

## The Biggest Travel and Tourism Fair In The World

# The Berlin International Tourism Exhibition

Berlin – Islamic Tourism



جناح فلسطين  
Palestine Stand



فولكلور سوري  
Syrian Folklore

The International Travel and Tourism World Trade Fair was held in the city of Berlin, Germany, from 7th to 11th March this year, the 37th in this annual event. Ten thousand exhibitors from 181 countries participated, making it the largest specialist tourism trade fair in the world. Organisations from all areas of the tourist industry took part in the fair, including ministries of tourism, hotels, airlines, travel agencies and banks. The

exhibition, which was first held in 1968 when 36 countries participated, uniquely reinvents itself each year with the introduction and launch of new types of tourism. For instance, this year cultural tourism was prominent during the fair, with every country involving in selling it. There was also tourism geared specifically towards younger generations, including adventure treks and hunting. There were high expectations for the

development of tourism this year, with an increase in the numbers of exhibitors taking part – up by 6% - and the participation of Arab countries up by 10.3% on the previous year. However, the exhibition was still overshadowed by the prospect of a war on Iraq. There was also a noticeably poor turn-out from visitors to the exhibition, the number this year being no more than 50,000, a poor account by the standards of previous years and in ➤

## Exhibitions

contrast to all the investment and effort expended in making the event a success. Attendance in previous years has been as high as 150,000 visitors.

Some commentators believe that the problems facing tourism in the Middle East today, particularly in the Gulf region, are not due to the factor of war but the weakness of the European market - an exporter of tourism - and especially the German market.

Dubai participated in the fair with their biggest stand for thirteen years, with 82 exhibitors. The country gained top place for having increased the numbers of its tourists by 30%, followed by Lebanon which gained 13%, Egypt (9.4%) and Jordan (6.1%).

Dubai also took the prize for best tourism promotional film (for The Golden City Gate) which was selected from 83 cities also in contest. Barcelona won second prize, and there were ten other winners in the three categories of the prize - economic promotional film, tourism promotional film, provincial promotional film. The Dubai film is twelve minutes long and shows some of the main features of tourism in Dubai, such as the Arab Tower, Jemerai Beach, markets, castles, wildlife, safari trips, and folklore.

Islamic Tourism participated in the Berlin exhibition and two agreements were signed with new agents for the magazine, in Germany and South-East Asia. Mr Ali Abed Wahab will be the magazine's representative in Germany. Mrs Aziza Karim, who owns a tourism agency in Malaysia, will represent the magazine there.

Our staff visited many of the stands from the various countries exhibiting at the fair, including those of the relatively new Central Asian states that have shown great interest in the magazine. A meeting was held with the Turkish Minister of

Tourism and with Ms Elah Etakhan, director of international relations for the Travel Agencies Association in Turkey. A contract was signed to promote Kerala in India, one of the most outstanding tourist destinations in the world. Another meeting was held with representatives of the Saudi airline and representatives of the Arak Company. There were many visits to the stands representing Fujayrah, Sharja, Dubai, Bahrain, Oman, Syria, Sri Lanka,

Brunei, Ethiopia and several other countries. The magazine was invited to visit a number of African countries' representatives also. An agreement was signed with the Ministry of Tourism in Pakistan for the promotion of tourist locations there.

The Islamic Tourism stand was visited by many distinguished people, including Akram al-Shaar, director of Tourism with the Elaf Company in Saudi Arabia, and Adnan Abu Hajab, representative of Thailand.

Dr Mamdouh el-Beltagui, the Egyptian Minister of Tourism, held a press conference on the second day of the exhibition.

He called on travel agencies in Europe and elsewhere not to be afraid of visiting Egypt, emphasising that his was a safe country with a very friendly and hospitable population. He said that in 2002, the number of foreign tourists who visited Egypt was 5.2 million and that the number of German visitors during February this year reached 182,000.

Islamic Tourism asked Dr el-Beltagui about the absence of Alexandria from the international tourist map and whether there are any efforts to make use of the tourist villages along the country's north-western coast towards the city of Mercimatroia near the Libyan border. Dr el-Beltagui replied that Alexandria had recently witnessed a huge development in terms of organisation and facelift, and an increase in tourist facilities and services. He mentioned the archaeological discoveries in the region, especially submerged artefacts, and the rebuilding and reopening of the Alexandria Library, which all gives hope to the return of Alexandria to the tourism map. As to the northern coast, decrees had been issued to halt facilities being built to serve local tourism and there was also a scheme to restructure el-Alamein City in order to serve in-coming tourism. ■



جناح غامبيا  
Gambia Stand