



PEACE IN OMAN

biggest charm for tourists

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
SALALAH, JAN 31

Most of the tourists endorsed this value of the country in addition to other factors like the country's focus on environment and care for heritage and culture.

Marco Capitani, Contracting Manager of Veratour, sounded convinced about the destination, as two previous seasons were quite a success.

"We are promoting Oman as the most peaceful and cultural destination of the Middle East. We have upgraded our facilities and joint venture with the Marriott is working in a very good way. Our strength is our kitchen which is offering typical Italian food for full season."

"We had a very positive feedback from our guests last year. The average satisfaction level was 98 per cent.

They liked the wild situation in Mirbat area... The sales forecast is very positive this year. We will increase our

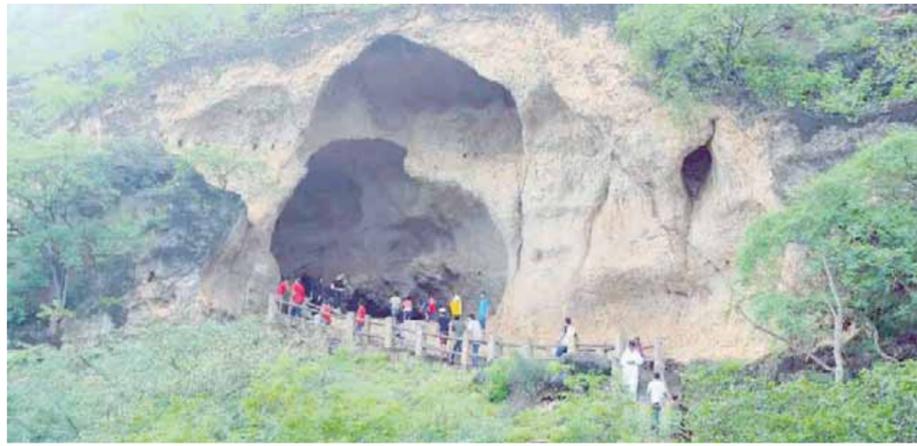
numbers, as we advanced our season almost by two months. Last year the season started in December, this year we started in October. It is going to make a difference," said Marco, while talking about client satisfaction about the destination.

Similar were the views of Bengt Egmalu, a tourist from Sweden.

Bengt loves to steal time for Salalah, as this was his sixth visit to Salalah along with his wife.

"Now I am leading a retired life. I travel a lot, but in every visit outside my country I keep Salalah in mind because I love its serene atmosphere, land and people. They have plenty of things to offer to a tourist and the prime thing is safety and security," he said.

A tourist from Germany recounted her experience in Salalah as "unique and one of the most memorable." In her comments through email Ricarda said, she was lucky for her visit during the country's National Day celebra-



tions. She claimed to have encountered the true spirit of the country and said: "I came along with a group from Germany in a charter flight without knowing that among the tourists we would

be the lucky ones and our visit would coincide with Oman's National Day.

"We were able to experience the authentic Omani expressions, especially their love for His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. This would not be an exag-

geration if I say that everyone was either having his/ her dress done in Omani flag style with the Sultan's picture or cars made up in National Day fashion."

IT professional Nikolaus Hievo-

nymi from Germany endorsed Oman's peace, safety and security as the most charming thing that attracted him to come. "At a time when something or the other is happening around the world, I am finding Oman an oasis of peace. I pray it remains like this and we can have many more visits to the country," he said.

Tourists Sabine and Edda, both from Germany, were very much impressed with the country and its culture.

"It is very nice to see concern for heritage and culture at a time when countries around the world are losing their identity in the name of development. We preferred to come to Salalah to experience authentic Arab life.

Tall buildings and malls are available everywhere, but our purpose of being here is entirely different and here lies the success of the country. We wish all the best to the country and its people," they said.

Oman geological field guide launched

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 31

Under the auspices of Ahmed bin Nasser al Mehrzi, Minister of Tourism, the 'Field Guide to the Geology of Northeastern Oman' was officially launched at the Annual General Meeting of the Geological Society of Oman (GSO) held at Crowne Plaza Muscat on Monday.

The publication is the product of a joint effort between GSO members and the German Geological Society (DGGV). The authors of the 283-pages field guide are Prof Dr Gösta Hoffmann of the Departments of Geoscience (GUtech and University of Bonn/Germany), as well as Prof Dr Martin Meschede (University of Greifswald/Germany), Dr Anne Zacke (University of Bonn) and Dr Mohammed al Kindi, former President of GSO.

The book was published by Borntraeger Science Publisher and is available internationally.

"Oman is like a museum. In Oman you can study the geology like nowhere else in the world. In contrast to many other countries, the rocks are accessible and visible on the surface," said Prof Dr Gösta Hoffmann,



Dr Mohammed al Kindi, Prof Dr Goesta Hoffmann and Ahmed bin Nasser al Mehrzi, Minister of Tourism, during the book launch on Monday.

adding that the geology of Oman is spectacular — for the touristic layman and the geologist alike.

"Exceptionally well exposed rocks offer a fascinating outcrop experience, second to none. The scenery is unique, and often breathtaking. As the field guide is written in a textbook style and presents the geology in a comprehensible way, a broad understanding is facilitated. Therefore, this book not only addresses geologists but also amateurs, visitors and travellers exploring the beauty and

the significance of Oman's geology," he remarked.

The idea behind the field guide emerged during the academic stints of Prof Goesta Hoffmann and Anne Zacke at GUtech.

During numerous field trips and excursions that were conducted with the support of GSO, the geoscientists started to collect rocks.

They then set-up a special rock collection at GUtech, comprising around 1500 specimen of rocks.

The geological guidebook has two

parts: The first provides a general introduction to the geology of Oman, and enables the reader to put the variety of geological phenomena and observations into a scientific context.

The authors emphasise describing the processes that led to the formation of Oman's rocks and landscapes formed over millennia of Earth's history.

Following the introductory chapters on archaeology, climate, and vegetation, the geomorphological and geological aspects of Oman are presented.

The second and largest part of the guide consists of meticulous descriptions of 99 excursion points located across the northeast of the country.

The authors, have carefully selected the most interesting and important sites.

The excursion points can easily be located by their coordinates, or may also be visited using the detailed roadmaps provided for each single outcrop.

A large number of colour illustrations, a geological overview map, an index, and a list of references complete the content of the guide.

Delayed Palestinian local poll to be held on May 13

JERUSALEM: The Palestinian Authority said on Tuesday that local elections delayed last October after a spat between political factions will now take place in the West Bank and Gaza on May 13.

The Hamas movement which controls the Gaza Strip has been at odds with President Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party over the organisation of their first competitive polls in a decade.

"Today, at a regular meeting, the council of ministers decided to hold elections on May 13, to be held in the West Bank and Gaza," local government minister Hussein al Araj said.

The rival parties have not contested an election since 2006 parliamentary polls, which Hamas won — sparking a conflict that led to near civil war in Gaza the following year.

Reconciliation attempts have repeatedly failed, and Hamas boycotted the most recent municipal elections in 2012.

Hamas rejected the announcement. Spokesman Fawzy Barhoum said in a statement it "strengthens divisions and serves Fatah politically."

"Any upcoming elections must be part of a reconciliation," he added.

The elections will choose municipal councils in some 416 cities and towns in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The delay was sparked by the disqualification of a number of Fatah candidates in Gaza by the courts there.

Shortly afterwards rival courts in the West Bank labelled the ruling unlawful, and said the elections would go ahead only in the West Bank — prompting the government to postpone them.

Fatah and Hamas traded blame over the delay.

Salem Barahmeh, a Palestinian commentator, said if Hamas wanted to the group could prevent the elections from taking place in Gaza. — AFP

Fine artists exhibition opens



MUSCAT: Young Fine Artists Exhibition was opened at Stal Gallery in Muscat on Monday under the auspices of Sayyidah Afra bint Talal al Said.

Hassan bin Mir, Executive Director, of Stal Gallery said that the exhibition hosts works of 12 artists, mostly dominated by modernism, and experimentation of different materials.

He said that one of the young artist will be crowned with the grand award while two awards will be given to the best show and the best two artworks. The exhibition will last for two weeks.

— ONA

Delegation from Majlis Ash'shura visits Octal

MUSCAT: A delegation from the Majlis Ash'shura, led by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Head of the Economic and Financial Committee, recently visited Octal's state-of-the-art PET complex in the Salalah Free Zone to gain insight into the export powerhouse's contribution to the national economy.

The members were welcomed by Octal CEO Nicholas Barakat and joined a comprehensive tour of the company's facilities, which contributes 2 per cent of Oman's GDP and 7.3 per cent of the Sultanate's non-oil exports.

Representing the future of manufacturing in the Sultanate, Octal has earned a reputation as one of the largest direct employers in Salalah and a leading choice for talented Omani youth. The company has maintained a long-term commitment to providing Omani graduates with enriching opportunities to succeed and achieve their professional aspirations both in Oman as well as in Octal's offshore



facilities. Octal is the world's largest producer of PET sheet and resin on a single site and the world's leading clear rigid packing material supplier, producing nearly 1 million metric

tons of bottle grade PET per year.

Transporting more than 50,000 containers per year from the Port of Salalah, the company exports its products to more than 80 markets

around the world.

Its longest list of customers feature some of the most prestigious brands, including Walmart, Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Proctor & Gamble, and Unilever.