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A Note From The Editor



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"Islamic Tourism" Revisited

We have been writing, occasionally, on the concept of "Islamic Tourism". These writing generated a debate on the concept and a conference was even organised to discuss and clarify the term. We are proud that we brought it into centre stage and we have created an awareness of it. We subsequently discovered that some are choosing it as a topic for their MA and PhD theses and we continuously receive questions about it. I have recently replied to some questions that were put to me to clarify the concept of "Islamic Tourism". Here are some further thoughts.

The concept "Islamic Tourism" is so wide and not easily defined. In its narrow sense, it may mean "Religious Tourism" (Visiting shrines all over the Islamic World). But in its wide sense, it is the type of tourism that adheres to the values of Islam. Most of these values are shared with other religious and non-religious beliefs (for example the ethical code promoted by World Tourism Organisation). It calls for respect for local communities and the local environment, benefiting the locals, decency and learning about other cultures.

Examples of Islamic Tourism: Visiting Islamic shrines and historical sites, participating in cultural exchange that would bring different nations closer and understanding the other. It also includes all other types of tourism which are not in conflict with Islamic law and belief. I don't think that it is all that much different from other types of tourism. However, I don't think that the following types of tourism are accepted by Islam: Gay & Lesbian Tourism, Music Tours, Sun and Beach Tourism and singles travel (especially for Muslim women in a non-Islamic country).

I think that there is a need for such tourism. The modern world tends to classify different functions. Tourism now has different categories. The concept of "Islamic Tourism" may come under "Religious Tourism" but it is a much wider (Please note that the category of "Religious Tourism" is now used by international organizations).

Islam is not really limited to religious practices but includes all aspects of life. I suppose that in a truly Islamic society, when people's sensibilities are governed by the spirit of Islam, there will not be a need for a title such as "Islamic Tourism". If you go back to Islamic history you will find "Rihlah" which can be for visiting a shrine, gathering the Hadith of the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him), studying or teaching. Some of these Rihlat are recorded in books and they are valuable sources of information about different nations. No one called these "Islamic Tourism" but they are at the heart of the concept. I think the concept of "Islamic Tourism" is evolving and it will keep doing so, in tandem with the development of Muslim societies and Islamic thinking. I hope that the above mentioned points, and the work of ITM, will help in shaping this development. For comments, please write to:

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