

MEDITERRANEAN  
*Louis Group  
\$ails Into  
The Big Time  
Travel-Wise*



EGYPT  
*Timeless  
Hospitality  
At Le Meridien  
Pyramids Cairo*





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# Louis Group Sails Into The Big Time Travel-Wise

Travel Group Carves Niche in North American Cruise Market

BY MICHAEL IACHETTA

Three star cruise ships. Three-and-a-half-star service. And a five-star plus port-intensive, destination-heavy stepped up presence of late in the Greek and Western Mediterranean cruise markets, all of which makes us an easy and lucrative sell for American travel agents and tour wholesalers."

That single, deceptively simple paragraph sums up a novel's worth of reasons why Piraeus-and-Genoa-based Louis Hellenic Cruises (LHC) is becoming a major player in the U.S. niche cruise market.

Because Louis isn't exactly a well-known brand here, LHC brass breezed into NYC the other day to let the facts behind their cruise company speak for themselves during a whirlwind tour of the Northeast to brief key US travel agents and tour wholesalers on the company's new direction.

During one such briefing, LHC George Stathopolous, LHC managing director (the US equivalent is CEO), took off his jacket, rolled up his shirtsleeves and gave the above quoted "Three-to-Five-Star-plus" condensed insight into Louis Cruise Lines (LCC), which is the way the company is primarily marketed in North America.

Stathopolous, a veteran of more than 35 years in the cruise industry, was briefing Travel World News (TWN) about all things Louis during a recent working lunch at Omni Berkshire Place along Nicholas Filippidis, LCL Director of Product Development in North America.

His essential message was that booking Louis was a no-brainer for savvy American travel industry pros. Why? Because booking Louis, in effect, involves one-stop shopping for airlines, hotels, cruise and pre-and-or-post cruise options with agents booking directly with established tour wholesalers for no hassle commissions.

"We're more interested in serving a passenger base with a yen for adventure, information, experience and really getting to know a destination. So with us the ship is a venue to get you from here to there with no fuss, muss, glitter, glitz or pizzazz or any of that kind of stuff that makes the conventional cruise ship a floating city with the ship as much the destination as the destination," said Stathopolous. "With us, the destination is the destination. As simple as that.

"Don't get me wrong -- our cruise ships are a sailing home-away-from-home with all the cruise ship amenities but the destination is our prime focus even as our mostly older ships combine the luxury of the classic ocean liners of days gone by with all the modern enhancements," he said. "We sail with

Greek officers, a European crew and believe our ships offer the perfect vehicle for an unhurried and enriching experience. The reason: because we have worked hard to establish our reputation for timely arrivals, smooth embarkation and disembarkation procedures, with fascinating shore excursions coupled with enriching onboard experiences our specialty."

In brief, what the Stahopoulos/Filippidis TWN briefing boiled down was this: The Louis Group is celebrating its 70th anniversary with an impressive group portfolio that started from scratch as Cyprus's first tourist agency back in the 1930s, and



GEORGE STATHOPOLOUS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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**LOUIS GROUP** FROM PAGE 3

soon expanded into hotels, overseas, operations, aviation and cruises.

It initially chartered ships in the late 1970s and then founded Louis Cruise Lines and started buying its own vessels in the late 1980s. Today the group numbers 7,000 employees, 27 hotels, 13 cruise ships and 16 travel agents and catering outlets, including airport concessions, most notably at Moscow's Sheremetyevo.

Indeed, its chairman, Costakis Loizou, won the Pioneer Award for European Tourism 2005 in recognition of the group's achievements, with Costakis giving credit where credit is due to his father, the esteemed Louis Loizou, who founded the company. Costakis has built on that reputation.

That "rep" also includes more than 50 years of active involvement in the Greek market. So nobody does it better when it comes to sailing the Aegean and Mediterranean wine dark seas.

The Louis fleet cruises from, among others, the ports of Piraeus, Genoa, Marseille, London and Limassol to far-flung ports ranging from the Eastern and Western Med to North Africa during a season that begins around March and runs well into November.

"We couldn't have achieved that Louis group growth and reputation without the support of the U.S. travel agent and tour wholesaler," said Stathopoulos. "And we have earned that support by never betraying them, by being faithful to them, by paying well, by being reliable and trustworthy and by delivering a worthwhile product."

Louis also supplies promotional materials, FAM trips for key producers and educational seminars.

Far flung three-to-15-day itineraries cruise the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, including mainland Greece, the Greek Islands, Turkey, the French Riviera, Italy, Spain, Morocco and Malta. Two new itineraries include the "Black Sea Adventure" and "In the Footsteps of St. Paul."



The Sea Diamond, from Birka Cruises of Finland.

And more than 5,000 berths are offered weekly for the ultra-popular three/four/and seven-day Greek Island and Turkey cruises.

Recent additions to the fleet include the Orient Queen, formerly Norwegian Cruise Line's Skyward, from Orient Queen Shipping, and The Sea Diamond, from Birka Cruises of Finland. Both ships had recently undergone multi-million dollar renovations – The Orient Queen, for instance, had a \$22 million total refurbishment in 2005, and is classified as a luxury, 850-passenger ship with 370 spacious cabins. She also features two swimming pools, Jacuzzis, casinos, restaurants and lounges, a beauty salon, a health center, even a heliport and more.

Louis purchased The Sea Diamond from Birka for around \$35 million, with that 22.4-ton Finnish ship built in world-renowned Finnish shipyards in 1986 to sail with 1,250 passengers in 584 cabins.

The "Diamond" was further polished with a \$26 million refurbishment in 1999, and includes, among other amenities, three restaurants, various bars, a large show lounge, a nightclub, shops, a children's area, congress and conference facilities, an indoor and outdoor swimming pool and spa center.

The latest acquisitions enhance the Louis position in the Med and further

enables the company to establish its position in the European cruise market.

The five ships primarily operated in North America include the above-mentioned Orient Queen and Sea Diamond as well as the recently updated 790-passenger Perla. All three ships are deployed out of the ports of Piraeus and Lavrion for the operation of three/four/and/seven day Greek Island and Turkey cruise itineraries.

The classic 750-passenger Coral and the 660-passenger Sapphire are positioned in the Western Med to sail 5-10-day itineraries from the ports of Genoa, Civitavecchia and Naples, Italy, or Marseilles, France. Two additional vessels sail short-term cruises out of the Island Nation of Cyprus to the Holy Land and Egypt and another six are under long term charters catering to specialized market needs, including Thomson Cruises of TUI AG and Transocean of Germany.

There's more but by now you get the idea there's money to be made by booking Louis, including the fact that more than 140,000 passengers sailed on five LCL vessels in 2006, around 50% from North America, which puts them in the same league as MSC and Costa in their respective regions. And that's a very good league indeed.

**LCLUSA@louis cruises.com;**  
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# Egypt: Timeless Hospitality At Le Meridien Pyramids Cairo

Modern comforts are served up with impeccable style and engaging smiles at this hotel, just steps from the Great Pyramid.

MARY ELLEN SCHULTZ

Your client is going to Egypt and wants to stay near the Pyramids. Suggest the adventure begin at Le Meridien Pyramids in Cairo. Welcoming guests since 1998, the stunning resorts sits nestled between the nonstop urban bustle of the capital and the ancient, golden-sand splendor of the Giza Pyramids. Entering the cool marble lobby to the sparkling sound of its indoor waterfall soothes the spirit after the heat and light outdoors. The upscale property is surrounded by luxuriant gardens and a swimming pool that conjure up images of having escaped to a secret oasis right inside the city. Part of the Starwood Resorts group, Le Meridien Pyramids is perfect for families, couples, solo travelers and groups seeking a base from which to begin exploring the ancient mysteries of this vibrant country. Literally across the street from the Pyramids, the property is conveniently located in the Cairo-hugging suburb of Giza, a 45-minute drive from Cairo International Airport and a 15-minute drive from city center.

"Le Meridien Pyramids is blessed with a truly world class location whereby our guests enjoy stunning views of The Great Pyramid of Giza — one of the seven wonders of the world," notes General Manager Barry Curran. "This location, coupled with the exceptional service provided by our naturally friendly staff, makes our hotel a memorable home-away-from-home for both leisure & business." High season is during Christmas/New Year and Easter holidays.

## The Rooms

Le Meridien Pyramids 546 generously sized, comfortably elegant rooms, suites and cabanas feature a cool, calm décor



A Pyramid View room at Le Meridien Pyramids Cairo.

in muted or warm tones, all accented with modern and Pharaonic art — all offering the latest in-room facilities and services. Nonsmoking rooms and rooms modified for easy access for travelers with disabilities are also available.

Room choices include Pyramid view, pool and Pyramid view and garden view. Newly renovated is Le Royal Club floor, located on the fifth floor with 71 uniquely furnished, Pyramid-view rooms (with Hermes amenities), suites and private lounge providing an additional level of pampering, including complimentary breakfast. Junior and deluxe suites are perfect for honeymooners and families. Popular too are the poolside cabanas, luxuriously appointed rooms completely separate from the main building — so popular, in fact, that construction of 160 additional units will be completed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

**Nile Cruises**

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EGYPT

**LE MERIDEN** FROM PAGE 5

by January 2008. More luxury abounds in the Royal Suite (two bedrooms, sitting room, dining room, kitchenette, Jacuzzi bathroom) and for over-the-top extravagance, the Presidential Suite, featuring similar floor plan and located across from the swimming pool with an expansive private terrace and sundeck with a prime Pyramids view. Pretax prices for standard deluxe rooms begin at \$80/night; the Royal Club rooms at \$140/night; Junior suites at \$400/night; the Royal and Presidential suites start at \$1,200/night. All prices are seasonal and may be booked on GDS.

**The Pool, the Nubian Tent, etc.**

Once outside his/her room, your client can choose from a wealth of on-site attractions. The multisystem, heated swimming pool boasts waterfalls, four hydrojet units for underwater massage and a children's pool. Le Meridien's Le Mirage health club provides massages, steam rooms and shock showers; a state-of-the-art spa is scheduled to open in 2008. Choose from seven restaurants to sate hunger, from Al Shams (featuring international fare) to Laredo Tex Mex (popular with guests and Cairenes), to the Nubian Village (serving Oriental and Lebanese cuisine), with an attached shisha café for indulging in the local pastime of enjoying flavored tobacco smoked through a "hubbly bubbly" (refers to the

sound made when inhaling through a traditional glass water pipe). Tennis players have two courts to choose from, and workaholics have a well-equipped business center for logging in and faxing out. Families with kids have access to the hotel's Children's Play Area's playground, garden, toys, and optional babysitting service.

For offsite explorations of Cairo's ancient treasures, concierges can arrange city tours taking in such attractions as renowned Museum of Antiquities, Old Cairo, Saladin's Citadel, the irresistible Khan al Khalili and Kerdasa souqs, the Opera House, Nile cruises and excursions to the unusual (and world's oldest) step pyramid nearby at Sakkara, and the ancient capital of Memphis. They can also book tee-times at a local golf course, horseback riding at a nearby stable, and arrange for massage and beauty treatments at Le Meridien's health club. For a real "midnight at the oasis" experience, they'll book a "Bedouin Nights" desert dinner in a tent under the stars or, for early risers, an energizingly decadent "Nile Champagne" breakfast aboard a felucca (traditional sailboat).

**The Packages**

Seasonal packages are available. Prices quoted are pretax. Current offerings include the Endless Weekend — a one to three day stay for two with breakfast, featuring a deluxe room with garden or city view for \$140 per room/per night, the Pyramid view cost is \$170. Meridien Break, a midweek and weekend package. The Le Meridien Passport package requires a one-day minimum to 30-day maximum stay in a deluxe room with garden/city view and breakfast included for \$80 per room/per night; Pyramids view rate is \$110. The Celebration package pampers guests in a Royal Club room, with a bottle of sparkling wine, candlelight dinner for two on first night and buffet dinner for following nights, and breakfast. Priced at \$230 per room/per night for garden/city view room; \$260 overlooking the Pyramids. The \$828 "King of Queens" three-day package for two includes a deluxe Pyramids view room, breakfast, health club access and massage and transportation/admission for two at the Pyramids (through April).

**Agent Information**

The average 10% may be adjustable, depending on seasonal rack rates. With a weekly average capacity at 70% – 80%, and close to 100% on weekends/holidays, management recommends as much advance booking as possible. Professional agent rates are available.

**Le Meridien Pyramids, 800-543-4300;**  
**reservation@meridien-pyramids.com.eg,**  
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**TOURS TO EGYPT AND MORE WITH LOTUS INTERNATIONAL TOURS**

Lotus International Tours is putting the final touches on their 2007-2008 programs. In addition to their current popular tours they will introduce four exciting new programs. These will include a 12-day super deluxe package, a 10-days student tour, a seven day diving package, and a seven day western desert trek. Lotus International Tours has specialized in organizing group and individual packages to Egypt, the Middle East and the Mediterranean since 1984. They also offer variety of Cruise Packages to Alaska, Baja California, and the Caribbean.

Their International Airfare Department provides special bargains on some of the best airlines in the world to Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The hotels and Nile Cruises are five star deluxe picked to provide their clients with complete comfort.

Their tour guides and leaders are highly educated and certified by the local governments to provide the ultimate knowledge. Their experienced and knowledgeable office staff will go the extra mile to provide any information that is needed on the destination. Their Discover Egypt Tour is 11-days including a four night deluxe Nile cruise, from \$2,225 air and land. Tour includes round-trip airfare from New York to Cairo; domestic airfare within Egypt; four nights 5-star hotel accommodation in Cairo and one night in Luxor; four nights Deluxe Nile Cruise based on full board; full day

visiting the great Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, Memphis and Sakkara; full day visiting the Cairo Museum, the Citadel, Old Cairo Mosques and bazaars; all transfers and entrance fees as per the itinerary; English Speaking Egyptologist through out the trip; and 20 meals (nine breakfasts, six lunch, five dinners) plus on flight meals.

Their Egyptian Wonder Tour is 13-days including a four night deluxe Nile cruise from \$2,495 air and land.

Lotus International Tours, 888-329-7848, 714-998-2050, mnanwar@lotustravel.com, tour@lotustravel.com, tickets@lotustravel.com, www.discover-egypt.com

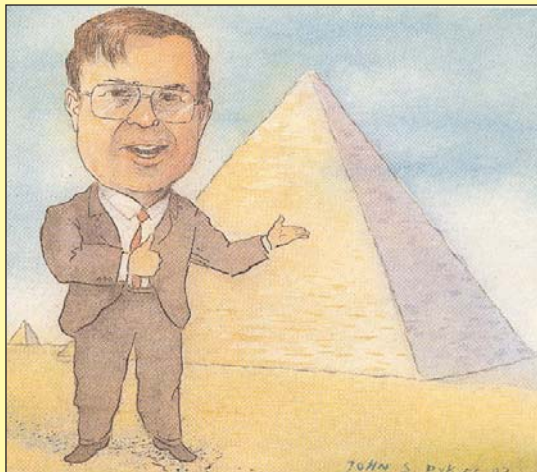
**BIRDS OF THE PHARAOHS TOUR WITH TRAVEL EGYPT**

There are over 430 species of birds found in Egypt with about 150 being resident. Travel Egypt offers a program which operates during the anticipated peaks of these migrations in Spring and Fall to afford birders a vacation with the maximum chance to view and photograph the widest variety possible.

The itinerary includes visits to important antiquity sites and oasis plus a visit to the Sinai peninsula all with expert guides. The program is 16-days/15-nights priced from \$3,995 ppdo from New York. There is a 20 percent commission to recognized agents.

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**SAMIR KHALIL BEGINS  
NEW VENTURE WITH  
KHALIL GROUP**



**SAMIR KHALIL**

For almost half a century, Samir Khalil has traveled the world in his role as an ambassador for Egypt. During these years, he has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and a broad

base of contacts in the travel industry worldwide. In his new venture, The Khalil Group, he will put his experience to good use on behalf of all his clients.

He will continue to offer specialized services for travel to Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, Khalil Group will offer competitive rates on a wide range of cruise ships worldwide. Finally, thanks to exciting new partnerships, they are able to offer excellent rates for hotel and tour reservations worldwide.

Mr. Khalil is well known to the American Society of Travel Agents as a long standing member and supporter of the travel industry. As an advocate for global travel, especially to Egypt, Mr. Khalil was instrumental in organizing the 1992 ASTA World Travel Congress in Cairo Egypt. Mr. Khalil served on the 1992 Host Committee and was the direct liaison between ASTA in the United States and the home office of the Egyptian Tourism Board in Cairo. The Congress was very successful and is still re-

membered by many who attended." Mr. Khalil will be delighted to assist with all your upcoming travel plans.

The Khalil Group, 866-376-9484, [info@khalilgroup.com](mailto:info@khalilgroup.com)

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Celebrated Author's 1888 Voyage Through the Ancient Sea; Croatia's Dalmatian Coast and Islands; Voyage to the Lands of Gods and Heroes: A Family Learning Adventure in the Greek Islands and the Ancient Mediterranean; The Origins of the American Democratic Ideal: The Lands that Inspired Jefferson and the Founding Fathers; Treasures of Italy and the Adriatic Sea; Extraordinary Women of Antiquity in History and Legend; From the Strait of Gibraltar to Patagonia: A Grand Voyage to West Africa, the Atlantic Islands and South America; South Africa by Sea; and Australia and the Great Barrier Reef, among others.

Travel Dynamics International,  
[www.TravelDynamicsInternational.com](http://www.TravelDynamicsInternational.com)

**CAIRO 'SILVER PACKAGE'  
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LAND TOURS**

Sunny Land Tours is offering a seven-day opportunity to 'discover Cairo.' This Silver Package Tour includes round-trip, daily non-stop service on Egyptair, airport transfers in Cairo, first class accommodations, breakfast daily, hotel service charges and local taxes, and a half-day city tour. Prices start from \$999 ppdo.

The base in Cairo will be at hotels such as the First Class Oasis Hotel. Optional excursions are available in Cairo as well as extensions to Luxor and Aswan.

Sunny Land Tours,  
800-783-7839, [bob@sunnylandtours.com](mailto:bob@sunnylandtours.com),  
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## THE GLAMOUR OF LUXURY AT CALISTA LUXURY RESORT IN TURKEY

The Calista Luxury Resort is located in Belek, the tourist center of Antalya. The hotel is approximately 16 miles from the airport, about 21 miles from Antalya and about two and a half miles from Belek. The hotel, with its unusual architecture and modern exclusive concept, would like to open its doors to its distinguished guests.

A la carte all inclusive sets the philosophy of Calista Luxury Resort. They aim to provide high quality service for the absolute pleasure of their guests.

Room categories include King Size, Presidential Suites, Garden Corner Suites, Corner Suites, Family Rooms and Standard Rooms. There is one VIP Villa, three single villas and 10 twin villas. Standard equipment in the rooms includes mini bar, air-conditioner, telephone, LCD TV, wireless and broad band LAN internet connection. Room cleaning, changing of towels and linens are provided daily, and fruits and wine are in the room as welcome amenities upon check-in.

For villa guests, express check-in and check-out, butler service, business service, 24 hour room service, concierge service, laundry, dry cleaning, breakfast, lunch, dinner, ordering from the menu of the VIP restaurant, delivery of fruits, cookies and wine to the room daily are provided. During the day, guests can spend their time in the Aqua Park and enjoy the animation team, which will entertain them with different games and sports activities. In the evening, guests can enjoy the show put at the amphitheater.

There are seven tennis courts, a heated swimming pool at semi-Olympic size, aerobics, step aerobics, fitness center, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, beach-volley and water sports activities on the territory of the hotel. Various programs and shows will be offered for guests between 4 and 14 years old. The SPA center of the Calista Luxury Resort offers a variety of health and care facilities including Turkish bath, saunas, steam bath, snow room, Jacuzzi, beauty center and many other treatments.

Open buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner from Turkish and international cuisines are served in the main restaurant. Also enjoy exotic tastes of Far East countries and Japanese cuisine at the Far East Restaurant; typical Italian dishes at the Italian Restaurant; traditional Ottoman and Turkish cuisine at the Turkish restaurant; daily fresh seafood at the Fish Restaurant; and spicy South American cuisine in the South-American Restaurant. There is also a Pool Restaurant, Beach Snack, Café Wien, and VIP Restaurant for villa guests. White Bar is the main bar in the lobby for guests to enjoy various local and imported drinks while listening to the piano and violin, playing classics like the Four Seasons by Vivaldi. At the Disco Bar, dance along with specially prepared drinks and cocktails. The Game Saloon is an entertaining option for guests and the Pool Bar is situated in the middle of the swimming pool offering cold and hot drinks. Welcome cocktail on arrival will be served in the Black Bar. At the Amphi Bar, enjoy hot and cold drinks with live music in the evenings.

Calista Luxury Resort, [www.calista.com.tr](http://www.calista.com.tr)

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## RUSSEL STOREY APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AT JORDAN VALLEY MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA

Philip Papa-dopoulos, the General Manager of the Jordan Valley Marriott Resort & Spa, has announced the appointment of Russel Storey to Director of Operations at the resort. Russell will be in charge of Food & Beverage as well as Rooms and Related Operations.

Russel Storey has been the Director of Food & Beverage at the Jordan Valley Resort & Spa since August 2005. He is a seasoned hotel specialist, with years of experience in Food & Beverage and Operations and brings a great deal of knowledge to the Jordan Valley Marriott Resort and Spa. A native of Britain, Russel grew up and was educated in South Africa. He attended a hotel management school there and worked as a police sergeant for five years in 1985.

In 1991, Russel moved to London and began his career in the hotel industry at the Regent Palace Hotel as a Security Officer. In 1992, he moved to the Sheraton Park Tower in Knightsbridge as a Night Security Officer. He returned to South Africa as an Assistant Manager in Granny Mouse Country House. In 1993, he became Food

& Beverage Manager at the Westville Hotel in Natal, South Africa. Once again in 1996, Russel relocated to England as an Assistant Food & Beverage Manager at the Forte Crest Hotel in Gatwick. In the summer of 1997, Russel moved to Bath, England and became a Restaurant and Bar Manager at the Hilton National Hotel. He moved to Windsor in 1998 as Food & Beverage Manager at the Courtyard by Marriott. Two years later, he moved to Mayfair as Food & Beverage Manager at the Mayfair Hotel. In 2001, Russel moved to the Birmingham Marriott as a Food & Beverage Manager. He relocated to Scotland a year later and became the Food & Beverage Manager at the Edinburgh Marriott. In 2002, he became the Director of Operations at the Glasgow Marriott and remained there for three years.

Marriott International manages three properties in Jordan, the Amman Marriott Hotel, the Petra Marriott Hotel and the Jordan Valley Marriott Resort & Spa. Marriott International, [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

## A LUXURIOUS RETREAT IN DUBROVNIK AT GRAND VILLA ARGENTINA AND VILLA SHEHEREZADE

Dubrovnik, at the crossroads of varied and diverse cultures, will delight and surprise travelers with its architecture, parks and gardens, and the spectacular views of the medieval city. The Grand Villa Argentina reflects the spirit, history and cultural heritage of this city.

Grand Villa Argentina is four exclusive villas and one hotel building, each one with

its own distinctive atmosphere and charm, surrounded by terraced gardens. Deluxe guest rooms combine traditional atmosphere with modern comfort and amenities that will satisfy the most demanding business and leisure travelers.

The Energy Clinic Wellness Centre offers a wide range of relaxing therapies and beauty treatments. Enjoy the heated pool, hydromassage, Jacuzzi bath, sauna, Turkish & Finnish baths and gym room, or sunbathe on the shores of the Adriatic.

Easily accessible by sea or road, Villa Sheherezade is located 20 minutes from the Dubrovnik international airport and has a private Rolls Royce transport upon guest request.

The old city of Dubrovnik is within walking distance. A private pier for tender boats grants free access by sea. Also private parking and valet parking services are available. A villa Manager and Butler help organize a memorable stay.

Once a retreat for celebrities, Villa Sheherezade is a most desirable villa located on the Croatian Adriatic coast. The villa has three floors; common areas are located in the ground floor, guest rooms on the first floor.

Facilities include The Grand Salon: an elegantly dressed salon with crystal chandeliers; The Dining room which offers a stylish décor to enjoy gourmet delights around a restored antique table; and The Study room which provides a sophisticated place to conduct business.

This exclusive villa offers five deluxe guestrooms with en-suite marble bathrooms with views of the Adriatic or the gardens. Fully equipped bathrooms with Jacuzzi bath and Bulgary amenities complete the modern comfort of the rooms all arranged with individually controlled air conditioning/ heating, direct telephone and fax line, internet connection, mini bar, satellite TV, and in-room safe.

Direct access to the waters of the Adriatic is possible through stone staircase on both sides of the beach.

Grand Villa Argentina/ Villa Sheherezade, [sales@gva.hr](mailto:sales@gva.hr), [www.gva.hr](http://www.gva.hr), [www.sheherezade.info](http://www.sheherezade.info)



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## PETRA NOMINATED TO BECOME ONE OF THE NEW SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah received Petra's official candidacy certificate to the final leg of the "New Seven Wonders of the World" competition. The certificate was presented by the founder of the project Mr. Bernard Weber during a "re-enactment of life in Petra" event organized by the Jordan Tourism Board on Tuesday, January 16, 2007. The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB) organized this event to take the "New Seven Wonders of the World" committee and the media back in time and give them a feel of what the glorious city of Petra was like 2,000 years ago. After a tour of the "rose-red city".

Previously, Her Majesty said, "We Jordanians are proud to be the custodians of the stunning heritage of the Nabatean people. Indeed, we feel that many of our modern Jordanian national characteristics are notably similar to those of the ancient Nabateans. Like them, we have carved out a special and unique role as a bridge between diverse regions and cultures. And like them, we are a peaceful culture committed to international commerce and dialogue"

"Petra's nomination to this international competition is an appreciation of this grand historic and cultural site, and shall place the rose-red city on its well deserved spot on the international tourism and heritage map, among other wonders of the world," said Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Usama Dabbas. "The cabinet's decision to form a higher committee for the nomination of Petra portrays the government's commitment to support this important initiative, which is expected to reflect positively on the national tourism sector." The committee is chaired by the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities with directors of Jordan Tourism Board and different media, tourism and cultural affairs organizations as members.

Mr. Bernard Weber, the founder of the "New Seven Wonders of the World" initiative, expressed his and the Committee's admiration of Petra and its history, and stated that his visit to Petra is part of the committee's world wide tour visiting the 21 final candidates.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Jordan Tourism Board have launched a national "Vote for Petra" campaign in November 2006. A wide spectrum of Jordanian tourism, culture, and commercial as well as Non for profit organizations participate in this national drive. The campaign included media programs and reports in addition to advertisements in key newspapers, magazines and Jordanian radio stations and television and many more activities to be carried out during the next six months. An international campaign spearheaded by JTB's representative offices abroad and by Jordanian Embassies worldwide, was launched earlier.

The Jerash Heritage Co. Ltd RACE (The Roman army and chariot experience) contributed in this historical event by organizing the Treasury event as well as a Roman army show at the Roman theatre, where the legionaries (representing the Nabateans and local Romans) presented their weapons, battle formations and tactics. This Roman / Nabatean combination reflects the rich history of Petra which was built by the Nabateans and ruled by the Romans

two centuries afterwards. The Jordan Tourism Board hopes to turn the "Bringing Petra to life" program into a frequently held activity at the rose-red city, to enrich the tourist's experience and market this magnificent historical milestone.

The Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), [www.visitjordan.com](http://www.visitjordan.com)

## AIR MALTA: FOCUSING ON CUSTOMERS WITH CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS



Air Malta started operating in April 1974 and today is the largest airline operating in and out of Malta. The airline carries some 1.6 million passengers every year. Throughout the years it has invested in markets which have the potential to augment the island's tourism intake offering the most extensive choice of air services to get to Malta. Air Malta continues to be the prime Maltese air transport enterprise.

With a fleet of 13 Airbus and Boeing aircraft configured in business and economy, Air Malta plans to operate no less than 139 flights every week to/from 35 scheduled destinations to Europe, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The airline is in the final stages of a fleet replacement project that will lead to an all Airbus fleet composed of A320s and A319 aircraft. It will be one of the youngest fleets in Europe and throughout the world.

The introduction of Flypass, the airline frequent flyer program, was another major service improvement. At absolutely no cost or obligation, Flypass gives passengers the opportunity to earn KMiles every time they travel. KMiles can be collected when flying with Air Malta and redeemed against Air Malta's scheduled services or through more than 60 portfolio partners.

Another initiative launched recently was the introduction of In-Flight Entertainment (IFE) onboard its flights.

The systems are aimed to provide a more enjoyable experience by providing audiovisual and print entertainment to passengers. Passengers travelling on Air Malta are also now being presented with a new in-flight magazine called Sky Life that focuses on people and travel, entertainment, business and lifestyle, the latest products and trends, cars, fashion, luxury goods and special features. Apart from the new magazine Air Malta passengers are able to watch a number of feature films on flights of certain duration, as well as a variety of shows and documentaries on a broad range of topics.

Air Malta, [www.airmalta.com](http://www.airmalta.com)

## 'ESCAPE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN' PACKAGES AT KEMPINSKI HOTELS

Kempinski Hotels in Sicily, Spain, Turkey, and on the Maltese island of Gozo are offering "Escape to the Mediterranean" vacation packages of luxurious wellness and spa treatments combined with ideal home bases for cultural expeditions to ancient Greek, Roman and prehistoric sites.

Kempinski Hotel Giardino di Costanza in western Sicily offers a "Sicilian Wine Delight" tasting package conducted by Florio Winery. The two-night package includes breakfasts, a visit and wine tasting at Florio Cellars, a guided tour of the town, a dinner for two accompanied by Florio wines, one treatment in Daniela Steiner Spa, and access to all leisure facilities such as sauna, fitness facilities, tennis courts and bikes. Rates start at \$724 for a single and \$1,048 for a double room. Side trips are available to Greek temples in nearby Segesta and Selinunte. Price valid from December 2006.

On Spain's Costa del Sol, the Kempinski Hotel Bahía Estepona resorts is offering their winter wellness two-night "Rejuvenation & Detoxification" program which includes a medical consultation, two anti-aging treatments in the Polly Mar Beauty Spa & Wellbeing Center, a 15 percent discount on other treatments, breakfasts, and a dinner for two. Offer valid until the end of February 2007, with rates starting from \$1,005.

The Turkish Riviera offers a wealth of archaeological treasures. Ideally located, the Kempinski Hotel The Dome in Belek, close to Antalya, opened one year ago. During the winter, the hotel offers a five-night package of daily breakfasts and dinners, welcome cocktail, wine and fruit, a guided tour of Side, Perge, Aspendos and Manavgat, as well as a spa treatment per person. Offer valid until the end of March 2007. Rates start at \$1,083 for a single and \$1,574 for a double.

Also in Turkey, the year-old Kempinski Hotel Barbaros Bay is set on its own private beach in the ancient city of Bodrum. It is the perfect home base to tour the city and visit St. Peter's Castle, a 15th century Crusader's stronghold as well as the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, that was once one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The nearby wonders of Ephesus can be a day excursion. Three-, five- or seven-night winter packages include breakfasts, dinner for two, airport transfers, use of mountain bikes, a spa treatment at the Six Senses Spa and a 15 percent discount on additional spa treatments. Rates start from \$573 for a double room.

The Kempinski Hotel San Lawrenz on Gozo, the sister island to Malta, features one of the best Ayurveda Spas in the Mediterranean. Cultural sightseeing includes visiting the 5,000-year old Ggantija ("the place of the giants") megalithic complex of two temples surrounded by an enormous boundary wall.

"Enjoy the best of Two Islands" hotel package offers a five-night stay, airport transfers, daily breakfasts, and a transfer to Malta for two nights at the 200-year old Capua Palace in

Silena to enjoy the local scene. Offer valid until the end of March 2007. Rates start from \$1,332 for a single and \$1,550 for a double room.

Kempinski Hotels, [www.kempinski.com](http://www.kempinski.com)

## KIDS SAIL FREE ON MONARCH CLASSIC CRUISES

Monarch Classic Cruises presents the Mediterranean with a vacation value for families: children 16 and under sail free when sharing a cabin with two adults.

Monarch Classic Cruises' new collection of 2007 cruises, ranging from three to seven days, will sail round-trip from Athens or Istanbul every week, March – November. The line's two ships, the 484-guest Blue Monarch and the 780-guest Ocean Countess, afford family-style warmth with resort facilities amid a yacht-like setting.

For a classical seven-day cruises visiting the Aegean's most fabled sights, the Blue Monarch sails round-trip from Athens every Friday. Highlights of her Golden Fleece itinerary include Istanbul with an overnight call, Mykonos, Kusadasi (Ephesus), Patmos, Rhodes, Crete and Santorini.

Guests in Turkey may embark the Blue Monarch in Istanbul and enjoy an overnight stay onboard. The ship then sails to Mykonos, Kusadasi, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete, Santorini and Athens before returning to Istanbul.

Alternatively, as a special six-day option for Turkey tour packages which already include a stay in Istanbul, guests can embark the Blue Monarch on Sunday and sail from Istanbul that day, returning to Istanbul as scheduled on Saturday.

An ideal centerpiece to vacations packaged with land tours and hotel stays, port-intensive cruises from Athens aboard the Ocean Countess are the perfect introduction to the Greek Isles and Turkey.

The three-day Aegean Discovery cruise sails from Athens (Piraeus) every Friday and features five ports of call—Mykonos, Kusadasi (Ephesus), Patmos, Crete and Santorini—before returning to Athens on Monday.

The four-day Aegean Classic, which then sails from Athens each Monday and returns on Friday, also includes a full-day port call to the island of Rhodes.

With Greece as its home, Monarch Classic will feature authentic Mediterranean flavor with an unrivaled expertise for travelers wishing to immerse themselves in the culture of this region. The line was formed to offer a dedicated Aegean deployment with a more personal, higher quality cruise experience than is currently available on a regular weekly basis.

The ships intimate size evokes a spirit of hospitality. Staterooms are mostly outside, ocean view. The cuisine is highlighted by homemade Greek specialties and entertainment includes a "Greek Night" celebration punctuated by folkloric music and dances.

Monarch Classic Cruises, 800-881-2377

## HILTON DUBROVNIK IMPERIAL SPA TREATMENT PACKAGE THROUGH MARCH 07

Hilton Dubrovnik has released a three-night spa package for approximately \$770 per room (twin share) valid through March 31, 2007.

The Dubrovnik Imperial Spa Treatment package includes a daily Hilton buffet breakfast and three spa treatments per person, including a one hour anti-stress massage; a 90-minute aroma sensitive face treatment; and a one hour mud and scrub body treatment. Hilton HHonors members also receive 1,000 HHonors bonus points per room booking.

GM of Hilton Dubrovnik Mr. Andreas Jersabeck said: "Dubrovnik is a magical city anytime of the year, but winter is the time when the crowds thin and the city really shows itself. Guests can walk the ancient walls, take a guided city tour, enjoy a Croatian coffee along the Stradun, or visit museums and art galleries.

For Hilton guests on this package, there's also seven hours of massage treatment for each three-day Imperial Spa booking."

He added, "When George Bernard Shaw, the legendary playwright wrote, 'If you want to see heaven on earth, come to Dubrovnik,' he meant any time of the year."

The 147-room Hilton Dubrovnik is located close to the Old Town's Pile Gate. Built in 1895 as the Imperial Hotel, the property was fully restored in 2005. Since then, it has been hailed by Frommers travel guide as "the undisputed jewel in the Dubrovnik hotel market" and is listed as one of Lonely Planet's "Top 5 Picks on Where to Sleep" in Croatia.

Hilton Dubrovnik, [www.hilton.co.uk](http://www.hilton.co.uk)

## ASTA'S JORDAN DESTINATION SPECIALIST COURSE NOW ACCREDITED

The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) has announced the Jordan Destination Specialist course is now accredited by The Travel Institute as a continuing education program for Certified Travel Associates (CTAs), Certified Travel Counselors (CTCs) and Certified Travel Industry Executives (CTIEs). Participating agents will receive 10 Continuing Education Units (CEU). In addition to receiving a certificate from ASTA, certified Jordan specialists will be promoted on [www.seejordan.org](http://www.seejordan.org), the web site of Jordan Tourism Board North America (JTBNA), and will also qualify for exclusive, complimentary FAM trips offered by JTBNA, based on their sales volume.

This course, written by noted industry author Sue Wilder, CTC, is designed to meet the educational needs of travel agents who want to expand their expertise to include selling travel to Jordan. It is available on CD-ROM for \$79 for ASTA members and \$89 for non-members; PDF versions also can be purchased for \$59 by ASTA members and \$69 by non-members.

"The Travel Institute accreditation is a distinguishing mark of quality education," said Cheryl Hudak, CTC, ASTA president and

CEO. "Learning about Jordan through an accredited specialist course will give participants a competitive edge over other agents and online travel sellers. We strongly encourage agents to take advantage of this exclusive opportunity to acquire the inside knowledge needed to increase their Jordan sales."

By completing the course content, application activities and specialist exam, agents will have a realistic profile of Jordan by recognizing its key historical developments and current cultural and tourism characteristics.

They also will be able to identify features of key destinations. Additionally, agents will develop strategies for selling Jordan, including how to find customers, plan itineraries and handle clients' concerns and questions about traveling to the country. Finally, they will earn a certificate designating them as Jordan Travel Specialists.

Including the accredited Jordan Destination Specialist course, ASTA has nine home-study programs: Model Agency Program, Cuba Travel Specialist, USA Travel Expert Program, Family Travel Specialist, Niche Travel Specialist, Mature Adult Travel Specialist, Travel Marketing Specialist and North American Rail Travel Specialist.

Each course includes a course manual, test packet and evaluation form.

American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), [www.astanet.com](http://www.astanet.com)

## GREECE GROUP DEALS

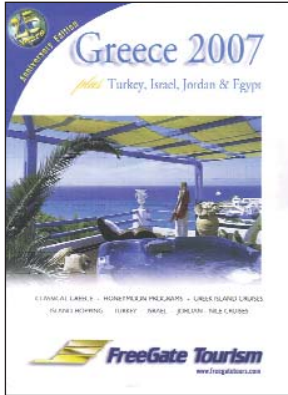
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## FREEGATE TOURISM CELEBRATES 25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY; RELEASES 2007 MEDITERRANEAN BROCHURE



In 2007, FreeGate Tourism, one of the leading wholesale tour companies serving Europe, the Mediterranean and Latin America, celebrates its 25th year in business. The company, which began in 1982 primarily selling tours and cruises of Greece and the Greek Islands, has expanded over the last 25 years to now include over 25 countries in its extensive repertoire.

"2007 marks a milestone year for FreeGate," according to Ted Evangelatos, President

of the company. "It's our birthday but the agents will be receiving the gifts. Gifts such as additional bonus commissions, invitations (which will go out shortly) for our complimentary fam trips as well as wrapped gifts that will be mailed to agents with client documents — just for starters - of our celebration.

We intend to make 2007 the biggest year ever for FreeGate by lavishing our thanks to the agents - guests at our party. Additional surprises will come throughout the year!"

FreeGate has released its 2007 Mediterranean brochure highlighting the best of the five countries included. The brochure, which features complete tours, Greek Island Cruises, Nile Cruises, Honeymoon Programs, and island hopping programs with custom itineraries, includes Greece, Turkey, Israel, Jordan and Egypt.

"In 2007, FreeGate has some of the best

cruise prices in the market and are passing the savings along to our clients," according to Mr. Evangelatos. "We've included Greek Island cruises in six of our tour programs featured in the brochure and because of our excellent rates, a complete package starts as low as \$1,199 for an eight-day package with airfare from New York and a cruise. As with all of FreeGate's brochures and tours, this brochure offers a range of programs that can be taken as is, or can be used as a basis to customize an itinerary for the specific clients - a specialty of FreeGate's expert personnel."

With a wide array of tour programs available, this is the year to visit Greece. "There is something for everyone and every budget included in the choices," says Mr. Evangelatos.

Greek Island Hopping tours giving the passengers a sampling of the islands. The 11-day Island Hopper 1 includes Athens, Santorini and Crete from \$1,959 with air from New York, and the 14-day Island Hopper 2 with Athens, Santorini, Crete and Rhodes starts at \$2,349 with air from New York. As always packages can be adjusted according to the client's specific criteria.

Honeymoons in Greece are extremely popular. Two tours featured in FreeGate's brochure which are tailored for honeymooners are the 13-day Island Love Affair (Athens, Mykonos and Santorini) from \$2,259 and the 13-day Romantic Greece (Athens, Mykonos and Paros) from \$2,169. Both tours include airfare from New York and domestic island transportation within Greece, as well as excellent centrally located hotels.

The eight-day/six-night Athens Getaway departing every Wednesday from March 7 - October 31 starts at \$1,199 per person including a cruise and airfare from New York. The package includes three nights in Athens, a three-day/three-night Greek Island cruise onboard a Louis Cruises vessel, a half day city tour of Athens, four transfers, and hotel service charges and taxes. Sightseeing by air conditioned motorcoach with English speaking professional tour guides and entrance fees is included as is on all FreeGate programs. For

those passengers that prefer to "bring their own air," the package is also available without airfare enabling travelers the opportunity to use their accrued mileage. The tour can also be extended to see more of Greece or to any of FreeGate's other destinations.

FreeGate's highly skilled personnel specialize in custom vacations within any budget. The Latin America brochure, which includes 17 countries including Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Belize and many others also features air, hotel, sightseeing and cruise programs that can be booked as detailed or can also be customized for each individual client. Group programs to all of the destinations are always customized to meet the requested criteria.

FreeGate Tourism, 800-223-0304,  
[www.freegatetours.com](http://www.freegatetours.com)

## TURKISH AIRLINES TO JOIN STAR ALLIANCE

The Chief Executive Board of Star Alliance, the airline network for Earth, has voted to accept the membership application of the Turkish Airlines. This now clears the way for Turkish Airlines to begin the integration process which will subsequently see the airline become the alliance's 21st member carrier.

With its fleet of 101 aircraft and network covering destinations in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Africa, Turkish Airlines will allow the Star Alliance network to offer customers more than 17,500 daily flights serving 927 airports in 162 countries. Turkish Airlines' home base, Istanbul, will in the future become Star Alliance's foremost hub at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and act as a gateway to various new destinations in Turkey and new connections especially to Central Asia and the Middle East. At the same time, Turkish Airlines will participate in all Star Alliance initiatives aimed at reducing costs while at the same time improving customer service, such as collocation at airports, joint lounges, electronic ticketing or joint media purchasing, to name a few.

Star Alliance, [www.staralliance.com](http://www.staralliance.com);  
Turkish Airlines, Inc., [www.thy.com](http://www.thy.com)

**VALENCIA HOSTS AMERICA'S CUP; SAILING RACE RETURNS TO EUROPE AFTER 156 YEARS**



To welcome the competitors for the America's Cup next year, Valencia is opening itself to the sea. For the first time in more than 150 years – from June 23 to July 7, 2007 – Europe will host sailing's most

prestigious event. Aficionados will flock to this city on Spain's Mediterranean to watch the world's best yachtsmen from 10 countries battle it out. Officials are predicting the America's Cup will create 10,000 jobs and generate \$1.5 billion for the Spanish region's economy.

Since 1851, America's Cup races have only been held in Britain, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. Reliable wind conditions, year-round temperate weather and the promise of a race that will bring spectators closer to the sailing action were key factors in convincing officials that Valencia would be the best venue.

To meet increased demand, new hotels have been opening since 2004 including the 157-room Puerta Valencia by native son,

Javier Mariscal near the City of Arts & Sciences; the 48-room South Beach-style Hotel Neptuno on Malvarrosa Beach; the 66-room boutique property Palau de la Mar that joined two 19th century palaces in the city center; and the five-star 254-room Hotel Balneario Las Arenas that has become the centerpiece of Valencia's increasingly sophisticated seafront. In 2006, three more five-star properties debuted: the 306-room Valencia Hilton, the 271-room Hotel Sorolla Palace, and the 136-room Westin Alameda. A four-star boutique hotel, the 100-room Vincci Lys opened on a quiet pedestrian street in the old quarter.

Valencia, [www.turisvalencia.es](http://www.turisvalencia.es)  
 America's Cup, [www.americascup.com/en](http://www.americascup.com/en)  
 Tourist Office of Spain, [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info)

**MEDITERRANEAN**

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[www.caravan-serai.com](http://www.caravan-serai.com)

**Corinthia Hotels International**

[www.corinthiahotels.com](http://www.corinthiahotels.com)

**Egyptian Tourist Authority**

877-77-EGYPT  
[info@egypttourism.org](mailto:info@egypttourism.org)  
[www.trade.egypt.travel](http://www.trade.egypt.travel)

**Freemate Tours**

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[www.freemate.com](http://www.freemate.com)

**Goway Travel, Inc.**

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**Lotus International Tours**

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