

SYRIA AND TOURISM

Most nations recognise that tourism forms an intrinsic part of a diverse economy. But what is tourism in today's world and what does it mean for Syria?

The definition of tourism has become increasingly broad – hence terms like health tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, etc. However, the vast majority of tourism activities are still associated with heritage.

Indeed, the UK tourism market is roughly 80% heritage related. As a result, any region that benefits from natural heritage, antiquity, and/or industrial heritage can create a compelling heritage tourism offer to form the foundation of a sustainable tourism sector. This in turn contributes significantly to the wider economic base of that region.

rh architects is a specialist architecture practice working alongside both government agencies and the private sector to redefine tourism strategies in the more mature markets and set

the benchmark for tourism experiences in the emerging economies around the world. By designing highly differentiated tourism destinations, we are helping to attract visitors to previously underdeveloped historic sites while also assisting in the creation of robust tourism markets alongside existing commodity, manufacturing and even service sector industries whilst they are still prominent.

The challenge must ultimately be to balance resulting benefits with potential dangers such as ecological or environmental damage that unmanaged mass tourism can cause.

Tourism to many of the world's greatest historic nations, including Syria, has in recent times been disadvantaged by mixed perceptions. This is changing and the time has now come for the Middle East as a whole to capture once again both the imagination of the international tourist and the resultant economic benefit.

Ray Hole
Managing Director
rh architects

www.rh-architects.com

NEW VISION ON TOURISM



Syria established the Ministry of Tourism in 1970. But there was no legislation putting all players in the tourism sector where they belong. The private sector was scattered and did not have proper representation.

Yet tourism in Syria is and will be a totally private sector incentive. The role of the state is legislative.

Various players in this sector were previously distributed across small groups, called societies. They were licensed under the umbrella of the Ministry for Social Affairs.

Restaurants, Hotels, Travel Agents, Tourist Guides, Handicrafts & Antiquities were all grouped in different organisations.

In 2001 the Syrian Government realised that Tourism can be and should be a strategic industry, contributing to national income.

To fulfill this vision the Ministry of Tourism, together with the private sector, have worked to form a private sector grouping for all the players in the tourism sector.