



Arab and Islamic Countries lose Billions of Dollars in Staggering Tourism and Aviation

It has been difficult to estimate the losses affecting the tourism and travel sectors after the attacks on New York and Washington DC on 11 September 2001 and the extent of the worsening tourist situation in many countries. The incidents have so depressed and frustrated people that many have postponed their tourist projects or even cancelled them until the situation is clearer. As a result, the travel sector has been enormously affected, especially civil aviation, with aeroplanes being the weapons used to attack the United States of America.

In the Arab and Islamic world, the catastrophe has been particularly horrendous. The first indications of the September 11 repercussions are emerging now throughout Arab and Islamic countries where tourism is the main economic and national source. However, should the situation continue as it is now, things are likely to get even worse. Undoubtedly, estimates for the losses incurred in the Arab and Islamic tourist sectors so far are tremendous and might even go on to affect other areas that are linked to tourism, such as restaurants, hotels, museums, transport, handicrafts, and so on.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Tourism, with the cooperation of other ministries

and relevant authorities, has attempted to find a solution to the problems resulting from an increase in airline companies' insurance and a decrease in numbers of tourists to Egypt, through adopting measures that introduce incentives and promotions for travellers, such as cutting the fares of inner tourist tours and the price of hotel accommodation.

The Egyptian Minister of Tourism, Dr Mamdouh al-Biltaji, has announced an increase in proactive marketing campaigns in the Arab, Russian and Commonwealth countries, as well as in Chinese markets and throughout the countries of Eastern European, by offering discounts in hotel fares for Arab tourists and treating them as groups. He added that the average expatriate tourism to Egypt since 11 September 2001 until the end of October 2001 reached 41,522 Arab tourists - 10% down as compared with the same period in 2000. The number of foreign tourists in September 2001 was 184,040 tourists - 31.7% down as compared with 2000. He also referred to the decrease in the percentage of hotel accommodation during that period with an 18% decrease from 72% in 2000 to 58.3% in 2001.

Economic sources in Jeddah believe that the current international ➤



crisis will lead to a decrease in the number of pilgrims coming from abroad by 30%.

The advisor on travel, tourism and aviation, and deputy chairman of the travel agencies' committee in Saudi Arabia, Mr Ra'id Haabis, anticipated the decrease in the number of flights hired this year. He also pointed out the necessity of considering the role of the international economy in relation to the number of pilgrims.

Mr Haabis estimated the average decline in the market in 2001 at 30% as a result of the recent incidents and the war in an area which has had a great impact on the markets of East Asia.

In Amman, the Jordanian government has initiated a number of objective measures to help the tourist sector cope with repercussions in the region following the international crisis.

Among the measures that the Jordanian Council of Ministers has recently approved are a decrease in the percentage of general taxation imposed by the government on sales of hotel income from 13% to 3%, and a cut in the price of tickets to enter tourist and historical sites to 50%, in addition to a cut in the taxation of departing non-Jordanians, from 15 dinars to 5 dinars.

All these measures are in addition to other steps that have been taken by individual hotel owners, such as cuts in hotel charges, which have been taken to promote local tourism following cancellations at Jordanian hotels made by tourists from Europe and the United States. The Jordanian Hotels Committee estimated the percentage of the cut offered by Jordanian hotels to be about 45%, which is different from the announced charge. It also estimated the percentage of hotel accommodation in first class hotels in the country since 2001 at about

42% against 72% during the last summer months.

Sources estimate that the cancellation of tourist reservations from the United States was about 40%. The percentage of flight cancellations on Royal Jordanian Airlines was 20% until the end of 2001.

An official from civil aviation in Rabat, Morocco, has announced that Arab airlines will endure a great loss of between \$500 million to \$1 billion dollars should the current crisis remain unresolved until next summer. Mr Abdul Jawad al-Daoudi, general manager of The Arab Civil Aviation Corporation, based in Rabat, announced that the crisis of aviation following the attacks has increased significantly.

According to preliminary estimates, the aviation of Arab companies has declined between 15% and 20%.

An official in the Yemeni government has stated that the attacks in the United States and the situation following them would "immensely affect" the tourist season in Yemen. The Minister of Tourism and Environment, Abd al-Malik al-Eriani, clarified that many travel and tourist agencies in Europe and America had cancelled their programmes to Yemen. He did not mention anticipated losses in the tourism sector, or the percentage of cancelled reservations. However, the Yemeni Prime Minister, Abd al-Qadir Bajammal, declared that it was about \$300 million dollars through the end of 2001, including foreign investments.

In countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, where the tourism industry sectors jointly turn over about \$10 billion dollars a year, there is obvious anxiety, particularly in relation to any definite impact on projects to attract foreign investment which, in 2000, had achieved world records. This was especially so in the areas of communication and power. ■



خور دبي.

Promoting Regional Tourism

The tragedy of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America and the events that followed was a catastrophe for world tourism. Following 11 September, tourism has significantly declined throughout the world and many airline companies have decreased their level of work and made many of their employees redundant. There are airlines that have even completely halted some of their flights. Airline service companies have also been affected, including those dealing in tourism and hotels, along with other tourist sectors that are primary movers in the world economy.

The risks and difficulties of traveling the world have become ever more serious as a result of what happened on 11 September. This has left the revival of tourism related activities in the near future somewhat uncertain.

However, in such times of uncertainty regional tourism in all its forms should be highlighted and focused upon, particularly among Islamic countries. Nowhere is this need more apt than in respect of religious tourism, an area in which developing tourist countries can depend. This may partly involve having to start devising ways in which visitors can be received by a host country and provide adequate tourist services. It also requires the setting up of modern highways, preferably linked on an intra-regional basis so that there would be no need for potential visitors from neighbouring countries flying to places further afield for their holidays.

Islamic Tourism magazine has undertaken the responsibility of maintaining tourist and economic activities, and highlighting cultural, historical and religious landmarks, in particular the Islamic ones, as well as giving adequate information about Islamic countries on tourism. This might help to surmount the crisis of recent events and their economic impact.

السياحة الإقليمية بديل للسياحة العالمية؟

كان الحدث المؤلم الذي حلّ بأمريكا في 11 أيلول (سبتمبر) 2001 وما أعقبه بمثابة كارثة على السياحة العالمية. إذ تدهورت حركة السياحة في العالم بما دفع العديد من شركات الطيران إلى تقليص أعمالها وتسريح الكثير من موظفيها. وقسم منها أوقف بعض رحلاتها أو أنها أوقفتها بشكل كامل. وكذلك تأثرت جميع الشركات التي تجهز الخدمات لحركة الطيران. بالإضافة إلى الشركات السياحية والفنادق وغيرها من المجالات السياحية التي تشكل الرقم الأول في حركة الاقتصاد العالمي.

إن مخاطر ومشاق السفر والتجوال عبر العالم أصبحت جسيمة. في ضوء ما حدث في 11 أيلول (سبتمبر) 2001. وبالتالي من المستبعد أن تعود الأنشطة السياحية العالمية إلى ما كانت عليه في المستقبل المنظور.

إن البديل لذلك هو بلورة وإبراز مزايا السياحة الإقليمية. وخاصةً بين الدول الإسلامية. بكل أشكالها وبالتحديد السياحة الدينية. التي يمكن أن يعول عليها من قبل الدول التي لازالت في طريق النمو السياحي. وعلى الدول النامية - والإسلامية منها - أن لا تنظر إلى البعيد فالخير موجود فيها وفي من جاورها من الدول. فلو أنها بدأت بالعمل على تسهيل طرق استقبال الزوّار والسواح وتوفير الخدمات السياحية وإنشاء الطرق الحديثة في ما بينها فلا حاجة إلى مواطنيها للتخليق في الفضاء والتنقل بين الدول لفضاء عطلاتهم. إن من الممكن التمتع بالمنظر والخيرات التي أنعم الله بها على الدول الإسلامية من جبال وسهول خضراء وسواحل ومدن ومواقع جميلة نقية ومعالم دينية وحضارية يحسدها العالم عليها. لذلك يجب على المؤسسات الحكومية والخاصة العمل من أجل وضع خطط مستقبلية لتطوير واقع السياحة في بلدانها.

إن مجلة "السياحة الإسلامية" أخذت على عاتقها دعم الأنشطة السياحية والاقتصادية وإبراز المعالم الحضارية والتاريخية والدينية. وخاصة الإسلامية منها. وإعطاء معلومات واقعية عن البلدان الإسلامية في المجالات السياحية. ولعل في هذا الجانب ما يساعد في تجاوز محنة الأحداث الأخيرة وتأثيراتها الاقتصادية. والله ولي التوفيق.