

## *AITF – fuelling the development of Azerbaijan’s tourism industry*

The 9<sup>th</sup> Azerbaijan International Tourism and Travel Fair, AITF 2010, took place on 28-30 April in the Heydar Aliyev Sports and Concert Complex. The show is officially supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the Azerbaijan Tourism Association and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan.



### The President of Azerbaijan on AITF 2010

For the first time, President Ilham Aliyev, accompanied by Minister of Culture and Tourism, Aboulfas Garayev, toured the exhibition. They visited regional stands, which demonstrated the exciting tourism opportunities throughout Azerbaijan and the industry’s potential for development. The President paid particular attention to the national stands of the Stavropol Region, Turkey, Greece, India, Egypt and Mauritius.

**Important guests** at the exhibition included Valeriy Gayevskiy, the Governor of Stavropol Region, Yuriy Yagudayev, Minister of Economic Development of Stavropol Region, Ivan Kovalev, Minister of Industry, Power and Transport, Georgios Poussaios, Secretary General for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Hellenic Republic, Head of the Indian Tourism Organisation and representatives of the embassies of Greece, India, Turkey, Egypt, Russia, etc.

### AITF sees strong growth

The exhibition’s significance for the travel industry is confirmed by its strong record of growth. This year, the exhibition saw a **20% increase in size**, featuring **179 companies** from **24 countries**. The exhibitors represented **33 tourist destinations**, including Austria, Belarus, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine. There were 14 national group stands, including the following regular participants: Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Malaysia, Turkey and Uzbekistan and a number of newcomers: Egypt, India, Italy (Lazio Region), Mauritius, Russia and UAE. One of the key features of this year’s event was the combination of outbound and inbound tourism opportunities offered by some of the large tour operators.



### Partner Country

This year’s partner country was Turkey. There were plenty of events on Turkey’s stand to attract visitors’ attention, including a raffle and cultural performances. Dr. Aytakin Yilmaz, Counsellor for Cultural and Information Affairs of the Turkish Embassy in Azerbaijan, noted: “In terms of presenting our country’s tourism potential, we believe the Caucasus and Central Asia are of immense importance and very promising. Of course, from this perspective, Azerbaijan is the most profitable and stable partner. This is the first time we have participated in the event as ‘Partner Country’”.

## Popular Destination

One of the most popular destinations for the Autumn-Winter season 2009-2010 in Azerbaijan was undoubtedly the UAE. This year, the number of *tourists travelling from Azerbaijan to Dubai increased by 350%* in comparison with the same time last year. At the exhibition, Dubai's stand featured *seven travel agencies and a range of famous hotels*, presenting a variety of tours and first-class services.

## Exotic Destinations

Companies from Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Thailand presented an exotic experience entitled "Paradise on the Islands".

For the first time, Mauritius presented a national group stand, comprising *6 companies* - elite resorts, spa hotels and tour operators.



## The Stavropol Region

The Stavropol stand promoted cities such as Yessentuki, Zheleznovodsk, Kislovodsk, Mineral Waters and Pyatigorsk, all of which are famous for their unique approach to treatment.

Exhibiting sanatoriums stressed the effectiveness of their participation. They underlined the importance of the Azerbaijan market, stating that up to 20% of some hotels' business came from the country. The national group, headed by the Minister, featured *24 sanatoriums and travel agencies from Russia*.

Many companies from *Ukraine* also took part in the exhibition, offering Azerbaijani visitors not only Black Sea leisure activities, but also spa resorts in Truskavetsk and other cities.

## Azerbaijani Representation at AITF

Azerbaijan organised a display of regional tourism opportunities, demonstrating the extensive domestic tourism sector. One pavilion was dedicated entirely to recreational areas, resorts and hotels. In total, *there were over 80 hotels and resorts from 32 regions of Azerbaijan*. This pavilion enabled visitors to get a real feel for the natural beauty of Azerbaijan's regions and discover their rich folklore, national dishes and traditions.

## Events taking place during AITF

A number of events take place every year alongside the exhibition, including workshops, master classes, presentations, etc. In this way, the exhibition helps to promote high standards, increase awareness and deliver improved sales. The following seminars were particularly popular: **"Tours to Israel. Recreation in the resorts of the Red, Mediterranean and Dead Seas"**, **"Let's Go to Dubai"**, **"Italy is Not Just a Country It is a Whole World!"**, and **"How to Sell Switzerland"**.



A new *Baku-Crete flight route* was announced on SW Travel's stand. This is a significant event, timed to coincide with the exhibition, which creates a direct route between Azerbaijan and Greece, catering for the increasing flow of tourists from Azerbaijan to Greece.

## Competition Winners

AITF's exhibitors work hard to produce attractive and innovative stands and, in honour of their efforts, a number of awards are presented. A survey conducted amongst the visitors determines the winners. This year, certificates were awarded to: **AZAL** for the "**MOST CREATIVE DESIGN**", the **GREEK NATIONAL STAND** for the "**BEST DEBUT**" and the **TURKISH NATIONAL STAND** for the "**BEST STAND**".

## Visitor Activity at the Exhibition

Crowds of visitors attended the exhibition every day. In total, *72% percent of the visitors were tourist industry professionals. The total attendance over three days was 7,640, representing a 20% growth compared to the previous year.* According to exhibitor feedback, approximately 7,000 valuable contacts were made during the exhibition.

The high attendance at AITF 2010 despite the global economic crisis and the visit by President Ilham Aliyev are both testament to the exhibition's significance for the industry and the industry's influence on Azerbaijan's economy on the whole. The event's relaxed and inspiring atmosphere proved ideal for conducting business. In 2011, *AITF will celebrate its 10th anniversary*, which will be accompanied by a commemorative programme of events.



## In Brief:

### Exhibitor data

Number of companies: 250  
Number of national groups: 14  
International participants: 47%  
Domestic participants: 53%  
Number of countries: 24  
Touristic destinations: 33

### Visitor data:

Total visitors over 3 days: 7,640  
International visitors: 11%  
Domestic visitors: 89%  
Trade visitors: 72%  
Exhibition size: 4,026 m<sup>2</sup>