

DUBAI TOURISM BOARD TARGETING AFRICAN CLIENTS



After having established itself as a leading destination for business tourism and luxury, the emirate of Dubai mostly targets the wealthier clientele. A new Dubai tourism strategy has been put in place to attract visitors from Africa.

The objective and the ambition of the tourism department of the emirate is 20 million tourists by 2020. **This is more than 5 million additional tourists, of which 10% are Africans, who need to be convinced by this deadline, the year in which the city should host the World Expo.**

It is therefore no longer a question for the Dubai tourism operators to content themselves with the image of a luxury destination, reserved exclusively for the wealthy.

“So far, most of our clientele comprised businessmen who come to do business all over the Middle East from Dubai, or wealthy tourists who come to vacation in our palaces,” explains Anas Allouch, director of communications of the department of tourism.

“There is now real desire to open ourselves up to a new, less affluent clientele, particularly from Africa.”

A policy has been put in place in recent years to increase the offer in terms of three- and four-star hotels. The State grants a total exemption of “fees” (in Dubai, not “taxes” but “royalties”) for these establishments during the first five years, but also an exemption of 50% for the following five years.

“This has allowed the large Emirati groups like Emaar to launch their own hotels positioned within this niche,” says the Dubai tourism communications manager. With this adapted hotel offer, Dubai hopes to lure some of the travelers passing through its international airport, which has recently dethroned Heathrow in London as the number one international airport, with more than 92 million passengers.

Among the passengers in transit, there are many Africans. It is a market in which the Gulf emirate plans to increase its shares. “The African clientele currently in Dubai is limited to Nigerians and Angolans, but our airport sees all nationalities passing through,” explains Anas Allouch.

“The idea is thus to put in place a different offer which would allow these travelers to spend a few nights in Dubai and to enjoy all the leisure and advantages that the city offers.”

Presently, the African clientele represents only 5% of the tourists who go to Dubai, i.e. 500,000 people - a figure that the Dubai tourism board intends to double within four years. According to statistics from the national tourism office, a total of 127,000 Nigerians and 211,000 Egyptians visited Dubai from January to September 2016.

There are plenty of attractions in this small 4,000-hectare emirate. Dubai is a kind of Disneyland for adults. You can start your day, for example, with a balloon ride above the desert to admire the stunning sunrise and then finish late at night in one of the many nightclubs scattered among the palaces of the city.

Meanwhile, one can visit the tallest tower of the world, Burj Khalifa, standing at 840 meters high, or one can even go skiing at the Mall of the Emirates. **“For a more family-orientated clientele, we have the new amusement parks that have just opened and that target some six million visitors next year,”** said Tarek El Moukachar, communications manager at Dubai Parks & Resorts, who has just inaugurated Bollywood Park, a theme park which is unparalleled in the world.

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