

**INVITATION**  
**Symposium on Marine Tourism & Climate Change**  
**Hurghada-Red Sea, Egypt**  
**15-16 June 2009**

*As a leader in marine tourism in the Red Sea, you and your staff are invited to attend a special symposium on Tourism and Climate Change. Run over three sessions, the symposium is designed to help you understand and prepare for the effects of climate change in the Red Sea. International experts will be providing the facts on climate change, what it means for the Red Sea, and what the issues are for the tourism industry.*

The marine tourism sector is highly sensitive to climate change. Environmental assets are already suffering impacts from a changing climate, and climate change issues are increasingly figuring in travel behaviour. Businesses that understand these changes and position themselves to adapt will maintain access to the growing opportunities in global tourism. Those that don't are will struggle to maintain viability in the face of this major new challenge.

The Marine Tourism Climate Change Symposium aims to assist the Egyptian Red Sea tourism industry to understand the issues associated with climate change and to provide the foundation for adaptation planning by tourism businesses.

***The symposium aims to:***

- Increase knowledge of the implications of climate change for the Red Sea.
- Improve understanding of the vulnerability of Red Sea tourism to climate change.
- Identify potential strategies for Egyptian Red Sea tourism to adapt to climate change.
- Identify the role of politics, regulations and the industry in facilitating climate adaptation.
- Provide a platform for tourism industry to share knowledge about climate change issues.
- Build capacity in tourism staff to monitor the health of Red Sea reefs.

**Information session – *Climate Change issues for Red Sea tourism***

**15 June – 18:30 (Marriott Hotel, Fayrouz Room)**

This is designed for all tourism professionals, including business owners, managers, office staff, tour guides and vessel staff.

**Business forum – *Doing business in a changing climate***

**16 June – 08:30 (Marriott Hotel, Bay Room)**

This is designed primarily for those involved in business decisions and planning, especially business owners and office managers.

**Training session – *Eyes on the Reef: Bleach Watch in the Red Sea***

**16 June – 15:00 (Field Trip, Marriott Hotel Marine)**

This is designed primarily for employees that spend time in the water, such as tourist guides, marine biologists and educators.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Symposium on Marine Tourism & Climate Change**

#### **Tourism is central to the economic security of Egypt**

Tourism generates US\$7.5 billion annually and providing income for 12% of Egypt's labour force. Over 30% of the tourists visiting Egypt are divers, positioning the marine environment as an important tourism asset for the nation. Coastal resorts and dive sites attract tourists from all over world, with many sites of international renown. The tourism sector is expected to experience continued growth from a global perspective, providing important opportunities for prosperity and poverty alleviation all around the world.

#### **Resilience is an essential trait for successful tourism businesses**

Tourism has achieved this growth despite a multitude of challenges. Global economic recession, terrorism, disease pandemics and increasing energy costs are among the many external pressures, while dynamics in the supply and demand side add additional complexity. In these testing conditions there are winners and losers. Tourism businesses that are resilient to change are not only more likely to withstand these threats – they often prosper relative to competing businesses, destinations and sectors.

#### **Tourism is highly sensitive to climate change**

Now, against this turbulent background arises a new and yet more daunting challenge: climate change. The effects of climate change are already being felt around the world, and the vast majority of experts forecast accelerating impacts as climate change progresses. Far from being immune, tourism is recognised as one of the sectors most sensitive to climate change.

#### **Climate change is already affecting tourism assets**

Climate change is already affecting marine habitats – such as coral reefs – that are key assets for tourism. Coral bleaching has caused serious damage to over 16% of the world's reefs, and there are signs that the Red Sea is not immune from this threat. Further, the effects of climate change are not limited to coral bleaching. Climate change is also predicted to lead to increased risk of flooding of low lying coastal areas, increased coastal erosion, more severe storms and potentially serious implications for fisheries and marine wildlife such as sea turtles and seabirds. These have implications for the environmental assets that support tourism, as well as affecting operating conditions (more rough weather days, threats to infrastructure, etc). Additionally, and perhaps most immediately, destination choice is likely to be increasingly influenced by consumer perceptions of a destination's climate footprint.

#### **This Symposium will assist in future-proofing tourism businesses**

Tourism businesses will need to understand these implications, prepare for change and adapt if they are to avoid being losers in the face of climate change. This Symposium brings together leading international experts and local tourism leaders to explore the environmental and business implications of climate change, and to identify strategies for adapting to change.

## PROGRAM

### Symposium on Marine Tourism & Climate Change

**15 June - 18:30 (Marriott Hotel, Fayrouz Room)**

**Information session – Climate Change issues for Red Sea tourism**

Who should attend – tourism business owners, managers and staff

1. Speaker 1 – Climate change and coral reefs: current and future impacts
2. Speaker 2 – Climate Change and tourism: risks and responsibilities
3. Panel discussion

**16 June- 08:30 (Marriott Hotel, Bay Room)**

**Business forum – Doing business in a changing climate**

Who should attend – tourism business owners and managers; policy makers

1. Speaker 1 – The changing business climate: insurance and finance considerations
2. Speaker 2 – The future tourism market – trends and forecasts
3. Speaker 2 – A world of experience: case studies and approaches to adaptation
4. Breakout sessions
  - Group Session 1:
    - How will climate change affect your operation?
    - Report back on Group Session 1
  - Group Session 2: What can tourism operators do to plan for and respond to climate change?
  - Group Session 3: What will tourism operators need to prepare and adapt to climate change?
    - Report back on Group Sessions 2 and 3
    - Synthesis of discussions and future directions

**16 June- 15:00 (Field Trip, Marriott Hotel Marine)**

**Training session – Eyes on the Reef: Bleach Watch in the Red Sea**

Who should attend – tourism guides and educators, plus marine park field staff/rangers

1. Theory session – introduction to Bleach Watch program; overview of data sheets; identifying corals; assessing coral health; reporting protocols
2. Field training – in-water training and trials of data sheets
3. Debrief – questions and next steps



**Training Opportunity– BleachWatch**  
*(Part 3 of Symposium on Marine Tourism and Climate on Climate Change)*  
**Egypt, June 2009**  
**16 June -17:00**

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**Coral Reefs are in Crisis**

There is now overwhelming scientific consensus that the Earth’s climate is warming and that the effects on the world’s ecosystems can already be seen. Coral reefs are among the most sensitive of ecosystems and scientists predict that coral bleaching events will become increasingly frequent and severe. The recent report “Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2008” identifies climate change the most serious threat to coral reefs worldwide. Although there has not yet been extensive climate-related damage to Egyptian coral reefs, other reefs in the Red Sea have already suffered serious damage from rising sea temperatures.

**Tourism has a key role to play in understanding the problem – and the solutions**

Understanding the effects and implications of climate change, and identifying management responses are urgent challenges for the conservation of reefs worldwide. Yet, detecting and measuring climate change impacts, even dramatic effects such as coral bleaching, can be difficult. The initial onset of mass coral bleaching can range from gradual and patchy to rapid and uniform, and can occur with varying synchrony over hundreds or thousands of square kilometres. Detecting the early signs of a mass bleaching event requires a wide network of observers providing regular reports of conditions throughout the region.

**BleachWatch - Observe to Conserve**

BleachWatch has been designed to provide reliable reports of reef condition from a range of reef users. BleachWatch taps into the experience and intimate knowledge many members of the community have about their local reefs. It provides a formal mechanism to link observations by tourism guides, management field staff and other regular reef visitors with conservation and management programs. BleachWatch originated in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia, but is now running in several other countries, including the USA, Indonesia and Madagascar.

This training session provides an opportunity to learn about BleachWatch, and to be a founding member of the BleachWatch program in the Red Sea.

**Objectives**

This training session aims to:

- Introduce you to the BleachWatch program
- Provide initial training in recognising and reporting coral bleaching and other impacts on coral health
- Train you in completing BleachWatch reporting forms.