

World Travel Market

Libya polishes image and Central Asian Republics are optimistic

By Karen Dabrowska



Jordan receives the prize of best stand. الاردن يتسلم جائزة أفضل جناح في المعرض.



Egypt the mother of all the world.

مصر أم الدنيا.



The mystic of Morocco.

جاذبية المغرب.



Lebanon : The heritage of the Mediterranean.

لبنان : تراث البحر المتوسط.

The World Travel Market (WTM) marked its biggest event ever this year with a total of 4886 exhibitors from 190 countries. Some of the new exhibitors included: Vietnam,

Bonaire, Abu Dhabi, Albania and Belarus. Fiona Jeffery, Group Exhibition Director, said she was delighted with the figures. "The free seminar, workshops, conference and stage

schedule has brought together leading industry experts, respected senior management and an unprecedented line-up of well known journalists, television >



Germany : A European giant.

المانيا : عملاق أوروبا.



تركيا : جسر بين الشرق والغرب.

Turkey : A bridge between East and West.



Greece : The magic of the islands and history.

اليونان : سحر الجزر والتاريخ.



مالطا : درة البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

Malta : The pearl of the Mediterranean.

presenters and celebrities to provide a stimulating, entertaining and worthwhile programme." A report entitled "Guide to Global Travel Trends" was released on the first day of the market. The lay out of the exhibition was very interesting. Stands were grouped according to geographical regions or business interests and every region was given a distinguished carpet colour. Africa orange, the Middle East grey, America and the Caribbean red, Asia and the Pacific yellow, Western Europe and the Mediterranean blue and the United Kingdom and Ireland butter cream.

Arab countries were very well represented at this year's WTM with professional stands and impressive literature from both their national airlines and travel companies. Jordan, Morocco and Al-Maha Desert Resort in Dubai gained awards.

For Libya all publicity has turned out to be good publicity. According to Catherine Isambert of Sand Ruins Tours the negative

media image has stimulated interest in the country, especially among the French and British. The Italians were always interested because of Libya's colonial past.

At the WTM Turage's in blue robes welcomed visitors to a tent. Gone were the days of unreadable propaganda: colourful brochures in impeccable English described the wonders of the Great Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the country's official name.

The jewel of the desert is the oasis of Ghadames on the triangle of Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. It is famous for its Islamic architecture and decorations and has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. According to Libya's High Authority for Tourism and Antiquities growth in the tourist sector is constrained by the lack of suitable accommodation. Foreign investors are encouraged to put their money into high and medium quality accommodation projects as well as budget accommodation. The major urban areas present significant opportunities

for investment in restaurants, coffee-houses and entertainment, especially arcades for modern computer games. The setting up of a major water fun park has been proposed adjacent to Tripoli's zoo and scuba-diving centres could be developed in Tajura, Sabratha, Tolmetha, Tobruk and other locations. There are also opportunities for health tourism through the development of special centres. The lakes in the Awbari Sand Sea are ideal for salt water treatments and therapeutic thermal waters are found in Al Assah, Al Ajaylat, Wadi Zamzam, Gaberoun and Sirt.

Guyana and Surinam, the only two South American states which are members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference often embark on joint tourist promotions. They were represented together at the ITB travel fare in Germany. Both are largely forested countries with spectacular waterfalls, distinctively large plants and trees and a thick tropical rainforest teeming with brilliantly-coloured ➤



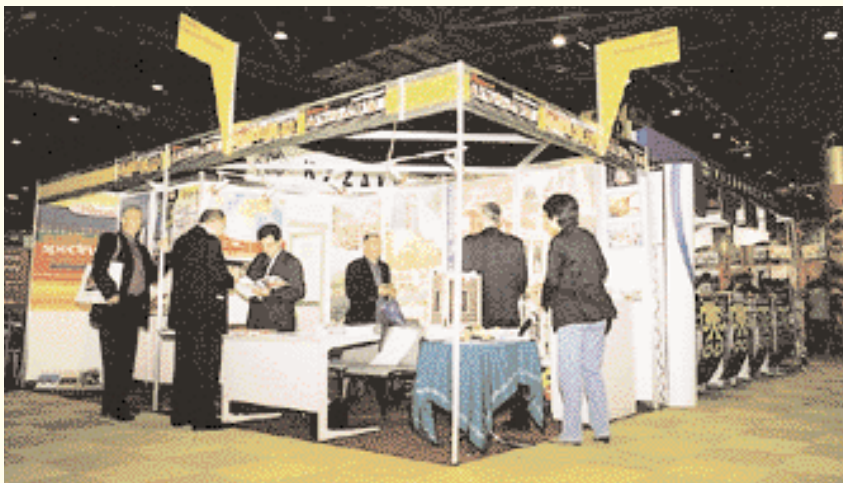
Armenia : The old tradition.

أرمينيا : تراث عريق.



China : The lure of the Orient.

الصين : سحر الشرق.



Azerbaijan : A new opening.

أذربيجان : بداية جديدة.



كازخستان : تترقب السياح بلهفة.

Kazakhstan : Waiting for tourism.

birds, insects and a wide variety of mammals: ideal for eco tourism.

But Guyana came alone to this year's World Travel Market. Although tourist literature does not feature many Islamic sites, the Executive Director of the Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana, Indira Anamdjit emphasised that the country "has some excellent mosques".

The Muslim community has built many schools and there are many student exchange scholarships with Middle Eastern countries. Muslim holidays such as Eid are public holidays and there are no problems of religious intolerance, Anamdjit told Islamic Tourism.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan were the Central Asian Republics at this

year's World Travel Market. But Zoya Mozgacheva, the Director of the Advertising and Information Agency of Uzbek Airlines is confident that in three to five years Uzbekistan will welcome visitors from all over the world.

The mosques and madrases of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva with their marvellous design and colourful tile work are just some of the cities in Uzbekistan linked to the ancient Silk Road between Europe and Asia. This country also gave the world Tamarlane, one of the most legendary of the great Central Asian warriors.

Samakand, the ancient city of Afrasiab and already an important settlement in the 1st millennium, was one of the jewels of the Silk Road. Tamarlane's mausoleum is a major

attraction as is the famous Registan Square, the Bibi Khanum Mosque and the Shah-I-Zinda mausoleum complex. Some 15km outside the town is the Imam Al-Bukhari mausoleum, a famous Muslim shrine.

Bukhara was once known as "the divine" because of the number of religious schools and mosques there. Besides being a main trading centre it was a pilgrimage site for Muslims visiting Imam Bakhouddin Naqshbansdin's mausoleum. Its main attractions include the Ark where the emirs lived, the UNESCO protected Kalyan Minaret and a number of restored madrases in the old downtown section.

Khiva was an oasis town on the northern Silk Road spur on the way to Russia and became known for its artisans. The entire city has ➤



A Latin American group.

فرقة من أمريكا اللاتينية.



South America : A special taste. أمريكا الجنوبية : مذاق خاص.



Mexico : A look to the future.

المكسيك : تطلع للمستقبل.



Cuba : getting out of the siege. كوبا : اختراق للحصار الأمريكي.

been remarkably preserved and declared a national reserve.

Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, has been a settlement of some kind or another since the 1st century BC and was largely rebuilt following a devastating earthquake in 1966. Attractions include many excellent museums and the Zangi-ata mausoleum complex.

While Uzbekistan focuses its marketing strategy on the cities of the Silk Road, Kazakhstan (the ninth largest country in the world) is eager to promote adventure tourism: especially hunting. Dana Kuandykova, the Chief Tourism Manager of Kazakhstan's Global Air told Islamic Tourism that Arab sheikhs enjoy hunting with falcons. The rich nature of Kazakhstan gives hunters tremendous possibilities: huge Siberian ibex,

moose, roe deer, wild bear, gazelle, brown bear, lynx and wolf. In the rivers and lakes, especially in the north of the country are numerous water birds including geese and ducks. In the mountains it is possible to hunt mountain turkey and partridge and pheasants in the bushes. Rafting, trekking, mountain climbing and helicopter excursions are another possibility as is ice skating at the world's largest ice rink, the Medeo stadium. Islamic Tourism had an active stand at the market. It attracted a lot of interest from different sectors, ministries of tourism, companies and individuals. Many of these visitors approached Islamic Tourism to discuss different deals - some of them promising. Representatives of Islamic Tourism paid visits to most of the stands and

exchanged information with them. Generally the response was positive.

Islamic Tourism also attended some of the press conferences and presentations, including the ones of Indonesia and the Palestinians. Indonesia is keen on changing the image imposed on it after the Bali bombing. The Palestinians promoted religious tourism and gave a very impressive presentation. Their effort is to be applauded and encouraged and we wish them, together with other Arab and Muslim exhibitors, every success in future. Special thanks goes to the organizer, Reed, for providing two prayer rooms for Muslims. Heart felt thanks must also go to the Egyptian stand for their generous hospitality and the Iftar they provided every evening. It is an example that should be followed. ■