

World Travel Market

Arab And Muslim Presence Grows From Strength To Strength

London-Karen Dabrowska

Muslim and Arab countries are upgrading their participation at the World Travel Market, an international four-day exhibition held annually in London in mid-November. This year a total of 5,194 national tourist offices, industry organisations, tour operators, hotels, cruise liners, airlines and technology companies from 202 countries took part, including 126 new exhibitors.

WTM's Global Media Network, representing key travel industry media around the world was invited to nominate companies who have made a remarkable contribution to their region's travel and tourism industry. Qatar Airways, one of the world's fastest growing airlines received an award and Nakheel, the UAE's premier property development company was voted the world's leading tourism property developer.

New exhibitors

New exhibitors included Kyrgyzstan, Etihad Airways, Kuwait, Oasis Adventures, Port Ghalib, Agadir, Pyramids Golf and Saudi Arabian Airlines. "Through its presence in this tourism fair in London, Kuwait seeks to raise awareness of its potential as a tourism destination attracting family and business alike. This comes about at a time when Kuwait is launching mega tourism projects, primarily development of Failakah Island, as a touristic project, the expansion of Kuwait International Airport new terminal and increasing hotel sector capacity by 7,000 rooms by 2008", Huda Al-Enizi the Director of Domestic Tourism told Islamic Tourism. "Kuwait is also building a new port in Boubyan Island to accommodate the increasing maritime activities in the region, in addition to many other projects such as a new golf club and tennis complex".

Oasis Adventures

The UAE's Oasis Adventures is promoting a variety of leisure pursuits ranging from desert safaris to indoor skiing. Robert Keysselitz pointed out that Dubai has the

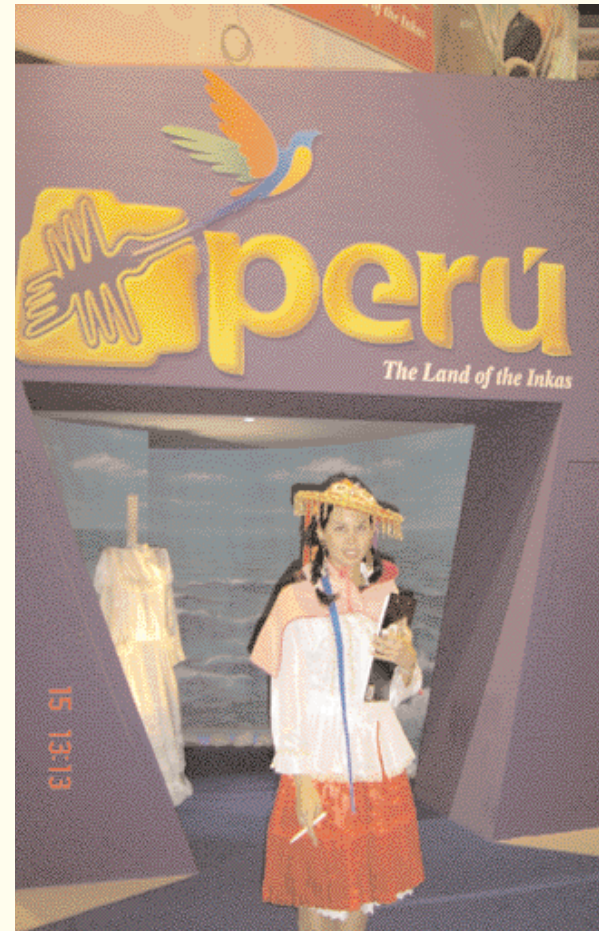


longest indoor ski slopes and is confident that the government's target of attracting 50 million visitors by 2010 will be met. A new artificial island is being built and ballooning and scuba diving are also possible.

Morocco

Morocco has also set ambitious goals for attracting ten million visitors by 2010 and Mohamed Eddaifi the General Director of Al Moggar Garden Beach Hotel believes Agadir

should attract at least two million. Thirty thousand beds will be ready next year and "we have to push a bit to get tourists". That is why the region had its own stand for the first time at WTM promoting the vegetable garden of Morocco, an untouched coastline alternating between hundreds of miles of steep scenic cliffs and huge sandy beaches. There is also a thousand-year-old culture, valleys of a thousand kasbahs and vast palm groves. ➤



Etihad Airline

Etihad, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, designated the world's leading new airline, was another new attraction at the WTM. Barely two years old it is being described by industry observers as the most successful airline start up in history, adding a new route each month. A daily service between Manchester and Abu Dhabi will be

launched in the spring of 2006.

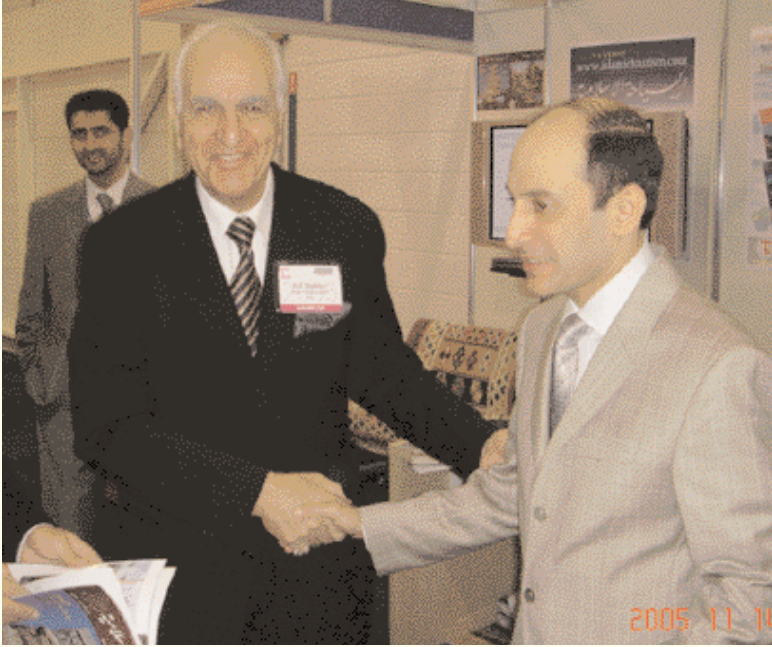
Egypt

Egypt's Port Ghalib presented another aspect of the country's tourism: located along Egypt's South Sea Red coast is it a new resort spanning 3.5 km of pristine beachfront, nine themes villages and international marina and airport, 23 hotels, a golf course, luxury residences and

retail and entertainment facilities. Pyramids Golf And Country Club, the latest deluxe golf resort in Cairo consisting of 132 luxurious rooms also made its debut at the WTM.

Libya

Libya's participation at the WTM has grown from strength to strength since the country's rapprochement with the West. The exhibitors on the Libyan stand included Cyrene Tours, Teneney Travel & Tours, Takes Co, Golden Treasures Tours, Arkno Tours, Jawaher Libya, Jannat Tours, Libo Tours, Raban Tourism Services and Wings Travel and Tourism. There are now 50 private Libyan companies working with in bound travel, which has been encouraged by Law 7 favouring foreign investment. The tour operators are convinced that Libya is one of the most attractive destinations in the Western Mediterranean, if not the whole world, and point out that few countries have such untapped potential as Libya with its stunning array of ancient and ➤



Mr. Shakiry welcomes Mr. Akbar Al-Bakir

الشاكيري يرحب بالسيد أكبر الباكير



الشاكيري مع الزميل جيف هان وزوجته
Mr. Shakiry with Mr. Geoff Hann and his wife



Mr. Motaz Othman in a business discussion

معتز عثمان في جلسة عمل



Mr. Esfandiyar Rahim Mashaei, Vice President, The Islamic Republic of Iran with Mr. Shakiry at ITM stand

نائب رئيس الجمهورية الإسلامية في إيران السيد اسفنديار رحيم مشائي مع السيد الشاكيري في جناح السياحة الإسلامية

well-preserved heritage sites, glorious 1,300 mile Mediterranean coastline and traditional culture. There is increasing curiosity about a destination that was virtually off limits for 20 years and remains a magnificent, unspoilt land.

Iraq

Iraq was represented by Amir Dawood of Nineveh Travel & Tourism who "hopes the future will be good for inbound tourists". He is focusing on tours for Iraqi nationals who would like to visit Britain and came to

the WTM to find local partners who could assist him.

Jordan

Jordan introduced 'Trek Petra', the charity walk to the lost city of Petra in aid of the leading travel industry water-aid charity Just a Drop. The trek will commence at the Dana nature reserve before traversing the vast desert lands and rugged mountains where settlements date back some 6,000 years. The trek will then retrace the steps of Indiana

Jones at the ancient city of Petra - the legacy of the Nabateans who settled in southern Jordan more than 2,000 years ago. On arrival in Petra walkers will be able to take in the tombs, temples and haunting rock drawings in some of the oldest archaeological sites in the Middle East.

Kazakhstan

The first low-fares airline in the Middle East, Air Arabia commenced flights to Kazakhstan, part of the historic Silk Road suggesting ➤



that Arabs may start visiting the Central Asian Republics in larger numbers. "We look forward to assisting in the development of Almaty and Astana into burgeoning tourism and trade centers", said Air Arabia's Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Thani. "We have a history of creating new destinations and we hope to do the same with our most recent destinations in Central Asia. Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan and Almaty the cultural centre, also the homeland of the Dutch tulip, offers large expanses of great scenic beauty and many rare animal and flower species. The travel opportunities are boundless, ranging from hiking across picturesque mountains and camping beside vast lakes to historic city tours.

Bhutan and Mongolia

Bhutan and Mongolia were the 'must see' destinations for travelers in search of new

frontiers in tourism. Prior to 1974 there was no tourist industry in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. Today the royal government, which insists tourism must be environmentally and ecologically friendly, socially and culturally acceptable and economically viable", has forbidden independent travel and insists all visitors take an all inclusive tour: this means accommodation in the best hotels and lodges, inland transportation, guides, museum fees and meals are taken care of.

Tony Evans of the Travel Directories makes no apology for taking tourists to Mongolia in the middle of winter when temperatures drop to minus 30. "There is no such thing as bad weather - there are only bad clothes", he says echoing a Siberian saying. "Seeing horses emerge from a blanket of snow", is an unforgettable experience. ■