

VENUES, CONFERENCES,
MEETINGS, EXHIBITIONS,
INCENTIVES, EDUCATION,
EVENTS, DESTINATIONS

UPDATE

Region urged to lift profile of industry

MEETINGS

The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC), the international industry organisation, has urged the Middle East to help raise the profile of the meetings industry within the region.

Chair of JMIC, Barbara Maple, said one of the biggest challenges was overcoming the “low profile relative to other industries” that the meetings industry suffered from.

“Few government decision makers, and even fewer in the broader business community, are even aware that we exist as a distinct business sector,” Maple said.

She added it was incredibly important for “emerging regions” to work with JMIC to help it continue its work in promoting the meetings industry.

“The Middle East is a good example of such a region – where the pressures of indus-

try development are particularly demanding, yet it hasn’t been a prominent player in the local business community long enough to ensure good awareness of what the industry is, what kinds of benefits it delivers and what sort of support it needs in order to prosper,” Maple said.

“By taking advantage of what JMIC represents, an emerging region can more quickly take its place amongst established countries and regions and access the networks and resources that will enable it to promote its value and issues more effectively to local audiences,” she added.

JMIC has witnessed a recent surge in membership, having welcomed three new affiliates in the past three months; the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) and Destination Management Association International (DMAI)



Barbara Maple JMIC Chair.

have joined as full members while the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) has agreed to cooperate with other JMIC members in support of its mandate to provide a forum for overall industry issues and take action to enhance in-

dustry profile and a better understanding of its benefits.

“This new surge of membership reflects a growing understanding of the need we have to take more direct action as a group and to raise the profile of the industry to the point where we are seen as a real factor in the global economy,” Maple added.

JMIC consists of eleven major international associations, including AIPC (The International Association of Congress Centres), COCAL (The Latin American Confederation of PCO and Related Companies), ECM (European Cities Marketing), EVVC (The European Association of Event Centres), IAPCO (The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers), ICCA (The International Congress and Convention Association), MPI (Meeting Professionals International), and SITE (the Society of Incentive & Travel Executives).

Cruises labelled “blessings in disguise” for planners

VENUES

The burgeoning Middle East cruise market offers “unique and value-for-money” meetings and incentives options for planners, according to industry experts.

With more than 82 ships scheduled to dock in Dubai in 2009, conferences and incentives on cruises are expected to become a popular option for delegates, combining the hotel stay with sightseeing for a lower cost.

Country manager UAE and Oman, Kanoo Travel, Sunil D-Souza said that cruising was becoming more popular with corporate clients who were booking short trips for meetings.

“The corporate market is starting to ask us for choices on cruises because it’s a blessing in disguise for bookers. For one single booking and price it combines all the luxuries of a hotel stay

with the good things of visiting a destination and an onboard itinerary,” he said.

As well as providing an easy booking option for planners, Silversea senior vice president of sales and marketing for UK, Ireland and the Middle East, Trudy Redfern said that cruises provided a fantastic environment for delegates, without the worry of transport issues and additional expenses.

“The meetings and incentive market is very popular. You have a captive market,” Redfern said.



Sunil D-Souza said cruises offered a great deal in one booking.



30 MILLION
PowerPoint
presentations given
worldwide every day

Destination marketing survey needs you

SURVEY Travel, tourism, hospitality, leisure and retail professionals are being urged to take part in a destination marketing survey that aims to identify some of the key issues they face when promoting their products and services both regionally and globally.

The Middle East's largest B2B publisher, Dubai-based ITP Business Publishing, has launched the survey in the run up to the Middle East Tourism Marketing Summit 2009 (METMS: 2009) — a one-and-a-half day event to be staged in April or May next year under the patronage of Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) in association with Fusion Marketing Management and supported by

US-based international advertising and marketing firm, MMG Worldwide.

As the exclusive B2B publishing firm selected to cover the event, ITP Business Publishing last month emailed the destination marketing survey to its hefty database covering key readers of the following magazines: *Meetings Industry Middle East*, *Arabian Travel News*, *Hotelier Middle East*, *Leisure Manager* and *Retail News*.

Readers are being urged to send their responses to the survey as soon as possible with a view to each publication publishing their findings in their February issues, ahead of the summit.

It is hoped the findings will also help shape the agenda at the summit by identifying the

topics of discussion are required to help the travel, tourism, leisure, hospitality and retail industries move forward in terms of promoting their products, services and relevant destination to the world.

METMS: 2009 will be an invitation-only event that aims to attract around 100 top-level executives from a wide range of categories including destinations, airlines, hotels, travel suppliers and leisure, attractions and retail managers.

The target audience will be the region's CEOs, COOs, VPs and directors of marketing and finance to include key tourism officials and government developers, major shopping mall and integrated resort developers, hotel chain heads, airline and transport officials and

other travel industry management professionals.

A programme of events is yet to be unveiled but is expected to include debates, presentations from keynote speakers and workshops in a bid to encourage interaction between all participants.

If you would like to take part in the destination marketing survey, please email gemma.greenwood@itp.com

To express your interest in attending METMS: 2009 email: mktg@fusion-mgt.com



Companies seek "immersive" incentives to stay ahead of the game

INCENTIVES Middle East leisure facilities are offering increasingly unique incentive options to cater to demand from the Dubai meetings market.

Camel polo was the latest in a line of out-of-the-ordinary team-building options to be launched in Dubai, as the region's meetings market "looks for somewhere to go," according to Grant Thornton's hospitality and leisure consultant Grant Salter.

Salter said the buzz word to describe the experience corporate clients were looking for was an "immersive" experience.

"It's all about getting clients involved and interactive so that from the moment they walk through the gates they're in a different world; that's the main appeal to corporate guests in this region," Salter said.

His most recent project in-



involved developing a conference centre, with the capacity of 1500, due to be opened next year at the Al Ain Wildlife Park and Resort.

"I don't think the business model of blending corporate into leisure and vice versa is something new here but it can be done bet-

ter in certain markets," said Salter. "The wildlife park will certainly cater for something that is out of the ordinary and quite unique."

The development will offer corporate conference packages, which include early morning and lunchtime tours of the park, functions set in the bush, wildlife themed evenings outside of the typical conference environment and themed buffets.

Similarly, business development manager for Dnata, which has organised the launch of camel polo at Arabian Ranches Polo Club, Dubai, Adrian Sime said, "We're always looking for innovative ways to attract our corporate customers. We conducted a rigorous account research programme, which told us doing something different is one of the most important factors for companies."

"We thought 'why not take two elements from the Middle East, camels and polo and bring them together to form camel polo?' It makes an ideal team-building sport," added Sime.

General manager of the Royal Golf Club, Barhain, Michael Braidwood said that although the club had always targeted the corporate market, it had recently developed facilities to offer more variety to feed the market.

"Our new club facilities cater to meetings and incentives and, with five restaurants and an array of leisure activities, we can create attractive and interesting events for our corporate clients.

"We've also have a creative team behind them, dedicated to offering our corporate clients a very unique experience," he added.

United Abu Dhabi triumphs once again



■ His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz Bin Ahmad Al Saud, Chairman of MEACO, His Excellency Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority and His Excellency Zaid Al Siksek, Chief Executive of the Health Authority.

CONGRESS Abu Dhabi secured the World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC) 2012, because of its united approach, according to leading medical council directors.

The WOC, which is expected to attract more than 12,000 international delegates to the UAE capital, is the world's longest running and largest international medical meeting.

His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz Bin Ahmad Al Saud, chairman of the Middle East African Council of Ophthalmology (MEACO) and member of the board of directors of the In-

ternational Council for Ophthalmology (ICO) Foundation said, "the over-riding factor in Abu Dhabi's selection was its total-destination approach" to the bid.

"Various government organisations came together to produce what can only be described as an impressive, consolidated and convincing bid," he added.

The move is seen as a major coup for Abu Dhabi and a huge boost to its credentials as a preferred destination for international medical meetings.

WOC 2012 will be held at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition

Centre (ADNEC) in February 2012. WOC is a biennial event traditionally held in a different world region — with 2012 marking its debut on Middle East and African territory.

"The move to the Middle East and Africa represents a significant outreach for ICO which has traditionally opted for more conventional venues within the Americas, Europe and Asia," said Dr. Bruce Spivey, President, ICO.

"We are delivering a strong message to our colleagues in the Middle East and Africa that their specific concerns are also ours — an approach that is firmly in line with the WOC's mission of contributing to the progress of ophthalmology by stimulating discussion among professionals involved in this rapidly advancing scientific and medical discipline."

"WOC 2012 will very much be a case of the world's oldest, and one of its most successful, international medical gatherings convening within the con-

finer of one of the world's most modern convention complexes to deliver an event of truly world-class standing," said His Excellency Sheikh Sultan Bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) and ADNEC.

"It also gives us an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate Abu Dhabi's capabilities as a world-class convention destination and its uncompromising approach to delivering unparalleled hospitality."

As part of ADTA's philanthropic contribution, it has offered to provide 200 hotel rooms within the UAE capital which will be allocated to WOC delegates from less wealthy developing nations within the Middle East and Africa region.

"Abu Dhabi's hotel room inventory will be in excess of 26,000 in 2012 and the destination is also rapidly developing the international convention expertise to ensure its success as a major global meetings destination," explained Sheikh Sultan.

Networking possibilities of business cards not being fully exploited

NETWORKING Research has revealed that a third of people never look at the business cards they receive, marking a substantial loss in business networking opportunities.

Despite this, nearly 60% of those surveyed said business cards would never become extinct as a business tool.

CEO of brand engagement specialists Kyp Systems, the company behind the research, Nicholas Miller, said the findings indicated companies were failing to exploit a useful business format.

"Companies need to ensure

that their business cards work harder beyond the initial point of exchange," Miller said.

"They need to act not simply as a convenient memory aid, but as a physical representation of a brand," he added.

Indeed, 87% of survey respondents said they were more likely to keep, look at and share business cards that were more engaging — by containing better content or through eye catching and innovative design.

"Clearly people still relish the business card swap as a real opportunity for direct contact. Such

opportunities are becoming rarer in today's digital world and should be viewed as a chance to

communicate a lot more than just where your office is located," Miller added.



■ CEO of Kyp Systems Nicholas Miller.