

Strong line up for Gulf debut

As Reed launches region's first meetings industry research study

UAE – Over 200 hosted buyers are expected to join leading hotel chains and a host of visitors from the Gulf and Middle East for next month's inaugural GIBTM exhibition taking place in Abu Dhabi, 13-15 March.

Reed Travel Exhibitions is

expecting its show's debut will attract major destinations, venues and suppliers from the region to the new ADNEC centre (see page 3).

GIBTM director Graeme Barnett detects an eve-of-show surge of interest from potential exhibitors, buyer and trade

visitors, "following on from one of the most successful EIBTM events since its Barcelona move".

Reed has also released a new study on net worth and available opportunities for the meetings industry for the Gulf and wider Middle East region.

The research findings are available online at: www.gibtm.travel.

Barnett says: "The research will be able to add some clarity for the sector and act as a base for debate and discussion in the period leading up to GIBTM 2008."

Russian research

RUSSIA – Meetings industry business from Russia is set to increase by 170 per cent in 2007, with conferences being the largest sector. The findings come from a survey taken during and after the 2006 Moscow International MICE Forum.

Conducted by *International Leisure World* magazine, the survey also found the busiest time for Russian meetings industry is October-April, with 68 per cent of all events taking place. The busiest single month is February and incentive tours account for 16 per cent of the market and seminars abroad for 11 per cent.

Turkey is the most popular destination for Russians with 8.85 per cent of the market, followed by France and Germany. Other countries popular for meetings and events for outbound Russians were Italy, UK, Spain, Austria, Egypt, UAE and China.

The local meetings industry

events are heavily concentrated in the 21-100 participants bracket – nearly 40 per cent of the total.

Russian companies are clearly beginning to value more the importance of motivating staff through incentives and spectacular product launches. Advantages of arranging meetings abroad and attending international conferences are taking root.

Informedia Moscow MD Con Bridgeman cautions that the domestic Russian professional conference market is very different from the inbound and outbound meetings industry, however. "In fact," he tells CMW, "they are separate industries. It is also very different from the type of international conference in the West that executives are sent to from Russia, as these tend to be global conferences servicing a given sector to which Russians go to acquaint themselves with global trends."

AIPC launches Academy and marketing Summit

BELGIUM – After more than a year in the planning, the International Association of Congress Centres this month launches its AIPC Academy. The education programme brings experience and expertise of industry leaders "to respond to a growing need to upgrade the professional qualifications of congress centre staff", says an AIPC statement.

"Our member surveys have indicated for some time a growing concern around a shortage of qualified staff in many areas of their operations," says AIPC president Barbara Maple. "We are seeing many new entrants into the industry who may have their own specific qualifications but who lack the broader understanding of how the industry operates."

Course content will focus on

topics that are unique to the management of congress centres. "We were not," says Maple, "interested in replicating programmes that offer general business or management skills, as these are readily available in most communities."

There will, initially, be a faculty of eight instructors and 25 students are already registered for the first year's programme.

And, following its inaugural International Sales and Marketing summit for senior level congress centre sales and marketing directors at last year's IMEX, AIPC is staging a second Summit to coincide with this year's show in Frankfurt.

The format will focus on case studies and discussions of strategic matters.

New venue for Warsaw

POLAND – Hilton's new Warsaw Hotel and Convention Centre opens in the Polish capital next month, offering 3,000 square metres of event space to complement its 314 bedrooms.

Hilton Europe and Africa president Wolfgang Neumann says Warsaw is

known for its dramatic history, but more than ever it is emerging as the EU's newest and best value meeting and convention destination.

"Located within easy reach of the major European source markets of London, Paris and Frankfurt, the city offers an unusual backdrop."

Awards season in LA

USA – Los Angeles is in the month of academy awards and awash with ballgowns and limousines.

Big events taking place including the 79th Academy Awards® (Kodak Theatre Hollywood), the Grammys® (Staples Center) and the Writer's Guild Awards taking place at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza.

Moving up into the Hills, and the Beverly Hilton has completed a property-wide renovation at a cost of \$80 million, including remodelling of the 50,000-plus square feet of meeting space.

The Ritz-Carlton Marina del Rey recently completed an \$8 million renovation of its 304 guest rooms and suites, corridors and club lounge.