

EXPO MILAN 2015 - FIRST EXPERIENCES



The Milan Expo, which began May 1st and will continue until October 31st, is in full swing. The chosen theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" is more or less respected, but some countries made a special effort to stick to the topic.

Always an extremely popular event, the Universal Exposition attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every 5 years. **Many countries, including the smallest ones like Vatican and Monaco, make a special effort to be present at this event which is a tremendous promotional opportunity.**

For visitors coming from the Milan city center the easiest way to reach the Rho Fiera Expo, the gigantic Milan exhibition grounds, is by the metro. A "fair" ticket for 5 Euros is good for one round trip on the M1 line. The metro, practical and clean, favours standing, with only a few side-facing seats.

Once the visitors arrive they need to walk from the terminal to the first Expo entrance and get ready for two security checks. Grounds maps are distributed sparingly. On the other hand, organizers set up a great WiFi network, which is free and which includes presentations, program, schedules and much more useful information.

For those that are hungry, numerous bars, cafés, restaurants, and shops are available although none sell regional specialities, food or craft. While prices of food and other products are rather high, fountains of flat or sparkling water provide free water to all visitors.

While some countries like Israel, France, Spain, and Chile made a concerted effort focusing on the "Feeding the Planet" theme, others seem not so concerned. For them it seems the Expo is a tremendous tourism showcase and for the visitors it may feel like a tourism fair.

Such is the case with Slovenia for example, that dispatched student and institutional forces to promote their destination. All fluent in the language of Dante, they sell the country and its features with heavy charm and efficiency. Others, like Sudan, simply stick a couple of clichés on the walls and transform their area into a souk.

360° screens, technological innovations, augmented reality, stunning clips ... the Expo is an overview of what works best with regard to image. Needless to say, the receptacle always plays the flagship role. Pavilion architecture is in fact the first showcase of the exhibitors.

From this perspective, a few exhibitors distinguish themselves and France has not been left behind, far from it. The French pavilion built and assembled entirely out of laminated light-coloured wood, is like an elegant and sensual wave (see the picture). However, the show is also outside, with a spectacular garden heaping with various grains, strawberries, zucchinis, tomatoes, olive trees, herbs.

In a nutshell, this Expo delivers all it promises. Logistics hold up, it seems well-organized as a whole and the flows are channelled efficiently. For those who planned on attending just one day, choose your stands wisely because the most popular ones, such as the United Arab Emirates, show a wait time of over twenty minutes.

It is smart to start the visit with the least crowded countries and wait until the end of the day for the rest. But don't wait too long because at 9 p.m. all the countries take down their stand ... with the notable exception of Azerbaijan! Yet, announcements over the PA system broadcast a closing time of 10:30 p.m. and evening tickets are sold with entry time starting at 7 p.m.!

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