

Dubai receives 14.36 million international visitors in 2022

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Dubai received 14.36 million international overnight visitors in 2022, growing 97 per cent YoY from the 7.28 million tourist arrivals in 2021, according to the latest data published by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). The growth, which enabled the emirate to surpass global and regional tourism recovery levels, contributes to the goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to consolidate Dubai's status as one of the world's top three cities for travel and business.

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai said: "Dubai's ability to rapidly accelerate tourism growth, which has marked it out as a clear frontrunner in the international industry, demonstrates the far-reaching vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to transform the emirate into an important global player in shaping the future of vital sectors. The remarkable rise in international visitation in 2022 supports the ambitious goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 to double the size of the emirate's economy by 2033. The tourism and travel sector contributes significantly to the leadership's aim of making the emirate a model for excellence in the global economy.

"The exceptional growth in the inflow of visitors reflects Dubai's continued rise as one of the world's most connected cities and its determination to lead the world in hospitality infrastructure and service levels. The high growth shows the world that we never rest on our achievements and constantly work to raise our benchmarks. I am confident that Dubai will be an even greater catalyst for the growth of global tourism and travel connectivity in the years ahead."

By closing in on its pre-pandemic visitation of 16.73 million in 2019, Dubai's 2022 tourism performance further validated its ranking as the No.1 global destination in the Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards 2023 for the second successive year, only the second city in history to achieve the feat. The latest data from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) shows that global tourist travel in 2022 was 37 per cent lower than 2019. The Middle East saw the strongest relative increase, with arrivals climbing to 83 per cent of pre-pandemic numbers. Dubai exceeded both global and regional barometers of recovery with visitors to the city in 2022 reaching 86 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

His Excellency, Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism, said: "Aligned with the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to make Dubai the world's most visited and re-visited destination, the performance of our industry in 2022 shows the extraordinary progress made by the city over the past two years. While the global economy remains in a state of flux, Dubai has emerged as a clear leader in the tourism industry. The robust performance is a testament to Dubai's growing role at the vanguard of global tourism recovery. The positive momentum also shows that tourism remains a significant contributor to the city's economic growth and sustainable development, further driving the goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 to reinforce Dubai's status as one of world's top three cities for tourism and business.

"The effectiveness of our strategies and initiatives gives us the confidence to tap new growth opportunities in the global travel and business sectors over the next few decades. As the fastest growing city in the Middle East, Dubai's continuous growth has been made possible by the unwavering support of our stakeholders and partners and a raft of strategic investments and federal policy reforms that have led to a steady flow of global entrepreneurs, talent, investors, and business and leisure travellers. The industry-wide success has also encouraged us to redouble our efforts to provide more opportunities for Emirati talent to contribute to the growth of Dubai's tourism sector, aligned with our cutting-edge industry nationalisation programme to build the next generation of tourism professionals. We will continue to accelerate momentum throughout 2023 and beyond by focusing on all the key elements that have placed Dubai at the forefront of the world's leading travel destinations – a diversified approach to markets, an evolving multifaceted destination proposition, continuous collaboration with our partners, all of which have enabled us to deliver exceptional value to visitors from around the world," HE Helal Almarri added.

Dubai's international markets maintain momentum

The strong performance in 2022 features some noteworthy spikes in Dubai's traditional key markets and strong growth across emerging markets. Dubai remained a first-choice safe travel destination for visitors from the city's stronghold markets.

From a regional perspective, Western Europe and GCC regions each accounted for a 21 per cent share of arrivals. The GCC region in particular saw an exponential increase in their share of arrivals from 13 per cent in 2021 to 21 per cent last year. South Asia contributed 17 per cent of total volumes while the MENA region contributed 12 per cent, further reinforcing Dubai's continued appeal to travellers from proximity markets. The Americas accounted for seven per cent of arrivals while the North Asia and South East Asia region and Africa each contributed five per cent and Australasia accounted for two per cent.

His Excellency, Issam Kazim, CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing, said: "As Dubai continues to grow exponentially in line with the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 launched by our visionary leadership to make Dubai one of the world's top three cities for tourism and business, it remains committed to moving to the next level with new and unique world-class infrastructure, experiences and attractions. The sheer diversity of the destination proposition and Dubai's growing profile as a safe, open

and accessible destination saw the city being chosen as the No.1 global destination for the second year in a row in the Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards 2023. Our partners played a pivotal role in achieving the No.1 ranking with their contributions to both Dubai's tourism growth and the sector's global rebound, as well as their active participation in all our global campaigns and marketing activities that have driven consideration for Dubai as the destination of choice for global travellers. The exceptional support of our public and private sector stakeholders and partners will be instrumental in raising our ability to showcase our unmatched offering designed to meet the diverse preferences and budgets of international travellers, as we gear up to welcome more visitors to Dubai in 2023."

Hospitality sector achieves significant growth

Dubai's hotel sector, which continues to be integral to the emirate's destination promise and the overall growth of the tourism industry, continued to perform strongly across all hospitality metrics.

Average occupancy for the hotel sector in 2022 stood at 73 per cent, one of the highest in the world, rising from 67 per cent in 2021. The figure is just short of the 75 per cent occupancy in the pre-pandemic period of 2019. The high occupancy is particularly noteworthy as it was achieved despite a 16 per cent increase in room supply in 2022 compared to 2019. Dubai's hotel inventory at the end of December 2022 comprised of 146,496 rooms at 804 hotel establishments, compared to 126,120 rooms available at the end of December 2019 across 741 establishments. The total number of hotels in 2022 marked a six per cent growth over 2021, with 755 hotel establishments offering 137,950 rooms, figures that highlight the continued strong investor confidence in Dubai's tourism sector.

The hotel sector outperformed pre-pandemic levels across all other key measurements – Occupied Room Nights, Average Daily Rate (ADR) and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR). Occupied room nights reached a record high of 37.43 million room nights in 2022, registering a 19 per cent increase vs. 2021 (31.47 million) and a 17 per cent increase over the pre-pandemic period of 2019, which yielded 32.11 million occupied room nights.

The ADR of AED536 in 2022 surpassed the ADRs for both 2021 (AED451) and 2019 (AED415), with 19 per cent and 29 per cent increases respectively. The hotel sector's robust performance is also evident in its RevPAR growth – an increase of 30 per cent compared to 2021 (AED391 v AED301) and an increase of 25 per cent over the pre-pandemic period of 2019 (RevPAR of AED312).

Celebrity-led global campaigns

One of the driving factors behind Dubai's success in 2022 can be attributed to captivating global campaigns conducted in collaboration with regional and international celebrities, opinion leaders, influencers and community personalities that highlighted the city's unique appeal and brought to life the myriad experiences it offers. One such campaign is Dubai Presents, which takes a novel approach to global destination marketing, using a highly stylised movie approach to create engaging content. Shot against the backdrop of some of Dubai's most iconic landmarks and unique hidden locations, these short films feature Hollywood stars like Jessica Alba and Zac Efron. The 'Where the World Celebrates' global campaign that coincided with the FIFA World Cup in Qatar featured French football star Karim Benzema.

International events destination

One of the biggest success stories of the region in 2022, Expo 2020 Dubai, made a massive contribution to the tourism industry's outstanding performance. The six-month long event, which attracted over 24 million visits, once again proved Dubai's ability to host mega global events and reinforced its position as an international events destination.

Dubai seeks to further enhance its destination proposition across all tourism pillars, leveraging the retail and events sectors to attract more domestic and global visitors. In addition to Expo 2020, Dubai continued to host global business and leisure events across 2022 including Gulfood, the World Government Summit, Binance Blockchain Week, Gitex Global Dubai, the International Boat Show and the Arabian Travel Market. In addition to this, the city also hosted the Skift Global Forum East, the first-ever international extension of the world's flagship travel conference, the Skift Global Forum. At this event, Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism announced the launch of an annual Dubai Tourism Summit.

Every year, as part of its Retail Calendar, the Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment team (DFRE) organises major festivals and events including the iconic internationally-renowned Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai Food Festival, Dubai Summer Surprises and Dubai Fitness Challenge. In 2022, DFRE also launched the inaugural Dubai Esports Festival, the largest international esports tournament to be held in the region.

A leading sports tourism destination, Dubai also hosts an extensive line-up of annual global sports tournaments and events, attracting sporting icons, players and fans from around the world. In 2022 the city's international sporting calendar included the Dubai World Cup horse race, the Dubai Duty Free Tennis

Championship, Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby 7s, the Dubai Desert Classic golf tournament and the DP World Tour championship, to name a few. Dubai pulled out all stops to enable residents and visiting fans to enjoy the FIFA World Cup 2022 at buzzing hotspots in the city. Dubai was chosen as one of six cities globally to host an official FIFA Fan Festival, making Dubai a focal point for the international football fraternity.

Culinary innovation and accolades

Dubai's culinary sector was a significant driver of growth in 2022, with the city's rich, creative and multi-cultural dining scene attracting visitors and accolades from across the globe. Dubai's eclectic gastronomic scene features around 13,000 restaurants and cafés, ranging from homegrown eateries to gourmet institutions and fine dining restaurants, offering diverse cuisines. The city's thriving culinary landscape was recognised with the launch of the inaugural MICHELIN Guide Dubai in June 2022. The first regional edition of the world's most prestigious restaurant guide featured a total of 69 restaurants, including 14 Bib Gourmand winners. Further, Dubai's restaurants and chefs were recognised in the inaugural edition of the Middle East & North Africa region's 50 Best Restaurants list unveiled in February 2022, which celebrates culinary excellence across the region. The arrival of fine dining food critique brand Gault&Millau also contributed to the evolution of the dining scene in Dubai. In 2022, DET launched the region's first-ever Gastronomy Industry Report, a comprehensive study of the gastronomy scene in the city and the region, reinforcing Dubai's position as a highly sought-after global food tourism destination.

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Delivering on sustainability goals

With sustainability embedded in its tourism strategy, Dubai has taken decisive measures to position itself as a top choice for holidaymakers seeking sustainable and safe destinations. Throughout 2022, Dubai worked tirelessly to achieve the city's sustainability goals, led by Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST), an initiative aimed at raising the city's profile as a leading sustainable destination. DST has taken steps to contribute to the city's broader clean energy targets and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, as well as the UAE's Net Zero 2050 strategy. With 2023 declared as the UAE's Year of Sustainability and Expo City Dubai hosting COP28, the UN Climate Change conference, the year will be key for advancing Dubai's vision to enhance sustainability and forge global cooperation to address vital issues. The last year saw the launch of 'Dubai Can', an innovative citywide sustainability initiative, as part of the drive to transform the emirate into a leading sustainable destination and the world's best city to live and work.

Global cruise and yacht tourism destination

Cruise and yacht tourism played a crucial role in attracting international tourists and strengthening Dubai's position as a global travel hub in 2022. The expansion of the cruise sector has further consolidated Dubai's status as the cruise hub of the region. Similarly, with its world-class infrastructure, advanced facilities, year-round sunshine, luxury marinas, award-winning tourism offerings, rich maritime history and picturesque coastline, Dubai continues to amplify its appeal as a global superyacht hub.

New landmarks and initiatives to spur growth

In 2022, a number of new attractions and initiatives were launched as part of the ever-evolving destination proposition. These include the unveiling of the Museum of the Future, Dubai's new iconic landmark that offers a gateway to a future world. Dubai also unveiled Expo City, the dynamic legacy of Expo 2020, an innovation-driven, human centric vision of the future, and Atlantis The Royal, a mega resort located on Palm Jumeirah.

With the implementation of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, which aims to expand the emirate's tourism offering by over 100%, Dubai is on track to achieve its vision of becoming the city of the future. Moreover, Dubai will launch new initiatives aligned with the UAE 2031 Tourism Strategy, which seeks to

attract 40 million guests by 2031 and increase the tourism sector's contribution to the emirate's GDP to AED 450 billion.

Dubai also continues to unveil strong regulatory initiatives to promote the accelerated growth of the tourism sector including hassle-free entry procedures for business and leisure travellers that streamline access to the emirate by establishing long-term engagement with the city. These include the 60-day tourist visa available from September 2022, and the Five-Year Multi-Entry Visa for employees of multinational companies, in addition to the Golden Visa, Virtual Working and Retire in Dubai programmes. In 2022, Dubai was selected as one of 20 destinations globally under Airbnb's Live and Work Anywhere initiative to identify the world's most remote worker-friendly destinations. Airbnb also launched the Dubai Remote Working Hub, a one-stop-shop for aspiring remote workers in partnership with Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism.