

ILTM Review

Luxurique offers exclusive experiences in Japan

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Naomi Mano

Travellers from the Middle East can look forward to three major things when they book a holiday in Japan with Luxurique: depth of experience, exclusivity and tailored journeys.

Naomi Mano, founder of Luxurique, tells **TTN** in an interview that the brand has been catering to the market for a decade, so its reach is unparalleled. "We're one of the oldest in Japan in this space, we've always been committed to giving our clients that true and authentic Japan experience."

These aren't the usual skin-deep experiences either. It's about offering fresh perspectives on things one has heard or read about, like anime or sumo. "Let's say, something like sumo. We can get you box seats. We can get you to have breakfast with the wrestlers and watch their morning practice. We can also get you a private meet and greet and maybe also a private dinner with one of the champion wrestlers or an ex-champion Yokozuna (the highest rank any Sumo wrestler can attain). The way we can curate the outcome of the experience - that is what we specialise in," she explains.

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– NAOMI MANO***

The demand for Nippon travel is on the rise in the Middle East. Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO's) Daisuke Kobayashi, JNTO Dubai Office Executive Officer, was quoted as saying by Japanese Travel Trade News journal, Travel Voice: "People in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are very willing to travel overseas." And overseas travellers in the GCC countries totalled 37 million in 2019, which is the seventh-largest market in the world. That's only poised to grow.

According to a JNTO survey, 96 per cent are interested in travelling to Japan. Perhaps because it's still considered an exotic destination. But also because there are companies like Luxurique who are able to curate exclusive itineraries for a discerning client with the means.

"Guests from the Middle East travel in big groups; before you know it, it's 20 or 30 of them. So, we really have to handle them almost as if they're a group of clients rather than an individual. We try to curate something that is specific for them. So, we could, for example, bring a Michelin-star chef to them rather than them having to go to the restaurants because usually the Michelin-star restaurants have limited seating. They're not limited to size or budget. They actually want things done their way and we try to give that to them. I feel that for Middle Eastern clients, we are perhaps one of the very, very few companies that can cater to that sort of niche demand."

The destination management company head points out that it caters to both business to consumer and business-to-business segments. It tailors experiences for groups, individuals and travel companies that get in touch.

And as always, it's dedicated to its niche offering – connecting people to the hidden gems of Japan. "Tourism is one of those things where if it's too popular, there's overpopulation, it doesn't work. A lot of people like Tokyo, Kyoto, some of the bigger cities that are a lot more well known, but there's a lot of different cities out there. Especially, where the artist is or where the unique experiences are. It's a little bit more rural or in the suburbs, so we try to bring forth a

lot more of these sort of unique gems that are more hidden. That's our focus right now."

It's not just remaining current that's on Mano's mind. The important thing is to keep an eye on the future trends to stay relevant and that's exactly what Luxurique is doing with medical tourism.

"Japan is a place where stem cell treatments are actually possible. We have had, in the past, many people wanting to do stem cell treatments in Japan. We're working on the wellness component as well. So, the whole range of the health tourism, the regenerative tourism, all that is what we are working on."

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