

FESTIVAL IN SUDAN TO BOOST DOMESTIC TOURISM



In Sudan, the Red Sea Tourism and Shopping Festival has started last week. The country's government hopes that this initiative, which has run for several years, will help to boost domestic tourism. There is also hope of attracting much-needed investment from foreign visitors.

The area covered by the festival, the Red Sea State, is rated as the top tourist resort in the country, despite lying almost 900 km to the east of Khartoum, Sudan's capital. Features such as **unspoiled beach, nature reserves and the islands along the coast are expected to attract tourists.** Activities on offer here include fishing, underwater photography opportunities and diving among the coral reefs in the Red Sea's warm, clear waters.

The festival is organized each year by the government of the Red Sea State, with its mixture of tourism and retail events intended to bring in tourists interested in experiencing the complex and fascinating history of the area, in particular its thousands year long history.

The state's capital, Port-Sudan, was the location for the festival's launch, where the theme of the event was revealed as pushing the Red Sea's status among the chief hot spots for tourism in the country. The festival will run until mid February 2013.

The local General Tourism Administration's Director, Mohamed Tahir Mohamed Awadab, explained that the festival was essential in raising the profile of the area and attracting more visitors. "The festival had been a great success during its six years of operation," he added.

There had been resurgence in tourism within Sudan, with the Red Sea itself proving the most popular attraction for those from other regions of the country. The region had also been highly popular with tourists coming to Sudan from other countries.

The beaches in the state were of very good quality and high levels of cleanliness, boasting a rich variety of coral and brightly colored fish, said Awadab. Other wildlife attractions include the always popular marine turtles. The clear, warm waters of the Red Sea coast by Port-Sudan are ideal for activities such as diving; it is also a popular cruise spot. Awadab also pointed out that interest was by no means limited to the two protected areas of reef, at Dungab and Sanganeeb. There were around four hundred other reefs in the vicinity, he said.

Besides the wildlife and leisure pursuits the area can offer, the festival puts considerable emphasis on the remarkably varied history and culture of the Red Sea region. **The fact that the area is inhabited by a wide range of tribes and peoples allows visitors to get an informed view of the cultural heritage of the region, as well as its contemporary relevance.**

Port-Sudan itself is situated by the Red Sea's western shores, barely elevated above the sea with an elevation of a mere two feet. As such, it acts as Sudan's most significant sea port, as well as being the center and administrative capital of the Red Sea State. Because of its location, it is sometimes known as the "eastern gate" of Sudan.

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