

The 15th Anniversary Edition of MITT kicks off the 2008 Spring-Summer Tourist Season

The 15th anniversary edition of the MITT (Moscow International Travel & Tourism) exhibition took place on 19-22 March 2008 in the Expocentr exhibition grounds in Moscow. MITT is the main exhibition for the industry in Russia and it is in the top five tourism exhibitions in the world. Every year, MITT signifies the start of the Spring-Summer tourist season.

Over 15 years, the exhibition has grown and undergone a number of changes. The launch event, held in 1994, featured 800 companies from 50 countries. Over the next five years, the exhibition became one of the largest and best attended events in the world.

This year, approximately 3,000 companies from 118 countries and regions participated in the exhibition, utilising 55,000 m², making it 11% larger than the previous year. MITT 2008 covered almost all of the pavilions at Expocentr, using Pavilion 8 for the first time. Many exhibitors increased their stand sizes substantially.

According to an independent audit carried out by Russcom IT-Systems (who are accredited by the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry – UFI), MITT attracted an attendance of 92,000 – 12% higher than the previous year. The first two days of the exhibition were dedicated to professional visitors. Research indicated that 94% of the visitors during these two days were trade visitors.

Turkey became MITT's first ever partner country, presenting a stand of over 1,250 m² and featuring the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of Turkey and more than 500 additional companies. 20 March was pronounced 'Turkey Day' at the exhibition and all participants were invited to the Turkish hall for traditional food and entertainment.

Greece also presented a large stand – 1,500 m², along with Italy, which had 1,000 m². Bulgaria, France, Belgium, Indonesia and Czech Republic also increased the size of their stands. A number of new countries took part in the exhibition and demonstrated their interest in the Russian tourism market, including Mongolia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, USA, Fiji, Dominican Republic and Kazakhstan.

This year, Russia was also better represented with stands from Nizhniy Novgorod, St. Petersburg, Kaluga, Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Karelia, Smolensk and other regions. The exhibition featured a joint stand for sanatoria and recreation centres from the Moscow region, as well as displays from the Association of Assistance to Tourist Technologies and River Cruises.

The major players in the tourism industry take part in the exhibition regularly including: Tez Tour, Coral travel, Mostravel, Intourist, BSI Group, ArtTour, Inna Tour, Nord, Capital Tour, Russian Express, Lanta-Tour, Yuzhny Crest, Astravel, Acent Travel, VKO Travel, Detour, Track Travel, Maxitour, Vodokhod SPb, Infoflot and Tourflot.

The event's official opening ceremony was attended by representatives of government, trade associations, embassies and the event organisers. Elen Drapeko, First Deputy Chairman of the Committee of the State Duma for Culture of the Russian Federation, was the first to welcome participants to the exhibition. She said, "Russia is gradually becoming not just a 'supplier' of travellers, but also a country with an established domestic tourism market, offering its guests a lot of interesting and exciting tours". This point of view was shared by many at the event.

Grigoriy Antyufeev, Chairman of the Committee for Tourism of the Moscow Government and Chairman of the Coordination Council for Tourism in the 'Russian Regions – Moscow Agreement', highlighted the importance of MITT for the development of domestic tourism. He explained that the development of tourism is one of the top priority sectors in the development of Moscow and, over the last 8-10 years, the Russian capital has undergone extremely rapid growth. New hotels have been built and the infrastructure is being improved. Mr. Antyufeev continued, "We have always supported and will continue to support the MITT exhibition in order to achieve a good result for both".

Ismet Yilmaz, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, received a very warm welcome as 2008 has been proclaimed the year of Turkish Culture in Russia. Mr. Yilmaz emphasised the importance of strengthening the relationship between Russia and Turkey, not only for the tourism industry, but also in terms of culture, society and economics.

A number of events took place alongside the exhibition, providing an important element in the event. For the first time, MITT featured a business conference on 20 March, entitled 'Tourism Industry 2008: Russian Regions – new opportunities for tourism development'. The conference was organised by ITE and one of the leading strategic consultancies in Russia, Strategy Partners. This was the first ever conference on such a scale to focus on the trends and prospects for the development of tourism in the Russian regions. During the conference, official world tourism statistics for 2007 were presented (UNWTO report), along with statistics on the competitiveness of Russia and its 46 regions in the tourism arena. In addition, the development of tourist and recreation zones in Russia and future development prospects were discussed, using Krasnodar Krai as an example. The conference was attended by top managers from Intourist, Accor, Baker & McKenzie, THR and many others.

During the annual awards ceremony, conducted on 19 March during the official gala reception, winners were given awards in various categories. Winners included Inna Tour, Enit - National Tourist Board of Italy, the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of Turkey, Papillon Hotels Resorts & Spa, the Committee for Tourism of Vologda Region, the Tourism Agency of Astrakhan Region, The Ministry of Tourism of Israel and the Slovenian Department for Tourism.

Runners-up in the 'Best Stand Presentation' nomination were: Tursal Travel, the Ministry for the Support and Development of Small Business, Consumer Market and Services of Nizhniy Novgorod Region, Thai Airways International, the Committee for Physical Culture, Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy of Leningrad Region, the Mayor's Office of Yaroslavl, Tourist Hotel Complex Izmailovo, Moscow State Reserve Museum and Muzenidis Travel.

The 'Best Newcomers' to the exhibition were: Grand Hotel Polyana, Aldemar Hotel & Spa and the Department for Tourism and Resorts of Georgia.

A new service this year was the delivery of advertising booklets and catalogues to agencies' offices, arranged by Rail Continent, a transport and logistic company. During the four-day exhibition, 51 tons of materials were transported.

Participants were also able to use the information service of the International Concierge Service Y-Club and TOPDILET, who provided information on entertainment in Moscow and services for booking restaurant tables, club entry, sport tickets, cultural events and taxi services in Moscow and worldwide. This service was provided free of charge.

Tursal Travel, who entered the Russian market in 2007, was MITT's general sponsor.

The next edition of MITT will be held on 18-21 March 2009. More than 80% of this year's exhibitors have already applied for participation at MITT 2009.

Ends

Notes to editors:

ITE Group plc is a leading organiser of trade exhibitions and conferences, with 150 events held annually in 14 countries. The company specialises in organising events in emerging and developing markets, in particular Russia, CIS, Eastern Europe, Turkey, China and Africa. ITE has a large network of local offices throughout these regions.

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