

OMAN GREEN AWARDS 2011

NOMINATION FORM

Organization

Organization Name
Organization Type (Business/NGO/Gov)
Website
Location /Address

Ministry of Tourism
Government of the Sultanate of Oman
www.omnatourism.gov.om
P. O. Box 200, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, P.C. 115



Contact Details

Title
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Award Category

Guardian Award

Project Details

Title
Location of Project
Line Description of Project

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM SECTOR IN OMAN (2010 INITIATIVES & ACTIONS)
National
Policy, planning, marketing and community initiatives to boost industry and public recognition of nature, culture and heritage as core elements of Oman's tourism future and, in doing so, to develop a sustainable and responsible tourism sector.

2010 saw the Ministry initiate a wide range of inter-connected initiatives to elevate industry and community thinking and discussion on the benefits for sustainable and responsible tourism. For the purposes of this application, these initiatives have been summarised as three projects:

- Project 1** Sustainable tourism policy, planning and operations
- Project 2** Destination Marketing
- Project 3** Industry and public awareness and education,

Abbreviations:

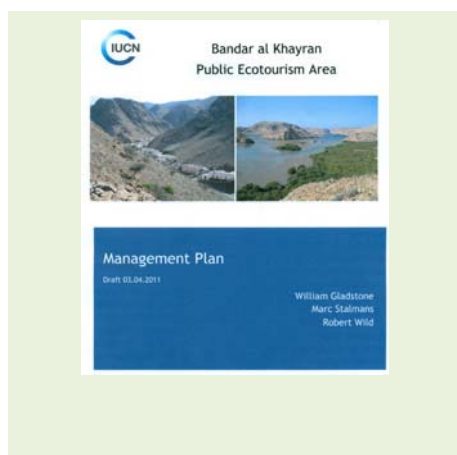
HRDAP	Human Resources Development Action Plan
ICRT	International Centre for Responsible Tourism
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
NTDP	National Tourism Development Plan
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Program

Effectiveness

What were your goals?

To accelerate agency and sector transformation towards sustainable tourism and empower industry stakeholders to take responsibility, and to boost community understanding of the value of sustainable tourism.

How have you measured your success?



- **Project 1: Sustainable tourism policy, planning and operations**

In 2010, the priority given to sustainable tourism policy development, planning and operations was unprecedented, with the following areas of activity:

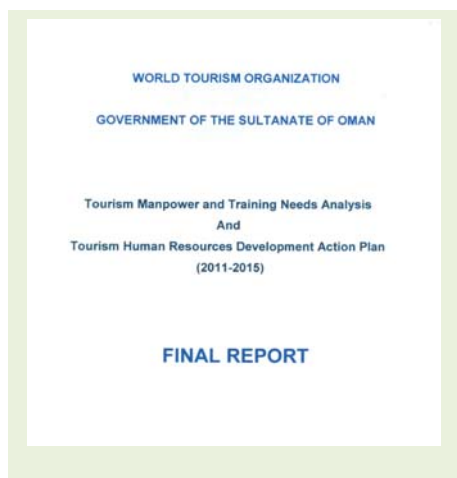
(a) Sustainable tourism policy, actions and guidelines development for the Ministry and industry stakeholders, and to underpin the 2010-15 NTDP.

This activity was assisted by the involvement of Professor Harold Goodwin (ICRT). Professor Goodwin in the early stages of policy development, along with UNWTO input. Following this work, the Ministry has finalised policy objectives, actions and guidelines for executive approval. The Ministry's intention is for these to become benchmarks for the sector.

(b) Commitment to several environmental planning and management plan studies to ensure that social, economic and environmental values are fully considered in the development process. The studies auctioned in 2010 (Bandar A; Khayran, Al Jabal Al Akhdar and Wadi Drabat) are listed at **Attachment A**. Additionally, studies are underway for Wadi Shaab and Al Fazayeh (Dhofar) where options for a visitors' centre and resort are under consideration.

(c) Completion of advice to assist development and operations (including environmental standards) with examples being the Development Control Plan Framework (DCPF) for Tourism Development in Oman which set out environmental and social responsibilities for developers, investors, planners and contractors (download from www.omantourism.gov.om), National Guidelines and Standards for Scuba Diving (completed July 2011), and the Eco Tourism Planning Framework (in train).

(d) Completion of the HRDAP 2011-16, along with a Ministry staff capacity building program spanning skills and career development. The HRDAP developed with the UNWTO provides essential guidance to Government, Ministries and private sector agencies, mapping skills training and employment forecasts for the tourism sector. The Plan also identifies ways to increase the benefits for Omani people from tourism.



- **Measurement:**

(a) Policy – Professor Goodwin and UNWTO input in the initial stages of policy formulation and, in 2011, formal agreement to policy, actions and guidelines.

Policy documentation has been prepared and endorses, Guidelines for each Ministry Department have been prepared along with Action Plans. The Sector Engagement Plan is in preparation.

(b) The inclusion of environmental, social and economic values in planning and evaluating development and operations. All tourism projects are subject to environmental impact assessment by the Ministry of Tourism with coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs.

(c) The number and quality of environmental planning and management studies, and the positive influence they have on development outcomes.



This advertisement was developed by the Ministry for the latest edition of *Bird Watching Guide to Oman*. The book is one of several sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism. The advertisement says that success can be measured by the number and diversity of bird species recorded in Oman and illustrates the messaging being used to promote Oman's natural values. Several magazines then offered to run the advertisement at no charge.



• **Project 2: Destination Marketing**

The Ministry is the Government's lead agency for the destination marketing of Oman. It does this in concert with the travel and tourism trade, industry partners, as well as running community awareness and consumer tactical campaigns. This activity takes place in several international markets and to targeted segments. In doing so, the Ministry leads the implementation of the Oman Brand Mark (launched 2008) across all markets and media channels (TV, web, print and social network platforms).

In 2010, the Ministry reviewed and refined Oman's brand positioning (across all media platforms and channels) to give greater priority to nature and natural values. This included a review of messaging and images to better communicate Oman's natural values to consumer segments as well as to Omanis.

The Ministry also reviewed its marketing approach from responsible and sustainable tourism perspectives, again making many changes to the messaging, tone and images used in promotions.

This refinement has given Oman a clear point of difference with other GCC markets and will boost industry and public awareness in the environment.

2010 also saw the Ministry launch a fully integrated campaign for the Northern Hemisphere Winter Season that brought together Oman's hallmark arts, sports and events into a single campaign with advertisements aligned to nature and natural values. The creatives developed for the campaign then formed the basis for the GCC and international promotions for the Muscat Festival and Tour of Oman.

Measurement: Trade and sales feedback, IATA passenger arrivals data, monitoring of consumer and Ministry web sites, invited 'free ink' in key trade and consumer platforms, DART reports for consumer direct campaigns.

Assessment: Trade and consumer Oman's feedback indicates strong support for the brand positioning work that has taken place.

The creative value and messaging of new advertisements is also graded by the host editors of travel and tourism magazines. Imagery and content are regularly scoring 4 to 4.5 on a 1 (poor) to 5 (meets all criteria) scale. One has scored 5.



4th International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations

Living Landscapes of Oman
10- 12 October 2010, InterContinental Muscat

The conference will provide a forum for government, private sector, academic and international organisations to share experience in the planning, implementation and future trends in responsible and sustainable tourism development.

conference highlights:

- 1. The role of tourism in sustainable development and future tourism
- 2. Sustainable tourism for a world of tomorrow
- 3. The responsible tourist
- 4. Responsible destination and marketing

To register online please visit www.rtd4.com or send details to register@rtd4.com

For more information please contact the Conference Organiser (UNWTO)

Phone: +961 4391117 Fax: +961 4391118 register@rtd4.com



- **Project 3: Industry and public awareness and education programs** covering five activity areas:

(a) Schools, television and radio promotions on the value of tourism and conservation. This involves Oman's media (Oman TV and four FM stations) actively promoting sustainable tourism.

(b) Marking World Tourism Day (29 September 2010) with an industry-written booklet on *Tourism and Biodiversity* to serve as an information and resource for students and industry members. The booklet, involving contributors from across the sector and The Research Council of Oman to provide expert scientific commentary on biodiversity as it relates to tourism, is the first of its kind for the tourism sector in Oman, and continues to be promoted by its contributors.

(c) 4th International Responsible Tourism in Destinations Conference (RTD4, October 2010). The Ministry is indebted to Professor Goodwin who Co-Chaired the conference with the late Dr Rajiha Abdulameer Ali, Minister of Tourism. As well, the conference involved the UNWTO, UNEP, and the IUCN. An indicator of the success of the conference and the progress made is the *Closing Statement* reproduced at **Attachment B**, and which was passed to Oman's tourism stakeholders. The *Statement* calls on all tourism stakeholders to take responsibility to ensure they adopt sustainable and responsible practices.

(d) Major sponsorship involvement in the Responsible Tourism Awards at World Travel Market, London, November 2010.

(e) A photographic competition for Oman residents with nature as one of the four completion themes.



Measurement:

(a) Numbers of schools (18) and students (3,000) involved, plus Teacher feedback.

(b) Distribution of books on line and via talks and lectures on World Tourism Day, trade shows and on request.


(c) Participation in the photographic competition exceeded all expectations and resulted in Oman's largest photographic completion with over 220 entries and 1,800 images for judging.

(d) RTD4:

High international participation by agencies and professionals - higher levels than previous conferences. Strong and active engagement by Omani students

Powerful *Closing Statement* backed by international agencies and the ICRT

The conference developed momentum within the Ministry to ensure that words are put into action.



Explore and celebrate Oman
Looking for historical sights, scenic attractions and rich culture? Then celebrate Eid and National Day by exploring the place you call home.
Beauty has an address
www.oman-tourism.gov.om Call: 80007799

Explore and celebrate Oman
Want to go on a great vacation with exciting activities and stunning scenery? Then celebrate Eid and National Day by exploring the place you call home.
Beauty has an address
www.oman-tourism.gov.om Call: 80007799

These advertisements promoted the 2010 Eid break as a time for Omani families to venture to Oman's regions. They use images from the 2010 photographic completion, convey the interdependence of tourism and nature, and show the pride young Omanis have for their culture. This messaging also conveys the interdependence of nature and culture.

Innovation & Creativity

How were innovative methods, strategies or ideas applied?



Professor Goodwin discussing responsible tourism's objectives with Tour Guides from Zahara Tours

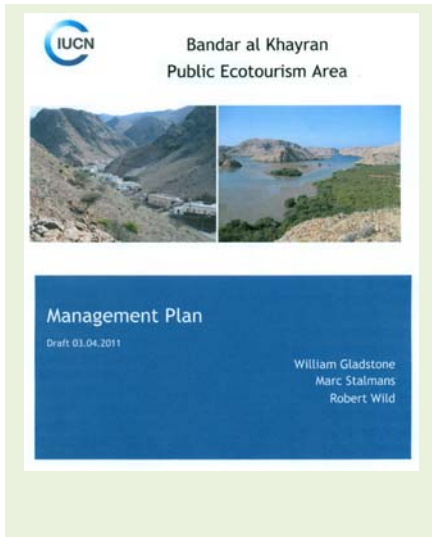
Project 1 Sustainable Tourism Policy, Planning & Operations

The process to formulate sustainable tourism policy, planning frameworks and operational guidelines encompassed a review of current international best-practice, an assessment of local conditions, industry consultation and internal Ministry processing.

The Ministry called on international experts and lead agencies on sustainable tourism to ensure standards, expectations and benchmarks were fully understood. This process was also used as an Ministry and industry training exercise.

From the Ministry's perspective, a key focus was to ensure that sustainability principles that form the basis of the sustainable tourism policy were included in the 2011-15 NTDP.

Likewise, with the HRDAP, the Ministry called on the UNWTO so that standards and benchmarks were fully understood. These too were able to be used to assist in the formulation of staff skills and career development plan for the Ministry.





This advertisement (2011 summer campaign) shows Muhammed Shanfari in a field of Dhofar balsams. The scene looks European – the ‘device’ to attract the attention of GCC consumers and showcase Oman’s nature. The diary entry says no emails today, again reinforcing the ‘back to nature’ message.

Project 2 Destination Marketing

The review of Oman’s Brand positioning included the:

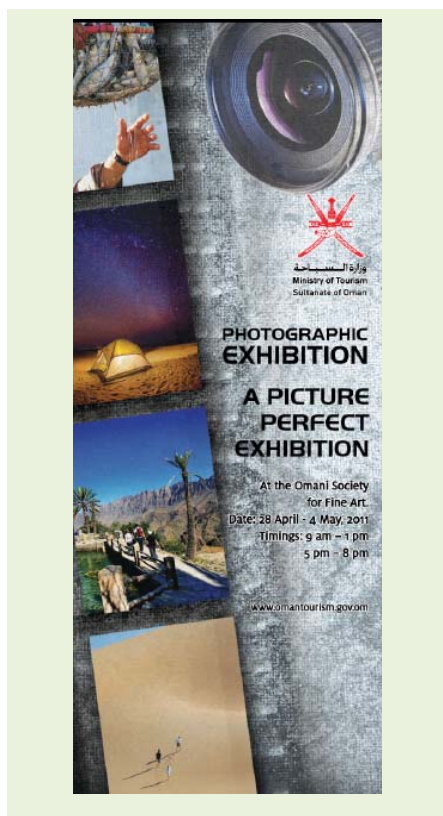
- (a) The development and inclusion of the strap line - **Beauty has an address** – in all Arabic and international language advertisements to convey tangible and non-tangible moments that make visitors realize that beauty has an address. This communication ‘device’ is well suited to the promotion of Oman’s natural values. This approach has been applied to all trade, consumer and awareness advertising.
- (b) The use of evocative images and text to convey personal experience, again building on the proposition that a visit to Oman is uniquely fulfilling.
- (c) The use of images that strongly convey a sense of ‘place’ and that are not ‘artificial’ - images that convey Oman’s world-class natural values with ‘back to nature’ messaging.
- (d) The review of messaging and images from a responsible and sustainable tourism from a responsible perspective, leading to a change in the language, tone, images and associated messaging used in all promotions and communications.

As mentioned earlier, this brand positioning was consolidated through the integrated arts, sports and events campaign launched at the World Travel Market (London November 2010). Advertisements carried the dual themes of nature and contemporary activity and won wide acclaim. The theme was also showcased in a recent consumer-direct campaign run in the UK on Lastminute.Com – Oman’s first consolidated consumer direct campaign.



Trade and digital monitoring (DART Reports, Google Analytics, Key Word Search etc.) shows the approach is gaining momentum and will accelerate Oman’s ability to be marketed as a global destination in its own right. As an illustration, a number of prestigious journals are now offering placements and editorial coverage of Oman ahead of major gateway destinations.

This strategy has greatly assisted Oman’s regional and international positioning Oman as a destination for culture, heritage and nature, and highlights the interconnection of these elements.



Project 3 Industry and Public Awareness and Education

2010 saw a substantial boost in investment in programs aimed at increasing the natural values and sustainable tourism.

The **schools' program** involved presentations at 40 schools in northern Oman (Muscat, Al Batinah, Sohar and Ibri - northern and southern Oman in alternate years) to the senior year students and their teachers about the value of tourism and the need to deliver a sustainable sector going forward. These highly interactive sessions are aimed at encouraging discussion on how tourism is organised and conducted, and the sector's importance to Oman's long-term prosperity. Environment values and the need for sustainable outcomes are underlying themes.

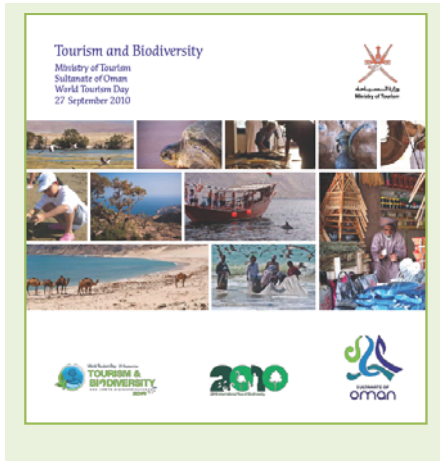
Sponsored television and radio promotions devised by the Ministry comprise 30 x two minute television and radio programs covering the value of tourism, the need to keep the environment clean, how to greet and communicate with tourists, and career possibilities. Promotions run on Oman TV Channel 1 and four FM youth-focused FM stations.

The content of the schools', television and radio programs is complementary, and the Ministry believes that the combination of channels (schools, television and radio) will provide an effective nation-wide communications platform.

Nature was a core theme of the **Ministry sponsored photographic competition** which was designed to excite Oman's photographers to take images that could market Oman to the world, and educate the community on the value of tourism and the environment.

The completion attracted over 220 entrants and around 800 images making it Oman's largest photographic completion. This overwhelming response yielded a body of high resolution images of that have been used extensively in promoting Oman to its people as well as to the international community. The advertisement to the left used two winning images for an advertisement promoting domestic tourism in a clean environment. It is also an image of a young Omani acting as a guard and steward.

An exhibition of outstanding images was opened at the Oman Fine Arts Society on 27 April 2011. A 2011 photographic competition will be announced shortly.



- **World Tourism Day with a booklet on biodiversity and tourism to reaffirm the challenges of tourism and biodiversity.**

This was the first industry initiative of its kind – bringing industry stakeholders together to write about the actions they each must take to safeguard Oman’s biodiversity.

This booklet is a resource for students, industry members and well as information source for trade events, again highlighting the need for tourism to be sustainable and responsible.

The 2010 edition was printed on recyclable paper and can be downloaded from the Ministry’s web site: www.mot.gov.om.

- **4th International Conference Responsible Tourism in Destinations, October 2010**

The Ministry gained the active involvement of the UNWTO, UNEP, IUCN and ICRT, thus providing a powerful forum for industry development.

Conference fees were dropped to encourage industry stakeholder participation as well as students from Oman’s universities and colleges making the event a major industry development activity. This approach led to a record number of delegates (380 delegates from 34 countries, plus ~120 students). The momentum developed led to a *Closing Statement* that drew international attention to the need and value of sustainable tourism outcomes and the responsibility of all stakeholders to consider their plans and actions.

The Conference’s *Closing Statement* is at **Attachment B**. Conference papers can be downloaded from www.omantourism.gov.om. The Statement also been emailed to Oman’s tourism stakeholders to encourage the take-up of sustainable tourism principles in business planning, operations and marketing.

- **2010 Responsible Tourism Awards at World Travel Market, November, London**
Sponsorship of several awards was to assist international efforts to promote and reward best practice sustainable and responsible tourism outcomes, and to indicate that the Sultanate’s tourism industry stakeholders were ‘thinking globally and acting locally’.

Impact

How has the project/initiative/work motivated others to contribute to a greener Oman



Oman's Global Awareness Campaign on BBC TV and web channels will cover Europe, MENA, India, Asia and Australia showing 1,700 television and 4.7 million web advertisements over several months. The Campaign showcases natural values.

The Ministry believes its actions will add to others' to make a 'greener' Oman, and this momentum will build as in coming years as environmentally clean tourism infrastructure, services, facilities and messaging takes hold.

Looking ahead, the Ministry has ensured that sustainable tourism objectives underlie the 2010-15 NTDP, while the Ministry's sustainable tourism policy, actions and guidelines will become an industry benchmark.

On marketing, the Government of Oman has agreed to the Ministry's request for special funding for a global TV and web destination awareness campaign that will showcase Oman as a destination of high natural value. The BBC has been contracted to work with the Ministry on this project and filming was completed in April 2011. The campaign roll-out is scheduled for September 2011. This campaign will elevate environmental awareness by Omanis.

The Ministry's industry and public awareness and educational programs will continue in 2011, boosted by proposals for an expanded photographic competition.

Originality and Leadership

How has the Ministry demonstrated vision, foresight and persistence?

The Ministry believes these actions demonstrate that it has worked proactively and actioned a series of coordinated activities that would not otherwise have happened.

With respect to sustainable policy, programs and promotions, on a comparative and value basis, the Ministry believes it has set an example for public and private sector agencies. More needs to be done, but we are making solid progress. The Ministry believes it, along with Omran's many actions, have been proactive in making Oman greener.

Continuity & Sustainability

How sustainable is the initiative carried out?

The Ministry's will focus on sustainable outcomes and ensure that existing and new industry stakeholders make a matching commitment to sustainable tourism.

Explain how it will be effective in the long term

Sustainable tourism objectives are embodied in the 2010-15 NTDP.

Natural values are core to the destination marketing strategy across all markets.

Key values are now being incorporated into staff development programs.

A HRDAP is now able to be implemented.

An Eco Tourism National Strategy is in preparation.



The Ministry is looking to implement Certification Schemes to encourage industry to increase professional standards and performance levels, with annual reporting and transparency.

in October 2011, the Ministry hosts the 3rd International Geotourism Conference. This will build awareness in Oman's natural values at an international level and provide an industry training opportunity for Oman's tour companies.

We see these actions as further steps to transitioning to a sustainable tourism sector.

Referees

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Title:	Professor	Professor
Name	Harold Goodwin	Thomas Andersson
Organisation	Int. Centre for Responsible Tourism	The Research Council of Oman
Position	Head	Senior Advisor of Science
Email	harold@haroldgoodwin.info	Andersson@trac.gov.om
Telephone No.	+44 1795 532737 (<u>Email preferred</u>)	+968 2450 9829

Note

- Professor Goodwin worked extensively with Omran and with the Tourism Ministry in the early stages of policy formulation. He, along with the late Dr Rajiha Ali, Co-Chaired the 4th International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations.
- Professor Andersson, on behalf of The Research Council of Oman, is a contributing author to the booklet, *Tourism and Biodiversity*.

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REF.NO. : _____

DATE : _____

REMARKS : _____

ATTACHMENT A

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS AND STUDIES COMMENCED IN 2010

International and National

National Sustainable Development Report being prepared by the Ministry of Environment

Contribution to the National Report to the Conservation of Biodiversity under the Ministry of Tourism

Jabal Al Akhdar

Socio-Economic Baseline Study for the Sustainable Tourism Development, Centre for Oman Studies, Sultan Qaboos University, Working Draft Report

Bandar Al Khayran

Banadar Al Khayran, Public Ecotourism Area, Management Plan, William Gladstone, Marc Stalmans, Robert Wild

Bandar Al Khayran Environmental Tourism Project, Sultanate of Oman, Literature Review and Description of Physical Setting, Five Oceans LLC

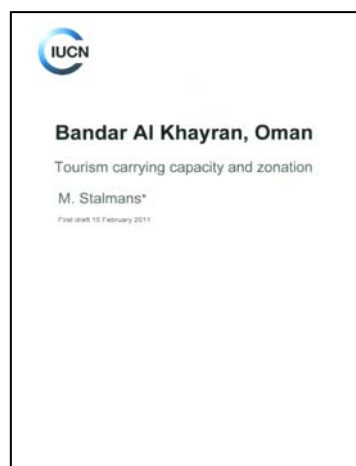
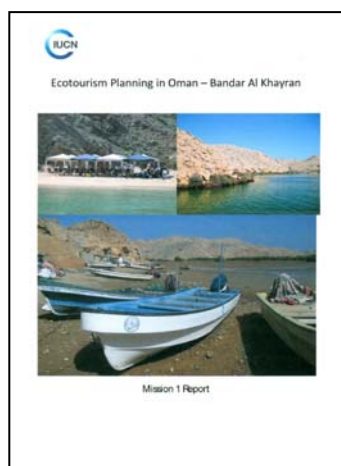
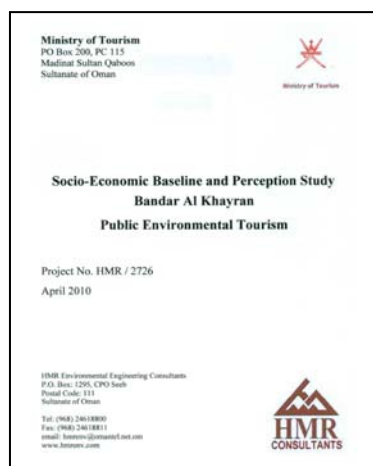
Bandar Al Khayran Environmental Tourism Project, Sultanate of Oman, Volume 2: Environmental Baseline Survey Report (Draft), January 2011

Bandar Al Khayran, Oman. Tourism Carrying Capacity and Zonation, M. Stalmans, IUCN, First Draft, February 2011

Ecotourism Planning in Oman – Bandar Al Khayran, Mission Report 1

Wadi Darbat

Master Plan and Management Plan, Wadi Darbat, Draft, February 2011



CLOSING STATEMENT

An invitation to take responsibility and work together for sustainable development through tourism, Muscat, 12 October 2010

On the occasion of the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Tourism hosting the 4th International Conference on *Responsible Tourism in Destinations, Living Landscapes of Oman* in Muscat (10 -12 October 2010):

- **Welcoming** and recognising the contributions of 380 delegates from 34 countries;
- **Valuing** the guidance and input of UNWTO, UNEP, IUCN and ICRT for co-chairing;
- **Learning** from many presentations, case studies and debates; and
- **Recognising** that the scale of the challenges is increasing.

The Conference invites all stakeholders to consider their share of responsibility to contribute to sustainable development through tourism taking account of the four Conference themes and outcomes:

1. **Livelihoods, local economic development and human resources** to be at the centre of any sustainable tourism strategy. We urge stakeholders to consider the importance of well managed local sourcing mechanisms to spread the benefits of tourism. We recognise the importance of associations and partnerships to achieve this.
2. The conservation and celebration of **tangible and intangible heritage management**. It is necessary to understand and respect the value systems of local communities. Cultural heritage is at the heart of destinations. This heritage must be represented and interpreted truthfully and marketed with respect.
3. The challenge of a **world of finite resources**. Actions include legislation, enforcement and compliance monitoring to protect natural and cultural heritage, and reduce the consumption of natural resources such as water and fossil fuels.
4. **Responsible destination marketing and management**. Marketing should be used to attract tourists who value and respect local communities, natural and cultural heritage of destinations, while management should ensure fulfilling visitor experiences.

Drawing on the outcomes and progress made since the First Conference on International Responsible Tourism in Destinations, this Conference reaffirms that a responsible approach to sustainable tourism is a model that can and should be developed and adapted for national, regional and local programs. Additionally, the Conference recognises the value and priority of operational research and monitoring for targeted actions at all levels.

Noting that tourism is a multi-stakeholder and dynamic industry, the Conference invites all stakeholders to take their share of responsibility in a collective effort to achieve sustainable destinations.

The Conference encourages other national programs around the world to adopt a responsible approach to sustainable development through tourism.

To demonstrate its leadership in taking responsibility, Oman's Ministry of Tourism will finalise its Sustainable Tourism Policy in collaboration with other government authorities and stakeholders. The policy will be embodied in 8th Five Year Plan (2011-2015) for Tourism. Accordingly, we invite all stakeholders to declare what their organisations will do to make a positive difference, and expect stakeholders to develop sustainability policies and report on their implementation and effectiveness.

To assist the spread of our learning internationally, Conference presentations will be posted on www.rtd4.om.