

Middle East Ceremony to Kick Off World Travel Awards Grand Tour 2011



World Travel Awards is set to kick off their 2011 Grand Tour with the Middle East Gala Ceremony, taking place at Armani Hotel Dubai on 2nd May.

Hailed as the 'Oscars of the travel industry' by the Wall Street Journal, more than 400 senior industry figures from the region's leading travel and tourism companies, as well as a host of international media, will be in attendance.

A total of 462 Middle Eastern hotels and travel companies have been nominated for the prestigious event in 2011, with a World Travel Awards trophy becoming an increasingly important accolade for those companies wanting to stand out from competitors.

World Travel Awards is preparing to show the strength of its support for the recovery of the regional tourism sector with its fifth consecutive annual gala in the region.

It is vital to remind travellers the situation in several key markets - including Tunisia and Egypt - has returned to normal, with major tourism sites open to the public, airlines running to schedule and tour operators in source markets selling trips.

According to UNWTO figures, Egypt alone reported 14 million international tourist arrivals in 2010, an increase of 17% on the previous year, while Tunisia saw 7 million arrivals.

Both destinations are expected to grow again in 2011.

Graham E Cooke, President & Founder of World Travel Awards added: "The region has shown remarkable resilience to overcome the challenges of recent times, with an exceptional focus on excellent customer service and facilities that are simply second to none."

"These are difficult times but tourism remains strong in some countries and it will remain to be important for the region. Our job is as always to highlight the positive impact of tourism and this year's event will be even more important than ever for obvious reasons," he added.

Marc Dardenne, Chief Executive Officer, Emaar Hospitality Group, said: "It is an honour to host the opening of the World Travel Awards 2011 Grand Tour in Armani Hotel Dubai, an iconic development which underscores the remarkable strides the Middle East region has made in the hospitality sector. The iconic property has set new benchmarks in global luxury hospitality, and will offer participants an unparalleled experience."

The Middle East event kicks off the 2011 Grand Tour, with regional ceremonies following in Jamaica, Turkey, Egypt and Thailand. Winners from the regional events will then go on to battle it out to be crowned the World's 'best' at the Grand Final ceremony at the end of the year.

Voting is already underway, with stakeholders offered until 4th April to register their opinion.

About World Travel Awards:

The World Travel Awards was launched in 1993 to acknowledge and recognise excellence in the

world's travel and tourism industry. Now celebrating its 18th anniversary, the awards are regarded as the very highest achievement that a travel product could ever hope to receive. Votes are cast by 183,000 travel professionals which include travel agencies, tour and transport companies and tourism organizations in over 160 countries across the globe. Votes are cast globally by fellow industry professionals in over 1,000 different categories. Attended by senior executives from major travel companies, operators and destinations, WTA events are universally respected as providing established, top level networking opportunities, regionally and globally. The World Travel Award's official list of worldwide media partners includes: ABTA Magazine & ASTA Network Magazine, Breaking Travel News, CNBC Arabiya, eTurboNews, Khaleej Times, L'Agenzia di Viaggi, Trav Talk, Trade Arabia, TTN, Travel Daily News International, Focus on Travel News, New Focus Travel Magazine, Tourism Review, JAX FAX, Passport Magazine, Travel & Leisure, Travel & Leisure Golf, Xenios & Xenios World.

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About Armani Hotels & Resorts:

Armani Hotels & Resorts was established in 2005 under an agreement between Giorgio Armani S.p.A. and Emaar Properties, with the objective to develop, own and operate an exclusive collection of hotels, resorts and residences in the world's most important cities and holiday destinations. Armani Hotels & Resorts plans to open at least ten hotels and resorts within the next ten years.

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