

Exhibitions



General view .



The bus companies.

شركة الباصات.

Will France be the school of international tourism?

Paris - A. S. Shakiry

After two issues of Islamic Tourism in French, the magazine and its website have taken their place in France and the Francophone countries. I have lately attended two important exhibitions, Topresa and MIT International. The reader will find a report about the first exhibition in this issue and I want to talk about the second one. The Paris exhibition has left a good impression on me since it revealed the scope of the French tourist industry. I enjoyed it very much during my two days tour of the stands which were mainly French.

Very few of the new member states of the European Union participated and their stands were very simple. But the major advantage of this exhibition was the wide participation of the different French provinces which gives the impression that France is the mother of tourism. There were hundreds of leaflets, photos and films to show the different destinations and the new tourism innovations. Some of the companies that have participated are major players in the tourism industry. One of these

companies owns no less than 4000 hotels and another runs thousands of restaurants. The same could be said about travel firms and travel agents. Most of those whom I meet were interested in the French market only as if France is a tourism continent and they don't see the need to reach out to the international markets.

The exhibition occupied only two of the hundreds of halls of the Porte de Versailles. Hall number 5 was dedicated to all companies that sell their products to group travel and tourism companies, such as destination promotion, hotel and restaurant promotion, food and drink companies and others. Hall number 6 was dedicated to the manufacturers of tourist buses and their operators, who are considered the life line of tourism.

The French Minister of Tourism, Mr. Gilles de Robien, explained the different dimensions of the tourist industry in his country. Despite my lack of knowledge of French I understood some of what he said. This encouraged me to meet him and present him with copies of

Islamic Tourism magazine in its Arabic/ French and Arabic/ English versions, as well as a CD explaining the magazine's website. I expressed my hope that the magazine would open a new dimension for tourism.

My relationship with France is an old one that goes back 50 years. I visited the country in 1955 and since then I toured its provinces and became acquainted with its industry and tourism. I visited it in the past as an industrialist and as a tourist and now I am visiting as the publisher of Islamic Tourism. Touring Paris is not an opportunity for night clubs, drinks and sex as some people think. It is a tour of a country rich in heritage, natural beauty, leisure and family holiday opportunities. It is all the product of this enlightened nation which makes France number one in the tourism industry. The question is: will Mr. Robien take the French tourism industry forward so that it becomes a school for the tourist industry? This is what we hope for.

Finally, if politics divide nations, tourism unites them. So let us work for this together. ■