

SIR BANI YAS TO HOST THE ISLAND'S FIRST OFFSHORE SAILING RACE

Inaugural sailing event is set to highlight the island's strong maritime heritage open doors to a new destination for sailing enthusiasts

Abu Dhabi, April 05, 2014 – Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC), master developer of major tourism, cultural and residential destinations in Abu Dhabi, announced today that it will host the first Offshore Sailing Race on Sir Bani Yas Island in the emirate's Western region, which will take place on April 18, 2014. Organised in partnership with Anantara Hotels Resorts & Spas, Rotana Jet, Dubai Offshore Sailing Club (DOSC), and Volvo Ocean Race Abu Dhabi Stopover, the event is expected to bring together 90 sailing enthusiasts aboard 13 sailing boats on a non-stop race from Sir Bani Yas Island to Dubai.

John Cole, Senior Asset Manager for Sir Bani Yas Corporate Operations at TDIC, said:

"We're so excited to be hosting the first offshore race on Sir Bani Yas. There's a real thrill to this event because it's the first race to kick off from the island and at the same time a first for the sailors who will be venturing into these waters. We strongly believe that such an event can put Sir Bani Yas on to the sailing map especially since it offers the best of what sailors and sport enthusiasts look for – a breath-taking location, quality service and a secure marina berthing.

"By sponsoring this race we're joining forces with two of the UAE's most ambitious sailing projects to highlight Abu Dhabi's credentials as a leading winter water sports destination. And we're looking forward to welcoming both the sailors and spectators back in December for three weeks of festivities around our hosting the Volvo Ocean Race Stopover in Abu Dhabi," **said Faisal Al Sheikh, Director, Events Bureau, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), which is behind the emirate's stopover hosting.**

The two-day race will see sailors put their skills and experience not just against each other, but also against the sea as they race to the finish line at the Dubai Offshore Sailing Club (DOSC) - 175 nautical miles away. Setting out from Sir Bani Yas Island, the sailors will be taking on one of the oldest trading routes in the region. The racing event will be concluded in Dubai with a prize-giving ceremony.

Gareth Lloyd, Dubai Offshore Sailing Club General Manager said: "DOSC is delighted to be involved in this fantastic event, which provides a great opportunity to visit one of the UAEs premier destinations. The uptake from the members has been fantastic and everyone is looking forward to discovering the delights of Sir Bani Yas Island."

On April 10, a week prior to the race, sailors will set sail from the Dubai Offshore Sailing Club to Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi, where they will rest before heading out to the south side of Sir Bani Yas the next morning. Expected to arrive at Sir Bani Yas on April 12, sailors will berth and be given the opportunity to either fly back to Dubai and prepare for the main race,

which will take place on April 18, or stay at any of the island's three celebrated resorts, which are managed by Anantara, and enjoy its diverse nature-based activities, including a Nature and Wildlife Drive, nature walks, biking, horseback riding, snorkelling, kayaking and many more.

Mr Mark Eletr, Island Cluster General Manager, Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas, said:

“We are excited about welcoming both the competitors and spectators for this very first yacht racing event which promises to be visual spectacle off the western coast of Abu Dhabi. Sporting events such as the Sir Bani Yas Offshore Race provide a unique platform to reach out to new consumer markets for our three resorts on the island and to further raise the profile of Sir Bani Yas and all the incredible adventures that are available both on and off the water. ”

While the race, which kicks off on April 18, 2014, promotes the island as a destination for sailors, it also plays homage to the Island's rich history and its strong maritime heritage. It is significant to note that although the island has expanded to accommodate new hospitality developments, certain areas remain untouched among the general landscape of the island especially that Sir Bani Yas has been inhabited for over 7,500 years, and is home to more than 36 archaeological sites that have been found on the island including a 600 AD monastery and the wharf which is an important connecting point for the island.

John Cole, Senior Asset Manager for Sir Bani Yas Corporate Operations at TDIC,

added: “We'd also like to thank our partners, who have helped us make this happen. It's been a collaborative effort to put such an event together – the first of its kind for Sir Bani Yas. We are definitely looking at making this an annual event – one that will bring Sir Bani Yas into the sailing fraternity and possibly turn it into one of the region's best sailing destinations.”

An 87-square kilometre island located off the coast of Abu Dhabi, Sir Bani Yas has a rich history as a destination for sailors to trade or replenish their supplies. It was developed into a wildlife reserve by the late president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Today, as a result of dedicated environmental and conservation efforts, over 10,000 animals and birds call the island home. The free-roaming wildlife, which includes oryx, gazelles, deer, ostriches, giraffes and cheetahs, can be found in the 4,100 hectare Arabian Wildlife Park - a popular attraction on the island. Guests interested in visiting or staying on Sir Bani Yas can enjoy short direct flights from Abu Dhabi and Dubai or can avail of boat transfers from Jebel Dhanna in the Western Region.

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About Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC)

Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC), established in 2006 and fully owned by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, is a master developer of major tourism, cultural and residential destinations in Abu Dhabi.

These include Saadiyat, a natural island ten minutes drive from downtown Abu Dhabi featuring luxury resorts, championship beachfront golf courses, sophisticated residential communities, retail destinations and cultural institutions - designed by world-renowned Pritzker Prize-winning architects - such as Zayed National Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. TDIC is also developing Desert Islands, a heritage-based tourism destination composed of eight islands - Sir Bani Yas Island, the historical Dalma Island and the previously unexplored Discovery Islands.

TDIC has built a strong reputation among international industry players for its compelling value proposition, transparency of business approach and ability to deliver. The company has been awarded high investment grade ratings of A1, AA, and AA by three top credit rating agencies, Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings, respectively. These ratings reflect TDIC's strong financial position and support the company's credit worthiness to investors, lenders and other market participants.

By creating investment partnerships and joint ventures, TDIC's developments are helping to support the Emirate's evolution into a world-class destination for tourists, businesses and residents. TDIC offers significant employment and vocational training opportunities for Emiratis keen to enhance their careers and professional qualifications.

For further information, please visit <http://www.tdic.ae>.

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