

OMAN'S TOURISM GROWS



The Sultanate of Oman on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula is developing its tourism industry. The government promotes the country abroad to bring more tourists. According to the Ministry of Tourism in Oman, the target is not only leisure tourists but also people involved in the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) sector. Tourism industry becomes more important for the Omani economy. It is illustrated by the fact that the Ministry of Tourism is only two years old. Currently, hotels in Oman enjoy 100 per cent occupancy rates during the high peak season. Nowadays there are some 9000 hotel rooms in Oman and the plans are to open additional 9000 rooms by 2015 ranging from two to five star properties.

According to experts from Oman, there is a big demand for the country. They, however, control the flow as they want only responsible tourists. It is also true that infrastructure is not yet ready for a big influx of visitors. At present, there are investments of more than US\$30 billion going into the tourism industry. MICE sector has problems with insufficient facilities. They can cater for groups of 500 and less but not for big groups that exceed 600 delegates.

The Director General of Tourism Promotion, Salim Bin AdeyAl-Mamari, claims that their campaigns have proved to be successful. According to Mr. Salim previous years' efforts to promote Oman in Australia are slowly gaining substantial results. He also says that Oman offers an experience very different from its neighboring countries and it is what makes it demanded. Oman's development strategy is based on four factors maintaining the country's culture, improving tourism awareness, constant development of tourism infrastructure projects and maintaining the rich bio-diversity of the country. The tourism industry is also important for luring foreign investors and therefore for creation of new jobs.

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