

# Tourism and Political Change

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## Arab Politics and Tourism: Political Change and Tourism in the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

### Contents

Introduction	2
Libyan tourism	2
History and political structure	4
The political changes which have taken place	5
The implications for tourism	7
Destination management	10
Qualifying and amplifying determinants	11
Conclusions	11

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# 10 Arab Politics and Tourism: Political Change and Tourism in the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

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## Introduction

Libya, formally known as the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya — in Arabic Al Jumahiriyah al Arabiyah al Libiyah ash Shabiyah al Ishtirakiyah al Uzma (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005), has enormous potential as a destination with its diverse high quality and unique tourism assets – its archaeological heritage (notably its Roman and Greek antiquities), its spectacular beaches, its mountains and its desert. However, to date these assets have not been developed for a number of reasons, not least Libya's isolation as a result of United Nations (UN) sanctions and relatively recent recognition of the importance of diversifying the Libyan economy from its reliance on oil and gas revenues. Although UN sanctions have now been lifted and Libya has re-emerged on the world stage, the challenges relating to the development of Libya into an internationally-competitive destination, both internally and externally, should not be underestimated. This chapter will explore some of the political issues relating to tourism development in Libya.

## Libyan tourism

Libya is located in North Africa on the southern edge of the Mediterranean Sea and shares borders with Egypt to the East, Sudan to the south-east, Chad and Niger to the south, Algeria and finally Tunisia to the West (see Figure 10.1). Libya is 90% desert and has three distinct areas: Tripolitania, which contains the most densely-populated Western coastal strip north of the Western mountains (Jebel Gharbi); Cyrenaica, which contains the Eastern coastal strip north of the Green Mountains (Jebel Akhdhar); and the Fezzan in the South. Libya's 1770 kilometres of coastline (CIA 2009) has spectacular white and golden beaches which are lapped by the crystal clear and stunningly blue waters of the Mediterranean.



**Figure 10.1:** Map of Libya.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (2009) provide an overview of the economic impact of Libyan tourism, showing both GDP contribution and tourism employment are expected to rise over the next ten years (Table 10.1).

**Table 10.1:** Ten year predictions for the contribution of tourism to the Libyan economy (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009).

Indicator	Units	2009	2019
Tourism contribution to GDP	%	8.6	10.2
	Libyan dinars (millions)	9937.9	27,873.3
	US dollars (millions)	7703.8	21,607.2
Direct and indirect employment	Jobs	159,000	232,000
	% of total employment	8.8	10.4
	Proportion of jobs	1 in 11.4	1 in 9.6

However, despite this optimism, Libyan tourism can only be described as emerging although as Ham (2007: 5) asserts:

*Libya has it all: ancient cities of rare splendour, the Sahara that you thought existed only in your imagination and the unmistakable cachet of being ruled by one of the 20th century's most iconic figures, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.*

Clearly these assets provide great potential for tourism in Libya – with its beaches, archaeological (particularly Greek and Roman) heritage, mountains and deserts. These assets and the requisite infrastructure and superstructure for their effective exploitation – roads, hotels, restaurants and resorts – are underdeveloped. Some superstructural developments have taken place, e.g. the opening of the 299-room luxury Corinthian

#### 4 Part III: Normalisation/Opening

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hotel in Tripoli in April 2003 (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005) which was developed through Libyan–Maltese investment partnership.

Libya's tourism attractions reflect successive periods of occupation. There are thirteen major archaeological sites, of which five are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list (UNESCO 2009) – Tadrart Acacus, the old town of Ghadamès, Cyrene, Leptis Magna and Sabratha – as outlined below.

- ◆ The earliest of the five World Heritage sites is the Neolithic rock art sites of Tadrart Acacus in the South-west of Libya which link to Algeria's Tassili N'Ajjer (also inscribed on the World Heritage list). Thousands of cave paintings dating from 12,000 BCE to 100 CE document changes in the Sahara's fauna and flora (UNESCO 2009).
- ◆ Ghadamès – 'the pearl of the desert' – is one of the oldest pre-Saharan cities, standing in an oasis on Libya's Western border. UNESCO (2009) describes Ghadamès as an outstanding example of a traditional settlement through which runs a network of covered passageways at ground level for men to move around the settlement.
- ◆ Cyrene, a former Greek colony, was one of the principal cities in the Hellenic world. It was later Romanized and remained an important capital until an earthquake in 365.
- ◆ Leptis Magna was originally founded by the Phoenicians around 1000 BCE, it survived the Spartans to become first a Punic and eventually (around 23 BC), a Roman city developed by Emperor Septimius Severus into one of the most beautiful cities of the Roman Empire (UNESCO 2009);
- ◆ Sabratha, a Phoenician trading-post and port serving the former Numidian kingdom of Massinissa in modern-day Algeria, was rebuilt by the Romans in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

## History and political structure

Ronald Bruce St John provides a select chronology of Libyan history (St John 2008). What is now Libya has, at various periods, been occupied: simultaneously by the Phoenicians in the West and the Greeks in the East, then the Romans and later the Arabs. It was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1551 to 1911 and under Italian occupation from 1911 to 1943. The three parts of Libya (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan) were unified in 1934 (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005).

During World War II, Libya was one of the main battlegrounds of North Africa and at the end of the war fell into military administration – Tripolitania and Cyrenaica under the British, the Fezzan under the French. Post-war, the United Nations General Assembly created the United Kingdom of Libya with Idris al-Sanusi as King. In 1958 oil was discovered and by the early 1960s Libya had become an oil exporting country, transforming it from one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the richest (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005)

King Idris was ousted, 1 September 1969, in a military coup led by Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi who, aged 27 became President of the 12-person Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) which was designated as Libya's supreme executive and legislative authority (Martinez 2007). Although the RCC was dominated by Qaddafi he did not hold absolute authority and the RCC operated collegially, debating issues until consensus

was achieved. The RCC established a Council of Ministers to execute general policy and legislation in accordance with RCC decisions, initially with Qaddafi as Prime Minister although he soon handed this post over to another RCC member and devoted himself to the development of his revolutionary theory.

Qaddafi's political principles form the basis of the Libyan political system and were published in 1975 in the Green Book (widely available in public places throughout Libya and in a number of languages) (Qathafi, n.d.). The Green Book comprises three parts: Part 1: The Solution of the Problem of Democracy: The Authority of the People; Part 2: The Solution of the Economic Problem: Socialism; Part 3: The Social Basis of the Third Universal Theory.

## The political changes which have taken place

The Libyan political system is a local idiosyncratic ideology based on Qaddafi's Third Universal Theory, combining socialist and Islamic principles (El-Kikhia 1997). According to El-Kikhia (1997) while local idiosyncratic ideologies are not unusual, what is unusual about Libya's is its longevity. The Third Universal Theory is offered as an alternative to capitalism and communism which Qaddafi saw as failing political paradigms. It rejects political parties (illegal in Libya), and promotes people power in a 'state of the masses' or Jamahiriya – a political system designed to promote participation by the Libyan people. The Jamahiriya is organized as local congresses feeding into regional congresses and ultimately into the national GPC (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005). The GPC is the primary formal instrument of government with legislative powers. It has a membership of more than 1000 and convenes twice a year. The congresses have executive bodies or Committees at local, regional and national level (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005). At a national level, the General People's Committee is made up of Secretaries forming a cabinet of ministers representing different portfolios. One portfolio relates to tourism and the Secretary reports to the General People's Committee for Tourism.

Thus Libyan politics reflect a dual structure: the RCC (whose members are in power as a result of involvement in the revolution) and the Jamahiriya. In theory, Libya is governed by the people and the GPC has primary authority. However, in practice it is an authoritarian regime with Qaddafi as chief of state and several of his relatives – most notably his son Saif al-Islam – holding ultimate power either directly or indirectly through the RCC. The RCC controls the Jamahiriya ensuring that its decisions at each level conform to the Green Book. Remarkably nowadays Qaddafi holds no official title but is commonly referred to as the 'Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution'. Saif al-Islam has emerged as a progressive and reforming leader and seems likely to be accepted by the Libyan people to succeed in due course. Qaddafi himself probably sits between the revolutionaries and the reformers (Martinez 2007). As the CIA World Factbook (2009, online) suggests:

*Libya faces a long road ahead in liberalizing the socialist-oriented economy, but initial steps – including applying for WTO [World Trade Organization] membership, reducing some subsidies, and announcing plans for privatization – are laying the groundwork for a transition to a more market-based economy.*

## 6 Part III: Normalisation/Opening

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Qaddafi's domestic position as champion for the oppressed has been reflected in his approach to international politics and his support of liberation movements worldwide. In accordance with his Third Universal Theory, Qaddafi has sought to establish a more equitable distribution of wealth between developed and developing countries through sponsorship of terrorist and guerrilla movements world-wide, e.g. the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Basque nationalist and separatist movement Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It depends who is telling the tale as to whether Qaddafi is cast as good guy or bad guy. What is undisputable is that he has used Libya's oil wealth to assert the independence of developing nations on the international stage. Amongst many international interventions Qaddafi: supported Nelson Mandela before his release from prison; intervened in Uganda to keep Idi Amin in power; and supported Iran in the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq war (Library of Congress – Federal Research Division 2005).

The United States (US) Department of State (2008) catalogue US-Libyan relations which from 1969 and through the 1970s tell a sorry story of attack and counter-attack culminating in December 1979 with the USA designating Libya a state sponsor of terrorism following the mobbing and burning of the US Embassy in Tripoli as Libyans demonstrated solidarity with the Iranian revolution. In November 1969, Qaddafi demanded the evacuation of US air bases in Libya which was achieved by June 1970. Diplomatic relations deteriorated and in 1972 the US withdrew its ambassador. In 1973, a Libyan airliner was downed by Israeli fighters over Sinai and in response the US embassy in Tripoli was mobbed and a USA flag burned. In 1973 Libya proclaimed first a special maritime zone within 100 nautical miles of Libya and later control of the Gulf of Sidra south of 32°30' N, neither of which the USA recognized. US provision of military aid to Israel during the Yom Kippur war in 1973 between Israel and Egypt-Syria precipitated an embargo on Libyan oil exports to the USA.

Through the 1980s, US-Libyan wrestling over the Gulf of Sidra continued. In March 1981 Qaddafi threatened war if the USA entered the Gulf of Sidra. Later in March the USA announced exercises there within the next six months. In August 1981, two Libyan fighter planes were shot down over the Gulf of Sidra following an attack on US planes. In January 1986, following Palestinian terrorist attacks on airports in Rome and Vienna in December 1985, allegedly with Libyan support, the USA imposed economic sanctions on Libya. In March 1986, Libya fired air missiles at US aircraft flying over the Gulf of Sidra and in response the USA sank two Libyan patrol craft and attacked the missile base. In April 1986, a bomb exploded in West Berlin discotheque frequented by US soldiers, killing three people, including two US soldiers, and wounding 230 people. The USA responded by attacking five targets in Libya and killing 40 Libyans, including Qaddafi's baby daughter. The incidents of the 1980s culminated in December 1988 with the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland killing 269 passengers and crew, most of whom were Americans, as well as eleven civilians on the ground (US Department of State 2008).

The 1990s saw Libya in political and economic isolation as a result of sanctions and trade embargoes to force the transfer of two Libyan intelligence agents suspected of the Pan Am 103 bombing for trial in the USA or the UK. In June 1992, Libya agreed that these suspects could be tried abroad but it was not until April 1999 that they were transferred to The Netherlands for trial under Scottish law. The international sanctions

forced rising import costs and inflation in Libya's domestic economy and standards of living deteriorated prompting several assassination attempts on Qaddafi by militant opposition groups and an army-led coup attempt in 1993. In January 2001 Scottish judges convicted one of the suspects (Abdel-Basset al-Meghrahi) but found the other not guilty. Amidst extreme controversy Al-Meghrahi, suffering from prostate cancer and allegedly with three months to live, was released in August 2009 on compassionate grounds by the Scottish Justice Minister.

During the sanctions, Qaddafi turned to the Arab world for support. When this was not forthcoming he turned to sub-Saharan Africa promoting the concept of a 'United States of Africa', again with little success (Martinez 2007). It was the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 that precipitated a change of heart towards the West by Qaddafi. As Martinez (2007, 154-155) commented, what alarmed Qaddafi was:

*... the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Up to then, the international sanctions had not greatly concerned the regime, and Colonel Gaddafi has seemed attracted by the idea of turning Libya into a kind of Mediterranean Cuba. In 2003, a great gust of panic was felt in Tripoli, which blew away the regime's certainty that it could withstand simultaneously the pressure of Islamist violence from within at the same times as the threat of invasion from without [and ] ... took care to emphasise the convergence of its interests in all spheres with those of the United States and Europe.*

In August 2003, Libya officially accepted responsibility for Lockerbie, agreed to pay the relatives of each victim at least \$5 million and renounced terrorism to the UN Security Council (US Department of State 2008). The US maintained sanctions but did not oppose the lifting of UN sanctions in September 2003. In December 2003, after negotiations with the USA and the UK, Libya renounced its production and use of weapons of mass destruction and agreed to unannounced inspections from international bodies. In February 2004, diplomatic relations between the USA and Libya were resumed and US passport restrictions lifted. Trade restrictions gradually eased. By June 2006 the USA formally rescinded Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism and, in October 2007, the UN General Assembly elected Libya as a non-permanent member of the Security Council completing its return to the world stage. Libya is once again 'open for business' thus enhancing its tourism potential.

## The implications for tourism

If Libya is to become an internationally-competitive destination then it needs to resolve a number of fundamental issues. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) discuss how a destination might turn its comparative advantage to competitive advantage using a five-layer model in which core resources and attractors are underpinned by supporting factors and resources. Destination policy, planning and development provide a strategic framework for implementation by destination management. Qualifying and amplifying determinants define the potential scale of tourism development within a particular context. Each layer will be discussed below in the context of Libya.

## 8 Part III: Normalisation/Opening

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### Core resources and attractors

Core resources and attractors are key to destination development. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) identify: physiography and climate; culture and history; a mix of activities; special events; entertainment; superstructure and market ties as important elements. Libya's physical resources in terms of its landscape are world-class and it has a good climate. It offers a fascinating mix of cultures and a rich history. There is the potential for developing hallmark events, to generate high levels of interest and enhance a Sense of Place. Libya has a diverse range of colourful community-led events which would provide entertainment and a good basis for such events. Superstructure includes accommodation facilities, food and beverage provision, transport and attractors. Although Libya has world-class attractors in its World Heritage and other archaeological sites, beaches, mountains and deserts, most other superstructure aspects need attention (World Tourism Organization 1998). The issue of market ties relates to the developing links with key source markets. Libya's colonial history offers the potential for the development of such links across Europe (UK, France, Germany and Italy) and beyond.

### Supporting factors and resources

Core resources and attractors need to be underpinned by supporting factors and resources, including infrastructure, accessibility, facilitating resources and perhaps most important, political will. Infrastructure includes transportation which in Libya needs a massive overhaul. Accessibility is a challenge. Despite the advantage of geographic proximity to key tourist-generating markets with reasonable flying times, entry to Libya is problematic and potential, non-Arabic tourists to Libya must hold a passport complete with legally-certified Arabic translation, a visa and a return ticket. Facilitating resources include the availability and quality of local human, knowledge and capital resources, education and research institutions, financial institutions and an enabling public sector. Libya is a cash economy and credit cards are not widely accepted. Although the number is increasing, there are few automated teller machines in Tripoli or the rest of Libya.

CIA (2009) reports 2004 estimates of unemployment levels of 30% so the potential for tourism jobs should be welcome. However, whenever this writer has asked Libyans directly: 'Would you work in tourism or let your wife or son/daughter work in tourism?' the answer has been a resounding 'No'. There are fundamental issues in relation to the attractiveness of tourism as an employment sector. Tourism is widely seen as 'bad' and 'has been blamed for sexual permissiveness, flagrant indulgence in alcohol, gambling, drugs, pornography, voyeurism' (Din 1989: 554). Such negative images of tourism are particularly important in Muslim countries and no less so in Libya. Most Libyans are devoutly religious – 97% are Sunni Muslims (CIA 2009) – and the Islamic basis of the Green Book makes it difficult, if not impossible, to separate religion from state. It is not just a case of not drinking wine. Islam is unambiguous about alcohol, as recorded in Sunan Al-Tirmidhi Hadith 2776 narrated by Anas ibn Malik:

*Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) cursed ten people in connection with wine: the wine-presser, the one who has it pressed, the one who drinks it, the one who conveys it, the one to whom it is conveyed, the one who serves it, the one who sells it, the one who benefits from the price paid for it, the one who buys it, and the one for whom it is bought.*

Alcohol is prohibited in Libya as is pork. Pork is easily avoided and its absence has few implications for tourism. However, the role of alcohol in international tourism cannot be ignored and its prohibition may deter some visitors.

Another challenge, particularly relating to women's employment in tourism, is where a company requires its staff to wear uniforms that do not meet Islamic dress codes. Islamic women are required to cover their entire bodies – except for their hands and faces and not 'reveal their adornment except to their husbands, fathers, husbands' fathers, sons, husbands' sons, brothers, brothers' sons, sisters' sons, sisters in Islam, female slaves, old male servants and small children' (The Noble Qur'an 24: 31). Several conditions for Muslim women's dress have been identified:

*Clothing must cover the entire body so that only the hands and face remain visible; the clothing should hang loose so that the shape and form of the body is not apparent; female clothing must not resemble male clothing; the design of clothing must not resemble the clothing of non-believing women; the design must not consist of bold designs which attract attention; clothing should not be worn for the sole purpose of gaining reputation or increasing one's status in society.*

(El-Sherif Ibrahim et al. 2007, p.293)

Covering of the head with the hejab is particularly problematic in relation to women's employment in tourism across the Middle East and North Africa. As one Omani hotel manager commented in relation to waiters:

*we cannot recruit a girl who will be wearing the hejab in a very restrictive way or totally black which might give the impression to the customer that she is a terrorist ... the way that the female waitresses wear their black scarf makes the guest afraid to ask her any service ... because he doesn't want to offend the culture or the religion.*

(Al-Balushi 2008, p.272)

The attractiveness issues relating to tourism employment are exacerbated by legislation which prescribes low wages for tourism occupations (Naama 2007).

The supporting factors and resources could be unlocked if the political will were strong enough. Tourism was recognized by the Libyan government in 1986 at the Eleventh Session of the GPC for 'the significant role it can play in changing the international image of the country' (World Tourism Organization 1998, p. i). In 1987 this was followed up with a Memorandum on Tourism and People's Recreation with more detailed objectives. In the late 1990s, the General People's Committee for Tourism sought technical assistance from the World Tourism Organization acting as executing agency on behalf of the UN Development Programme to commission a nine-member team of consultants from the High-Point Rendel Economic Studies Group to develop a National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP). The NTDP aimed to provide 'a realistic and implementable base for the development of the sector through the establishment and promulgation of a policy framework, short and long term objectives, supporting strategic guidelines and a five-year action programme for the period 1999 to 2003' (World Tourism Organization 1998, p. i). The consultancy team concluded that: 'the lack of development of the tourism product, and the widely-held negative perception of the Jamahiriya among the populations of the major tourist generating markets ... will necessitate tourism to be

## 10 Part III: Normalisation/Opening

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product led ... [and] ... strongly supported by a programme of public relations activities' (World Tourism Organization 1998, pp. 3/2). However, to date, little has happened to turn rhetoric into reality although there is much talk of partnership development of several coastal resorts, including the ambitious multi-billion pound Green Mountain Project outlined by Foster and Partners (2007) in the Cyrene Declaration signed by Saif al-Islam.

### Destination policy, planning and development

An important first step in developing a tourism development plan is to define the tourism system based on an audit of the destination's resources. Whatever the final plan is it will need to be sensitively phased so infrastructure constraints can be addressed incrementally as can human resource issues. The plan must be monitored and evaluated with a set of key performance indicators integrating international best practice as far as possible, so as not to reinvent the wheel and to enable benchmarking against competitor destinations. That little has been done thus far to implement the NTDP means that it would probably be best to start again. One criticism of the NTDP (personal communication) is that it was developed by outsiders so developing Libyan consensus on an appropriate plan is crucial.

Obviously Libya's archaeological and cultural heritage will be a key element in the Libyan tourism product and spa tourism and the potential for spa resorts along Libya's coast offer opportunities for attracting high-spending market segments. Business/conference tourists are another high-spending segment although they require considerable investment, e.g. in an international calibre conference centre, a bidding unit and a trained workforce capable of delivering a high-quality product (Haven-Tang *et al.*, 2007).

Philosophy/values are key aspects of destination policy, planning and development, especially in Libya where there are many socio-political issues. They must be interpreted sensitively and explicitly stated in a vision of what Libyan tourism would mean. The positioning of the brand in relation to Libya's competitors (probably Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan) must then be determined. 'Brand Libya' must be consistent with the vision and its underpinning philosophy/values and there must be community consensus-building and market testing to ensure it resonates internally and externally.

### Destination management

This layer of the Ritchie and Crouch model (2003) comprises: organization, marketing, quality of service experience, information/research, human resource development (HRD), finance and venture capital, visitor management, resource stewardship, crisis management. Of these marketing, information and HRD are particularly relevant to Libya.

In terms of marketing the NTDP recommended an initial first stage, perhaps of three years, focusing only to create 'awareness of, and a clear, accurate yet positive image for the Jamahiriya as a country and of Libyans as a people' (World Tourism Organization 1998: 7/1) before moving on to stimulate demand for visiting Libya.

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a key issue. There are skills shortages and gaps in the labour market, and Libyans are generally ill-equipped to take up employment opportunities in the tourism industry. This is partly a result of the outmoded curricula on offer in Libya's training institutes which make their graduates an unattractive employment option and drives employers, e.g. hoteliers, towards the employment of foreign workers (Naama 2007).

## **Qualifying and amplifying determinants**

Qualifying and amplifying determinants are situational conditioners defining the potential scale of tourism development. This layer of the Ritchie and Crouch (2003) model includes location, safety/security, cost/value, interdependencies (with other destinations), awareness/image and carrying capacity.

Libya's location on the southern edge of the Mediterranean gives it close proximity to its key source markets and a pleasant climate. Although safety and security are key concerns, Qaddafi's police state is very safe for tourists, but Qaddafi and his former hatred of the West dominate images of Libya in the media and reinforce Libya's former involvement with the sponsorship of terrorism and high-profile isolation fuelling concerns about the security of Libya as a potential destination which are not countered by marketing and promotion activities.

There is low awareness of Libya's tourism potential in key markets. In the UK, for example, potential visitors have little awareness of Libya's potential as a destination. Akram Khalifa (personal communication), who undertook a study of images of Libya in the UK, quoted the words of one Libyan tour operator: 'In the UK there are not enough promotions and not enough effort is spent in advertising, which should be the main duty of the tourism ministry. The British have no idea about Libya'. He reported a second Libyan tour operator as saying that the Libyan image is unclear and misunderstood in the West, despite a number of media articles promoting positive images. Major marketing and promotion activities will be required to address this issue.

## **Conclusions**

Qaddafi's local idiosyncratic ideology is based on socialist and Islamic values and uniquely defines the Libyan political context. It is therefore hard to see what lessons can be learned from Libya in relation to tourism development in other contexts. Qaddafi has now been in power for over 40 years and although there have been increasing signs of economic reform and shifts towards free trade since international sanctions were lifted, progress is slow.

Although the Libyan government has long recognised the importance of tourism in economic diversification and the NTDP was developed in 1998, there has been little progress on its implementation to turn rhetoric into reality. Qaddafi's control of all aspects of Libyan political life is so overwhelming that it is difficult to imagine that the NTDP could have been conceived without his backing. Tourism is an integral part of the reform agenda with the potential to help re-engineer images of Libya abroad. However,

## 12 Part III: Normalisation/Opening

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it is one which poses fundamental challenges to Libyan conservatism. It would seem that it is going ahead very slowly, in a controlled and contained manner through proposals for high-quality resorts in partnership with foreign developers. So, to date and despite Libya's world-class tourism resources, the infrastructure to support tourism development (roads, telecommunications, hotels and resorts), remains massively underdeveloped. Low awareness of Libya as a potential destination in key source markets, misperceptions about security, complexities around passports and visas, and currency issues are major challenges to Libya's ambition of becoming an internationally-competitive destination with tourism making a significant GDP contribution.

Libya has vast financial resources from its oil exporting activities on which it could draw to support its tourism rhetoric and turn its undoubted comparative advantage into competitive advantage. This is likely to be achieved through careful specification of high-quality distinctive tourism products implemented through a sensitively-phased development plan to address the many and varied infrastructural and other issues which are currently obstacles to progress. Such a plan should involve public and private-sector investment. It must be supported by appropriate marketing and promotion activities to tackle the low awareness of Libya even in key European source markets and change perceptions that Libya is not a safe destination. The message must be loud and clear that Libya is open for business and welcomes tourists.

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