

ATM records 46% rise in visitor registrations

ARABIAN TRAVEL MART

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Shirajiv Sirimane in Dubai

The 19th edition of the Arabian Travel Mart began on Monday with a 46% rise in visitor registrations, against 2011 figures as well as travel agent registration up by a whopping 213%

Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, officially inaugurated Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2012, in the presence of senior government officials, leaders of the regional and international travel industry as well as high-profile participants.

Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions, organiser of Arabian Travel Market, said, "As

the first promising signs of democratic progress emerging in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring, the region's tourism figures show that it is growing once again.

"This year's ATM serves as a timely reminder and strong indicator of the vital role the travel and tourism industry plays in the region's socio-economic development.

A recent World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) report shows that the direct contribution of the travel and tourism trade to GDP is expected to increase by 4.6% to over \$250 billion over the next decade.

United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Secretary-General Taleb Rifai revealed that the UAE has applied to join the UNWTO."

The UAE is currently the only country within the region that is not a member of UNWTO.

This year, ATM features representatives from 87 countries, with 54 national tourist organisations exhibiting at the International Exhibition Centre floor over the next four days.

It was also revealed that more and more travellers are booking hotels from mobile devices. HRS, Europe's leading hotel port-

tal, tripled its sales in the mobile bookings segment between 2010 and 2011.

The mobile reservations share of total sales reached around three percent in 2011. For this year, HRS expects this share to double.

An official from Sri Lanka said that though this trend is not very popular in Sri Lanka and this would be the future with people using high tech mobile devices.

Sri Lankan participants at the ATM were happy with the stand and the preparations done by the Sri Lanka consulate.

Here are some highlights of the ATM on day one.



Pictures by Shirajiv Sirimane

