbours will be hotels themed to resemble many of the world's iconic buildings and structures.

Among the themes will be Holly Bolly Hotel, themed after Hollywood and Bollywood classics with a celebrity museum; Palace hotel, including replicas of famous palaces such as Versailles, Taj Mahal and Buckingham Palace; Old Asia, themed on Tibetan architecture, and Africa World Hotel, which will offer Big 5 wildlife safaris and jungle treks.

Asia-Asia, built to look like Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers, will include the largest convention centre in the Gulf region, a 15,000-seat sports arena and the largest spa in the world.

Other meetings facilities will be included in Bawardi's themed hotel and entertainment strip, which is forecast to host 3.3 million guests by 2016 - more than 21 percent of the total number of visitors Dubai expects by that time.

At Kempinski's Mall of the Emirates hotel, which comes with adjacent ski slope and 15 Alpine chalets overlooking the snow, the hotel's conference wing includes 15 rooms with built-in video conferencing.

The hotel includes eight business suites, each with its own dedicated meeting space and high-speed broadband facilities.

Doaa Amin, Mall of the Emirates marketing manager, said the Mall offered great opportunities for incentive travel or conference guests. "They can ski from the slopes straight into our entertainment and dining venue, Sezzam."

Only qualified skiers are allowed on the five ski slopes, where two hours skiing costs around 150 dirhams (A\$53). Non-skiers can have as much fun as they can handle in the snow park — where the temperature is minus two degrees — for 40 dirhams per day



(A\$15), including snow gear.

Mall of the Emirates is close to major business centres, including the Jebel Ali Free Zone, Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City.

Another major development is the new city of Dubai Waterfront, a self-contained community larger than Manhattan, with housing for 700,000 people.

"People think it is a dream, but people are wrong," says Khaled Issa Al Huraimel, general manager of the project for the developer, Nakeel, "What we start here we finish."

Huraimel says the massive develop-

ments in Dubai will "in 15 years change the perception of the Middle East".

Donald Trump Jnr, echoes those sentiments. In Dubai for the launch of the Trump International Hotel and Tower, centrepiece of offshore The Palm, Jumeirah, he said: "There's nowhere else in the world growing at this pace, Dubai is unique. You show the people here the vision and they will encourage you all the way.

"If you looked at Dubai five to 10 years ago, no-one could have imagined what it would become today. And in another five to 10 years it's mind blowing what Dubai might be."

InterContinental's three in the City

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) will operate three new hotels in one development in Dubai Festival City.

With the opening in the first quarter of 2007 of InterContinental Dubai Festival City, the InterContinental Residence Suites Dubai Festival City and the Crowne Plaza Dubai Festival City, the three properties will offer more than 1000 rooms and suites.

The InterContinental Dubai Festival City will further boost the city's rapidly expanding MICE facilities with a 4500sqm conference centre across two levels and meeting space that can be divided into 10 break-out rooms servicing anything from smaller VIP board meetings to a reception-style banquet catering for up to 1800 guests.

All 500 rooms in the hotel will be equipped with high-speed broadband Internet access.

The introduction of the InterContinental Suites Dubai Festival City is a first for IHG in the UAE market. It will feature 215 high-rise, one, two and three-bedroom suites.

The 316-room Crowne Plaza property — being built above the conference centre — will be ideal for business travellers, with all rooms equipped with high-speed Internet access and flat plasma TV screens.