

# Indian Tourism

## An all out drive to attract Arabian Gulf tourists

Dubai - Islamic tourism

India is making a major effort to promote tourism this year with emphasis now being placed on attracting the Gulf Arabs, due to the tourist short haul flight and their high spending power.

The prime focus will be Kashmir, which has re-emerged as a major tourist destination for Arabs in particular. According to Prakash Jajoria, the new regional director of India Tourism in Dubai for West Asia and Africa, in two and a half months this summer, they saw 7000 foreign tourist in Kashmir, enjoying the delights of the renowned houseboats on Dal and Nagin Lakes as well as the other popular sights and experiences. Security concerns have been addressed, safe areas have been identified for tourists, and packages covering a range of accommodation and sightseeing options, are offered. ➤



سباق القوارب.  
Boat Race.

Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, was often referred to as "paradise on earth" by the early Mughals, who journeyed to the cooler mountains of Kashmir in summer and developed Srinagar's famous waterfront Mughal Gardens. The Mughals also patronized art and culture among the people of Kashmir – a rich heritage that thrives today in the plethora of artisanship and making of handicraft, prized as gifts, worldwide. Kashmir is a land where many holiday dreams are realized; spectacular landscapes, distinctive seasons, skiing and

sledging along the slopes of the Gulmarg – the "valley of flowers", as well as golfing and water skiing.

Of the 2.3 million foreign tourists who visited India in 2003, nearly 100,000 were from the Arabian Gulf. This trend is certain to grow further, said Jajoria, and this year, 10% more tourists are expected to visit India than last year. Indian Airlines is offering special fares on the Delhi-Srinagar flights. Among the recent moves, the Indian government is making special arrangements to ease visa restrictions and

regulations for visiting Gulf Arabs. Jajoria added that he planned to co-ordinate with foreign airlines operating to India to promote tourism, aiming at people of different nationalities living in the UAE.

It has been observed that Gulf holiday makers like the casual and informal atmosphere in India and the typical 'human touch' to services. There is a real empathy in terms of culture and the extensive mix of art, leisure activities, shopping, and the sense of shared history and values that hold a special appeal.

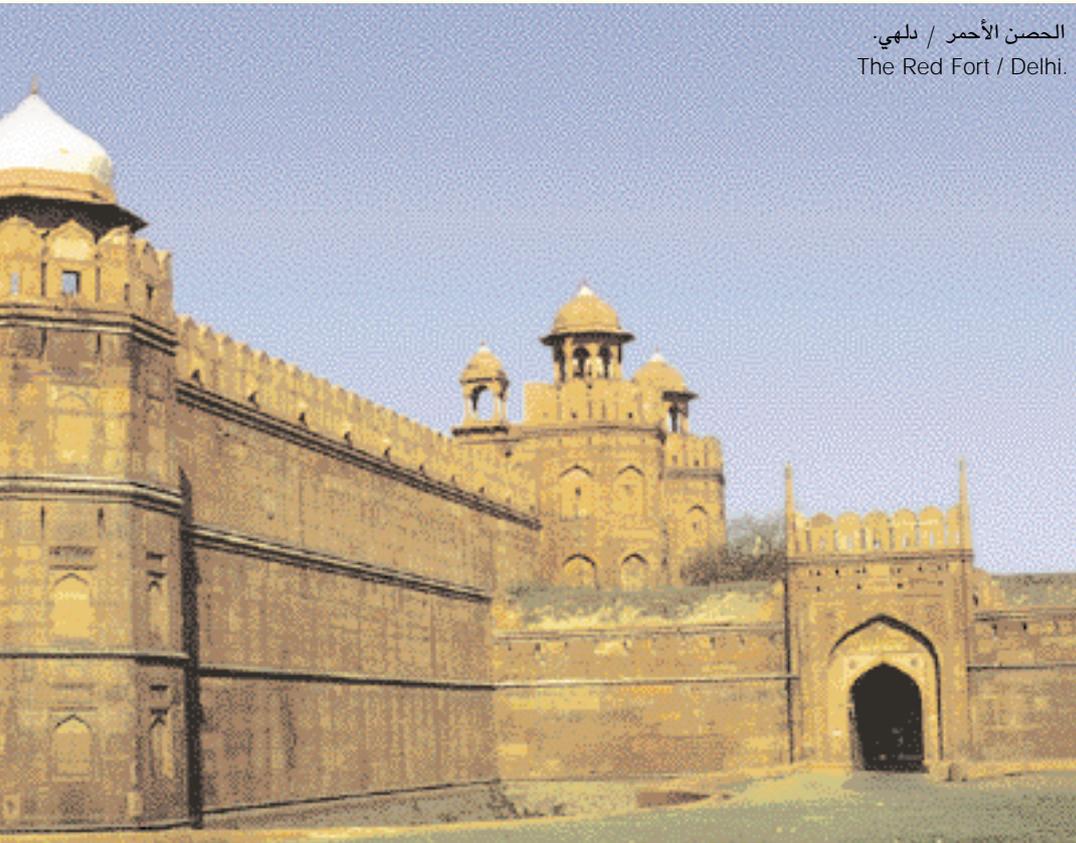
Jajoria also emphasized that a high level delegation of tourism authorities led by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Jagmohan, is scheduled to visit the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait in the first week of October. The Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir is also expected to accompany the delegation. A series of road shows will be held during their visit. This is a concerted effort to attract more tourists from the Arabian Gulf to India, highlighting the underlying shared culture connectivity and one-of-a-kind travel experiences and discoveries.

In addition, the Fifth International Travel & Tourism Mart was held in India from Sept 26th – 28th, and it was attended by businessmen from the UAE. The event was sponsored by the Dept of Tourism, Government of India.

The highly successful 'Incredible India' tourism campaign launched in September last year will also be expanded, said Jajoria, adding fresh perspectives that concentrate on the diversity of Indian tourism.

Jajoria added that Sikkim was the second destination to be promoted in a substantial way after Kashmir, as a great adventure destination, offering such diverse activities as river rafting and mountaineering and also promoting eco-tourism. Sikkim has five-star facilities and can be approached by road from Jalpaiguri in West Bengal or by helicopter from Bagdogra in West Bengal.

At the same time other established destinations, will also get a boost – such as Kerala, popular for Ayurvedic holidays, Goa, the monsoon destination, Mumbai's cosmopolitan entertainment and lifestyle and the ever-popular Golden Triangle of Delhi-Agra-Jaipur. ■



الحصن الأحمر / دلهي.  
The Red Fort / Delhi.