

Dubai's new ventures drive tourism targets

The recent unveiling of a plethora of exciting new developments means that Dubai is well on track to achieve tourism targets of 15 million tourists per year by 2015. Shows such as the recent Arabian Travel Market 2008, which opened to record crowds, provide the emirate with a platform to demonstrate its position as a leading destination for tourism by unveiling a series of awe-inspiring and pioneering new developments. Dubai is successfully diversifying its economy, and considerably increasing investment in infrastructure across a range of sectors pinpointed as crucial drivers in attracting visitors to the emirate.

Ian Scott, director of the UK and Ireland representative office of Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing, comments on the recent unveilings: "Dubai is a destination where you can expect the best, known for its ground-breaking projects the emirate continues to expand its globally acclaimed leisure and business facilities of superlative quality".

Amongst these inspiring new developments are a number of high-profile and exciting hotel projects. In 2007 there were 452 hotels and apartments in the emirate, and this figure is set to further grow as new developments continue to fuel visitor demand. In tandem with this, room numbers are predicted to swell from 50,306 in 2007 to 63,317 by 2010. This massive growth is reflected in the emirate's hotel annual occupancy levels which are among the highest in the world, at 84.4 per cent in 2007 and on course to dramatically increase in 2008.

New hotel developments include Sol Kerzner's Atlantis The Palm, a two-tower luxury development with 1,539 rooms which is expected to open this September. At the other end of the spectrum, boutique hotel Desert Palm has just opened, idyllically situated on a lush polo estate and featuring a luxurious Lime Spa by Per Aquum. In addition when the world's tallest building Burj Dubai opens in 2009 it will house the world's first Armani Hotel alongside 160 luxury apartments, all specially designed by Giorgio Armani himself. And, Emaar's new brand The Address is also set to open three new properties in the next seven months at Dubai Marina, Dubai Mall and Downtown Dubai.

Dubai is aiming to become the world's leading family destination for the UK and Irish markets by the year 2012, with many new family-orientated projects in the pipeline. Dubailand, which will house 24 theme parks, will be one of the world's largest leisure attractions covering three billion square feet and twice the size of Walt Disney World Florida. Dubailand's attractions will include Legoland, opening 2011, The Restless Planet, a dinosaur theme park opening late 2008 and Dubai Sports City featuring large state of the art stadia and sports facilities, the first stage of which is already complete. The Dubailand development will also feature Universal Studios' Universal City, as well as Six Flags and Marvel Entertainment theme parks.

Whether it is business or leisure travel access to the emirate has never been easier. Dubai is the aviation hub of the Middle East, acting as a link between the East and West. Poised to open in 2009 Dubai World Central (DWC) will act as catalyst to further boost regional tourism growth. More than just an airport DWC will be the world's first logistics hub connecting air, sea, rail and road, taking just four hours to transport

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cargo from port to plane. Al Maktoum International Airport will be at the centre of DWC and is set to be the size of Chicago O'Hare airport and London Heathrow combined. The airports capacity is expected to reach 70 million per year by 2015.

The emirate is already one of the world's leading maritime destinations and with over 51,000 new berths to be added to the emirate's current portfolio, which includes marinas, waterside developments and harbours. This is set to establish Dubai as the leading location for boating holidays, overtaking popular destinations in Europe and the rest of the world. Dubai Maritime City, the world's first purpose built maritime centre, is set to open this year. Opening in stages, it will cover 227 hectares upon completion, providing outstanding infrastructure and addressing the requirements of the nautical community both nationally and internationally.

Arabian Travel Market also highlighted Dubai's reputation as a world-class MICE destination. Leading accommodation, convention facilities, incentives and a strategic location all serve to demonstrate the emirate's status as a global hotspot for the MICE Industry. Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC), is the region's flagship events venue and has been specifically designed to cater for a wide range of needs, large or small, and has an overall capacity of 12,000. Upcoming developments include The Palm Jumeirah which will unite outstanding conference and meetings facilities with exceptional leisure opportunities. Furthermore, hosting the World Travel and Tourism Council's Global Travel and Tourism Summit April 2008 and ATM May 2008 has allowed the emirate to continue to showcase its exemplary facilities, illustrating why Dubai will continue to be the first choice for many as the ideal location for global conferencing.

And these developments are just the tip of the iceberg, as the emirate continues to expand its portfolio of attractions and developments to meet the needs of a growing market, so Dubai continues to set itself apart from the competition, leading the region as internationally acclaimed destination with an incomparable diversity of product.

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