

# Huge Potential and Great Challenges

Yemen, country of hundreds of faces, is for tourism industry still an undiscovered treasure. Nowadays, when the travelers are becoming more and more discerning, they seek authentic places in a globalized world, which Yemen certainly is.



## What Makes Yemen So Special?

First of all there are several exceptional sites, unique in the world – the old town of Sana'a with fabulous, decorated houses, Shibam with the first skyscrapers in the world, the endemic Island of Socotra and others.

Nature lovers can not be disappointed with variety of different landscapes they can find in Yemen. Archaeologists are dreaming about the treasures of the mighty desert kingdoms that are still hidden under the sand dunes. Those who are interested in architecture will not stay untouched by the art of construction all over the country. Biologists are aware of the biological significance and uniqueness of Socotra Island.

The thing that certainly makes Yemen attractive and different from other countries is the culture. Yemen is an eternal land, a cradle of great Arab civilization. If you would like to find yourself in a living museum, in another century, in a world with still strong tribal rules, Yemen is your destination.



## Problems, Challenges & Potential of Tourism

With so many attractions, the position of Yemen in tourism industry is still underestimated. The reasons certainly lie in an unfavorable image of a dangerous country that media have incorrectly attached to Yemen. It is important to know that anything can happen to tourists in most other countries as well.

However, Yemeni government takes care of all visitors and do not permit access to any region where the travelers could be endangered. With the tourists' permissions authorities carefully follow the travelers as they discover various parts of the country.

Of course, a lot should be done for the preservation of the sites, as many of them are falling into decay. This is however in many places difficult due to the lack of interest, financing and due to the unstable political situation.

In ecologically precious regions such as Socotra Island, the right approach is urgent for developing tourism and at the same time to preserve the island as it is. Therefore the Ministries of tourism and of Environment are developing sustainable and ecological strategy to build efficient infrastructure in Socotra.

Another burden of the Yemeni wilderness is pollution. This can only be improved through educational process and is a long term project.

With respect to tour agencies one of the current challenges is the fact that there are often big differences in prices and the quality of services, which reflects still loose tourist policies. While only a few tour agencies managed to fulfill various rigorous conditions to get registered, they did not achieve any advantage against the non-registered ones or against people who offer cheaper tourist services right on the street although illegally and without a permit. Such cheaper services are however a double-edged sword as they are often of worse quality and the final price is usually higher than agreed.



Another problem is the availability of different tourist services and facilities like hotels, restaurants etc. which still does not meet the needs of western clients. This poses a considerable drawback but in a way it is also an advantage that Yemenis could use in the future when developing Yemen's tourism infrastructure.

Today there is a great potential for building sustainable hotels, to offer sustainable tours, to include different sport activities and to present Yemeni culture in a ways benefiting the local communities.

### **Treat Yourself with an Experience of a Lifetime**

Yemen is a country that deserves the stereotypes to be broken. According to numerous testimonies, Yemen is one of the safest countries for tourists and it often stays in the visitor's heart for a long time. It is a timeless, monumental, surreal journey into the past. Although these attributes are accurate, no words or pictures can fully prepare you for the experience that awaits here. In Yemen the past effortlessly continues to live in the presence challenging your notions of reality. Yemen is a living tradition and a large monument to the grandeurs of life and nature.

**By Tina Zorman (Director of Eternal Yemen, tour and travel operator)**

<http://www.eternal-yemen.com>

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