

TAKING TO THE AIR

ALPHA TOURS PARTNERS IN HELI-FLIGHT

DUBAI – Alpha Tours, a leading destination management company, and Falcon Aviation Services (FAS), a UAE based premium aviation service provider, have entered into a strategic partnership to offer private luxury helicopter services catering to the corporate and leisure tourism markets in the Middle East.

An initial investment of US\$20.5 million has been put into the venture, which Ghassan Aridi, CEO of Alpha Tours described as tapping into a newly created niche market.

“The boom in tourism and other business sectors in the UAE have created a niche for private luxury services. As a leading destination management company specialising in VIP services, we felt it was timely to make a foray into this new market and partnering FAS was the ideal strategic move to undertake,” Aridi explained.

According to Aridi, the new service has been designed to enhance

tourism attractions within the UAE, and add more value to packages Alpha Tours provides to guests.

“Several travel solutions cater to the needs of our clientele that includes tourists, businessmen, and families who are seeking an unforgettable experience of enjoying Dubai from the sky. This is to complement the basic packages of 30, 45 & 60-minute helicopter rides, as well as quick transfers within the emirates”.

Under this strategic partnership, FAS will supply Alpha Tours with a co-branded fleet of luxury helicopters to cater to their high end clientele, both corporate and tourists. This helicopter service will be based in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

The fleet will consist of four helicopters, one Augusta A109 Grand and one Eurocopter EC130 in each city, offering VIP comfortable leather seats, air conditioned & soundproof cabins, as well as panoramic aerial views. ■



INDUSTRY SEMINAR

ICCA MIDDLE EAST CHAPTER HOSTS EVENT

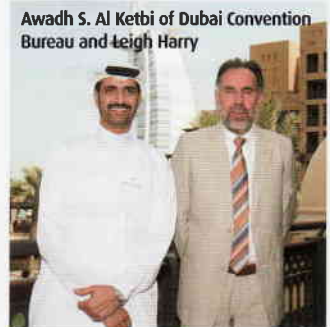
DUBAI – Leigh Harry, President of ICCA (International Conference and Congress Association) came to the UAE in late August to present seminars on the Value of Business Tourism in the Middle East.

The Dubai seminar was hosted at Mina A' Salam by the ICCA Middle East Chapter in cooperation with Jumeirah Group and the Dubai Convention Bureau, with the same seminar repeated in Abu Dhabi the following day, hosted by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority.

Some seventy or more delegates attended each seminar to discover more about what makes a destination successful, how to increase the revenue from business tourism and what ICCA can do to help.

Drawing from ICCA's authoritative database, Leigh Harry provided an

overview of the associations meeting industry, current and future trends as well as challenges faced by PCOs and DMCs. He also spoke on the complexities of the bidding process and in his dual role as Chief Executive of the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, provided interesting insights into winning and losing bids, as well as the expansion plans of the centre. ■



Awadh S. Al Ketbi of Dubai Convention Bureau and Leigh Harry

AIPC CONFERENCE SUCCESS

GRAZ, AUSTRIA HOSTED ANNUAL PROGRAMME

GRAZ – Along with an extensive educational programme and series of new programme briefings, the 2007 Annual Conference of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC), held in Graz, Austria, delivered a new Board of Directors and a set of winners for the newly launched AIPC Innovation Award.

Conference content included keynote presentations and workshops from such noted industry leaders as Simon Anholt, founder and publisher of the Anholt Nation Brands Index and the Anholt City Brands Index; Steven Powell, Senior Vice President, Worldwide Sales, InterContinental Hotels Group and David Greusel,

Principal with HOK Sport Venue Event.

At the same time, it delivered updates on new initiatives including the AIPC Quality Standards programme, the AIPC Academy, the International Sales and Marketing Summit and the inaugural AIPC Key Issues and Outlook Survey.

The Conference also included a poster session for 16 entries in the AIPC Innovation Award competition, a programme begun this year to recognise projects or initiatives that represent the development of new, more creative or more effective approaches to any aspect of congress centre management, operations or marketing. ■