

OMAN FOCUSING ON SAUDI TOURISTS



According to tourism management officials, the country of Oman is making efforts to attract more tourists and business-people from Saudi Arabia by incorporating more tourist accommodation services, a more organized societal infrastructure and a stronger economy to create financial incentives for business.

The Ministry of Tourism's director of development, Salem Al Mamari, has stressed the importance of the Saudi market and its relationship with Oman. **Salem has announced that both he and the Ministry are "...continually working to draw Saudi tourists into Oman"** as the interaction with Saudi citizens and businesses is a strong stabilizing force in the economy of Oman.

Tourism officials are actively advocating travel to places all across Oman. Oman received approximately 17,000 Saudi tourists in 2013, with most of them visiting the city of Salalah. In perspective to the vast population of Oman, the number of visitors was relatively small.

Salem publicly promoted Oman by explaining its friendliness to foreign businesses, making mention of the many hotels, transportation services and telecommunication outlets across the country. He also brought up the private and public project opportunities provided by the Omani government for private and public sector partnerships.

Salem also informed potential tourists that Oman was very tourist friendly, announcing that acquiring a visa in the country has become much easier, and that "Gulf Cooperation Council" country citizens can enter and exit Oman without visa.

Even though many efforts have been made to increase the volume of tourism in Oman, Salem highlighted that he and the ministry don't care that much about the quantity, but rather the quality of tourists visiting Oman. He then went on to compare his ideal outcome to Europe's infrastructure, stating that the ministry is trying to establish a similar system.

Lastly, Al-Mamari spoke on the Omani government and its efforts to increase the amount of hotel rooms in Oman, saying that **by the year 2020, their goal was to go from 14,000 total hotel rooms to 32,000**. Oman is also constructing 5 airports for international flights, including one in the popular city of Salalah that is intended to open within a year. Shortly afterwards, in 2015, another airport will open in the city of Muscat.

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