

Meeting the needs of business travellers



The premium leather line Cesano comes in briefcases of different sizes and colours

Samsonite Group, a worldwide leader in travel solutions, has announced the launch of new business collection for discerning professionals across the region.

The unveiling of the new business luggage solutions further reinforces the group's commitment to market

leadership across every consumer segment in the Middle East. The launch of the premium business collection aims to perfectly fit the business functionality, technology and unique styles of professionals on the move.

In his comments on the new collection, vice president, Middle East operations, Samsonite Group, Prashant Vatkar said: "As leaders in cutting-edge travel solutions, our primary concern is to satisfy the needs of our discerning travellers. Our latest range of innovative, high-quality business collection integrates style, functionality and design technology to meet the changing lifestyle needs of the professionals."

"The business collection uniquely combines signature elements from Samsonite and its unique fabrications create exclusive solutions for the sophisticated and discerning business traveller. It is a great supplement to our existing luggage lines."

The all-new Cesano – a 100 per cent premium leather line – comes in briefcases and portfolios of three sizes and two colours, complimenting business professionals' needs. The group is also shortly re-introducing its line called Leather Collection II, made of premium leather in black colour and equipped with laptop cases and mobile office in different formats.

Enhancing its SMS solution

In an attempt to provide customers with a new and easier channel for accessing information, Oman Air has partnered with Tamimah and Nawras to announce a further enhancement to its SMS solution.

The new Oman Air SMS service gives access to scheduling, fare enquiries and booking status. Nawras customers can also use the service to update their local contact details or to make a request, such as ordering a special meal or a preferred seat.

Oman Air customers now using a Nawras SIM-card will have an option to receive messages on various products and services offered by the airline. "We urge customers in general and travel agents in particular to ensure their mobile numbers are provided at the time of booking so that passengers can be reached around the clock and 365 days," said senior manager, reservation and global distribution, Oman Air,

Hamad Saif Al Harthy.

Product manager, Nawras, Mohammed Al Najwani added: "Nawras is committed to using the latest technology to bring convenience to customers in a user-friendly way. This service offers great value and a new channel of information to our national carrier, Oman Air."

Committed to providing innovative services and enhancing the passenger experience, chairman, Tamimah, Mohammed Al-Harthy concluded: "We believe in innovation and are happy to partner with Oman Air and Nawras in launching this innovative service which is one of the first of its kind in this region."

In December 2008, Oman Air launched its SMS notification services which informed customers about any flight schedule changes or cancellations, and this has now been extended to a complete and innovative SMS enquiry service.

Tracing your baggage

Two new environmentally-friendly airport kiosks, including one which allows passengers to check the status of delayed or missing baggage, have been launched by air transport IT specialist, SITA.

SITA is enabling a new kiosk with a web-link to its WorldTracer software, used by over 440 airlines and ground handlers, in a bid to allow passengers to check on the status of their delayed bags and to file missing bag reports without

having to talk to an agent.

Speaking about the WorldTracer Kiosk, which is slated to be launched later this year, regional vice president, SITA – Middle East and Turkey, Hani El Assaad said: "Passengers rank check-in baggage arriving on time as second in importance for a pleasant journey after the flight arriving on time."

"Using these kiosks, passengers can scan their bag tags and enter their contact details. The passenger can then generate a claim and continue their journey without having to queue at a service counter. A unique claims ID number allows the passenger to remain informed of the status of their baggage," he added.

According to Assaad, the application will be able to provide customers with instant feedback on the status of their bags, 99.9 per cent of which are successfully traced and reunited with their owners within 48 hours or less.



The kiosks aim to allow passengers to check the status of delayed or missing baggage

New green IT strategy in place by year end

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has announced a comprehensive sustainability plan to address its technology infrastructure and IT operations, with full implementation expected by the end of 2009.

Green IT becomes the latest component of the Fairmont Green Partnership programme, aimed at limiting waste, purchasing responsibly, conserving energy and reducing the company's overall carbon footprint. The group's Green IT plan includes the introduction of a workstation power down schedule, electronic waste diversion in markets where programmes exist, and the development of donation standards aligning with qualified and respected recycling companies and charities.

In addition, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts will optimise purchasing efficiencies including crafting a green procurement policy to ensure the brand uses technology products

that are either EPA Energy Star or Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool-rated as well as services that address Extended Product Responsibility programmes.

"Whether it's technology, environmental sustainability, or any other aspect of the hotel environment, Fairmont continues to roll out pioneering programmes and services that are reflective of our vision: to be a true leader in the global hospitality industry," said senior vice president, technology, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Vineet Gupta.

"With technology still evolving rapidly and e-waste on the rise, this is an area where we can make a tangible impact in addition to lowering our overall CO₂ footprint. Furthermore, our industry-leading environmental practices are the benchmark by which many other hotel companies measure against, so we're pleased to expand our green programming into another distinct area of our business."

www.steigenbergeraldaresort.com



Content	*****
Navigation	*****
Presentation	*****
Overall Rating	*****

Through its meticulous arrangement of content, imagery and elegant typography, the new website of Steigenberger Al Dau Resort has the ability to almost instantly immerse you into its world of hospitality.

The web designers behind Steigenberger Al Dau Resort, which boasts two properties in Hurghada, Egypt – the five-star 388-room Steigenberger Al Dau Beach Hotel and the four-star 246-room Steigenberger Al Dau Club – have designed a separate portal for each of the two hotels, both with the exact same template yet which feel very different to one another.

As you browse through the two resorts and their offerings, the most striking thing is, without doubt, the effort that has been put into

the photography – there are over 100 high-resolution colour images showing off the resorts' golf offerings, Thalasso & Spa, diving and aqua facilities, dining options and meeting venues.

Furthermore, the simple navigation directs you to the lowest direct booking rates and special offers for both hotels, and there is also a direct online booking facility and a function to sign up to the hotels' e-newsletters.

With plans to launch in German and Russian as well, the website even has the confidence to offer a direct link to customer review sites such as Holidaycheck and Tripadvisor. A noteworthy website and one which can certainly lead by example.

Claudio Saghini

360-degree virtual tours

US-based Hospitality Softnet, Inc. has announced the introduction of high-resolution, interactive virtual tours from Circlescapes.

This high impact, cost effective technology brings a dynamic 360-degree panoramic experience to any current hotel website in a move to capture the visitor's interest much more effectively than the standard static web platform. The high resolution can also be used to replace older low-resolution formats that are now outdated.

Partner, Hospitality Softnet, Inc., Gary Richards explained: "This innovative approach to web design actually enables the viewer to virtually visit the hotel via a 360-degree virtual environment. The Circlescapes' creative design team can develop these virtual platforms as enhancers to an existing website location, or as a stand alone website."

"Although designed to

attract all segments of business, it can give the hotel's group sales team an invaluable virtual selling tool that will be a tremendous advantage when presenting the property to potential meeting planners."

President, Circlescapes, Lisa Franzino added: "Our goal at Circlescapes is to create an interactive virtual tour experience for the hotel's potential customer – one that will make them say 'Wow!' and drive the sale."

"We start with high-resolution spherical photography that's crisp and clear at full screen size. Then we add background music, voice-overs, video clips, animation, special effects, and clickable links to the tour to make it a beautiful, informative, fun, and lasting marketing piece."

Services offered by Hospitality Softnet, Inc. include Mystery Shopping calls, Sales Training, Teleprospecting and Market Intelligence.