

lm group launch first joint venture in Israel to tap into travel demand thanks to the countries world-leading vaccination programme

- *Israel identified as ideal for a new OTA because of its growing wanderlust demand set by their travel trendsetters which have seen them smash aviation records YOY since 2013*
- *Israeli travellers will be poised to take off on their post-vaccination travels soon (4.8m out of 9m people having had both jabs) - and **lastminute.co.il** will spearhead the opportunity to get holidaymakers back in the air again.*
- *lm group launch first joint venture with Israeli travel giant, Issta Lines Group, will be used to assert Middle Eastern ambitions*
- *Localisation, localisation, localisation: the JV will be the first international OTA to offer a website in Hebrew language and support to customers in the local language.*
- *Learn more in [this video](#)*

London, 8 March 2021 - Leading European travel company, lm group, can today reveal lastminute.co.il, a new online travel agency (OTA), created as a joint venture with Israeli travel giant, Issta Lines Group.

The new company will sell worldwide flights from Israel, using lastminute.com's innovative technology platforms, which sell millions of flight tickets per year, coupled with Issta's localised presence, and commercial agreements in the region.

Integrating technologies and content from two of the major players in the OTA sector means lastminute.co.il will be able to provide Israeli customers with not only the best prices but the best customer support at a local level.

This unique combination means the two travel experts can bring something fresh to an exciting market and benefit from the accelerated shift worldwide from offline to online as lm group targets Middle East expansion for 2021 and beyond.

While work on the joint venture had begun in late 2019, the two companies felt that the timing was now right to launch the new company with international agreements, like the Abraham Accords being signed, and Israeli's fast-track immunisation programme gathering pace meaning. Israeli's passion for travel can really lift off in 2021.

Andrea Bertoli, lm group Deputy Ceo, said: "2020 was a very challenging year for the travel industry, and in fact, the whole world had to face an unprecedented pandemic crisis. Despite this, we felt that the moment to build for the future is now and this is the right time to grow into new markets and segments. Especially as we see the first signs of market recovery, thanks to the

vaccine, with booking confidence in Israel, as well as the UK, growing week-by-week. This is why we're delighted to launch our first joint venture outside Europe into Israel and MENA."

Achishai Gal, CEO of Issta, confirmed the long-term plan was for lastminute.co.il to form the basis of entry into the Middle East.

He said: *"There's great interest in the Israeli market from across the world by huge companies due to the great potential inherent value in it, for example, the number of Israelis who flew abroad in the year before Corona was the same as the number of residents in the country (about 9 million). This is just the beginning."*

Darren Rozowsky, CEO lastminute.co.il, said they expected the jet-setting Israeli public to take to the skies as soon as possible and lastminute.co.il would be there with a *"fully accessible international site with customer-first competitive prices"* and the aspiration to become the cheapest over time.

He added: *"We believe that in addition to our technological algorithms and smart pricing, our commercial agreements are robust, local and international, and we can ultimately bring the end consumer an excellent product and local service at an attractive price."*

Bertoli added: *"Issta Lines Group is an incredibly forward-thinking travel operator which comes from an entrepreneurial journey of organic and M&A growth like ourselves. We can see great things ahead by combining our flight expertise, supply and technology with their local knowledge & regional commercial expertise."*

About [lm group](#)

lm group is among the worldwide leaders in the online travel industry and operates a portfolio of well-known brands such as lastminute.com, [Volagratis](https://volagratis.com), [Rumbo](https://rumbo.com), weg.de, [Bravofly](https://bravofly.com), [Jetcost](https://jetcost.com) and [Hotelscan](https://hotelscan.com). The Group's mission is to be the most relevant and inspiring travel company, committed to enriching the life of travellers. Every month, the Group touches 60 million users across all its websites and mobile apps (in 17 languages and 40 countries) that search for and book their travel and leisure experiences with us. More than 1,200 people enjoy working with us and contribute to providing our audience with a comprehensive and inspiring offering of travel related products and services. lastminute.com N.V. is a publicly traded company listed under the ticker symbol LMN on SIX Swiss Exchange.

About Issta Lines Group

The Issta Lines Group is Israel's largest and most prominent travel organization, with a wide range of holdings in the leisure and recreation industry. As a member of some of the world's leading tourism organizations, Issta Lines is well positioned to provide its clients with a wide range of services including international flights, hotels, tours, domestic and inbound travel, car rental and cruises.

The Issta Group encompasses over 60 branches throughout Israel, as well as providing several call centers and online travel services. The Group employs over 1000 permanent employees in Israel and abroad. Publicly traded on the Tel Aviv stock exchange, Issta Lines has a number of subsidiaries, predominantly focused on travel and leisure time activities.