

# Sharjah to train tour guides

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Licensing programme would be mandatory at travel agencies

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**SHARJAH //** The Sharjah tourism authority has set up a licensing procedure for tour guides after determining that travel agents were not adequately educated about the emirate.

A 10-day course, costing Dh2,750 (US\$750), will be offered beginning next month by the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority in collaboration with Skyline University College Sharjah. It is expected to be mandatory by next year. Lessons will focus on Sharjah's geography, Islamic culture, information on dress codes, Arabic culture and Ramadan timings. Students will also learn about the historical attractions and will be taught communication skills.

Nitin Anand, head of academic support services at Skyline University College, called the programme the first step in implementing rules and regulations to improve the emirate's tourism industry.



**Lessons planned for tour guides in Sharjah will focus on topics such as geography, Islamic culture and dress codes.** Jeff Topping / The National

"It will provide them with the basic skills and knowledge to be a tour guide," he said. "It's part of an improvement and also for people to develop themselves."

Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed al Qasimi, the chairman of the tourism authority, said economic challenges had made it necessary for Sharjah to put more effort into tourism. "The SCTDA is eager to build on the rich and diverse cultural and national tourist attractions," he said, "thus making tourism a sustainable product that yields strong and stable revenues."

In 2008 1.5 million tourists visited Sharjah, up from the 600,000 in 2001. Twenty-seven per cent were from GCC countries and 35 per cent from Europe. The authority said the emirate was adding 28 hotels to the current 107 and planned to add more than 5,000 rooms in the next two years.

The authority decided on the licensing procedure after finding that many of the tour guides working in agencies were not adequately educated about Sharjah.

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