

Middle Eastern Tourism Analysis



Middle East tourism is witnessing a rapid growth throughout all aspects of the sector. The number of foreign visitors traveling to the region is rising along with internal demand and local governments are investing in the industry, which is now the fastest growing economic sector in the Middle East, providing significant foreign exchange earnings and job creation throughout the region. According to the World Travel Organization, the Middle East can expect to receive 68.5m visitors a year within the next 15 years. The region currently draws 5% of the world's tourists. It is also estimated that business travel in the

Middle East will reach \$28.4 billion by 2016. Officials from Dnata, a travel company owned by the Dubai government, claim that the travel industry, particularly business-related, will grow despite the presence of other airlines offering big discounts on tickets and other travel services. "The market will continue to grow even with the presence of low-cost carriers," said Iain Andrew, senior vice president of Dnata Agencies. According to the Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing, 80 per cent of all travel to and from the Gulf region is business-related.

Despite all the positive factors, Middle Eastern countries have to overcome some obstacles. There are problems with infrastructure development and with oversupply of hotel rooms, and there is also the current political instability. According to industry specialist Rob Nicholas, Director at Dubai-based Nicholas Publishing International, the region needs to attract major association meetings. Mr. Nicholas said that: "Major rotational meetings are an entity in themselves, and represent a highly untapped segment for the Middle East. This is primarily due to the absence of dedicated convention bureaus in many regional destinations to spearhead efforts to attract them, as well as the lack of professional congress organizers".

Date: 2007-05-01

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/middle-eastern-tourism-analysis-news305>