



Moroccan Travel Market Marrakech 2009

International Fair for Tourism Professionals

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SPECIAL REPORT

From the development of mega projects to the arrival of luxury hotel brands, Abu Dhabi remains defiant in its attempt to position itself as one of the world's prominent tourism hub

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REGIONAL ROUND UP

Triumphant, innovative, extraordinary: these are just three ways in which the tourism industry across the region can be described this year

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WTM's World Responsible Tourism Day event programme on November 12 at ExCeL, London, aims to be the most ambitious and controversial ever

Being responsible and forward thinking

BY ALEXANDRA NORTH

World Travel Market (WTM), a vibrant, must-attend event held annually in London, is once again set to open its doors from November 10 to 13.

The business-to-business event aims to present a diverse range of destinations and industry sectors to the UK and international travel professionals, and will provide the global travel trade an arena in which to meet, network, negotiate and conduct business under one roof.

This year will once again see a strong presence from the Middle East and North Africa. "WTM is one of the most important industry fairs organised along the year and we participate every year," said general manager, Mövenpick Hotel Doha, Markus Marti.

"WTM is a wonderful platform for communications, media relations, and will be perfect to introduce a new property such as our sister hotel, The Club at The Saujana in Kuala Lumpur," director of sales



We must think of the legacy we will leave behind

and marketing, The Chedi Muscat, Lore Koenig told *TTG*.

"WTM is one of three exhibitions we have identified as being a major opportunity of meeting existing and potentially new clients," commented director of sales, Ramada Plaza Doha, Ian Lillie.

"WTM is very important to us. The UK is one of our most important feeder markets so we divert a lot of marketing efforts to

attract visitors to Fujairah," PR and marketing manager, Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach Resort, Kiran Kumar told *TTG*.

Participants have an array of events to look forward to this year, and will undoubtedly not be disappointed. WTM's World Responsible Tourism Day event programme on November 12 at ExCeL London aims to be the most ambitious and controversial ever.

The series of presenta-

tions, debates, seminars and workshops are expected to rocket responsible tourism issues to the very top of the agenda, pushing boundaries to a new level of scrutiny. "World class leaders, international responsible tourism experts and many respected leaders with passion and commitment to a more sustainable world will be taking a lead in the sessions," said chairman, WTM, Fiona Jeffery.

"We want to inspire, provoke and above all, make delegates think more deeply about the kind of legacy the industry wants the next generation to inherit. "We will be asking the kind of difficult questions the industry frequently shies away from. We want to make people stop and think," she added.

Further to this, the International Centre for Tourism Hospitality Research at Bournemouth University will be presenting Tourism Futures this year. International tourism is rapidly changing and a number of significant challenges and opportunities are

emerging for both suppliers and destinations which require a rethink of both strategic and tactical tourism management.

Tourism Futures will explore the challenges currently emerging in the tourism industry. The seminar will investigate these major trends and provide examples on how the industry responds to change and development. The forum brings together leading academic and commercial industry experts to identify and debate new trends, opportunities and challenges.

Jeffery added: "As consumer demands, needs and desires for holiday experiences continue to mature and evolve, we need to ensure that, as an industry, we stay abreast of the emerging challenges and opportunities and meet the demands. The Tourism Futures seminar is a strategic opportunity for WTM exhibitors and visitors to learn more about the issues facing the industry and come away with tangible solutions."



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Expansions and upgrades at Reef

Reef Oasis Hotels & Resorts is currently overseeing a series of expansions and upgrades to its two Sharm El Sheikh hotels, Reef Oasis Beach Resort and Reef Oasis Blue Bay Resort & Spa.

Located in Hadabet Om El Sied, the 718-room Reef Oasis Beach Resort is currently undergoing an extensive expansion project which will see the number of rooms at the resort increase to 912 rooms by the end of the year. Furthermore, a renovation is underway for 104 of the resort's standard rooms, a project which is scheduled

to be completed by the end of November.

According to sales manager, Reef Oasis Hotels & Resorts, Sameh Mohie, the resort is also set to welcome a range of new facilities. "By this winter season, the hotel will see the final construction of an additional swimming pool and two bars, and by summertime we will also be welcoming an all-new specialty Asian restaurant," Mohie told *TTG*.

Meanwhile, the group's other property, the 614-room Reef Oasis Blue Bay Resort & Spa, located in Sharm El Sheikh's El Basha Bay, is set to introduce a

new Honeymooners Suite for its guests. Spanning an area of up to 93m², the suite will feature a dining area, separate bar area, LCD television screen, Internet connection and a DVD player. The suite will also boast a sea-view terrace attached with a dressing room and seating area, as well as a Jacuzzi, separate shower stall, two basins and full vanity unit. Complimentary honeymoon services will include a 30-minute massage treatment, a romantic dinner, unlimited free laundry, and half-an-hour water sports activities per person.

Showcasing its Egypt portfolio



Among others, Sonesta Nile Cruises provides passengers with voyages between Luxor and Aswan

Fresh on the announcement of its new online cruise booking engine, Sonesta Collection is once again exhibiting at this year's WTM in a bid to showcase its extensive Egyptian portfolio of hotels and cruise ships and achieve maximum coverage.

"WTM is one of the most important international travel fairs and Sonesta Collection is always keen in attending such important travel shows for wide exposure. We are looking to capture and expand in the European market as well as Far East market, and expect to meet with our business partners as well as lobbying with new partners," assistant regional communications manager, Sonesta Collection – Hotels, Resorts, Nile Cruises, Dina El Badramani told *TTG*.

The group, which comprises some 12 hotels and resorts in Egypt, as well as a fleet of cruise ships, recently announced the availability of its online cruise booking engine for consumers and travel agents interested in the Sonesta Nile Cruise fleet.

Available on its website, which aims to enable visitors to book their entire Egypt experience from the convenience of their desktops, the booking engine allows the consumer to review sailing dates, check availability and book the cruise and ship of their choice.

Both the corporate reservation office and Nile Cruise sales office are available for technical assistance and to provide customer support.

Presenting new Soma properties

Located on the eastern shores of Egypt and 45km from Hurghada International Airport, the ten million m², self-contained community of Soma Bay is welcoming two hotels over the period of the next few months, namely, Breakers Diving and Surfing Lodge and Kempinski Hotel Soma Bay.

Set to open its doors to guests in March 2009, Breakers Diving and Surfing Lodge will be located directly opposite the Soma Bay house reef and adjacent to the well-equipped dive centre. Hailed as Soma Bay's upcoming waterfront lifestyle hotel, the hotel will feature 160 rooms offering views of the house reef, lagoon, jetty and the open sea. The new development will offer four-star accommodation designed specifically for divers, wind surfers and kite surfers, as well as a rooftop terrace with garden, bar and sauna which will aim to provide a quality chill-out experience.



Breakers Diving and Surfing Lodge will be located opposite the Soma Bay house reef

Meanwhile, Kempinski Hotel Soma Bay is nearing completion and is set to be the first entry of Kempinski Hotels in Egypt. Scheduled to open within the next few weeks, and designed as a Moorish fortress with oriental design accents, the 324-room hotel extends over 7,000m² and will feature a distinctive range of restaurants and bars.

According to marketing and PR, Soma Bay, Jane Rankin, both hotels will be showcased at this year's WTM exhibition.

"This is a particularly exciting WTM for us as it is the first time we have a dedicated destination stand representing the entire resort and all Soma Bay properties and activities," Rankin told *TTG*.

"Our main focus is to present Soma Bay as a self-contained resort destination that is developing with these two new hotels, as well as new activities such as kite surfing to complement our already award-winning range of facilities," Rankin concluded.

Introducing tourism attractions



My Land Show, International Tourism Exhibition is scheduled to be held at Kish International Exhibition Centre, in the Kish Free Zone, from December 2 to 5. Organised by Expokish, the event, which will take place over a total exhibition space of 21,000m², will be open to both travel professionals and the public. A key objective of My Land Show

in December will be to introduce tourism and cultural attractions of worldwide countries. A host of participants will be present including professionals from across the tourism industry's various sectors including tour operators, travel agencies, tourism promotion organisations, recreational complexes, airlines, railways, cruises, and cultural departments of embassies.