



## Press Release

### **Desert Islands Education Centre in Abu Dhabi's Delma Island to offer ICDL training**

***New education initiative offered in Al Gharbia expected to significantly benefit Island residents; reflects UAE's ICT thrust as sector expenditures expected to hit USD 14.8 billion by 2011***

January 31, 2009

Desert Islands Education Centre (DIEC), the first professional education facility to open on Abu Dhabi's Delma Island, has signed an ICDL (International Computers Driving License) accreditation agreement with ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority of the program in the Gulf. Under the terms of the agreement, DIEC will offer training and testing on the ICDL curriculum, certifying Island inhabitants with IT skills. The agreement forms part of the Desert Islands tourism project and is expected to increase employment, education and investment opportunities.



“This is a step forward in our ongoing programme of providing key training to students, so that they are well prepared for career opportunities emerging in Al Gharbia (western region),” explained Bernie Roy, Deputy Director of Education for Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC).

“ICT education is essential for growth across all economic sectors and is also highly sought-after by employers. We are pleased to enter into this agreement, which also furthers our aspiration of enhancing Arab-wide computer literacy and cultivating ICT as a platform for national and regional progress,” said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

According to a recent research by economic and financial analysts Global Insight, the UAE’s expenditure on information and communications technology (ICT) is expected to rise to USD 14.8 billion by 2011.

This affiliation with ICDL is part of TDIC’s efforts to create social sustainability and build a pool of competitive workforce in the western region. The Desert Islands Education Centre’s vision is to offer the Island’s local inhabitants a range of vocational education opportunities to meet the needs of the emerging tourism industry.

ICDL GCC Foundation is one of the top three contributors to the global ICDL certification program. Its main goal is to enhance computer skills and IT access in Gulf societies. The Foundation also assists GCC states in the quality implementation of their ICDL programs.

The Desert Islands Education Centre was launched in August 2008 as part of the Islands’ first phase of development. Comprising eight natural islands, Desert Islands is a nature-based destination that redefines tourism in the Middle East with its multitude of experiences including an Arabian Wildlife Park, nature reserve, rich heritage, five-star hospitality and outdoor adventures.

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### **About ICDL**

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognized computer proficiency standard that is owned by the European Computer Driving License Foundation (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO’s Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001, is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting and prescribing it to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 168 countries, and is offered in 48 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 27,000 centres worldwide, above 8 million candidates, more than 1 million issued certificates and over 25 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program year 1997.

### **About ICDL GCC Foundation**

ICDL GCC Foundation was created by the ECDL Foundation, the not-for-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills in societies and providing access for all to the information society, to serve them to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with their implementation of ICDL and for providing them with localized support to ensure quality of ICDL programs. The ICDL GCC Foundation

is the sole accreditation body that is responsible to support ICDL accredited training and testing centers in the GCC. It also acts as the reviewing and approving body for the local adaptation of ICDL programs

### **About Desert Islands Education Centre:**

The 1,000-square-metre purpose-built DIEC opened to the public in August 2008. Expatriate and UAE Nationals teaching professionals supervise courses ranging from English language and computer studies to Soft Skills courses such as business writing and the fundamentals of customer service. The facility includes two computer laboratories that can accommodate 32 students at one time and a massive walk-in experiential center where prospective enrollees can learn more about the Centre and the Desert Islands destination. Why not mention that we also have 3 classrooms accommodating 45 students at one time?

### **About Desert Islands**

Desert Islands is an escape from the ordinary where nature, wildlife and heritage blend on eight natural Arabian islands offering visitors the chance to discover, explore and unwind. The nature-based destination redefines tourism in the Middle East with its multitude of experiences including an Arabian Wildlife Park, nature reserve, rich heritage, five-star hospitality and outdoor adventures.

Desert Islands lies just off the coast of Jebel Dhanna, a 250 kilometre drive from Abu Dhabi City. The destination comprises Sir Bani Yas Island, Dalma Island and Discovery Islands. Desert Islands is easily accessible to Abu Dhabi Island and the mainland via boat and plane services. When fully operational, Desert Islands expects to attract around 250,000 visitors, which will generate US\$326 million in tourism revenues and create 6,500 jobs.

The master developer of Desert Islands - Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) – is an independent public joint stock company of which Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority is the sole shareholder. TDIC has estimated total investment in Desert Islands, from both the government and private sector, at over US \$3 billion (AED 11.5 billion).

**Sir Bani Yas Island** – a nature-based sanctuary was originally developed as a private wildlife reserve by the late UAE President and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Sir Bani Yas Island is being developed with a focus on nature and adventure, and will be a showcase of sustainability.

**Dalma Island** – the cultural jewel of Desert Islands, is a true symbol of UAE heritage mirroring an authentic Arabian lifestyle in a genuine environment. Currently 5,000 UAE nationals live on the island. The Desert Islands Education Centre (DIEC) provides Dalma's residents vocational education aimed at advancing career opportunities in the Islands' emerging tourism expansion.

**Discovery Islands** - an exclusive and luxurious retreat nestled on six natural islands, is home to a vibrant marine life and untouched animal habitats. Two islands will be developed into exclusive boutique resorts, while two others will offer camping experiences on untouched desert islands. The remaining islands harbour undisturbed breeding grounds for birds and turtles.

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