

**KITF celebrates its tenth anniversary in style**

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Kazakhstan's leading travel exhibition, KITF. The event took place on 21-23 April in Almaty. KITF is listed in the UNWTO's recommended events and is organised in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Kazakhstan.

This year, 36 countries, represented by over 500 companies, were vying for visitors' attention with colourful cultural shows and tempting offers. New to the show this year were Australia, Brazil, Croatia and Sri Lanka. Croatia, in particular, saw a great deal of interest from visitors, being one of the most popular tourism destinations in Kazakhstan and having recently announced that Kazakh visitors no longer need a visa to enter the country.

According to exhibitors, KITF is the most effective event in the CIS for generating new business and some even reported signing contracts on their stands. Ukraine's international airline sold a dozen tickets during the exhibition for the new Almaty-Kiev-Almaty flight, introduced just two weeks before the exhibition. They also announced the launch of a direct flight to Egypt.

Natalia Glukhova, Marketing Executive of Tourism Malaysia, Moscow, commented, "We are very optimistic on the potential of promoting Malaysia in the Kazakh Market. The statistics on tourist arrivals from the area are very encouraging after the launch of a direct flight to Malaysia. Participation in KITF and Astana Leisure is a platform to introduce our product in the market. We are also receiving more trade from Malaysia indicating their interest to participate in KITF. This is very positive development. We are also planning to carry out a few marketing, advertising and PR activities in the market in conjunction with this event.

A popular attraction was the international pavilion which housed national tourist organisations from around the world. In the centre of the pavilion was a stand presenting the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Kazakhstan. The Ministry announced plans to establish a well-developed infrastructure along the Western China Highway, with accommodation, restaurants and service stations every 800 km. During his opening speech, Yevgeny Nikitinsky, Counsellor to the Ministry, stated that investors have confirmed their support for the Kenderli, Aktau City and Barabai projects.

Over the last ten years, KITF has seen huge growth; the event now features nine times as many exhibitors as its first edition and it has grown by 27 times in terms of size.

Event Director, Maria Badakh, comments, "This year was a great milestone in the history of KITF, as we celebrated ten years at the centre of Kazakhstan's travel industry. The success of the show over this time has reflected the development of Kazakhstan's travel industry and we've seen a huge increase in the number of travel agencies and tour operators in the country. As Kazakhstan builds its reputation as a major tourist destination and more and more Kazakh citizens venture abroad, we look forward to another ten successful years!"

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Notes to editors

KITF is organised by ITE Group Plc, a leading organiser of trade exhibitions and conferences, with over 180 events held annually in 11 countries. The company specialises in organising events in fast-developing markets, in particular Russia, CIS, Eastern Europe, Turkey, China and Africa. ITE has a large network of local offices throughout these regions.

ITE's portfolio of travel and tourism events also includes MITT (Russia), UITT (Ukraine), TourSib (Russia), AITF (Azerbaijan), EMITT (Turkey) and Astana Leisure (Kazakhstan). For more information, please visit: www.travel-exhibitions.com.

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