

The Algerian Minister Of Tourism Talks To Islamic Tourism:



The minister Mr. Mousa receives our representative

السيد الوزير يستقبل مندوب المجلة

"Tourism and agriculture are our development alternatives"

Algiers - Mounir El-Fishawy

Our meeting with Mr. Nour-eddine Mousa, Minister of Algerian Tourism was arranged easily, despite his busy schedule since he took office a year ago. At the beginning of our interview the Minister said: "We thank you for the interest that you have shown in Algerian tourism and for the different aspects you highlighted through your magazine and we have a great appreciation for what you have done on this front". The Minister was happy to answer the following questions:

• What is the history of tourism in Algeria since independence in 1962?

- Since independence and until the end of the 1960's, Algeria passed through a period of reorganization as an independent and sovereign state. During the seventies, Algeria was on the avant-garde level of tourism. Our country is well known to Europeans through travel agencies. The majority of investments were coming from the public sector. The principal tourist and hotel construction still noticed nowadays testify to this achievement. Then, in the mid 1980's Algeria was confronted with economic problems which affected its tourist activity. This was followed by a black decade, which weakened the reputation of our country as a tourist destination. After the national reconciliation, in 1999 laws and programs of economic development were worked out and particular interest was paid to culture and the restoration of our heritage which had positive spin offs for tourism.

• Does tourism account for a major part of Algeria's national income?

- Not yet. However, the various products of Algerian tourism, which are able to attract foreign and Arab tourists, can in the near future, thanks to God, achieve our goal, to make it possible for this sector to make a significant contribution to the national income, in accordance with our ten-year strategic plan.

• What are the principal features of this strategy?

- This strategy is articulated on four principal axes: the first axis relates to completion of the infrastructure of the tourism sector; the second to increase the level of services; the third to provide the necessary training and education for the work force and the fourth to enlarge the space allocated to media and commercial promotion of the tourist destination of Algeria on the international level.

• What are the means by which you hope to promote Algerian tourism?

- Through participation in major exhibitions of tourism and travel throughout the world and by putting emphasis on inbound tourism. We are also organizing trips for journalists and various Arab and international media. In addition to that, we organise a travel and tourism show in Algiers and other international tourism festivals in different provinces.

• Which principal markets do you target in your promotion of Algerian tourism?

- We currently lay stress on the traditional markets, and initially Europe because of the many common factors which it shares with us: geography, language, proximity and climate.

• What are the main tourism products you promote?

- Algeria has several types of tourism: mountain tourism in the Auras, beach tourism on 1200 km of beaches on the Mediterranean, Islamic tourism to the holy places in all

provinces. The most important Islamic sites are the mosque of Oqba Ibn Nafai El Fihri, and the Zaowia Tijaniya, which has nearly 300 million followers in Africa and elsewhere. There is also therapeutic tourism, since Algeria has more than 200 very famous mineral springs. And finally, there is the Saharan tourism.

• Do you consider the current rules related to currency exchange are capable of encouraging Arab and international investments in Algeria?

- Obviously. Algeria introduced many incentives as regards investment, of which the Code of Investments (2001) guarantees safe investments and interest to investors. We also have the National Council of Investment which supervises all monetary and contractual operations and studies the files of significant projects. And the state currently has as a slogan: "Our alternatives of development are tourism and agriculture".

• What is happening with regard to training and qualifications related to tourism and the hotel trade?

- We developed and re-examined tourist teaching and qualifications as well as studies related to the craft industry and hotel trade. We are currently holding discussions with Algerian universities in order to create faculties and departments for hotel management and tourist promotion.

• What is the role of the private sector?

- Tourism is mainly in the hands of the private sector. Even the units that still belong to the state are being privatized. The state will be devoted, from now on, to missions of organization, promotion, supervision and control. ■