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## DESTINATION

Fuelled by resort tourism, upscale villages have blossomed along the Egyptian Riviera. As a result, confidence is high that Egypt is set to make its comeback

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## ON LOCATION

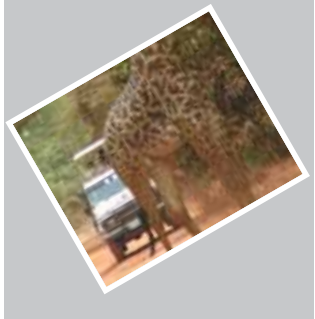
With a diverse product offering and an aggressive marketing campaign, Indonesia is expecting to significantly boost its tourism arrivals

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## ANALYSIS

Adventure tourism is rapidly becoming one of the region's fastest growing tourism sectors, and while it is largely considered to be a type of niche tourism it is becoming increasingly apparent that its spectrum is broad

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## TECHNOLOGY

A hotel kitchen, it seems, has become more like a backdrop to a science fiction movie, with an advancement of technology that is bringing to the fore equipment that can speak in a number of languages and even alert chefs of maintenance issues

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Enlightened leadership, an enabling business environment and ongoing investment have helped position Dubai at the forefront of the exhibition industry

# Leading the way in global events industry

BY ALEXANDRA NORTH

Dubai, one of the foremost exhibition destinations in the Middle East and Africa, is spearheading a regional sector with annual revenues of \$3.37 billion, according to data gathered from some of the world's biggest event management companies.

Delegates assembled at Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre for the inaugural Middle East edition of the International CEO Forum (ICF). This annual event – supported by Dubai World Trade Centre – brought together top executives from the world's largest event-organising companies. It was the first time that the forum was held outside of Europe, drawing the highest turnout of delegates in its history.

Research presented at ICF suggested that enlightened leadership, an enabling business environment and ongoing investment in support infrastructure are three of the major factors that have



The first International CEO forum held outside of Europe was hosted by Dubai

helped to position Dubai at the forefront of the global events and exhibitions industry.

"ICF has traditionally been the most important meeting of minds in the events industry, enabling leading executives to analyse key trends affecting the market, as well as providing unique networking opportunities. Dubai provided an ideal venue to host

this year's event, because the city is rapidly becoming one of the world's most important venues for exhibitions," said organiser, ICF, PRM Smulders.

Discussions at the 2008 forum focused on the key issues of attracting the optimum number and right calibre of visitors to ensure the success of a trade exhibition. Globally, this is proving to be a challenge

for the industry, given the high volume of alternative business networking channels available and the growing time poverty of executives and consumers.

However, Dubai has successfully avoided this trend to date, registering record double-digit visitor growth across many of its leading events in 2007. "One of the major drivers of success in the events sector is the

strength of the underlying economy. Dubai is seeing significant expansion of the non-oil sector, as well as a large surplus created by the rise in oil prices, all of which stimulate trade and create new business opportunities," commented economist, Henley Management College, Roger Martin-Fagg.

Another factor is the global interest in networking with the UAE's wealth fund managers. "Dubai entities control a significant proportion of the \$2.9 trillion funds available worldwide for investment. This creates huge demand for spaces at events, particularly those that offer the potential to network with the companies that manage these funds," he added.

Delegates also discussed the general shift in audience profile, experienced by the industry worldwide. Today, many events are moving from an exclusively trade-only, business-to-business customer profile, to offering

*Continued on page 2*

## Meeting attendance expected to rise

Meeting professionals expect healthy attendance and budget increases in the coming year, according to *FutureWatch 2008*, a market trends study for the global meetings and events planning industry.

The international study, conducted by Meeting Professionals International (MPI), surveyed 1,643 meeting and event professionals and suppliers from around the world. Overall, meetings and events professionals expect a 19 per cent rise in attendance in 2008 over the previous year. While webcasts and other web-based tools for live meetings are

also expected to rise, it is anticipated that at this time, they will still not replace the favoured face-to-face meeting experience.

"*FutureWatch 2008* is further evidence that there's no substitute for the power of human connections through live interaction," said CEO, MPI, Bruce MacMillan. "This year's study showed that while meetings and events professionals are embracing technology, its greater role is in enhancing events, not replacing them."

Among its major findings, *FutureWatch 2008* also found that a rapid move towards globalisation

can be expected in the coming year. In addition, in spite of worldwide economic concerns, budget growth was predicted. Despite a perception that there may be a downturn in 2008, corporate planners have remained bullish on budget expectations, predicting a 27 per cent rise this coming year, possibly reflective of a growing recognition of the value of meetings and events in the private sector.

*FutureWatch 2008* also found that a growing number of professionals list conservation and environmental concerns among the top three trends affecting their work.

## Measures to reduce emissions

Arab Air Carriers Organisation (AACO) is working with regional and international bodies to explore ways to limit the aviation impact on the environment.

In addition to providing a regulatory summary of global policies, AACO has identified a number of measures that can be taken to reduce emissions, which will limit the possibility of an economic adverse impact on the Arab airlines.

Measures that airlines can take to immediately reduce emissions include offering passengers the opportunity to offset the emissions from their flights, whereby pas-

sengers can easily calculate emissions from their flight and the cost to offset those emissions.

Further to this, if the passenger pays the cost of his/her carbon emission, extra miles can be included in their frequent flyer mileage.

The organisation has also indicated that airlines can develop an eco-labelling scheme which assesses an airplane's impact on the environment by providing passengers at the time of booking via the Internet a breakdown of the fuel consumption and carbon emissions of the aircraft-type to be used on their flight.



# A destination revisited

Fuelled by resort tourism, upscale villages have blossomed along the Egyptian Riviera. As a result, confidence is high that Egypt is set to make its comeback, finds **Alexandra North**

While Egypt boasts some of the richest architectural treasures in the world, Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) is adding new value with the addition of some 130,000 rooms already under construction.

Egypt's MICE industry is continuing to grow steadily, especially in Sharm El Sheikh, where the World Economic Forum on the Middle East took place. Forecasting this trend to continue, the government has stepped up its pace to improve the infrastructure so as to accommodate more easily the expected influx of visitors. While much of the business expected hails from the corporate sector, ETA aims to capture visitors' attention and encourage them to stay for an extended break to combine their business trip with a relaxing vacation.

Hoping to capitalise from both markets is the \$16.3 billion resort currently being developed near Hurghada, spearheaded by Damac Properties, as well as the \$2.5 billion Serrenia project.

Preparing for increased business, The Savoy Hotel of Sharm El Sheikh is looking to expand with the introduction of the area's first Ice Bar. Meanwhile, Emaar Misr, an Egyptian subsidiary of Emaar Properties, is developing a Mediterranean resort at Sidi Abdel Rahman at an estimated

cost of \$10 million.

"The number of tourists will depend on the stability of the Middle East and the money invested by the government in infrastructure," commented minister of tourism, Egypt, Zoheir Garanah.

Areas such as Sharm El Sheikh, which is well known for having the ability to cater towards company retreats, are generating a significant amount of repeat business.

Garanah, confident of Egypt's potential, has put out a plan that aims to see the number of visitors grow by 10 per cent per year through to 2014, when the expected number of arrivals is forecast to rise to 16 million.

"Following a jump in German bookings in January and February of last year, as well as favourable feedback from tour operators, we are hopeful the market will increase by eight per cent," said Garanah.

## Sporting challenges

Soma Bay's Cascades championship golf course has been ranked the number one golf course in the world outside of Europe by readers of a leading golfing publication in Germany.

The 18-hole par 72 Cascades is the first in many ways in

Egypt and was the first golf course open for play on the western Red Sea coast when launched in 1999. Designed by Gary Player, The Cascades is also the first championship course in the Middle East designed by one of the 'big three', namely Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer.

The desert and oceanfront links-design of The Cascades benefits from a strategic location, directly on the Red Sea coast. Nine of the holes feature the added excitement of water hazards and the whole course offers memorable views of the lush green fairways contrasting with the desert and blue sea.

The Cascades is a key highlight of the extensive golf facilities at Soma Bay's renowned Cascades Golf and Country Club. Adjacent to the championship course is the nine-hole, par three challenge course, also designed by Gary Player, that offers both the beginner and the more advanced golfer the opportunity to practice a variety of shots.

The challenge course serves the golf academy, where individual and group tuition by PGA golf professionals is available. There are also extensive practice facilities, including a 60-bay driving range, and several putting and pitching practice greens. The Cascades Club House sits at the centre of the championship course and offers extensive changing and showering facilities, essential rentals and a wide range of

golf merchandise at the Pro Shop.

The Cascades is home to one of the most important individual tournaments in the region, The Red Sea and Pan Arab Open Amateur Championship. The 2007 event attracted more than 175 competitors from 22 countries. The 2008 Championship is scheduled to take place in Soma Bay on the first weekend of July.

Soma Bay is one of Egypt's leading leisure destinations and in addition to award-winning golf, the luxury resort destination offers diving and snorkelling, relaxing beaches and a world-class spa and thalasso-therapy centre.

Guests can choose from one of three top-class hotels in Soma Bay, namely La Résidence des Cascades, Sheraton Soma Bay and Robinson Club Soma Bay. Two new hotels, Kempinski Hotel Soma Bay and The Breakers Diving and

Surfing Lodge are scheduled to open in 2008.

Meanwhile, Orascom Hotels and Development has announced the agreement to acquire a controlling stake of 51 per cent in a prime 530-room five-star hotel property with an attached marina in Sahl Hashish, Hurghada.

The property is due to be operational by the end of the second quarter of this year, and is expected to further enhance the competitiveness of Orascom Hotels and Development room portfolio. The property will be acquired at a total cost of \$35 million, which is in line with the company's historical investment cost per room.

#### Award-winning destination

Placing Egypt once again firmly in the mind of internation-

al tourists, the World Travel Awards honoured Sharm El-Sheikh with the title of the World's Leading Dive at the end of 2007.

The Royal Savoy Sharm El Sheikh also came in as the world's leading Diving Resort. Thousands of votes each year are registered online at the official World Travel Awards website, with most of the leading travel Internet sites offering additional online voting facilities.

Furthermore, the Giza Pyramids were awarded as the World's Leading Attraction and Hilton Sharm Dreams Resort was awarded as Africa's Leading Family Resort.

In addition to this, Luxor Suite at InterContinental Citystars Cairo was awarded as Africa's Leading Suit and Queen Cleopatra Villas Savoy Sharm El Sheikh was awarded as Africa's Leading Villa.

“ The number of tourists will depend on the stability of the Middle East and the money invested by the government in infrastructure ”

#### Key places of interest in Alexandria

**The Corniche** – Stretching 20kms, the promenade is lined with Graeco-Roman themed architecture, coffee houses and cafés

**Bibliotheca Alexandria** – A highly-contemporary glass and steel structure. The new library includes three museums, five specialised research institutes and an art collection

**Qaitby Fort & Citadel** – Built in 1480, the fort also houses the Naval Museum

**Pompey's Pillar** – Towering 30m above Alexandria's ancient acropolis, this Aswan granite monument was erected in 297AD

**The Graeco-Roman Museum** – Over 40,000 artefacts

**The National Museum** – Displaying 1,800 artefacts relating to historical figures such as Nefertiti, King Tut and Alexander the Great

**The Roman Amphitheatre** – The only one of its kind in Egypt

**Abu Abbas Al-Mursi Mosque** – One of many to be found in Alexandria, combining ornate Islamic architecture with Andalusian influences

**Montazah Palace Gardens** – Built in 1892 as the summer home of the Egyptian royal family

**Underwater cities of Cleopatra and her Palace, and Heracleon** – Located just inside the eastern harbour of Alexandria and 4km from the coast of Abou Kir bay respectively, these sunken cities can be explored by divers and showcase thousands of monuments still preserved under the water



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## La Résidence wins quality award

La Résidence des Cascades has been honoured with a Commitment to Quality Award by hospitality organisation, The Leading Hotels of the World (LHW).

The hotel was just one of two hotel properties in the Africa and Middle East region to receive the Commitment to Quality Award and be recognised for its exceptional standards with respect to accommodations, service, cuisine and facilities, based on more than 1,500 individual criteria.

La Résidence des Cascades, the only LHW in Egypt, is the flagship hotel of the luxurious Red Sea resort destination of Soma Bay. 249 guestrooms and suites are set amidst The Cascades, as well as an 18-hole, par 72 desert and oceanfront links-style course designed by Gary Player.

The hotel also houses Les Thermes Marins des Cascades, the largest spa, thalasso-therapy and wellness centre in Egypt, and a Leading Spa of the World.

This latest award follows



The property is the flagship hotel of the Red Sea resort destination of Soma Bay

the earlier presentation to La Résidence des Cascades of the TUI Holly Award, which is considered the hotel industry's 'Oscar', and acknowledges La Résidence des Cascades as the best TUI hotel in Egypt.

On accepting the YUI Holly Award, area manager, Soma Bay and general manager, La Résidence des Cascades, Robert Fellermeier said: "We are honoured to receive this award which marks La

Résidence des Cascades as amongst the best of the best, elected by one of the toughest juries in the world – more than half a million TUI guests. The TUI Holly is a very prestigious award in the hospitality industry as it stands for guest satisfaction.

"We are delighted that in our first year we have achieved such a high ranking, which is testament to the efforts of our team in working towards surpassing excellent customer service."

## Swiss group increases Egypt portfolio

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with owning company, Integrated Development and Tourism Investment (IDTI), for two upscale hotel projects in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

Both holiday resorts are already under construction and are scheduled to open by 2008 and 2009 respectively.

"A long history of success unites Sharm El Sheikh and Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts," explained senior vice president, Africa, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts, Josef Kufer. "We are delighted to be returning to this key Egyptian destination in 2008 thanks to IDTI, and to be able once again to offer our loyal clientele a high quality of service and products."

The five-star Mövenpick Resort & Spa Sharm El Sheikh will open later this summer over a total surface area of 103,000m<sup>2</sup>. The resort, with its 327 rooms and suites, including 30 luxury apartments, will be situated in a prime location in Nabq Bay, on the shores of the Red Sea, 7km to Sharm El Sheikh International Airport.

The extensive culinary choice consists of a main

restaurant with an open show cooking island, an Italian speciality restaurant, a beachfront grill and lounge restaurant, and a total of four bars. For nightlife enthusiasts, the hotel will also boast its own discotheque.

An array of leisure activities will include three swimming pools and two kids' pools, as well as floodlit tennis courts, a multi purpose court, beach volleyball, a fitness centre, water sports amenities and diving and snorkelling facilities, which will be supervised by professional instructors.

The spa and health centre with sauna and steam room will offer guests a welcome opportunity to enjoy a range of massages and beauty treatments.

Meanwhile, the Cleopatra ballroom and the business centre will be available for banquets and conferences.

"We very much look forward to co-operating with Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts and are convinced that the two new hotels will complement each other ideally," said managing director, IDTI, Mohamed Abu Eleinen. "There is no doubt that these exceptional projects will enable us to assume a leading position in Sharm El Sheikh."

Seven km from the Sharm El Sheikh down town area, again in a prime beachfront location, will be the 268-room Mövenpick Resort Um El Sied, which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2009.

The culinary offering and choice of swimming pools will be moulded on those of its sister hotel. This resort will also cater for the group's youngest guests, with a kids' club, a teenager camp and a special children's restaurant.

There will be plenty of opportunities for sports activities, with a scuba diving and water sports centre, floodlit tennis courts, beach volleyball and football, and mountain biking. Additionally, guests will be able to relax at the spa and wellness centre with its sauna, steam room and therapy rooms for massages and beauty treatments.

Further to this, an open-air theatre with seating for up to a total of 500 persons will provide the perfect setting for events of all kinds under open skies.

With the business traveller firmly in its mind, the hotel will also comprise a multifunctional conference room, as well as three meeting rooms and a business centre.

## Fairmont spreads its footprint

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of Fairmont Towers, Heliopolis.

This latest property, which is located in close proximity to Cairo International Airport, joins the group's collection of landmark hotels as the first Fairmont to open its doors in Cairo and the fifth addition to the portfolio in the Middle East and Africa region.

Furthermore, a second property located adjacently, Fairmont Heliopolis, will embark upon a renovation programme in the first quarter of 2008. Upon completion, guests will enjoy access to a wide variety of dining outlets, function space and other business and leisure amenities.

Boasting a contemporary design, Fairmont Towers, Heliopolis features 247 guestrooms which offer an elegant yet comfortable place to live, work and relax. Guestrooms offer either a classic or contemporary décor and feature 32-inch flatscreen television, wireless HSPA and bathrooms equipped with bathtubs, standing rain shower and sound systems. Rooms overlooking the atrium enjoy views of the tropical gardens, palm trees and flowing stream below. Meanwhile, three presiden-



Fairmont Hotels & Resorts will strengthen its presence in Egypt with its Nile property also set to open later this year

tial suites offer large bedrooms, a living room, dining room that seats 12 and a butler's kitchen with Nespresso coffee machine.

Other key features include extensive conference facilities, a spa, atrium garden and dining outlets. Fairmont Towers, Heliopolis' four dining outlets underscore the chefs commitment to excellent cuisine with a local flare, including Aqua e Luce, featuring modern Italian cuisine and views of the Atrium garden. The restaurant's design is an integral part of the dining experience with its open areas, private dining room, wine racks, and display kitchens.

Catering for corporate travellers and large-sized functions, the property fea-

tures more than 4,500m<sup>2</sup> of meeting space, with rooms named after ancient Egyptian precious stones and Red Sea treasures, including the main ballroom, Canyon, which has the capacity to accommodate 2,100 persons.

Further to its recreational offerings consisting of an outdoor heated pool and fitness centre, a Willow Stream Spa is scheduled to open late-2008.

Looking to strengthen its Middle East and African foothold, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts is expecting to launch Fairmont Nile City, Cairo in 2008, Fairmont Palm Island, Dubai in 2009, Fairmont Abu Dhabi Resort & Villas in 2011 and Fairmont Kingdom of Sheba, Dubai in 2011.

## Cairo Marriott cares about health

The goal of Cairo Marriott Hotel's Fit for You programme is to continually better serve its guests, by recognising evolving dietary and lifestyle needs.

Cairo Marriott Hotel's Omar's Café and room service is offering the Fit for You programme, which provides a variety of food and beverage options to help satisfy carbohydrate-conscious, low-fat and low-cholesterol diets.

The Fit for You section of the menu has been created to make it easier for those guests to find the items most suitable for their lifestyle. The catalogue of items includes low-carbohydrate choices such as a grilled chicken Benedict and a breakfast mixed grill.

Lean meats and fish are trimmed, while greater emphasis is placed on vegetables and grains than the protein component. Foods such as oatmeal, cream of



The property keeps guest's health in mind with its healthy eating menu

wheat, fresh fruit, French toast, egg white omelettes and whole grains, fresh and smoked salmon, are all good examples of low cholesterol items available on the

menu. Cairo Marriott Hotel boasts a wide range of accommodation options spread over a total of 20 floors. As well as 979 rooms, there are a total of 109 suites.

Catering specifically towards the business traveller, Cairo Marriott Hotel offers 14 meeting rooms which can be utilised for a range of events and conferences. Meanwhile, with families in mind, the hotel offers a comprehensive babysitting service, as well as onsite laundry amenities.

Cairo Marriott Hotel, located in the heart of Cairo with an exotic garden setting built around a 19th century palace on an island in the Nile River in downtown Cairo, is just 15 minutes away from the Giza pyramids and only five minutes from the Egyptian museum, making this property especially desirable for leisure travellers wanting to explore Cairo.

## Positive occupancies



The 18-hole course covers 7,100 yards in total

Taba Heights and the Sinai resorts are currently experiencing strong occupancy rates, and as a result, 2008 is set to be a promising year.

Taba Heights Marriott in particular has increased its occupancy significantly compared to the previous corresponding period last year. A resort hotel benefiting from the country's all-year pleasant climate, it is situated at on the Egyptian Red Sea coast.

The hotel features a sizeable pool area, with 2,800m<sup>2</sup> of pools with a Jacuzzi and water falls.

Taba Heights Marriott also offers an 18-hole championship golf course, which is booked by avid golfers from all over Europe that visit and as a result has become a favourite among the host of international golf tournaments. The 18-hole golf course claims to be the only championship course in the destination, and overlooks Red Sea. Every hole of the course, which in total measures 7,100 yards, offers the

option of five different tee placements.

With an extensive offer of water sport activities such as diving, paragliding, fishing and full resort animation activities, Taba Heights Marriott has become a desired spot for expatriates in the area. The resort also offers high speed Internet, a variety of theme nights and has launched its signature spa treatments.

Recently, extra flights have been scheduled to meet with the demand to the Taba area.

In addition, there will be an annual festival in Taba Heights every March starting this year, which is expected to increase demand further.

General manager, Taba Heights, Jan Heesbeen said: "We are thrilled that they have scheduled extra flights. This is a beautiful resort and a beautiful area for everyone to experience at least once in a lifetime.

"This is also an opportunity for us to showcase the destination and our magnificent property."

## Placing Alexandria on the map

The recently opened Four Seasons Hotel Alexandria at San Stefano is in the throes of setting new standards in terms of beachside living, and is working to re-place Alexandria on the map.

Four Seasons Hotel Alexandria at San Stefano aims to recapture the glamour of Egypt's coastal resort with its seafront tower in the centre of the city's cele-

brated Corniche. The 118-room hotel in Alexandria is located some 225km from Cairo's International Airport, making it easily accessible from the capital as part of a two-city break. Further easing accessibility are the services from airlines such as Qatar Airways, operating flights three times per day from Doha International, which is only a four-hour journey.



Alexandria has long been regarded as the summer capital of the region

## St. Regis to make landmark entry into Egypt

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has announced the introduction of its renowned St. Regis brand to Africa, with plans to debut a new property in 2011 in the heart of downtown Cairo.

The St. Regis, Cairo will include 299 furnished rooms and 103 serviced apartments as part of a luxurious, mixed-use development overlooking the Nile River. Owned by Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company, St. Regis, Cairo will represent the ultimate expression of contemporary luxury in Egypt's thriving capital city.

St. Regis, Cairo will be located in the heart of Egypt's modern metropolis on the north end of Corniche Road, adjacent to the World Trade Centre Cairo and Misr Bank Tower. Providing sweeping views of the Nile River, the new hotel will be an important component of a high-rise hospitality and residential complex.

St. Regis, Cairo will occupy approximately 115,000ft<sup>2</sup> of

the luxury development, a complex that will include two towers and a retail atrium. Hotel guests will be close to a variety of shops, restaurants and universities, and not far from the pyramids and sphinx at Giza, the historic treasures of Old Cairo, and Khan al-Khalili, Egypt's most famous bazaar.

Anticipating the needs of the city's quickly expanding business district, St. Regis, Cairo will offer more than 8,000ft<sup>2</sup> of meeting and conference space, as well as a business centre, shops and parking area. Hotel guests and residents will enjoy full access to the hotel's amenities including four restaurants and a lounge, an outdoor pool, luxury spa and fitness centre.

Following in the tradition of St. Regis Hotel, New York Hotel, St. Regis, Cairo will feature the famed hallmarks of St. Regis hotels including the St. Regis Butler Service and luxury accommodations tailored to global travellers.

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