

Great interest in the Spanish edition of Islamic Tourism



Fitur celebrates 25th anniversary

Madrid - Motaz Othman

Madrid became an international tourism capital during the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Fitur exhibition; the 2nd most important tourism exhibition in the world. The event, which was held on 26th-30th January 2005, was the focal point for people working in the tourism industry world wide. Some 11,000 specialised companies, from 170 countries, and 100,000 visitors participated. This is not surprising since Spain receives more than 48 million tourists annually.

Mr. Alberto Gallardon, the mayor of Madrid, said that Fitur provides valuable support to Spain's economy, culture, and social life. "It encourages us to make Madrid beautiful". Mr. Fernando Tapias, Chairman of Feria de Madrid, said that Fitur is the main source of support for incoming and outgoing Spanish tourism. Mr. Fernando Conte, Chairman of Fitur, compared the first exhibition in 1981 with today's exhibition twenty five years later. He emphasised that Fitur is now the 2nd most important international exhibition and

the main exhibition in the Spanish world, where it is considered the most important venue for tourist promotion.

Every year Spain's 19 provinces compete to have the best stand in terms of decorations, folkloric dances, fashion shows and food - all in a festive mood. Andalusia, Aragon, the Canary Islands, Madrid and Valencia all excelled this year with the size of their stands and the accompanying activities, which were well patronized.

Latin American countries were well

represented, especially by their ministries of tourism. They attach a great deal of importance to Fitur because Spanish tourists are eager to visit these countries. The participation of African and Asian countries was weak and their stands were small. European participants concentrated on Spanish tourists more than international visitors. The size and activities of the Portuguese stand were exemplary.

Arab participation was commendable, especially from North African countries, ➤



who were usually represented by the Ministries of Tourism. Many countries, such as Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, complimented their stands with traditional dances. Some Arab countries complained about the low number of visitors and neglect by Spanish visitors. The participation of Islamic Tourism this year was distinguished because of the new Spanish edition of the magazine, as well as the Arabic, English and French editions. We had a meeting with Miss Marietta Salvi – International Press – Fitur, and discussed the possibility of making Islamic Tourism, and its multi-lingual website, a media partner. We visited all the stands and met their representatives, who praised our work,

especially the Tunisian Tourism Minister who expressed his personal liking of Islamic Tourism. He invited us to participate in the forthcoming conference of tourism ministers of the members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in March. We received a very special welcome from the ministers of tourism in both Kerala and Goa. Islamic Tourism also attracted a great deal of interest from Mrs Olivera Lazovic – Director of Tourism in Belgrade- who asked us to visit Serbia. We also met Mr Kamal Tekkanat, Tourism Counsellor – Turkish Embassy – Spain, who was very keen on Islamic Tourism. The Syrian and Lebanese Ministries of Tourism participated with large stands, but Middle

Eastern exhibitors received a small number of visitors. This may be due to the prevailing political climate. Lebanon was represented by Mr. Rafiq Ridha who was very active in promoting his country. On the Qatar Airlines stand, we talked to Ms. Marimar Laveda, the marketing manager for the Spanish and Portuguese markets. She promised to encourage the headquarters in Doha to maintain co-operation with Islamic Tourism. The Spanish edition of Islamic Tourism magazine attracted a great deal of interest from Spanish journalists and from the Spanish public, who were pleased to learn that the magazine is available in most large bookshops in Spain's major cities. ■