

Dubai Tourism shares positive industry outlook with stakeholders as city continues to welcome tourists

29 Nov 2020, Dubai, UAE



The Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) hosted a forum for stakeholders and partners to share its industry outlook amid a resurgence in the sector since Dubai's reopening to international tourists on 7 July. The meeting provided insights into the current tourism situation both in the UAE and worldwide and steps taken to accelerate growth momentum including marketing campaigns worldwide designed to reinforce Dubai's profile as a safe must-visit destination.

The meeting held outdoors at the Fitness Village, Dubai Festival City on 26 November, saw the forum return to a physical setting. Stakeholder meetings held since the start of the pandemic had previously been held remotely. Precautionary guidelines were comprehensively observed, including temperature screening, wearing of masks and social distancing. By selecting a prominent venue of the ongoing Dubai Fitness Challenge as the location of the latest meeting, the Department highlighted the safe restart of the events sector and the city's gradual move towards normalcy. Presided by **His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism**, the meeting was attended by over 600 key executives from leading establishments in the hospitality, travel, leisure and retail sectors.

The partners were briefed on positive developments since the city's reopening to tourists including the steady influx from markets that have opened and the robust domestic tourism performance driven by stakeholder support. It was observed that while the "second wave" of the pandemic has impacted most of Europe with additional lockdowns and travel restrictions, the inclusion of the UAE in UK's quarantine-free travel corridor and the anticipated opening of neighbouring markets together with the successful citywide management of the pandemic are expected to increase visitors to Dubai.

The meeting also highlighted the hospitality sector's rebound that saw hotels in Dubai enjoying occupancy levels of 51 per cent in September, further instilling confidence in this sector and demonstrating its capability to attract guests and provide them a memorable holiday. According to data from hotel management analytics firm STR, Dubai ranks second globally in terms of occupancy after Singapore and ahead of Paris and London.

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, commented: "We are grateful to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, for his visionary leadership and guidance that has enabled us to efficiently tide over the challenges posed by the pandemic and inspired us to develop innovative initiatives to further enhance our competitiveness as a destination. Dubai's proactive approach and exceptional cross functional management of the situation, has put us in a first mover position to reopen to global markets as and when they reciprocally open, allowing the city to be ahead of the curve.

"We are greatly encouraged by the pace of the industry's recovery since the city opened its doors to international tourists almost five months ago. The steady influx of travellers indicates that we are on the right track. We hope to perform even better before the year draws to a close, accelerating momentum as we move towards the full reopening of the sector. This critical period has highlighted the resilience of our ecosystem, especially the hotel industry, which took the lead in reviving domestic tourism and creating a positive perception of the industry.

HE Helal Almarri added: "A diversified multi-geographic strategy that allows us to react quickly to market changes across source markets combined with the strong economic relief programme put in place by the local and federal governments, as well as the support of our stakeholders have helped the destination remain highly competitive in spite of global challenges. Our constant dialogue with stakeholders and partners, especially in these tough times, allows us to keep them abreast of the latest domestic and global developments. This provides them an opportunity to be aligned with new industry initiatives and take advantage of diverse campaigns and efforts being made to ensure Dubai stays at the forefront of the world's safest destinations."

The meeting also discussed global efforts to curb the transmission of COVID-19 and the wide-ranging precautionary measures deployed in the UAE to safeguard the health of communities. It was pointed out that clear, coordinated and detailed guidelines have been established for the restart of the tourism sector. As part of a concerted effort to ensure compliance, the DUBAI ASSURED stamp was launched to certify all establishments in the tourism ecosystem that have complied with safety guidelines. In a vote of confidence, the World Travel and Tourism Council awarded Dubai the Safe Travels stamp, further elevating its position as one of the world's safest destinations.

The participants were provided an update on various relief measures offered to stakeholders, which have been extended until the end of the year to stimulate the tourism, events and sports sectors under the economic stimulus package offered by the government to ease financial pressures on companies. These include tax concessions on municipality fees, exemption of fees levied on applications for hotel classification and the waiver of event ticket fees for all leisure and business events.

Participants at the forum were given a glimpse of the various digital activations launched by Dubai Tourism as part of its ongoing global marketing campaign to ensure that the city continues to be a first-choice international tourist destination. The digital campaigns were activated in three phases, starting with **#Till**

We Meet Again, followed by **#Ready When You Are** and the recently launched **#Live Your Story** designed to highlight the unique ways in which travellers can create their own special holiday experiences in Dubai. The Department is also running a special global influencer programme via multiple social media platforms in 10 languages and covering 20 source markets and 32 million followers.

Industry executives were also briefed on other initiatives such as the new 'Retire in Dubai' programme, which provides international retirees and expatriates aged 55 and above the opportunity to enjoy a one-of-a-kind lifestyle in Dubai; and the recently launched 'Virtual Working' programme that enables overseas remote working professionals to live in Dubai while continuing to serve their employers in their home country. Dubai Tourism is also seeking to attract visitors through year-round retail-focused festivals, new season launches, mega sales and exclusive retail experiences. The Retail Calendar for 2021 will commence on 17 December with the launch of the iconic annual Dubai Shopping Festival, which will run until 30 January 2021.

At the end of the forum, HE Almarri answered a wide range of questions related to the reopening of source markets, New Year's Eve celebrations, quarantine and testing procedures, health and safety protocols and the overall recovery plan.