



Travel & Tourism in the UAE reaches new heights, reveals WTTTC

Abu Dhabi, UAE: The World Travel & Tourism Council's ([WTTTC](#)) 2024 Economic Impact Research (EIR) has revealed a record-breaking year for Travel & Tourism in the UAE, with new peaks achieved across key metrics including the sector's GDP contribution, jobs and visitor spend.

The UAE's Travel & Tourism sector is now soaring past all previous records, testament to the country's commitment to attracting tourists from around the world to destinations such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Ras Al Khaimah.

Last year, the sector grew by more than a quarter (26%) to contribute a record-breaking AED 220BN to the UAE's GDP representing 11.7% of the entire economy. This exceeded the previous record set in 2019 by almost 15% and underscores the sector's pivotal role in the nation's economic framework.

Jobs supported by Travel & Tourism grew by 41,000 to reach more than 809,000, representing one in nine jobs in the country. Although the jobs lost during the pandemic were fully recovered in 2022, today's announcement shows sector jobs have now increased 11% since the 2019 highpoint.

While domestic visitor spending fully recovered in 2022, it continued to grow last year to reach more than AED 55.5BN which is almost 40% higher than 2019.

International visitor spending surged by almost 40% in 2023 to reach over AED 175BN, 12% above 2019 levels, reflecting the UAE's enduring appeal as a top global tourism destination.

Julia Simpson, WTTTC President & CEO said; "The UAE's Travel & Tourism sector has not only recovered; it soared to new heights, establishing itself as a cornerstone of the nation's economic landscape.

"The remarkable growth in both employment and visitor spending is a testament to the UAE's strategic vision and commitment to enhancing its Travel & Tourism. As the sector continues to set benchmarks for the global travel industry, it underscores the importance of sustainable and inclusive strategies in driving prosperity."

Speaking from the VFS Global iConnect conference in Abu Dhabi, Zubin Zakaria, Founder & CEO of VFS Global, added: "The UAE has always been a key contributor to global travel and this market has significantly powered the travel recovery post the pandemic."

"The findings of WTTC's research are extremely encouraging and as a key stakeholder of the travel ecosystem, VFS Global remains committed to supporting the ongoing travel recovery and ensuring seamless and secure cross-border mobility."

What Does This Year Look Like?

The global tourism body is forecasting that the sector will continue to grow at pace in 2024 with GDP set to reach over AED 236BN. Jobs will increase by more than 23,500 jobs to reach nearly 833,000. International visitor spending is projected to grow by nearly 10% to reach AED 192BN and domestic visitor spending is forecast to increase by 4.3% to reach almost AED 58BN.

What Does the Next Decade Look Like?

The global tourism body is forecasting that the sector will grow its annual GDP contribution to more than AED 275BN by 2034, almost 11% of the UAE economy. It is also projected to employ more than 928,000 people across the country, with one in nine residents working in the sector.

Across the Middle East

The Middle Eastern Travel & Tourism sector grew by more than 25% in 2023 to reach almost \$460BN USD. Jobs reached nearly 7.75MN and international spending grew by 50% to reach \$179.8BN USD. Domestic visitor spending grew by 16.5% to reach more than \$205BN USD

WTTC is forecasting that Travel & Tourism across the region will continue to grow throughout 2024 with the GDP contribution set to reach \$507BN USD. Jobs are forecast to reach 8.3MN, international visitor spending is forecast to reach \$198BN USD and domestic visitor spending is expected to reach more than \$224BN USD.

UAE Flight Booking Trends

According to the global tourism body's knowledge partner ForwardKeys, international arrivals at Abu Dhabi and Dubai grew more than 9% above 2019 numbers last year.

Flight bookings to Abu Dhabi for the second quarter of 2024 are also showing strong growth, 59% ahead of last year, whilst bookings to Dubai are up 13%.

For more information, please visit [wttc.org](https://www.wttc.org)

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Editors Notes

This cutting-edge research was carried out in partnership with Oxford Economics. All values are in constant 2023 prices and exchange rates, as reported in March 2024. Prices given in AED for the UAE, and USD for the Middle East.