

Destinations lifts the veil on travel to Libya, Iran and Syria

In his talk *Lifting the Veil: Libya, Syria and Iran*, Jonny Bealby of *Wild Frontiers* highlighted magnificent tourist attractions in the three countries and countered the Western media's negative stereotypes.

Crac des Chevalliers, Syria's ruins at their best



He was one of the speakers on «meet the experts» presentations at London's four-day Destinations travel show now in its 16th year in

London and 7th in Birmingham. At the beginning of February, the Times newspaper presented Destinations: The Holiday & Travel

Show, one of the UK's leading consumer travel events which attracts over 50,000 travel connoisseurs craving inspiration, information and exclusive deals.

In his presentation Bealby summarised Libya's tourist attractions as the best Roman ruins in the north and the best deserts in the south. He began his talk with a reference to the Leader

Ghouma Ali Miad "Libya is now becoming an important tourist destination".



of the Revolution, whose posters are everywhere. He has been in power for 40 years and is one of the longest serving leaders in the modern world. Bealby also referred to Libya's official title SPLAG – Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab

Gamahiriya.

Tripoli was described as a city influenced by the Phoenicians, the Romans and most recently the Italians. In the medina the prices are fixed and tourists are still an

oddy. It is a place for spices and brilliant souvenirs.

Bealby believes Libya is a country for people who don't do Roman ruins and museums. Leptis Magna

desert of dreams. Camel caravans are still passing through the desert: it is a place of no hotels so camping and a real outdoor adventure is the only option.



has unsurpassed sculptures and there is a breath taking theater in Sebrata. Libya also has the best museums in North Africa.

In the south the Acqacus is the

People have sheltered in caves from the hot desert sun for centuries. Some of the cave drawings were stolen by French tourists and it is now mandatory for a guide to accompany visitors

to the caves.

Libya is home to five world heritage sites and even the most discerning tourists are guaranteed to fall in love with this magical destination. Syria: boasts two of the oldest inhabited cities, the fabulous crusader castle of Crac des Chevaliers and the mighty Roman ruins at Palmyra. There are also the unsung attractions - the thriving souks, Christian hillside villages, local hammans, holy rivers and desert camps.

Iran may not be the first place you'd think of for a holiday, but for the culturally inquisitive, it offers a feast of ancient sights, a rich culture, interesting and varied landscapes, splendid cuisine and very hospitable people. It is a fascinating place to visit with old cities packed with exquisite mosques and spectacular madrassas, ruins from ancient Persia, nomadic tribes, hill walking, skiing and surreal beach resorts.

Ghouma Ali Milad the operations manager of Arkno Tours the only Libyan company at Destinations commented that Libya is now becoming an important tourist

destination and the tourist market will continue to grow. The industry has grown tremendously during the past five years. The majority of tourists are from Italy and France with some English speaking people, Australians, New Zealanders and Germans. There are some regulations tourists have to comply with, such as getting their passports translated into Arabic but those who are serious do not have a problem complying with these regulations.

Iran was promoted by Persian Voyages. Nasrin Harris, the company's managing director said it was becoming increasingly popular as tourist destination and hopes it will one day become a mass tourism market.

Tunisia was keen to promote thalassotherapy (therapy) using seawater. It is in fact the second best country for this form of therapy with 46, France being the first with 61 centres.

"Carla and Sarkozy and Prince Andrew have been to Tunisia for thalassotherapy", the Head of Promotion at the Tunisian National



Bizerte marina Tunisia

Tourist Office in London, Moncef Battikh said proudly.

The term comes from the Greek thalassa (sea) and therapeia (from therapeuein care or treatment) Seawater has beneficial properties

can be transferred to the body through the skin. Baths and showers, seaweed and marine sediment wraps and seawater sprays form the basis of thalassotherapy.



Moncef Battikh: promoting thalassotherapy in Tunisia

for the body due to its composition which is very similar to that of blood plasma and its living component, plankton. Heated to 34 degrees – 38 degrees C, mineral salts and trace elements

Tunisia showcased Bizerte is newest attraction: the Bizerte marina. Bizerte is known as the oldest and most European city in the country. It was founded around 1000 BC by Phoenicians from