

## Travel

# Exhibit in Spain Commemorates 600th Anniversary of Death of Great Muslim Intellectual



### Travel With John Daye

eTNTravelWireNews; Seville, Spain, May 12, 2006 - Starting this month visitors to Seville will be able to view a fascinating exhibition commemorating the 600th anniversary of the death of history's most important - but little known - Muslim intellectual and learn more about one of the past's most traumatic, and nastiest, centuries. Kicking off May 19, "Ibn Khaldun, the Mediterranean in the 14th Century: Rise and Fall of Empires," will be presented in one of Spain's most beautiful buildings, the Real Alcázar through September 30 and could not be more timely. Almost 300 works - a renowned altarpiece, an astrolabe, a Sultan's helmet, a priory chair, a Koran lectern, a Moorish king's sword, centuries-old manuscripts, bejewelled goblets and gold coins - have been gathered from museums

and libraries throughout Europe and the Middle East. Treasures from Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Portugal, Syria, Turkey and the UK will be on display during the four and a half month show.

By most historical accounts, the 14th century was a miserable time to be alive in much of Europe with wars, plagues, epidemics, banditry, insurrections, droughts, and just plain bad government - much like what we are living through today. The exhibit deals with several traumatic events that shook the 14th century: the 100 Years War which ravaged Europe; the Black Plague of the years 1348-50, "the deadliest disaster in history," according to many historians, and the struggles for the consolidation of the Spanish kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. The 14th century also saw a wave of palace intrigues which

brought continuous struggles and successive changes of government to both the Muslim-Maghreb world and to al-Andalus - the Arabic name the Muslims gave to the Iberian Peninsula. There they created a rich and vibrant culture - from the seventh to the 14th centuries - when most of Europe was living through a dark age. Iconic figures such as Tamerlane, Boccaccio, Dante Alighieri, Marco Polo, Petrarch and the double vizier Ibn al-Khatib figured prominently during their period.

Considered the founder of modern historiography, Ibn Khaldun was one of the great Muslim intellectuals. Of Andalusian descent, he spent part of his life in al-Andalus, living at the court of the Nasrid King Muhammad V, where he was named ambassador to the court of Pedro I the Cruel in Seville. A social historian and celebrated author of the Muqqadim, the Introduction to Universal History, Khaldun was concerned with the logic of empires, their expansion and decline, and his reflections on the formation of states are considered seminal.

## Tourcom : Africa Needs to Speak Up

BAMAKO, MALI, 16 May, 2006/ eTN - Africa needs to embrace the information age and tell more of its own extraordinary stories if it wants to improve the image of the continent and attract more tourists, according to conclusions of the first Africa regional conference on Tourism Communications - TOURCOM - organized by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Mali on 10-11 May.

"We are not asking for help, we are asking for comprehension," said conference chairman Hon. Franklin Nchita Ogbuewu, the Minister of Tourism of Nigeria. "We will now be speaking more, but let the world open its ears."

The conference, held in conjunction with UNWTO's Africa Regional Commission meeting, was attended by some 350 tourism officials and media representatives from 43 countries. It focused on communications and image building as a way of boosting tourism to Africa - a region that currently accounts for less than 5% of international tourist arrivals.

"While some, such as BBC World and CNN, are currently making an extra effort to

tell the story of Africa, it is unlikely this momentum will continue unless Africans themselves become more pro-active in communicating their own news to the rest of the world," asserted UNWTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli in his opening address. "I believe that public interest, and consequently media interest, in Africa will increase in tandem with increasing tourism. Those destinations that are capable of communicating effectively are the ones that will benefit the most."

Africa as a whole suffers from an image problem due to media coverage of the serious security and health issues faced by some countries on the continent. Other countries find there is a lack of coverage of the human-interest stories and good news coming out of the region. Tourists tend to lump all the countries of Africa together so that bad news in one destination affects the entire region. Rather than blame the media for this situation, participants were urged to develop an effective working relationship with the media.

"We are not part of the problem," said BBC World presenter Lyse Doucet in

opening the conference. "If you simply dismiss the media as causing the problem, we will not be able to work together."

Participants agreed that good communications needs to begin at home, with tourism officials developing better relationships with their own local journalists and training them in the complexities of the tourism sector.

Training for tourism industry communicators was also recommended to increase standards of professionalism in African tourism.

For foreign tourism generating markets, there is a need for more information for the media and for potential tourists through the destination website.

"People nowadays expect more information, better quality information and faster information," said UNWTO Deputy Secretary-General Taleb Rifai. "But it is important that the information be truthful, that there is a balance between what we promote and the reality on the ground or else we will lose credibility."

TOURCOM Africa also looked at the issues of crisis communications and the

threat of Avian Flu. With crisis becoming a way of life for the tourism industry, it is important that destinations be prepared, especially for the potential problems that an Avian Flu pandemic would cause. Members were urged to appoint Avian Flu coordinators for the tourism sector and join together with health officials to make sure that industry concerns are heard in the planning process.

African nations were encouraged not to let travel advisories issued by big tourist generating countries stifle hope and promotional efforts.

Kenya Tourism Director Wanjiru Makanga Munene said her country had successfully managed to get around travel advisories and boost arrivals by communicating directly and honestly with potential tourists.

UNWTO pledged to continue helping African nations improve their tourism communications through special programmes at the national level.

A similar conference for Latin America - TOURCOM Americas - is being organized by UNWTO in Rosario, Argentina on 28-30 May.

## Bali Westin Care for School Cleanliness Education

TravelWireNews; Nusa Dua, 19 May 2006 - The Westin Resort Nusa Dua, Bali initiated an educational event as part of Starwood "Cares for Community" Program, on Tuesday, 16 May 2006 at the exhibition hall of the Bali International Convention Centre. 175 students and teachers from 7 elementary schools, which are located in Bualu Village, were invited to participate in the event. Joining in the crowd, were representatives of each School Committee and the Bualu Village Authorities, who showed their support to this initiative to be implemented at schools, the village and the surrounding area.

This community project is focusing on educating the elementary school students about environmental cleanliness awareness, which should start as early as possible. In order to deliver a proper educational message and make it more attractive to the young students, the event was organized in such a way to include show performances, games, and other fun activities.

The event was successfully driven with support from Sunrise School, lead by Kayti Denham. She and her students performed a fantastic show, comprising singing, dancing, and poetry reading. "I strongly believe that to pass a message on it must be done in a memorable and enjoyable way, and we certainly are on the right track. Hopefully we can continue our mission and at the same time the people may enjoy the fun to ensure the message is passed on in a fun and inspiring way!" commented Jan Bundgaard, the resorts General Manager.

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