

Adventure Travel Show:

Turkish Tree Houses, Mongolian Ice Festivals, Jordanian Desert Treks

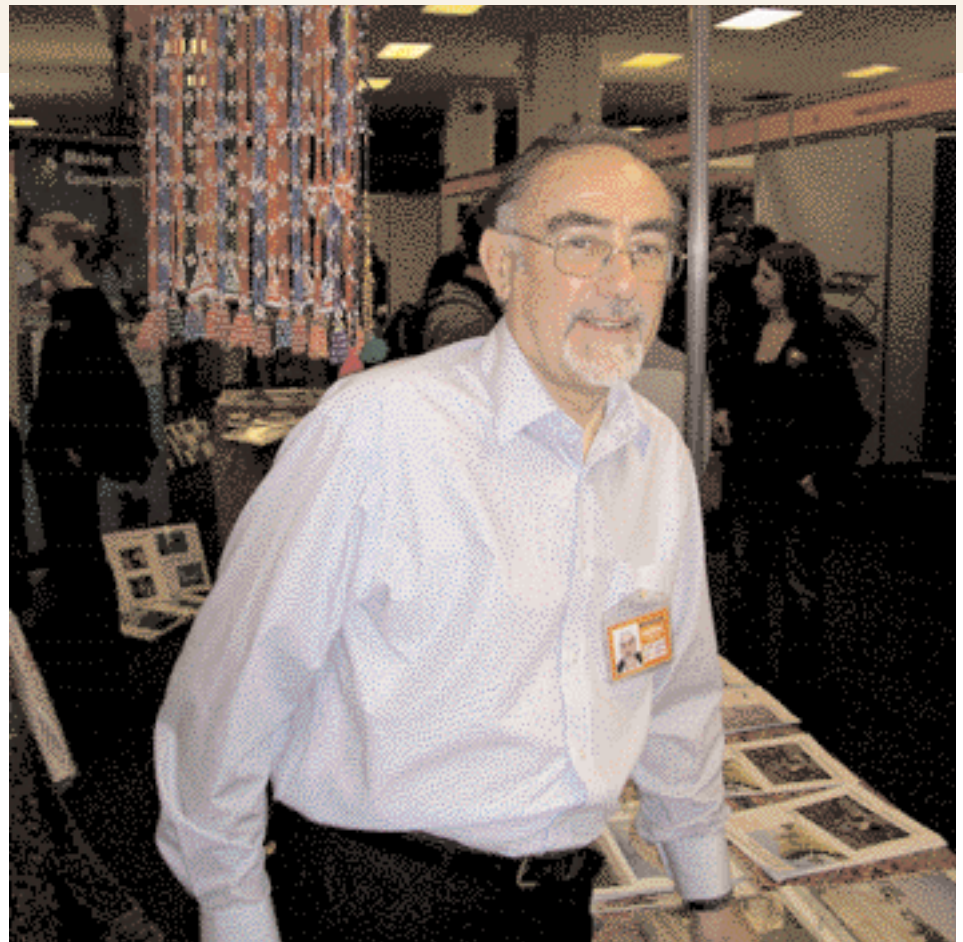
> London - Karen Dabrowska

Tree houses that sit like birdcages on century old pine trees in Olympos, Antalya, Mongolia's Lake Hovsgol, the purest lake in the world, and a unique trek from Jordan's Dana Nature Reserve which finishes in Petra, were among the attractions from Arab and Muslim countries at the Adventure Travel Show.

More than 250 travel operators and equipment manufacturers took part in the Daily Telegraph's annual three day event held in mid-January in London's Olympia Exhibition Centre. There were more than 100 free talks by celebrity speakers, explorers, photographers, film makers and travel experts. Topics included China to the UK – overland across the Silk Route, the Trans-Siberian Express, the Himalayan Summits, the Sahara- the Empty Quarter and Afghanistan which is gradually opening up to tourists.

It was a travel show with a conscience. Voluntary Service Overseas introduced its vision: instead of sending food or money it sends women and men from a wide range of professions who want the chance to make a real difference in the fight against poverty. But as Gap Year For Grown Ups, the only UK company specialising in volunteer work for the over 30s demonstrated, volunteering is not only for the young. Coral Cay Conservation organises expeditions to assist in the conservation of fragile and exotic tropical marine and terrestrial environments in the Caribbean, Oceania, Australasia and South East Asia. African Impact facilitates conservation and community development volunteer programmes in Southern and East Africa.

Exhibitions by Wilderness Adventures Mongolia, Mongolian Resorts and Mongolian Ways, showed that the country is determined to exploit its tremendous



Geoff Hann

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potential as an adventure travel destination. There were only 80,000 tourists last year but Ron Oren the Managing Director of Mongolian Ways, one of the leading seven travel agencies out of a total of 200, is against mass tourism.

"We don't want to see millions of tourists. Mongolia is not like Thailand where the

locals wear their traditional costumes for the tourists. Mongolian culture is part of life". In Western Mongolia hunting with golden eagles is still possible. The Kazakhs train their eagles to hunt for rabbit and fox and they follow their trainers 'from above'. A fascinating relationship develops between the bird and its owner, Oren explained. ▶

Jordan, a regular exhibitor at Adventure Travel, introduced a unique five-day trek from the Dana nature reserve to Petra. "It's a niche adventure", Matthew Teller author of The Rough Guide To Jordan, told Islamic Tourism.

Dana Nature Reserve is a system of wadis and mountains. It is famous for the beauty of Rummana Mountain, the mystery of the ancient archaeological ruins of Feynan.

Kootch Adventure Travel, the only Western company to specialise in Iran, offered the finest trekking and mountain biking adventures in spectacular mountains, deserts and forests, most of them remote and unexplored.

Malaysia promoted Sabah and Sarawak as its main adventure destinations with jungle treks, mountain climbing, cave exploration, river cruising, wreck diving and mountain biking.

Sohail Azhar, Director of TravelPak, spoke enthusiastically about 'Destination Pakistan 2007' a major promotion by the Ministry of Tourism.

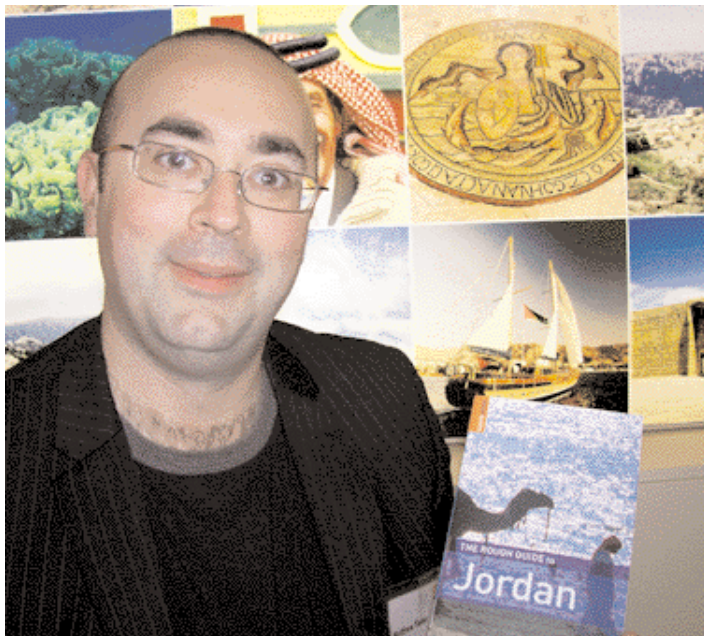
TravelPak is keen on religious tourism and has contacted Muslim organisations in Britain about religious and cultural tours.

"There are zillions of mosques in Pakistan. It is also a place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs and has numerous Hindu and Buddhist sites", Azhar said.

Veteran overland tour operator, Geoff Hann, who specialises in trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, will be leading the first trip to South Eastern Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran. Ten people have already booked for the tour.

Always an innovator Hann is also organising a road tour via Pakistan, the Khyber Pass and Iran and Uzbekistan and the lapis lazuli mines of Afghanistan.

Central Asian states were not well represented at Adventure Travel leaving Western tour companies to market the Silk Route and Middle Eastern countries did little to promote their unique desert environment. ■



Matthew Teller in the Jordanian stand

ماتيو تيللر في الجناح الأردني



Amartuvshin Dorjsuren Director of Wilderness Adventures Mongolia
أمارتوفشين دورجسورين مدير شركة مغامرات البراري المنغولية



Ron Oren: Eager to share his passion for Mongolia
رون أورين يود التحدّث عن حبّه لمنغوليا



A real climb on a man-made slope

عرض لتسلّقي الجبال