

WTM 2006

Emphasis on the link between sport and tourism

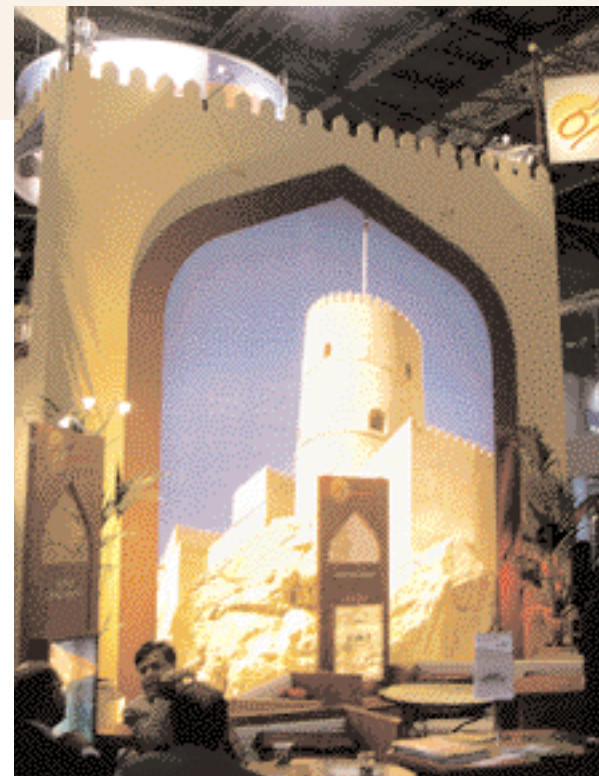
> London - Karen Dabrowska

World Travel Market 2006 has succeeded in substantially raising the quality of business visitors to this year's event with an expected increase in the amount and value of business conducted during the four days.



From left: Deputy Secretary General of WTO Dr. Al-Rifai, Mr. Shakiry and Motaz Othman

من اليسار: الدكتور طالب الرفاعي، نائب رئيس منظمة السياحة العالمية، الأستاذ عبد الصاحب الشاكيري ومعتز عثمان



The Omani Stand

الجنح العماني

There was an impressive level of participation from Arab and Muslim countries, especially Central Asian states and Libya whose stand at WTM has grown from strength to strength. Its first stand was just 12 square meters; this year's stand was 200 sq meters.

A total of 47,544 professionals attended the event at ExCeL London with a 13% rise in trade visitors (11,369), 4% increase in exhibiting personnel and a 10% uptake in media (3,165) compared to the 2005 statistics. Students dropped once again by 7%.

There were 67 events, conferences, seminars, presentations and debates on the latest industry trends and developments.

This included the publication of World Travel Market's Global Trends Report 2006. The report's compilers were Euromonitor International, the world's leading global business intelligence and strategic market analysis company, operating in 205 countries worldwide.

There were also two highly successful conferences - the first pan-industry conference on bilateral tourism relations

between China and Europe and a landmark Travolution conference, with some of the biggest names in travel and the new media world.

Tourism and sport

The intimate, mutually beneficial relationship between tourism and sport was emphasised during a tourism and sports seminar held under the auspices of the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport, VisitBritain and the UN World Tourism Organisation. ▶

In the presence of the two next hosts of the Olympics, China in 2008 and Britain in 2012, UNWTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli stressed that tourism and sport are two forces that represent the positive aspects in the globalization process. Large sporting events are more and more conceived and planned also as large tourism events and sporting

activities are an important part of today's tourism supply. Infrastructure, which would never be seen without the Olympics, is put in place and the Olympics provide the host country with the opportunity to shine in the media spotlight and increase the profile of the country as a tourist destination. The next Olympic Games will bring Beijing in

everybody's home around the globe, but other regions of China will also benefit. London is already one of the world's leading destinations. Nonetheless the Olympic Games represent a unique opportunity for the British tourism sector to further position the whole United Kingdom as a truly world class destination in a sector characterized by a strong and increasing global competition. Britain's



Victor Serbanos

فكتور صربانوس



Alesya Vasilevskaya and Gennadij Kisel

أليسا فاسيليفسكايا وجنادي كيسل



General view

منظر عام



Inside the exhibition

داخل المعرض



From left: Chairman of Bulgarian Tourism Mr. Mario Al-Jebouri and his deputy Mr Stanislav Novakov
من اليسار: رئيس السياحة البلغارية السيد ماريو الجبوري ونائبه ستانسلاف نوفاكوف

“ To date Eastern Europe has not been a popular destination with Arab and Muslim tourists. But the tour operators at this year’s World Travel Market (WTM) emphasised they are ready to welcome Muslim visitors. ”

Department for Culture, Media and Sport is preparing a comprehensive tourism strategy for 2012 in consultation with the industry.

The last Olympics have given Greece a staggering amount of hours on television, exceeding by far what could have been done in years of publicity efforts. The post-Olympic success of Australia shows how the Games can boost the tourism industry to levels never experienced before. The Games of 1992 have been the engine of major structural changes of the city of Barcelona, which has taken an important place in the map of European destinations. Gu Zhaoxi the Vice-Chairman of the China National Tourism Administration said that tourism and sport have a vital role to play in promoting international understanding and peace.

His views were echoed by Britain’s Minister for Tourism, Shaun Woodward. When asked whether the games would promote much needed understanding between the Muslim world and the West he replied: “ That is one of the great values of sport – it cuts across all sorts of cultural and economic difficulties and builds bridges of understanding between nations” . During his presentation about preparations for the Olympic games, Gu Zhaoxi said China is a country where ancient civilisation meets the modern world. China has 20,000 tourist attractions, 12,000 star-rated hotels and 247 tourist cities.

Eastern Europe

To date Eastern Europe has not been a popular destination with Arab and Muslim tourists. But the tour operators at this year’s World Travel Market (WTM) emphasised they are ready to welcome Muslim visitors. Belarus seems to be the most popular destination for visitors from the Middle East, especially Iran and the UAE.

Iran’s Ambassador to Belarus Abdolmajid Fekri commented recently that given the numerous capacities for Iran-Belarus cooperation in the field of tourism, mutual tourist relations should expand.

He referred to the significance of the direct air link between Tehran and Minsk which was started recently by Caspian Airlines, and said that this flight prepares the ground for development of co-operation between the two nations.

Fekri advised Iranian and Belarus tourist agencies to increase exchanges in the sector and cooperate with each other more closely. He referred to Iran’s numerous historical and cultural monuments and said, “They are quite attractive for foreign tourists, including those from Belarus.”

According to Alesya Vasilevskaya of the Minsk-based Sputnik tourist company health tourism is popular with Middle Eastern visitors. One of the favourite places of rest is Zaslavskoye pond known as the Minsk Sea. The Yunost sanatorium includes a sports centres and a children’s health camp.

In Romania, Islam has 700 years of tradition in Northern Dobruja, a region on the Black Sea coast which was part of the Ottoman Empire for almost five centuries (ca.1393-1878).

Victor Serban’s Gamma Touristic & Trade agency is based in Constanta where 85 % of Romanian Turkish and Tatar Muslims reside. He is interested in encouraging tourists from the Middle East.

The city of Constanta is the centre of Romanian Islam. Mangalia, near Constanta, is the site of a monumental mosque, built in 1525 which could also interest Middle Eastern tourists. The area has attracted Lebanese and Saudis and Serban told Islamic Tourism that he can organize tailor-made tours for individuals and groups.

“ I am selling my country to everybody. I can organise any kind of tour” , Irene Trantina of Kyiv (Ukraine) based Olymp Travel told Islamic Tourism.

The Ukraine is a country where Muslims could easily feel at home: there are 391 Muslim communities, 151 mosques and six under construction. ■