

Cyprus gaining popularity as a tourism destination

Cyprus, an island with 'sun, sea and sand' is emerging as a year-round tourist destination. TRAVTALK interviewed Hrach Kalsahakian, manager - sales and marketing, Cyprus Tourism Organisation, to learn more about the potential of Cyprus as a MICE and tourist destination.

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Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean, is putting its turbulent history behind it and emerging as a year round tourist destination. Traditionally, tourists from the UK are known to frequent this island with 'sun, sea and sand'. A former British colony, which gained independence in 1960, Cyprus, has been a member of the European Union since 2004. The country adopted the Euro on January 1, 2008.

The ethnic Greeks and Turks faced years of intercommunal violence.

1) Could you give us the number of tourist arrivals in Cyprus in the last 3 years, the percentage increase in tourists and the break up of leisure and corporate travellers?

The tourism industry has developed dramatically and is one of the major contributors to the

country's gross domestic product (GDP). There are plenty and excellent hotel facilities that cater to holidays only and business hotels or a combination of both.

In 2006, total arrivals were 2,401,000, out of which 38,100 were from Middle East countries.

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Likewise, in 2007, the total arrivals were 2,416,000, out of which 49,900 were from Middle East countries. In 2008, arrivals for the first 10 months were 2,233,000, out of which



Hrach Kalsahakian, manager - sales and marketing, Cyprus Tourism Organisation

41,000 were from Middle East countries.

2) What is the revenue for the country from tourism?

Tourism earnings represent about 18 per cent of Cyprus's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2006, the earnings from tourism sector were estimated at Euros 1.76 billion. In 2007, the earnings were Euros 1.86 billion. Similarly, for the first ten months of 2008, the revenues amounted to Euros 1.66 billion.

3) Can Cyprus handle MICE events and cater to a delegation of 2,000+ at a time? Could you list the convention and exhibition centres in the main cities of Limassol and Nicosia?

There are approximately 350 conference rooms available island-wide. Around 30,000 beds are available in hotels with conference facilities alone. The break up is as follows: Nicosia - 7,000; Limassol - 7,500; Paphos - 8,000; Larnaca - 3,000 and Famagusta - 4,500.

As far as conference centres are concerned, Nicosia has the Cyprus Conference Centre with a seating capacity of 1,200 persons and the State Fairs Conference Centre with a similar capacity. New, high-tech conference centre with a seating capacity of 2,000 is being planned in Limassol.

4) Which are the airlines that operate flights into Cyprus every week from UAE?

Cyprus Airways operates twice weekly flights to Larnaka, while Emirates Airlines has daily flights to Larnaka. Gulf Air also operates twice weekly flights from Bahrain to Larnaka through Dubai

5) Is Cyprus Tourism Board working with any organisation in UAE to take MICE traveller coming to Dubai further to Cyprus for a small holiday - an incentive the corporates would like to give their employees?

In the last four years since the founding of this office we have co-operated with major and medium size players in the market to promote Cyprus as incentives destination besides the established image and market positioning we have as a short haul holiday destination. Cyprus is emerging as a very affordable and overwhelmingly cost-effective destination for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) business.

6) Are you conducting regular workshops or sending information to educate the travel

agent selling the destination about the attractions of the place like wine tasting festival, things to do, beaches, climatic conditions, etc.?

We have our regular newsletter that goes to all travel agents and tour operators in the Middle East besides the flash news that we broadcast occasionally. We also issue press releases, especially during regional exhibitions like ATM or when there is need to convey a message to the wider audience. All information is available online through our regional website www.cyprusme.com.

Tourism Figures

1) Tourist arrivals from Middle East

- 2006-38,100 tourists
- 2007-49,900 tourists
- 2008-41,000 tourists in the first 10 months

2) Revenue from tourism

- Revenue from tourism is 18 per cent of GDP
- 2006 - Euros 1.76 billion
- 2007 - Euros 1.86 billion
- 2008 - Euros 1.66 billion for first 10 months

Hertz announces new monthly rental promotion scheme

Hertz Rent a Car Company, a part of Al Futtaim Group, has launched a new monthly rental promotion scheme, giving customers the opportunity to win prizes and save money on monthly car rentals.

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Four prizes are being awarded to Hertz car rental customers, with two winners for the month of December 2008 and two winners for the month of January 2009. Under the scheme, all Hertz customers, new and existing ones, who hire a car for the full

In addition to the great prizes on offer at the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah, customers can also save money on their monthly car rentals
Nigel Johnson

month of December or January, will automatically go into a lucky draw to win two nights

in a double room, including breakfast at the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah or the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Resort and Spa. Hertz will also provide a Group-E hire car such as a Honda Accord for the weekend.

Nigel Johnson, general manager, Hertz UAE said in a statement issued to the press, "In



Nigel Johnson, general manager, Hertz UAE

addition to the great prizes on offer at the Hilton Ras Al Khaimah, customers can also save money on their monthly

car rentals. Customers holding onto their Hertz car hire for the duration of the holiday season, even if they are heading out of the UAE for a short period, will be rewarded by paying the 2008 rate until the end of January 2009. A higher tariff will be effective from January 1, 2009, applicable to all new contracts."

New scheme

- Hertz Rent a Car Company has launched a new monthly rental promotion scheme
- Customers will get an opportunity to win prizes and save money on monthly car rentals