

EU's Study Trip Focuses On Yemen's Historical Cities

Sana'a - Khalid Adhababi



Al Hutaeb- Haraz

منظر عام لقرية الحطيب - حراز

For the second time, Islamic Tourism magazine was invited by the administration of Sana's National Hotel and Tourism Institute to take part in the study trip for the teachers of the department's tourism institute.

Ten teachers and trainers working as tourist guides and travel agency employees were invited on the trip, financed by the European Union, to familiarise themselves with the principal tourist and historical landmarks of four Yemeni cities. They also discussed theories about tourism and the principles they learned on their training courses under the direction of a German expert, Mr. Quest, who also went on the trip.

The program started from Sana'a in three land cruisers and Mr. Quest distributed the assignments. Everyone had to make a presentation about a particular tourist zone, and act as a tourist guide for the other course members who assumed the role of visitors. The German expert carried out an evaluation and observations on the work of each participant, pointing out the principal errors to be avoided.

The cars left from the Yemeni capital around 8 a.m. en route to Dhamar, 100 km to the south. We made several stops between these

two cities to look at historical places of interest, as well as the various types of rocks, stones and plants. One of the participants played the part of tourist guide and explained that the town is one of Yemen's oldest cities whose name refers to "Dhamar Ali Yahbor", King de Saba (15-35 A.D).

Its location between the cities of the south and the capital, on an agricultural plain, was conducive to its commercial and political role. Dhamar was also an Arab and Islamic learning centre: its mosque is one of the oldest in the Muslim world, built at the beginning of the reign of Abu Bakr Assiddiq. Afterwards, we moved towards the province of Ibb, commonly known as "the green province", located 193 km from Sana'a. Before reaching Ibb we visited Dhafar Hamiar, a heritage zone also called Dhafar Yareem, located 17 km to the east of the town of Yareem. Dahfar was the capital of the Himyarite dynasty since the first century A.D. At the entrance to this historical city we visited the museum of Dhafar which includes an invaluable collection of articles and historical items discovered during the last few years. We visited the remains of the historical Ridan Palace – only the foundations made of large stones remained.

We returned towards Ibb through the winding, beautiful, mountainous road, the "road of Samarah", which rises 2,500m above sea level. This is where mountain tourism began in Yemen. It is not a dangerous journey but one has the impression of travelling through the clouds. The fog engulfed us, sometimes blocking visibility completely. People prefer to stop on this road to contemplate the beautiful natural landscapes. It is an ideal place for photography.

We lunched in Ibb and said our afternoon prayers. The province of Ta'iz was the next

stop. It was the focus of our trip because of its rich tourist treasures including one of the most important mosques of Yemen, built by the emissary of the Prophet to the ➤



A house in Manakha

بناء شامخ-مناخة



The road to Samarah

طريق سمارة المثيرة



A village in Samarah

قرية في سمارة



Ta'iz- Ahmed Ben Alwan Mosque
جامع احمد بن علوان



A Photo opportunity from the top of Samarah Mountain
التقاط الصور من أعلى قمة جبل سمارة

Yemenis, Moad Ben Jabal, in 8 Hijra in the Al Jund area, 33 km to the east of Ta'iz.

In the morning it was time for eco tourism: we spent more than two hours in the beautiful Al-Dhbab valley. Then, we visited the mosque and the mausoleum of Sheik Ahmed Ben Alwan, one of the famous Sufis, founders of the Alwanite brotherhood. This mosque, which dates back 700 years, is located in an area called Yafrous, about thirty km to the west of Ta'iz. Before entering the centre of the city we visited the university, in particular the department of tourism and hotel management in order to



A village in Ibb
جانب من قري إب

consolidate relations between this department and the institute.

Mr. Quest invited us to discover the principal places of historical interest on foot: We visited the famous "Mosses Gate", the Large Gate, the Al Modhaffar mosque, the mosque and school of Al Ashrafieh, and the Husseinite Dome. Afterwards, we went to the historical fortress of Al Qahira to witness the splendid sunset and panoramic view of Ta'iz.

On the morning of the third day, we left Ta'iz in the direction of Al Houdidah, passing from the mountainous and historical zones to the coastal and desert zones. Located on the Red Sea, Al Houdidah province is known historically as a fishing zone and has been an important port since the 15th century.

The climate is semi-tropical: hot and wet in summer and moderate in winter. We also visited Zabid, located to the south of Al Houdidah, about 18 km from the Red Sea coast. It is a beautiful city, characterized by an original architectural style and the traditions and habits of its population. Zabid was known as "the city of knowledge and scholars" and was the home of eminent Yemeni theologians. It has more than 80 mosques and religious schools. We visited the principal historic sites such as the large mosque founded in the 3rd century of Hegira by Mohamed Ben Ziad; Al Asha'er Mosque, built by Abu Mosa Al Asha'ari; the fortress of Zabid and its rich library. Zabid is one of the oldest Islamic cities which played a part in the development of human civilization.

The next morning, the participants began their program with a visit to the famous fish market and port. Afterwards, we returned to Sana'a, by traversing 226 km through a tarred sinuous road, during which we made many stops to appreciate the places of interest, in particular Haraz village with Manakha in the centre. The region is part of Sana'a province.

In this mountainous zone, the tourist can appreciate the agricultural slopes on which crops such as coffee are grown in a series of terraces resembling steps. There are also beautiful villages dispersed through out: Al Hutaeb is famous for the mausoleum of the Ishmaelite disciple, Hatem Ben Ibrahim Al Hamidi (16th century), which is visited by



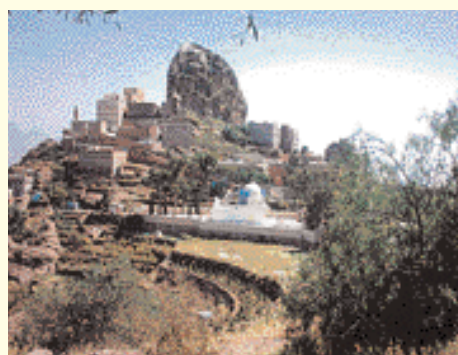
A break in AL-Houdidah
استراحة لشرب الشاي ونقاش مستفيض في الرحلة- الحديدة



Al-Shineny Market- Ta'iz
سوق الشينيني-تعز



The participants in the trip
المشاركون في الرحلة



Ishmaelites from different countries, particularly India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Madagascar. We also visited Al-Hijrah, in the west of Manakha, which is characterized by eight-storey stone houses some of which date back several centuries. This is where our study tour ended. It was an inspirational experience which ensured the participants will make a valuable contribution to the development of tourism in Yemen. ■