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Dubai aims to be world's leading family destination by 2012 for UK and Ireland

Ian Scott, UK and Ireland director of Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing, has today announced that Dubai is aiming to become the world's leading family destination for the UK and Irish markets by the year 2012. Commenting on Dubai's status as a world-class family destination, Ian said: *"Dubai's bold and progressive attitude to growth will see a whole host of exciting family oriented development initiatives open over the next few years offering an impressive portfolio of exceptional facilities for families. These iconic developments will continue to set Dubai apart from its competitors, rivalling other more traditional family destinations."*

The diversification of Dubai's economy into tourism areas has been instrumental in the emirate's success as a destination, and the family sector is a key area within this market. An array of high-profile family oriented projects is set to open soon in the emirate. SeaWorld parent company Busch Entertainment Corporation is opening four theme parks on The Palm Jebel Ali - the **Worlds of Discovery** will be located on a killer whale-shaped man-made island incorporating SeaWorld, Aquatica, Busch Gardens and Discovery Cove. Openings will be staggered from 2012.

When it opens in Autumn 2008, **Atlantis The Palm** will boast a 50-acre waterscape, the largest in the region, being home to 65,000 fish and aquatic animals, over 2km of non-stop river action with cascades, tidal waves and rapids as well as a private beach with watersports and a giant playground of water thrills. The resort will also have its own **Dolphin Bay**, an 11 acre coastal habitat which will be home to 28 Bottle Nose Dolphins in three lagoons.

Other forthcoming developments for families to look forward to include the exciting **Six Flags** theme park development at **Dubailand**. This immense development (5 billion sq feet) is the first of its kind outside the US and will cater to the needs of the entire family with diverse projects ranging from theme parks and ecotourism, to shopping malls and sports facilities. Internationally renowned entertainment groups such as the children's musical group **The Wiggles** and professional skateboarder **Tony Hawk** are flocking to be part of the exciting project.

Universal Studios' Universal City also at Dubailand will boast mind-blowing "ride-the-movies", offering adventures based on films such as King Kong, and TV show-based attractions. The park will be one of the largest in the world, covering 6.5 million sq ft and will also include 4,000 luxury hotel rooms, 100 restaurants, and retail outlets. The 505-acre project is scheduled to open in 2010, with the theme park encompassing a phenomenal 149 acres. **DreamWorks Animation** is also developing a range of projects in Dubailand. The centrepiece will be the world's first DreamWorks Animation branded theme park. The five million sq ft project will bring to life much-loved film characters such as Shrek.

The current star attraction of Dubailand, **Jumana - Secret Of The Desert**, is one of the most spectacular open air stage shows in the world, celebrating Arabia's rich history and culture to inspire the whole family.

"Dubai offers a complete package for all the family, from culture to action and adventure. Whatever your preference the emirate really does have something for everyone. The diverse family offering, combined with

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the emirate's safe environment and great climate means that Dubai is fast establishing itself as an outstanding destination for the family market," Ian continues.

In Dubai there is a constant stream of new and exciting developments on the horizon. **Cirque du Soleil's** spectacular acrobatics and cutting-edge imagery will be an immensely popular fixture on the entertainment scene with a permanent venue and show at **The Palm Jumeirah**. Furthermore, UAE-based real estate group Al Ahli has struck a partnership with **Marvel Entertainment** to create a Dubai theme park. Due to open in 2011, it will feature rides based on Marvel's Spider-Man, X-Men and the Incredible Hulk. Al Ahli has also signed a deal with **Nickelodeon** to bring some of its much loved characters to the theme park.

Dubai enjoys a warm and sunny climate throughout the year, and with only a seven hour direct flight from the UK, it's close enough to avoid jet lag – perfect for families with kids. The emirate is easily accessible, with 136 direct weekly flights from the UK and this is set to increase in 2008. And, some of the world's best family oriented hotels are located in the emirate such as the **Jumeirah Beach Hotel** with its world-class facilities and service, excellent location and Sinbad Kid's Club for the children and the **Le Royal Meridien Hotel and Resort** which is set amid beautifully landscaped gardens and the golden sands of the Jumeirah strip, it's perfect for families with young children with Penguin Club daily activities.

Dubai has quickly established itself as a leading family destination. For parents planning a holiday it's always a top priority that the kids will be kept entertained and happy - Dubai takes care of this in every sense! Constantly evolving and innovating to offer an ever increasing choice for visitors, Dubai is set to achieve a phenomenal growth in international arrivals, on course to reach 15 million by the year 2015.

Dubai prides itself on its reputation as the leading global tourist destination for leisure and entertainment. Having established itself at the forefront of innovation through a growing list of pioneering projects and developments - Dubai always looks to go beyond people's wildest dreams. Whether its water parks and beaches that float your boat, or rollercoaster rides and the circus that tickle your fancy – Dubai is the ideal family destination. Combining water parks, theme parks and many more activities, with safe beaches and year round sunshine there is no shortage of adventure and fun for all ages.

Virgin Holidays Worldwide is offering three nights at the 5 star Hilton Dubai Jumeirah from £589 per adult and £329 per child. Price includes return international flights with Virgin Atlantic from Heathrow direct to Dubai. Prices are also based on two adults sharing from 20 June – 15 July (prices may be subject to a fuel surcharge and an increase in Air Passenger Duty). Visit www.virginholidays.com or call 0844 5573 861.

For further information about Dubai, contact Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing on +44 (0) 20 7839 0580, email: dtcm_uk@dubaitourism.ae or visit www.dubaitourism.ae

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