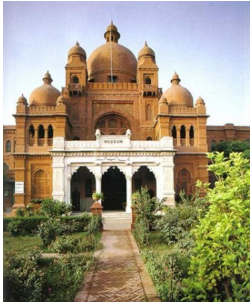


TOURISM INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN RECORDED \$350 MILLION IN REVENUES



In spite of the security concerns surrounding Pakistan last year, the country's tourism industry managed to earn approximately \$350 million from inbound and domestic tourists.

Pakistan received approximately 1 million tourists; 14% of whom came for leisure purposes, 26% for business and over 50% to meet their family according to the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. **Tourism industry has been growing in recent years at an average rate of 15% to 20% in spite of the security concerns** highlighted by the international media.

Confidence in Pakistan as a travel destination was largely boosted by the famous biker-tourist, Mohammad Iqbal Ghangla, who chose Pakistan as a place to launch a 12,000 kilometers Pakistan Motorbike Tour under the theme "Welcome to Pakistan" so as to appeal to would-be travelers to visit the country. The tour took him to the most hostile places in Pakistan, the Tribal Areas.

The success of the tour was to demonstrate to foreign travelers as well as to local tourists that Pakistan was peaceful and had many beautiful places to visit. The 30-days tour kicked off in November 5th in Mutan and Muhammad toured Swat, Dera Ismail Khan, the Tribal Areas, Jiwani, Quetta, Vihari, Murree, Ayubia, Faisalabad, Kashmir, Sehwan and many other places throughout the country.

However, this was not his first tour to Pakistan. In 2006-2007, he had travelled more than 6000 kilometers throughout Pakistan on a 12 feet long bicycle. In June, 2006, he had travelled from Madina to Makkah on foot for seven days. He says that his role was largely to demonstrate the stability in the region and the many beautiful places to visit in Pakistan without fear.

Another contributor to the success of Pakistan tourism last year was the massive support given to both local and foreign tourists by the Tourist Information and Reservation Centre based in Islamabad. The center would assist tourists to plan their holidays in the country, provide transport and tour packages at affordable costs as well as assist in booking hotels or motels. There are a total of 18 Tourist Information Centers throughout the country from where tourists can get similar assistance.

In addition, the infrastructure to support the tourism industry is already there with hotels, motels and restaurants even in the far flung areas of the country for affordable and reliable dining and accommodation.

The PTDC is looking forward to boosting tourism revenues from the launch of new tourist centers in Balochistan, which despite the scant lawlessness remaining is a potential destination for both local and foreign tourists. The PTDC also recently held a photo exhibition to display and market all the tourist resorts within Pakistan.

Tourism potential in Pakistan is enormous and the PTDC is doing its best to boost confidence in

Pakistan as a favorite travel destination and get more revenues for the tourism industry. Muhammad's role in displaying Pakistan as a popular travel destination has helped the once-dying tourism industry but the confidence is getting back to tourists and the potential is there for more growth.

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