

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMULA 1 FOR TOURISM INDUSTRY



Big events help to bring tourists. Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix is definitely one of the great events since it lures thousands of Formula 1 fans to the country. The race takes place from April 4 to 6 at the Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), in Sakhir. It is naturally a highly important boost for the country's economy. Last year (2007) the Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix generated €346m (BD207m), which was 40 per cent up compared to the previous year. International tourism made up approximately 7.6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and it represented 10 per cent of the kingdom's employment. An average 2007 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix visitor spent €856 per day and the biggest spenders were Europeans.

The race is a real windfall for hotels in the region as well. Most hoteliers increase the room rates significantly during the event. F1 fans from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and from Europe have booked their rooms well in advance. Rooms are sold out in most hotels. According to Crowne Plaza sales and marketing director Zee Bassila, they were getting bookings from October to November last year and some customers have booked the rooms even a year ago. Most of the bookings were made by European and GCC tourists. During the year a guest pays €114 to €251 per room, but during the race the prices rises to €352 to €838. The majority of bookings for Diplomat Radisson SAS Hotel Residence and Spa and for Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain Hotel and Spa came from the BIC (Bahrain International Circuit). According to Diplomat Radisson SAS Hotel, Residence and Spa sales and marketing director Michael Barnes, the majority of the fans would stay at three or four-star hotels, while the teams would stay at a five-star hotel.

The event will also boost the income of Gulf Air. The airline has confirmed it has allotted 32,000 seats for flights from the GCC, Europe and Asia for the duration of the race.

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