

Religious Travel Association Proclaims Year of Faith Tourism

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The World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) has proclaimed 2009 as The Year of Faith Tourism. Despite the economic downturn, both Jordan and Israel tourism officials report a record year for religious tourism in 2008. The International Museum of the Reformation -- recipient of the 2007 Council of Europe Museum Prize -- will host a major temporary exhibition (April 24 to Oct. 31, 2009) and series of events in honor of the contributions of John Calvin during 2009, the Jubilee Year of the reformer's birth. An estimated 25,000 visitors a year flock to the museum, with one-third coming from abroad, chiefly from France and the U.S. Travel with Spirit, a new consumer magazine focusing exclusively on Christian travel, is the latest indicator that the \$18 billion faith tourism industry is maturing. A study carried out by the Spanish Office of Tourism found that Mexico City is the preferred destination of tourists seeking religious sites, largely because of its Basilica de Guadalupe, which receives millions of pilgrims each year. Second place on the list went to Lourdes.

Travel with Spirit made its debut Jan. 27 and is slated to reach 520,000 Christian households by the first week of February.

The bimonthly magazine is published by Travel Network Group LLC, a group of companies that includes Travel Network Productions and Christian Travel Finder. The group already produces faith-based, family-friendly travel radio and television programs. For the last two years, Travel with Spirit radio has featured interviews from travel experts, authors, speakers and music artists, all from a Christian travel perspective. Travel with Spirit will now be published with all the same great content, only in a magazine format that will include exciting travel, mission and ministry content from all over the world, exclusively for the Christian consumer. The magazine departments and columns include notable Christian musicians, authors and speakers who have participated in travel that combines relaxation and adventure with an emphasis on faith. Guest writers will offer expert insight to the exciting experiences faith-based travelers encounter and the magazine will provide a host of travel ideas that will fit anybody's budget. The magazine's primary demographic is 25- to 54-year-old women, but will be published with something for every member of the family in mind. For more information, visit www.travelnetworkgroup.com or www.travelwithspirit.com.

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