

According to Dr Heba Asala, executive director at the tourism sector of the Ministry of Tourism, "What makes a first class port of call as well as homeport."

## World Travel Awards announces nominations for 2010

THE World Travel Awards (WTA) recently unveiled the nominations for its 2010 awards, as well as a number of new categories to reflect the changing face of travel and tourism.

More than 5,000 organisations spanning 162 countries have been nominated by industry peers for a chance to win the most coveted prize in travel and tourism.

Nominees range from destinations, tourist boards and airlines to luxury hotels, travel technology providers and adventure tour operators.

Online voting is now open and provides both the trade and the consumer an opportunity to support their favourite brands in the bid for travel glory.

WTA has also unveiled a series of enhancements to mark the first Grand Tour of a new decade.

Technology is top of the agenda with a host of new categories, ranging from 'Leading New Hotel Website' to 'Leading Dynamic Packaging Product'.

The awards programme, which serves

solidate Germany's standing as a preferred travel destination for GCC nationals."

During the road show, Germany's regional representatives provided pertinent information about their respective areas, with the aim of engaging and attracting more tourists from the Gulf countries. The dialogue between the participants and their GCC audience resulted in great enthusiasm on both sides.

Over the past few years, there has been a rapid increase in the number of GCC tourists who have been spending their holidays in Germany. Statistics recently published by the German Federal Statistics Office indicate that the number of arrivals by GCC nationals in Germany during 2009 reached 258,883, the majority being tourists coming from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, indicating a 7.07 per cent increase compared to 2008. In response to this dynamic growth Germany is continuing its efforts to attract more GCC visitors, for example, many of Germany's major cities now offer guidebooks in Arabic and rent out furnished apartments for families, as an alternative to hotel rooms. ■

## HotelREZ launches new partnership

HotelREZ, an internationally recognised representation company with more than 680 properties worldwide in 27 countries, has signed a first-of-its-kind partnership agreement for Mezza Associates to manage its complete hotel development across the Middle East.

The partnership is ready off to a flying start with collaborations moving ahead with Layia Hospitality and many more independent hotels. HotelREZ, since it was founded in 2004, has seen its hotel membership grow to 675 in less than five years. Clients include brands such as Simply Connect, Simply Fabulous, the Elegant Hotel Collec-

tion, World Fashion Hotels and the Hotel 100. It anticipates huge interest from GCC countries due to its successful formula for revenue generation and aims to be a refreshing option for hotels which wish to maximise their revenue through more distribution channels, a vast range of marketing programmes and impressive demand generation solutions. The partnership offers independent hotels and hotel chains a complete solutions partner at the forefront of hospitality distribution, managed by a team of industry specialists at the top of their game with an entrepreneurial, flexible and tailor-made approach. ■

ation and budget airlines available here.

It's a common misconception that low-cost hotels and 'no frills' airlines mean bad service and outdated facilities. This is not the case. Having budget options alongside five-star hotels opens up a destination, attracting tourists of all ages and incomes.

An increase in visitors is not something to be missed during turbulent economic times. The Middle East market is maturing and the perception of low-cost travel and hospitality is maturing. ■

By Mark Walsh, group exhibitions director, Reed Travel Exhibitions - organiser of low-cost travel and hospitality is Market. ■

## Get involved in ATM Travel Agents' Day

THE popular Travel Agents' Day is back at this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM) sponsored by IATA and providing trade professionals with the opportunity to direct visitors to their stands, present company information to the travel agents in attendance and promote their products and destinations.

There are various events taking place throughout the day on May 6 including the IATA-sponsored passport competition in which Middle East-based travel agents will be issued with their 'passport', featuring information on participating exhibitors, when they arrive at the show.

They will need to visit exhibitors' stands and gather information about their services in order to enter the draw for several top prizes. They must complete the whole passport and get it stamped by each participating exhibitor to be eligible.

Almost 70 destinations will be on hand to help travel agents gain insight to the latest trends, product news and ultimately secure business and previous winners have gone home with prizes such as iPods, laptops, holidays and DVD players.

If you would like to be included in the passport contact publishing director Kim Thomson on kim.thomson@trade Arabia.ae or sales manager Fiona McAndrew on fiona@trade Arabia.ae. ■



The team from Etihad pick up an award at last year's event