

# New International Association to Boost Religious Tourism



Taking into account the growing influence of religion as a component of travel, a new international association has been set up with the aim of promoting this particular branch of tourism. Indeed, a recent survey has indicated that over 25% of Americans choose their destinations on the basis of their particular faith.

At a recent conference on religious tourism, held in Cyprus, it was estimated that worldwide, the industry makes around \$18 billion per year. It would be fair to say that financial gain is not the main reason behind the establishment of the new association.

It has been described as a joint venture between the Religious Marketing Consultancy group and the Christian Travel Finder organisation. Its aim is to make faith-based trips a key option for all travellers. The association aims to host its first travel exposition in September 2008. The event will be an opportunity for travel agencies worldwide to advertise their products and services to religious travellers.

Visits to disaster zones are becoming increasingly common as more and more Christians are tending to go on trips to areas of the world which have been devastated by war or natural disaster. After the tsunami disaster of 2004, areas such as Sri Lanka and Thailand were inundated by Christian tourists. The association is set to offer more market services, opportunities, networking, education, media coverage, research and consulting in order to increase the quality and quantity of such trips.

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