

# Cultour

## The first cultural tourism fair

> By Armin Gemmer

When you are face to face with the Spaniard Ramon Alvarez in his office you must believe that he is a visionary. For 25 years he has worked in the field of international tourism; 14 years ago he started to specialise in the niche markets of business and cultural travel. Two years ago he ventured into a totally new field. He organised a fair which focused exclusively on cultural tourism. In his opinion cultural tourism has the same potential as congress tourism “in which no-one believed in before it evolved.” According to Alvarez, cultural tourism is a significant, growing market “which has developed surprisingly in the USA and has seen a considerable boom in Europe and Japan.”



After a successful premier, we wanted to hold the event in a place and location which has been destined for this kind of tourism,” Alvarez explains about the change from Spain to the very promising German market and the better situated Cologne fair grounds. For the second time the event was held there from 12th - 15th June. On these two weekend days the cultural fair was only open to professionals. In a well organised ambience, product

development managers, tour operators and agents specialised in cultural travel had the opportunity to talk about and make business contracts. On the following days the Cultour festival opened its gates to the general public. Visitors could obtain information about travel offers and travel destinations. In addition to this there were numerous activities e.g. musical and folklore performances on top of culinary delicacies from all over the world. The visitors from Cologne enjoyed themselves.

Unfortunately, only a few Arab/ Islamic exhibitors found their way to Cologne, among them the Sharjah Museums Department from the United Arab Emirates. Conny Boettinger, the marketing manager of the department explained the small number of international exhibitors by saying that the fair did not yet have an international reputation. “But from our point of view the event went very well. The internal Hosted Buyers Programme brought us a lot of interesting contacts”. ■