

The governor of Bolivar (Colombia) talks to ITM

Cartagena of the Indians: authentic past, splendid present and good future prospects

> Cairo - Mounir El Fishawy

In Cairo, ITM met in Mr. Libardo Simancas Torres governor of the Colombian State of Bolivar. He talked to us about "Cartagena of the Indians" or "Cartagena de Indias", as it is called in Spanish, the capital of the State of Bolivar, the second capital of Colombia, after Bogota.

Mr. de Torres indicated that the state is named after the liberator of Latin America, Simon Bolivar. The term "Indians" was added to Cartagena to distinguish it from the Spanish city Cartagena of Florence. The resemblance of the names of the two cities reveals their common characteristics such as the Spanish Andalusian character of both.

The city is a collection of markets, old houses and palaces, surrounded by an 11 km wall built by the Spaniards in the 17th century to protect it from the pirates of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is on the Caribbean coast and has 21 defensive sites, seven fortresses, 12 guns positioned in the costal front, two quays, 14 monasteries, seven museums and 15 sites or parks of a historical nature. Being a city that never forgets its ancestral history and glorious past, and always celebrating its prosperous present, UNESCO included it in its list of world heritage sites in 1984. This was an acknowledgement of its marvellous tourist potential that combines its authentic past, splendid present and good prospects for the future.

De Torres said: "We are proud of the important part played by our city in the independence of Colombia from the Spanish throne, in 1811. It became the most important city of the republic where the president receives his most prestigious guests. The natural beauty of Cartagena, its historic assets, cultural heritage, infrastructure and places of interest, as well as its moderate climate throughout the year, played a major part in the growth of tourism, especially conferences and tourist festivals.



Mr Torres with ITM's representative
السيد توريز مع ممثل المجلة

Among the most important meetings which it hosted was the Summit of Non-Aligned countries, the meeting of the presidents of Latin American countries, and the 4th congress of Spanish-speaking countries which honoured the famous Latin American writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez after he received the Nobel Prize. In November 2007, it will host the world tourism congress".

Mr. de Torres adds that Cartagena is a first class historical and tourist city. Since 1533 it was a strategic geographical site for the Spaniards at the time of their colonization of Colombia. The Spaniards constructed many buildings in Andalusian style which have been preserved in particular fortresses, palaces and churches, such as the church of Saint Pedro and the church built on top of Mt Poba. There are many museums, such as the Gold Museum which displays Indian artefacts, markets, houses, fields and leisure parks – all



enhancing the rich cultural heritage.

The old part of Cartagena, which is surrounded by a famous wall, is regarded as the country's main tourist attraction. Pleasant tours are organized with multicoloured cars and horse drawn coaches ideal for discovering the landmarks inside the old wall.

In addition, the city has bewitching Caribbean-style beaches on the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to surrounding splendid islands, such as the islands of Saint Martin Rosario and Barrio, close to the shore.

The governor continues: "We guarantee visitors a pleasant holiday with our famous coffee, various water sports, golf and tennis, wonderful scenery and nature, thermal spas and the Totamo volcano. Tourists will be surrounded by welcoming, hospitable people. There are 120,000 beds in luxury hotels and the infrastructure is being expanded to cater for the increasing numbers of visitors". ■