

Arabian



مهرجان الشرقية
للخيال العربية الأصيلة
ASHARQIA ARABIAN
HORSE FESTIVAL

DAMMAM

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

February 22nd-25th, 2018

Asharqia *Horse Festival*



Asharqia Arabian Horse Festival is a highly anticipated new event organized in Saudi Arabia. “Tutto Arabi” asked Sheikh Khalid Al Gahtani, Chair of the Higher Organizing Committee, some questions about the concept behind it.

by Monika Luft ■ photos by TuttoArabi archive

TuttoArabi: The Festival has been announced as an innovative new event. Could you please tell us more about it?

Sheikh Khalid Al Gathani: During the past few decades, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has seen an incredible resurgence in breeding Arabian horses and today produces more foals per year than any other country. This presents an ideal opportunity to create a new event that celebrates the breed

and unites those who have a passion for these beautiful animals.

A primary vision for the Festival is to ensure it is more than just a show – to create an event that celebrates the legacy of the Arabian horse in the Kingdom and highlights the importance of these horses as a cultural treasure. It was important to the Higher Organizing Committee that we



feature educational, historical and art elements as well as competition. We hope our event will attract local, regional and international attendees that are part of the Arabian horse community, but also inspire others to come enjoy and learn about these horses in a positive and engaging environment. We are extremely pleased to announce that the Festival will be held under the Patronage of HRH Prince Saud Bin Naif Al Saud, Governor of the Eastern Province, who has embraced the Festival and its mission.

What is the significance of the location?

Asbargia in Arabic refers to the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. While known as the region with the majority of oil production in the Kingdom, our Province also features dramatic coastline, beautiful beaches, historic forts and lush oases. We have three major cities with significant populations in the immediate area – Dammam, Dhabran and Al Khobar, making this an excellent location for a major new Arabian horse event.

What are the competitive aspects of Asbargia Arabian Horse Festival?

The Festival will feature two shows along with an endurance ride. The show that begins the event, “Asbargia Arabian Horse Classic”, will be held on February 22nd-23rd and is an ECAHO Class C national show that will showcase the Arabian horses of the Kingdom, many of which have been successful, not only within the Kingdom, but also in prestigious international competition.

The second show is a particularly exciting part of the Festival competition because it is the very first Straight Egyptian Arabian show to be held in the Kingdom. Named the “Gulf Straight Egyptian Arabian Cup”, this ECAHO Class S show will take place on February 24-25th. The Gulf Cup will be an international show open to all purebred Arabians certified as Straight Egyptian according to The Pyramid Society.

Both shows will be held under the auspices of the King Abdulaziz Arabian Horse Center (KAAHC) which is the



Sh. Khalid
bin Hassan Al Gahtani

governing body for Arabian horse competitions in the Kingdom as well as its registration authority. Our shows are sanctioned by the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations (ECAHO) and will feature international judges. With the large number of horses in the Kingdom, we expect entries to be high and competition will be keen.

Of course Arabian horses are famed for their endurance, and the Festival will showcase this aspect of the breed with a 100 kilometer endurance ride, the “Shubada Alwajeb Endurance Cup”. The ride is of special significance because it will be held in honor of the martyrdom of Saudi soldiers who lost their lives in defense of their country. The ride is held under the auspices of the Saudi Arabian Equestrian Federation and sanctioned by the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) and will begin at 6:00 a.m. on 24th of February.

An Art & Archeology Exhibition is also announced, could you please provide some details?

The Arabian horse has been featured in centuries of art and

within countless cultures and civilizations. Therefore it is natural that an event celebrating these beautiful horses includes art. The theme of the archeology elements of the exhibition is “Where It All Began” and will feature images of the fascinating rock art of Arabian horses that exists throughout the Kingdom – a testament to the early origins of the breed within Saudi Arabia.

While the rock art reflects the ancient past, the second element of the exhibition demonstrates that the Arabian remains a source of passion and inspiration for artists around the globe. Entitled “The Arabian Horse through the Eyes of the World” the exhibition will feature three art media and three internationally renowned artists. The photography of Gigi Grasso will be exhibited, along with bronzes by Karen Kasper, and paintings by Ali Almimar.

In addition to the art exhibition itself, there will be a special educational session with Saudi students to facilitate personal dialogue with the artists about their work and about how the Arabian horse has influenced their careers and how it

inspires them.

What will be the subject and the purpose of the educational seminar?

As organizers of the event, we are united in our belief that education should be a vital part of Asharqia Arabian Festival. To that end, a seminar has been organized that further illuminates the theme "Where it All Began". Zooarcheologist Dr. Sandra Olsen will present a lecture on the horse rock art found throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while equine geneticist Dr. Doug Antczak will speak about his latest research regarding genetics and the Arabian breed. Another featured speaker is Abdulaziz Al Qurashi, an expert on the Arabian horse in Arabic literature. Karen Kasper, whose spellbinding lectures are always a favorite,

will discuss the Arabian horse in art and the seminar will also feature renowned breeder and author Judith Forbis, and Arabian horse historian Cynthia Culbertson. Whether one is an experienced breeder or a newcomer, or even someone unfamiliar with the breed, we are confident this selection of lecturers will provide fascinating information and insight for all.

What kind of other extra activities do you plan?

Our Festival will include other activities and entertainment, such as regional music and foods, and elements of Saudi culture and the Eastern Province in particular, where the event is being held. We feel these will be entertaining to all attendees, but especially to those guests from outside the Kingdom. The Festival welcomes international guests, but

From left to right:

**Ali Almimar
Dr. Sandra Olsen
Dr. Doug Antczak
Judith Forbis
Gigi Grasso
Karen Kasper**



photo: Richard T. Bryant



photo: Richard T. Bryant

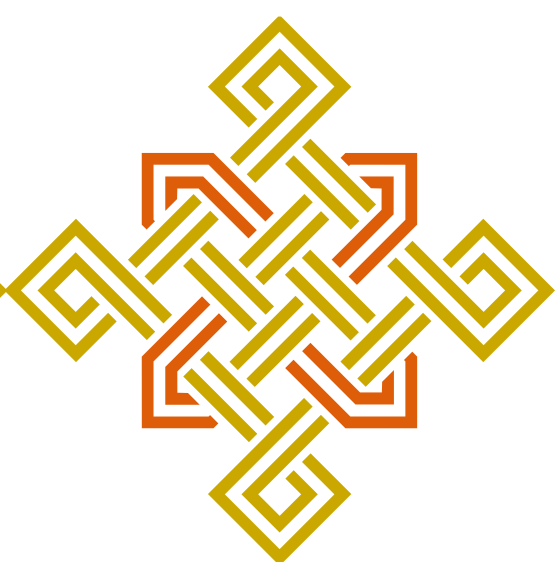




photo: Richard T. Bryant



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I would like to kindly remind them that arrangements must be made to obtain a visa, so those who wish to attend should e-mail info@asharqia-abf.com as soon as possible.

Who are the members of the Higher Organizing Committee behind the Festival?

In addition to myself, our Higher Organizing Committee includes Mr. Abdulaziz Bukanan and Mr. Hamad Bin Quraya both of whom are dedicated to the vision of the Festival and working together to ensure its success as a new international Arabian horse event.

Is promoting the Arabian horse the purpose of the Festival? Or is the purpose wider - to promote Saudi culture in general?

We believe that promoting the preservation and perpetuation of the Arabian horse is of paramount importance. This means that it is vital to support existing breeders and owners, but also to introduce the breed to others, including

developing and educating a new generation of breeders who will become the future stewards of the breed. Asharqia Arabian Horse Festival hopes to both honor the legacy of the Arabian horse and help ensure that the breed has a bright future, both within the Kingdom and around the world. Of course, Saudi Arabia is proud of its legacy with the Arabian horses, as well as its tradition of hospitality to guests. We look forward to introducing visitors to our rich history and cultural legacy and hope to see everyone in Dammam in February! □