

Tourist guide seminars begin

THE first of a series of key international seminars for enhancing tourist guides' techniques and training was recently staged on the island after it became the World Federation of Tourist Guides Associations' (WFTGA) first regional centre for training professional tourist guides and trainers.

Plans are to stage a second seminar of its kind in June this year and to make the WFTGA seminars an annual event in Cyprus.

The 10-day meeting was staged at the Archaeological Department of the Cyprus University with the full support of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO).

Professor of Archaeology Demetris Michaelides was instrumental in putting the meeting together.

The meeting attracted about 24 professional tourist guides' trainers from around the world.

"The importance of the seminar for Cyprus lies in that an agreement has been made with the WFTGA and the Cyprus University in making Cyprus the first regional training centre for the international tourist guides association, which mirrors the importance of Cyprus's position

between Europe, Middle East and Africa," said. Titina Loizidou, former WFTGA president and trainer.

The event in Nicosia included a welcoming speech by Cyprus University Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, Elpida Keanu Papailiou and speech by the vice president of the World Federation of Tourist Guides Associations and training committee chairman Rosalind Newlands.

Trainer Jenny Oultron said WFTGA mainly, aims to upgrade and sustain the standard of tourist guiding worldwide and the seminar was part of the effort.

"We do this by training trainers in our methods so that these can be passed on and training tourist guides. This course has been a great step forward for us, as it was the first to be run in collaboration with the Cyprus University," she said.

The training seminar, she said, entitled "Hands on Tourist Guide Training and Train the Trainer course," included two parts - an introduction to the practical skills for new guides and enhancing the guidance skills of professional tourist guides.

The event's second course, she noted, was an introduction to WFTGA's method for training

guides to become trainers.

The cooperation of the Cyprus University with the WFTGA, she said, was of significant importance, since the organisation, "has for some years been seeking a partnership with a university for its training courses."

Referring to the university's involvement in staging the event, she said:

"The university was tremendously helpful to us and we are most grateful for the opportunity of holding our courses in the prestigious surroundings of the university's Archaeological Unit. Cyprus was also the obvious choice for our first training centre because the CTO has been a wonderful friend and sponsor of the WFTGA, for many years," she said.

In his address at the meeting, CTO chief Photis Photiou said that the profession of the tourist guide is not an easy one.

"It is demanding and it requires hard work, intense effort and continuous training. The ten-day seminar you are about to attend proves the importance of non-stop training in this profession," he said.

The CTO, he added, is seriously involved in the high quality education of tourist guides by operating the tourist guides

school in cooperation with the Cyprus University to ensure high academic standards.

"The course leads to a recognised diploma that has enabled many Cypriots to build a successful and distinguished career. In addition, we organise on an annual basis, compulsory seminars that enable our tourist guides to refresh their knowledge and upgrade their information," he said.

Photiou said every tourist guide acts like an ambassador of the tourist destination he or she is working in.

"I also feel that well-educated tourist guides working with enthusiasm and professionalism constitute a necessity for every tourist destination that wishes to be successful. That explains the importance the World Federation of Tourist Guides Associates places on the proper training of tourist guides," Photiou said.

He congratulated WFTGA and CTGA for their initiative to create the regional training centre in Nicosia.

WFTGA was founded in 1985 in a bid to establish contact with the Tourist Guides Associations throughout the world and reinforce their professional ties.

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SEMINAR: The first of a series of regional professional training seminars for tourist guides, organised by the WFTGA, the Cyprus University and the CTO. Pictured is training committee chairman Rosalind Newlands (left) and Titina Loizides, former WFTGA president and trainer.

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