

'Al- multaqa' Exhibition The Arabian Travel Market in Dubai

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The A.T.M. (Arabian Travel Market) was held between 6th – 9th May 2003, only days during which worldwide attention has been focused on the Arab Gulf and the Middle East for a very different reason – the build up, enactment of and aftermath of the war in Iraq. It must be noted here that those countries that would usually represent themselves at this trade fair were noticeably absent due to their affection by the S.A.R.S. epidemic.

The large fall within the tourism industry was universally witness by countries throughout the world. The German ITB Tourism Exhibition can be singled out as an example of a tourism event, which was directly affected due to the afore-mentioned war. However this trend took a 180-degree turn following the recent Middle Eastern events. Countries as well as tourism authorities, hotel chains, airlines, tour operators and so forth have hurried to confirm their participation in such meetings, prepare their stands and arrange press conferences which have witnessed a noticeable increase this year. The organizers of these conferences drew attention to the services and products they exhibited; and the participants rushed to arrange parties and hold dinner banquets in order to attract the largest number of visitors, so much so that several press conferences and social activities were held simultaneously.

The exhibition took place this year in the Exhibitions Hall, situated close by the airport, and comprises of the eastern and western wings. Representatives from five continents and 783 exhibitors attended the fair. The exhibition was visited on its first day by 2780 commercial visitors from 61 countries in addition to thousands of mercantile guests, who attended for the full four days. The majority of those who attended the fair were hotel and resort managers, who came to acquaint and promote their hotels and resorts to the tour operators. In addition to this a large number of visitors, mainly managers of tourism and travel offices, came to meet the tour operators, hoteliers, airlines and exhibitors in order to obtain the optimum prices for

arranging this year's tours. The last two days witnessed an influx of citizens from the United Arab Emirates as well as from the neighbouring countries.

Islamic Tourism participated in the exhibition and its publisher Mr. Shakiry received a number of visiting V.I.P.'s including Mr. Anis Bajna, the director general of the Pakistani Tourism Promotion Authority, Mr. Abdul Aziz Shaheen, director of the tourism programs in

Dubai Government hosted a dinner party in the desert region, approximately 40 km outside of Dubai city, which we reached in robust 4-wheel drive vehicles. The ensemble was entertained by traditional folkloric dance. The following day the Vermont Hotel invited the guests to an exquisite dinner, this was succeeded on the third day by a party organized by the Indian government at the Marriott Hotel, and was accompanied by speeches by those in charge of tourism. The magazine editors attended a



The Publisher Mr. Shakiry with guests at the Islamic Tourism stand

السيد الناشر مع ضيوف في جناح المجلة

the Saudi Arabian Airlines and the director of Dubai Taj Palace Hotel. The stand was also frequented by numerous mercantile businessmen as well as members of the general public, who all expressed their admiration of the magazine and consequently a number of them signed subscriptions to ensure the regular reception of the magazine. Visits were conducted to the stands of participating hotels, airlines and the major tour operators to whom issues of the magazine were distributed.

number of press conferences, including the one held by the director general of the tourism promotion authority in Egypt.

The *Al- Multaqa* Exhibition will be back next year 2004, 4th – 7th May and it will be held in its traditional location in the halls of the World Trade Center, in Dubai, which have been renovated and expanded. Islamic Tourism magazine will participate therein and, God Willing, continue to cultivate its bright and prosperous future. ■