

KBLT Congress 2026 Opens in Riyadh as Saudi Arabia's Luxury Traveller Outpaces the World's Biggest Travel Brands

With Saudi outbound travel spend on track to top US\$30.7 billion in 2026, the Kingdom's advisory board says the market has entered a new era

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, September 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 5th Annual Kingdom Business & Luxury Travel (KBLT) Congress opens at the Mövenpick Hotel and Residences Riyadh on 6–7 September 2026, bringing together more than 100 pre-qualified Saudi buyers with the world's leading travel brands. Saudi outbound tourism spending is projected to exceed US\$30.7 billion (SAR 115 billion) in 2026, on an estimated 12.3 million international outbound trips, while the Kingdom's luxury travel segment, valued at approximately US\$13.5 billion this year, is forecast to surpass US\$25 billion by 2033.

The numbers point to a market in transformation. KBLT's Advisory Board sees an even bigger shift: Saudi luxury travellers are raising the bar on what they expect, creating new opportunities for brands that can anticipate — rather than simply respond to — their evolving needs.

A Market That Has Outgrown the Five-Star Playbook

Sulaiman Al-Romi, Chairman of the KBLT Congress Advisory Board and Chairman & CEO of Gulf



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Sidh NC, Director, QnA International

Reps Ltd., Saudi Premier Travel & Tourism Group, has watched the Congress grow in step with the market it serves.

"KBLT has evolved from a gathering into a truly international congress with unprecedented global demand and high attendance interest. This growth mirrors the remarkable transformation of Saudi Arabia's outbound luxury travel market, which has matured rapidly. Saudi luxury travelers are now among the most discerning and sought-after globally." Sulaiman Al-Romi, Chairman, KBLT Congress Advisory Board.

For him, the defining change isn't spend: it's expectation. "The most significant shift is the transition from conventional luxury to curated, purpose-driven, and highly personalized experiences. Today's Saudi luxury and business travelers seek cultural immersion, wellness, privacy, and seamless bespoke services. They are well-traveled, digitally savvy, and place great value on authenticity and exclusivity rather than just standardized five-star amenities."

From Ambition to Proof

Waleed Bin Huzaim, Strategic Communication & International Protocol Consultant to the Government Sector in KSA, says the Kingdom's own tourism story has caught up with its ambition, and the world is watching.

"A few years ago, much of Saudi Arabia's tourism communication was about presenting the ambition and showing the world what the Kingdom was planning to build. Today, the story is different. Many of those ambitions have become real experiences that visitors can see and enjoy for themselves ... This represents an important shift in Saudi tourism communication: from talking about ambition to inviting the world to experience it." Waleed Bin Huzaim, Strategic Communication & International Protocol Consultant, Government Sector in KSA.

Building for the Story, Not Just the Stay

Daniel Ponzo, Managing Director of Zahid Travel Group, KSA, points to where he sees the greatest commercial opportunity for destinations willing to adapt.

"Saudi travellers are increasingly choosing destinations based on the experience narrative, not just hotel brand but authentic moments ... Many destinations still sell rooms and itineraries rather than curated experiences. They underestimate how much Saudi Travellers value discretion, flexible schedule and genuinely bespoke service. There is still a gap in destinations building product specifically for this segment." Daniel Ponzo, Managing Director, Zahid Travel Group, KSA

His verdict on the market, in one line, is the thesis of this year's Congress: "Saudi luxury



KBLT Congress 2026 opens today in Riyadh

travellers have moved from wanting the best hotel to wanting the best story. Destinations that understand this shift will be the ones winning this market over the next decade."

Why It Matters Now

"Every edition of KBLT has grown alongside the market it serves, and this year is no exception. What started as a platform for connecting Saudi buyers with global travel brands has become one of the most closely watched luxury travel gatherings in the region. The Saudi outbound traveller is more sophisticated and more demanding than ever, and this edition is about making sure the destinations and brands in the room are ready to meet that." Sidh NC, Director, QnA International.

Saudi Arabia is emerging as one of the world's most influential luxury outbound markets, and its own Advisory Board sees a traveller evolving quickly toward curated, personal, story-led experiences. For destinations and brands, that is a significant opportunity: the ones who understand this shift early are best placed to build lasting relationships with one of the world's most valuable travel segments.

KBLT 2026 brings the people who understand that traveller, Saudi Arabia's own government, tourism and travel-trade leadership, together in Riyadh for two days of direct, commercial conversation with the destinations competing for their business. It is where that understanding turns into partnership.

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