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Calendar Listing

WHAT: Imax “Journey to Mecca: In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta” and associated programs

WHEN: Thursday, January 14 – Thursday, March 4, at 10:25 a.m. and 2:05 p.m. daily (also at 5:45 p.m. on Friday Jan. 15 and Sunday Jan. 17)

WHERE: Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History
10th Street & Constitution Avenue NW

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The Johnson Imax Theater presents the launch of “Journey to Mecca: In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta.” This giant-screen film will be shown daily for a limited engagement through March 4.

“Journey to Mecca” follows 14th-century scholar and explorer Ibn Battuta on his 3,000 mile journey from Tangier, Morocco to Mecca. Audiences will witness the obstacles Battuta overcame on this trek and will experience the Hajj, a sacred pilgrimage that is still performed by millions today.

The picture, which recently won the Most Popular Film Award at the La Géode Film Festival, 2009, Paris, is an SK Films release in association with Cosmic Picture and National Geographic. This large-screen documentary features both actual high definition footage of the contemporary Hajj as well as historically-informed reenactments of its origins, with English narration.

More information on the film, including a trailer, an educator’s guide and more, can be found at <http://www.journeytomeccagiantscreen.com>. Tickets are available at <http://www.si.edu/imax>, at any Smithsonian box office, or via the Smithsonian Theaters reservation center at (202) 633-4629.

A variety of educational programs, made possible through the generosity of BMCE Bank Foundation of Morocco, will be conducted in coordination with this cultural event, including:

- **Panel Discussion: Connected Cultures - Religious Traditions of the Middle East** (February 9, 6:30 p.m.; Baird Auditorium): This panel discussion explores the cultural connections between the three largest monotheistic traditions. All three traditions originated in the Middle East and are all inextricably linked, as they have influenced each other over centuries. The evening interfaith panel aims to foster a better understanding of human diversity and cultural change through the lenses of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

- **Lecture and Dinner: Ibn Battuta’s Marvelous Travels** (February 10, 7:00 p.m.; Moroccan Ambassador’s Residence, Potomac, MD): An evening at the home of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco features a lecture on Ibn Battuta, his travels, and his writings, by Dr. Larry Butler, professor at George Mason University. Following the lecture, enjoy a sumptuous buffet of Moroccan specialties.
- **Reception and Screening: Journey to Mecca, in conjunction with the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia** (February 24, 7:00 p.m.; Rotunda and Johnson IMAX® Theater): a screening of *Journey to Mecca* is followed by a reception in the museum’s dramatic rotunda. Light fare reflecting tastes of the region surrounding Mecca is featured at the reception.
- **Gallery Talk: Footsteps through Asia** (February 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, & 28, 1:00 p.m.; Freer Gallery of Art): A tour through the collections of the Freer illuminates other places in Asia that Ibn Battuta visited in his world travels. A docent guides participants on discoveries of the arts of the Islamic world, India, and China.
- **Evening Seminar: The Hajj** (March 4, 6:45 p.m.; Baird Auditorium): An evening seminar on the Hajj examines the annual pilgrimage, its history, the rituals of the five locations in and near Mecca, and its importance within the Islamic faith. The seminar is led by Dr. Sumaiya Hamdani, Director of Islamic Studies and Associate Professor of History at George Mason University.
- **Discover Station program** (Dates vary): Students interact with “*Journey to Mecca, Travels of Ibn Battuta: The Spice Trade and Beyond,*” where visitors are encouraged to explore the geography of the places Battuta visited and examine some of the major trade items from these areas both then and now.
- **Imax “OnDemand” Screenings for Groups.** In addition to the daily public schedule, “*Journey to Mecca*” is available for non-public screenings as part of the Smithsonian Theaters’ “onDemand” program. This program allows groups of 50 or more to view a 9:30 a.m. screening of the Imax or Planetarium film of their choice. Standard group discounts apply. Advance reservations are required. Interested parties may contact the theaters’ reservation office at 202 633-4629 for information and bookings.
- **Title I School programs** - Qualifying schools in the Washington metropolitan region will be provided with free tickets for their classes to see the film, followed by a visit to the African Voices Hall.
- **Arts of the Islamic World School Tour** – Middle- and high-school students open their minds by actively observing, discussing, and exploring Arabic calligraphy, lavishly illuminated and illustrated manuscripts, glittering glasswork, and inspiring metalwork, primarily from West Asia (the Middle East) and North Africa.
- **Free Teacher’s Guide: Arts of the Islamic World** - The first 300 teachers who register groups for the film will receive hard copies of the Guide.

A full description and schedule of *Journey to Mecca* educational programs can be found online at http://www.asia.si.edu/events/JMTprograms12_15.pdf.

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