

# AWTTE

## Arab World Travel & Tourism Fair

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"Lebanon, as you know, ladies and gentlemen, throughout its history, always manages to get over difficulties. The phoenix again takes its flight with more strength and determination". That was the message from the Lebanese Minister for Tourism, Mr. Joseph Sarkis, at the dinner party, at the Royal Hotel of Beirut, honoring participants in the 2005 edition of AWTTE (29th September - 2nd October).



The minister stressed that the prosperity of tourism in Arab countries, despite the present situation, is proof of their rich heritage. The general director of "Aalam Al-Iqtissad W.A Al-Aamal" affirmed that tourism is not a choice but a destiny. It is a fundamental sector, whose contribution to the national income is essential. The director of Middle East Airlines (MEA) was honored for his achievements this year; as well as Mr. Nadhmi Oujj, owner of the Royal Hotel, and the owners of Venecia & Vandom Hotels group.

Some countries were absent, whereas others, such as Iran, showed a strong presence. The Iranian ambassador in Beirut visited Islamic Tourism's stand. Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Tunisia, Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, the Authority of El-Aqaba, as

well as airline companies and hotel groups, all took part. But, the absence for the third consecutive year of the big Lebanese travel agencies, was particularly noticeable. The organizers should find out why in order to preserve the success and continuity of this fair. Maritime tourism had a strong presence. The Abu Marai Group of maritime lines exhibited the "East" boat which is used for Mediterranean cruises starting from Lebanon in summer, and Dubai in winter. Arab Tourism TV and the Turkish company Eyken, which organizes the EMITTE fair in Istanbul, also took part.

This year's "Hosted Bayer" program was noted for the large number of participants and its intensive activity. On the first two mornings, visits were organized to more than ten hotels. Around 130 journalists and tourism

professionals were taken on a tour to the historic city of Tyre, where they were received by Mrs. Bahia El- Hariri, who invited them to visit the historic sites and rich Islamic heritage, which could attract visitors interested in Arab-Islamic tourism. Another trip was organized to the forest of cedars in the north of Lebanon, where some trees are more than 7,000 years old. The trip included the historical city of Baalbek, a witness to the richness and long history of Lebanon. The participation of Islamic Tourism in this fair comes in the spirit of supporting exhibitions in tourism fairs, throughout the Arab and Muslim world. ■