

دبي

للاقتصاد والسياحة  
Economy and Tourism



DUBAI DEPARTMENT  
OF ECONOMY AND TOURISM

ANNUAL VISITOR REPORT 2023





Dubai's tourism industry enjoyed a remarkable year of growth in 2023, guided by the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. In the year that the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, was announced, setting ambitious strategies and goals for the next decade, strong progress was made to further consolidate Dubai's position as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure, and the best city to visit, live and work in.

Celebrating a milestone year, Dubai welcomed a record 17.15 million international overnight visitors in 2023, which further bolstered its ranking as the No.1 global destination for an unprecedented third successive year in the Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards, the first city to achieve this unique accolade. These achievements are a testament to the emirate's vibrant and diverse offerings, supported by world-class infrastructure, exceptional service at all touchpoints, and continuous collaboration between the government and private sectors.

This report, issued by Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), explores the key pillars and drivers which have fuelled Dubai's tourism and hospitality success, enhancing their economic impact and contributing towards achieving the D33 goals.

From the diverse source markets mapped out and the visitor satisfaction quantified, to data about the most visited attractions and the key factors that attracted tourists to the Dubai in the first place, this report documents another year of excellence by stakeholders across the city's travel and tourism ecosystem.

As we look forward to welcoming more visitors in 2024 and beyond, the unwavering support of our public and private sector partners will be crucial to maintaining this momentum. We are excited to continue working together to drive further growth across all segments of our industry.

**H.E. Helal Saeed Almarri**

Director General of the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism



# PERFORMANCE

## DUBAI'S TOURISM SECTOR CELEBRATES RECORD-BREAKING YEAR

**The emirate cemented its reputation as a leading global tourism destination in 2023, welcoming more international visitors than ever before while reaching a number of important industry milestones**

Dubai showcased its tourism strength to the world in 2023, with the emirate welcoming a record 17.15 million international visitors, up 19.4 per cent compared to 2022 and surpassing the previous benchmark of 16.73 million set in 2019.

Dubai's reputation as one of the world's most dynamic tourism destinations, backed up by a diverse portfolio of experiences that attract a broad spectrum of visitors, was key to its record-breaking performance last year.

The city's remarkable popularity drove its performance beyond pre-pandemic levels, making it one of only a few destinations worldwide to achieve this milestone in 2023.

Dubai also continued to add to its growing collection of international accolades, with the city being named the world's No.1 destination for the third consecutive year in the Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Best of the Best Destinations Awards 2024 – a first for any city.

Dubai was also named the No.1 city in the world to relocate to in a report by financial services provider Remitly and was declared the best city in the world for remote workers by property consultancy Savills in its 2023 Executive Nomad Index.

Other milestones included securing second place in Euromonitor International's Top 100 City Destinations Index for 2023 and being named among the top 10 cities in the Global Power City Index, published by the Mori Memorial Foundation's Institute for Urban Strategies in Japan.

These achievements are testament to the emirate's commitment to excellence, its world-class amenities and outstanding service standards, and the successful and enduring partnership between public and private tourism stakeholders that continue to drive its tourism sector to reach new heights.

The industry's outstanding performance also reinforces its importance to the Dubai Economic Agenda D33, the groundbreaking initiative launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, which aims to further consolidate Dubai's position as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure, and the best city to visit, live and work in.



## KEY SOURCE MARKETS

### TRADITIONAL VISITOR SOURCE MARKETS SHINE IN 2023

Dubai's growing popularity as a year-round tourism destination helped drive international visitation to new heights in 2023, with visitors flocking to the emirate from key regional source markets throughout the year.

Western Europe proved Dubai's number one regional visitor source market, accounting for 19 per cent (3.29 million) of the record 17.15 million arrivals in 2023, with South Asia ranking closely behind with 3.08 million arrivals, or 18 per cent of the total.

The GCC ranked third overall, with 2.65 million visitor arrivals, followed by CIS and Eastern Europe with 2.26 million visitors. This latter region proved a key growth market in 2023, with its share of total arrivals rising from 11 per cent in 2022 to 13 per cent, or the equivalent of an additional 620,000 visitors received last year.

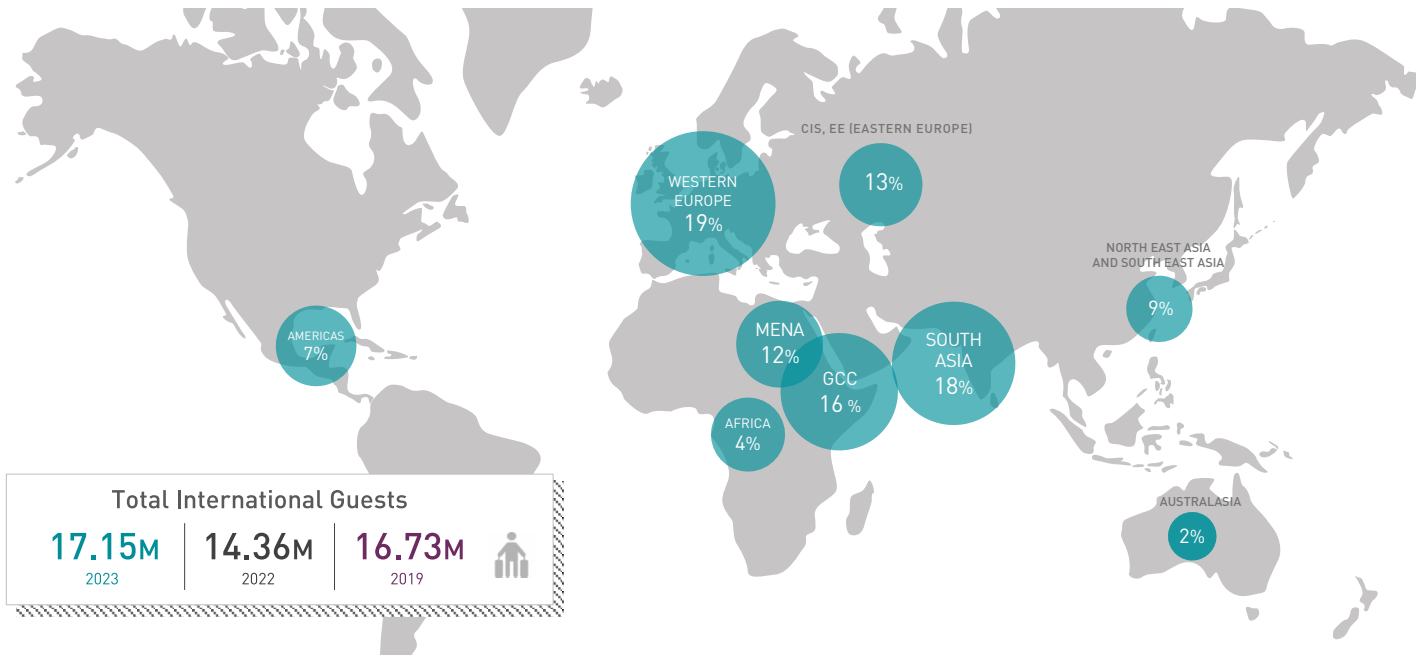
The MENA region rounded out Dubai's top five leading source markets with 2.09 million visitors (a 12 per cent share).

Elsewhere, the North-East Asia and South-East Asia market accounted for 1.46 million visitor arrivals, or nine per cent of the total, up from five per cent in 2022. This result established the region as Dubai's fastest-growing source market year on year (YoY), with an additional 790,000 visitor arrivals registered in 2023.

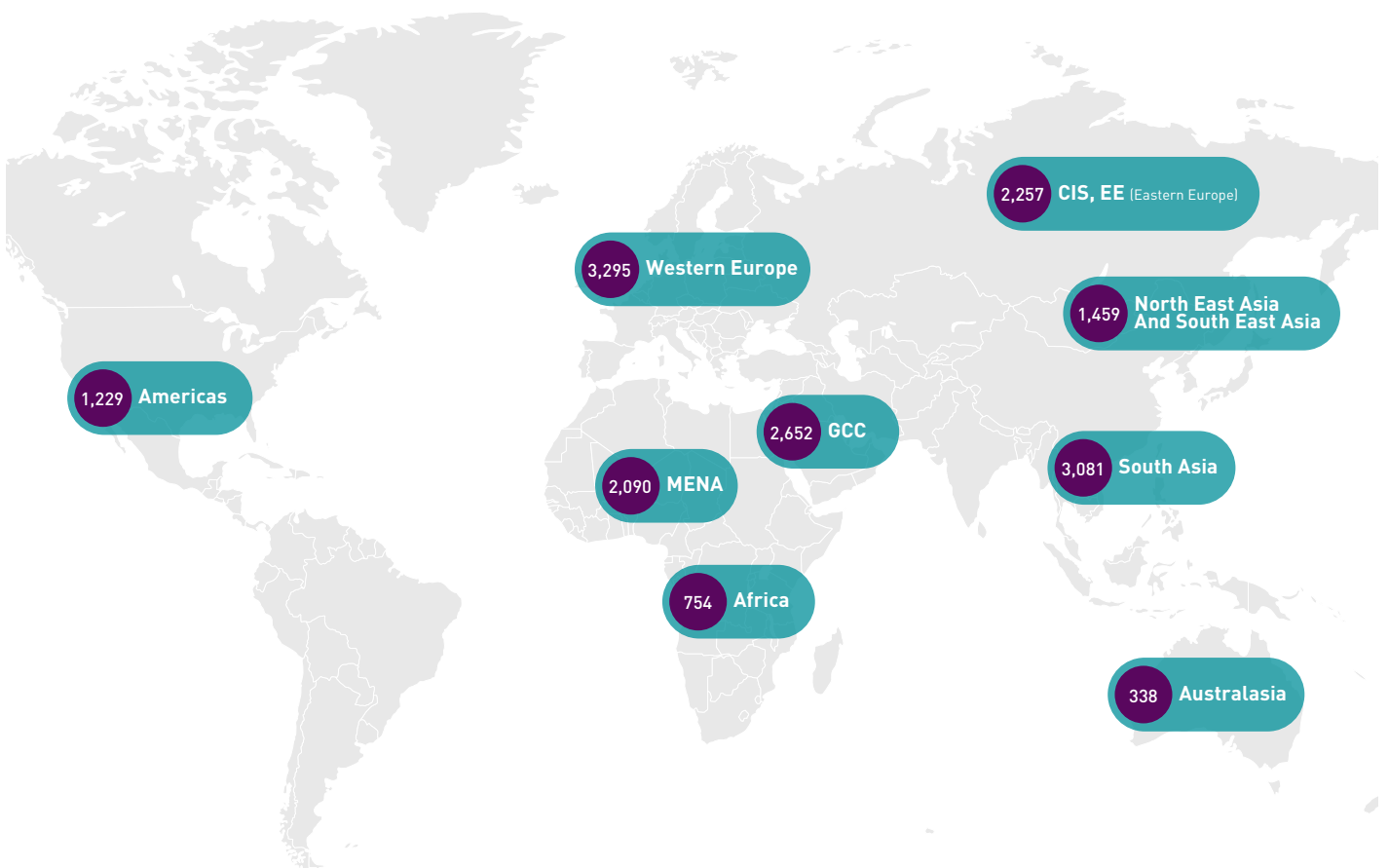
This impressive leap in total visitor share reflected Dubai's growing popularity among Chinese tourists, who are now travelling again following a relaxation on outbound travel restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dubai remains ideally placed to further capitalise on the growth in Chinese visitor arrivals in 2024.

Of the remaining regions, the Americas followed closely behind with 1.23 million visitors, ahead of Africa with 754,000 and Australasia with 338,000.

## SOURCE OF VISITORS BY REGION [% Jan - Dec 2023]



## TOTAL VOLUME BY REGION ['000 Visitors Jan - Dec 2023]



Notes:  
 [1] The difference in total is due to rounding.

# ACCOMMODATION

## DUBAI HOTELIERS CAPITALISE ON RECORD-BREAKING GROWTH

The unrivalled diversity and quality of Dubai's hotel and hospitality offerings, combined with the city's enviable reputation for world-class service, helped propel its hotel sector to new heights in 2023, significantly contributing to Dubai's growth and global appeal as a top travel destination.

In 2023, Dubai's hoteliers built on their already strong momentum from 2022 to surpass pre-pandemic benchmarks across several key metrics, including occupancy rates, occupied room nights, guests' length of stay, average daily rates (ADR), and revenue per available room (RevPAR).

The city's average occupancy rate of 77.4 per cent, which was one of the highest recorded worldwide last year, represented a significant jump from the 72.9 per cent reported in 2022 and the 2019 pre-pandemic average of 75.3 per cent.

The rise in occupancies is particularly impressive given the substantial 19 per cent increase in Dubai's guestroom inventory compared to 2019. The result further reflects the industry's remarkable resilience and growing global reputation for excellence.

Dubai's hotel sector also celebrated the important milestone of surpassing 150,000 guestrooms in 2023, a landmark achievement that positions the city among the world's largest hotel markets.

Dubai's guestroom inventory of 150,291 rooms across 821 establishments represents a marked increase

from the 146,496 rooms in 804 establishments recorded at the end of 2022, and a substantial rise on the 126,120 rooms in 741 establishments available at the end of 2019.

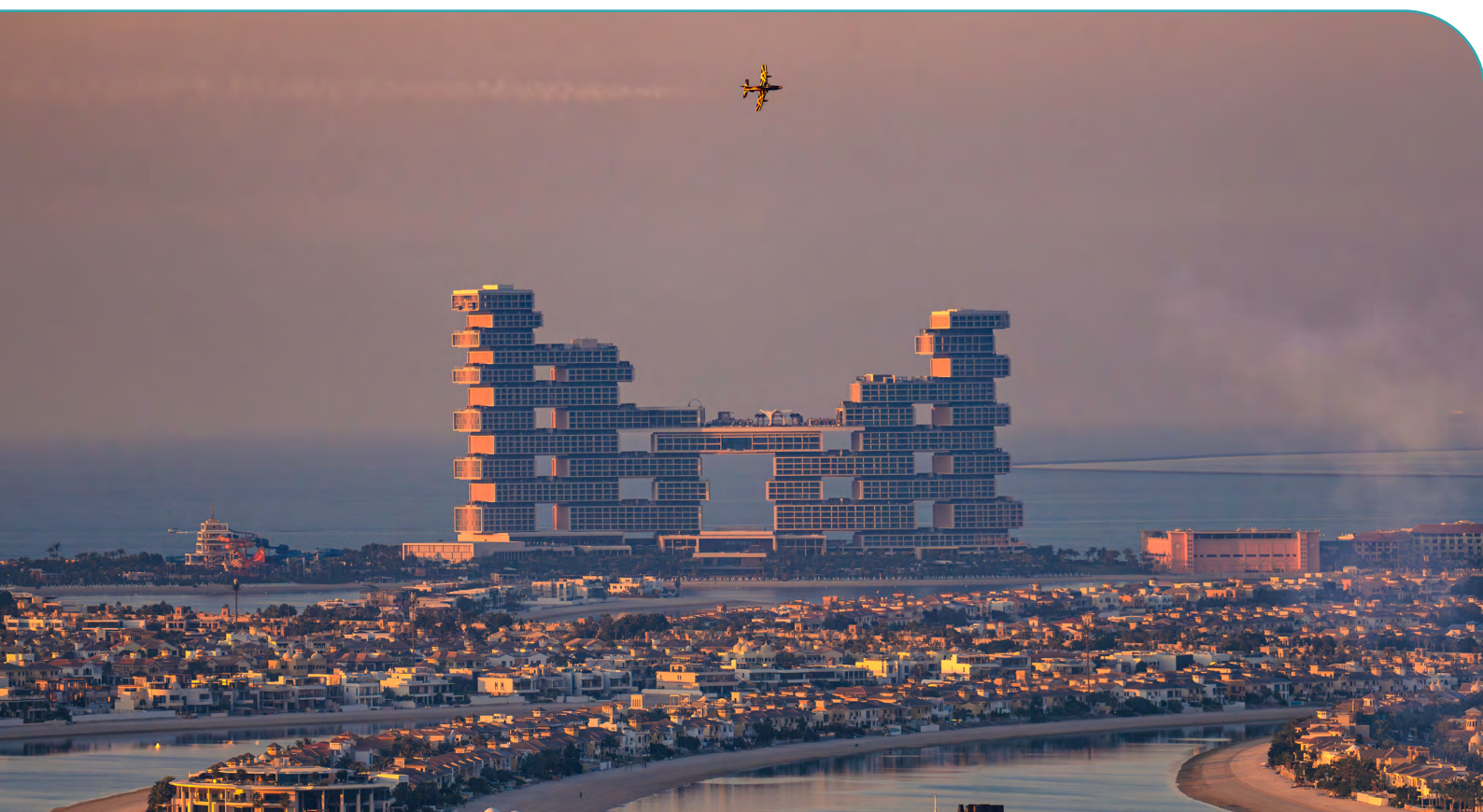
The 11 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase in occupied room nights to a record 41.7 million further illustrates the sector's strength, while showcasing the enhanced capacity and operational efficiency that rank among the industry's best virtues. It also highlights the growth of the market over the past four years, given it represents a significant 30 per cent jump from the 32.11 million occupied room nights reported in 2019.

Looking ahead, Dubai's guestroom inventory is expected to reach 154,888 in 2024, driven largely by the number of four-star hotels set to open in the city. This category is expected to account for an additional 2,330 rooms, or more than 50 per cent of the 4,597 rooms scheduled to open this year.

Citywide pricing strategies were also finely tuned to ensure competitiveness in 2023. While ADR remained consistent YoY at AED536, it marked an improvement on the AED415 reported in 2019.

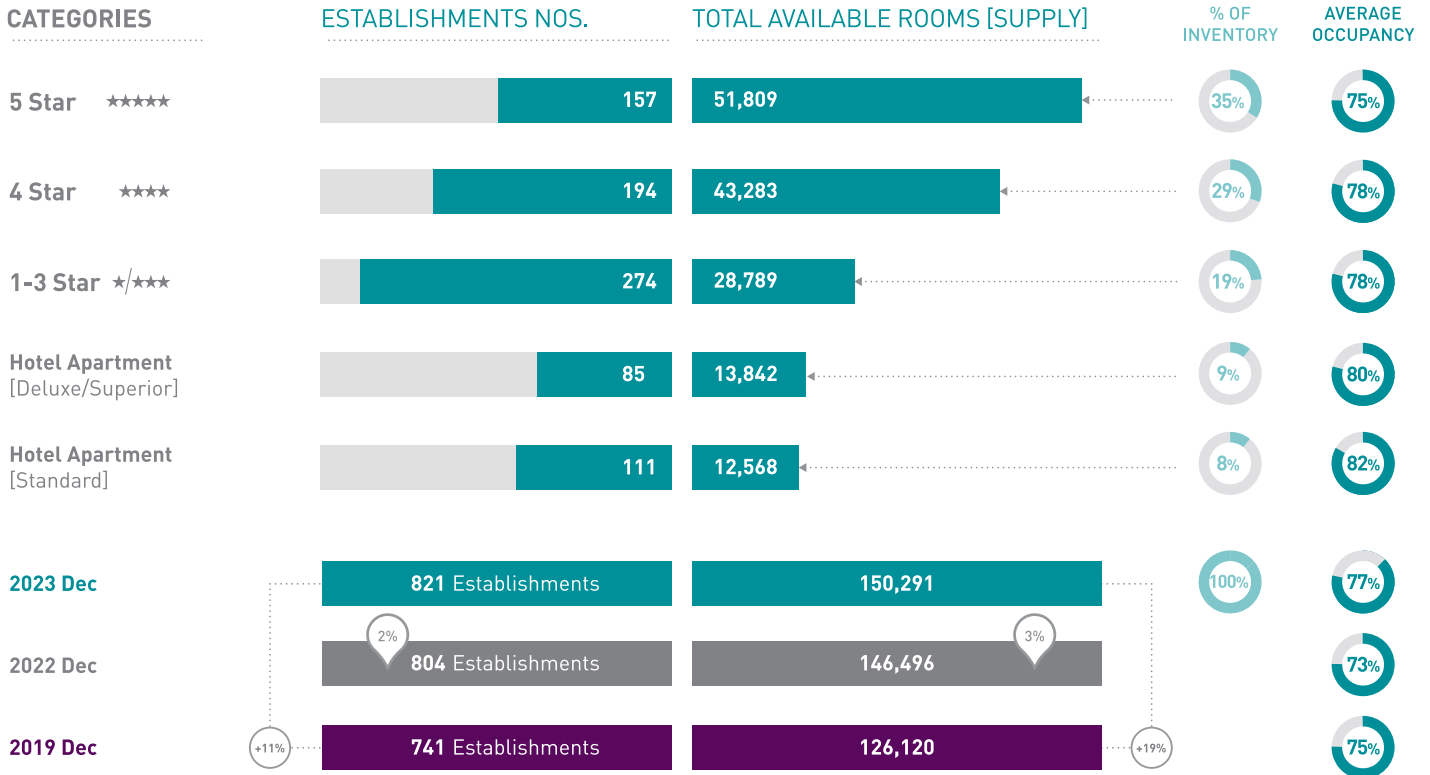
The success of this pricing strategy was furthermore highlighted by the six per cent YoY rise in RevPAR to AED415 in 2023, a result that also marked a substantial 33 per cent increase compared to the 2019 figure of AED312, highlighting the sector's impressive post-pandemic recovery and growth.

Visitors also chose to stay longer in Dubai in 2023, with average guest nights rising 10 per cent from 3.4 in 2019 to 3.8 last year. This trend suggests a deeper engagement with Dubai's destination offerings, which have dramatically expanded in recent years to target more diversified market segments and visitor demographics.



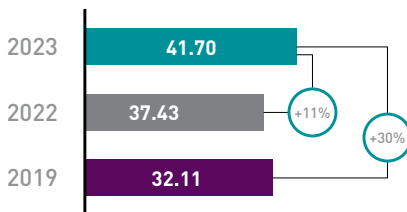
# HOTEL INVENTORY BY CATEGORY AND PERFORMANCE KPIs

2023 2022 2019\*

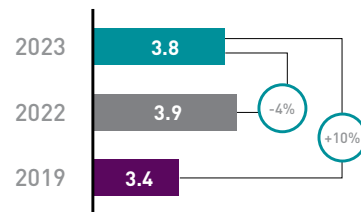


## DUBAI VISITORS DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN HOTELS (YOY Jan – Dec)

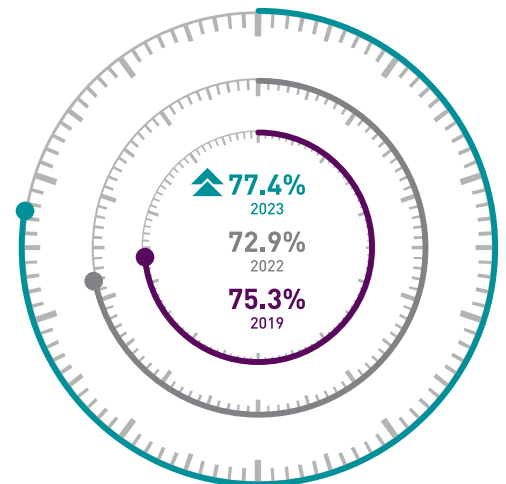
### OCCUPIED ROOM NIGHTS Million



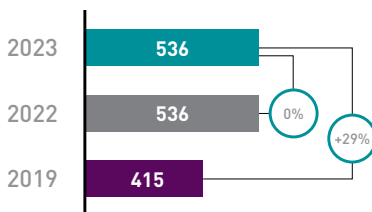
### GUESTS' LENGTH OF STAY Nights



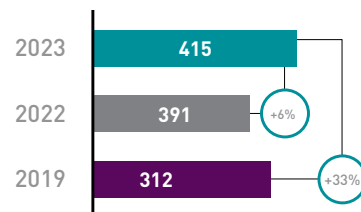
### AVERAGE OCCUPANCY



### AVERAGE DAILY RATE AED



### REV PER AVAIL. ROOM AED



Notes:  
 (1) Pre-pandemic year for comparison.  
 (2) Nights and revenue figures are reflective of reported hotel data including residents and hoppers.  
 (3) Establishment Nos and Total Available Rooms are reflective of the actual numbers end of December 2023.  
 (4) Occupancy is reflective of the YTD status and hence not directly corresponding to the monthly capacity (rooms available) depicted in the data alongside.  
 (5) The difference in % of Inventory is due to rounding.



# VISITOR TRENDS

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## TOURISTS FLOCK TO ENJOY DUBAI'S WORLD-FAMOUS ATTRACTIONS

Dubai's status as one of the world's most dynamic tourism destinations helped drive the growth of leisure tourism in 2023.

According to the 2023 Dubai International Visitor Survey (DIVS), families and couples accounted for 80 per cent of the 17.15 million international arrivals last year, the highest proportion in five years. To put this growth into perspective, the same visitor category accounted for just 74 per cent of all arrivals in 2019.

Dubai continued to consolidate its reputation as a family friendly destination in 2023, as highlighted by the average party size of group arrivals remaining consistent at 2.6.

The proportion of visitors travelling to Dubai to spend time with family and friends was also largely consistent at 14 per cent, while the relative proportion of travellers who said their sole purpose for visiting Dubai was business increased by two percentage points year on year to eight per cent, further highlighting Dubai's reputation as the region's most important commercial hub.

Dubai's status as a 'bucket-list' destination also helped increase its popularity as one of the world's top tourism locations in 2023, with 34 per cent of all survey respondents citing this as the main reason for their visit to the city, up from 24 per cent a year earlier.

International visitors also chose to stay for an impressive 13.8 days in Dubai in 2023, while almost 20 per cent of all arrivals had visited Dubai more than once in the last 12 months.

## DOWNTOWN DUBAI LURES INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Downtown Dubai, aided by its portfolio of world-famous attractions, once again proved the city's most-popular tourism destination in 2023.

Dubai Mall, which welcomed a remarkable 99 per cent of all international visitors to the city last year, claimed the title of most-popular tourism attraction for a fifth consecutive term, followed closely by the adjacent Dubai Fountain, which grew in popularity year on year (YoY), attracting 93 per cent of all visitors, up from 86 per cent in 2022.

Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower and the centrepiece of Downtown Dubai, also grew in popularity in 2023, attracting 40 per cent of all international visitors, up from 37 per cent in 2022 and 24 per cent in 2021.

Dubai Frame in nearby Zabeel Park continues to enhance its reputation as a major tourist attraction, with 36 per cent of all international visitors taking in the incredible panoramic views available from the Frame's 150-metre-high observation deck, up from

just 30 per cent in 2022 and 22 per cent in 2021.

Dubai's natural and cultural attractions also proved their value in 2023, with the city's growing collection of beach and marine facilities welcoming 77 per cent of all visitors. Meanwhile, its heritage and cultural districts drew 64 per cent of all visitors, a performance that was consistent YoY.

Perennial favourite Global Village demonstrated its enduring popularity attracting 32 per cent of all international arrivals, up from 30 per cent in 2022.

Dubai's reputation for adventure drove the growth in popularity of traditional favourite, the desert safari, with almost half (48 per cent) of all visitors to the city enjoying the sights, sounds and adrenalin-fuelled rush of an offroad desert adventure, up from 46 per cent in 2022 and just 34 per cent in 2021.

# VISITOR SATISFACTION

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## VISITORS OVERWHELMINGLY PRAISE DUBAI'S TOURISM OFFERINGS

Visitors interviewed for the 2023 Dubai International Visitor Survey (DIVS) once again expressed overwhelming positivity regarding their experience visiting Dubai, with 100 per cent of respondents stating they were either happy or extremely happy during their time in the city.

Subsequently, 100 per cent of surveyed visitors described themselves as likely promoters or active advocates of the city, helping spread the word about Dubai and its world-class attractions to friends, families and colleagues overseas.

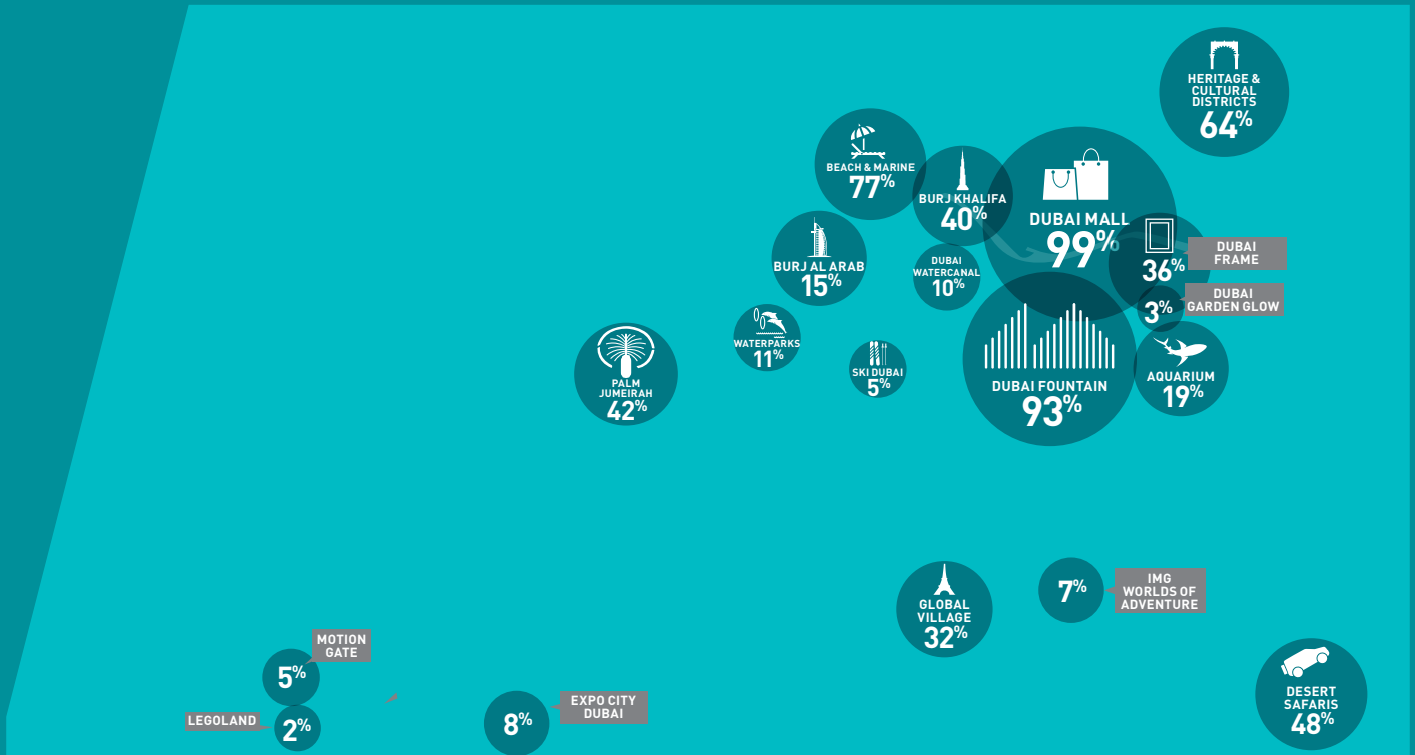
Overwhelming visitor satisfaction with Dubai's offerings was also reflected in the number of positive reviews generated online. According to the 2023 Dubai Digital Reputation report, which aggregated 2.7 million online reviews from visitors rating their levels of satisfaction with the services they received in the city's hotels and restaurants, 90 per cent of all published reviews were positive, while Dubai received a net performance score of 8.8 out of 10, up from 8.7 in 2022.

Dubai's hoteliers, across all categories, received high praise for their commitment to excellence and delivering the finest experiences to guests. A remarkable 93 per cent of all online reviews highlighting Dubai's five-star hotel experience were positive (up from 90 per cent in 2022), while the percentage for both four-star and one-to-three-star hotels was 87 percent, up from 79 per cent and 81 per cent respectively in 2022.

In a cumulative rating out of 10, reviewers praised the quality of dining options and the standard of food on offer in Dubai's hotels, scoring this category 8.8, up from 8.5 in the 2022 report. Other top performing categories included the quality of accommodation (8.4 in 2023 vs 8.0 in 2022), and overall service received (7.6 vs 7.4 in 2022).

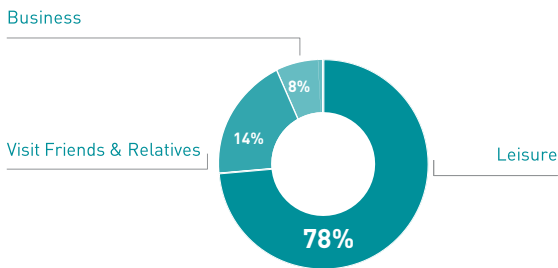
Overall, Dubai's enviable digital reputation is testament to the efforts of all tourism stakeholders to deliver the finest and most memorable 'Only in Dubai' experiences to guests visiting the city from around the world.

# % OF TRAVELLERS VISITING DUBAI'S KEY ATTRACTIONS

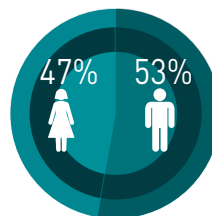


## VISITOR TRENDS

### PURPOSE OF VISIT



### GENDER



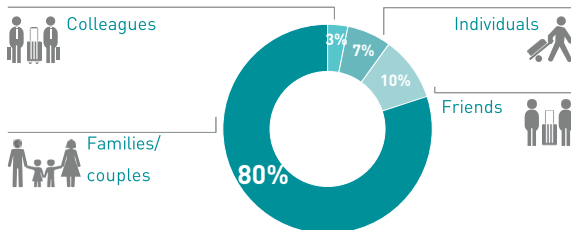
### AVERAGE PARTY SIZE



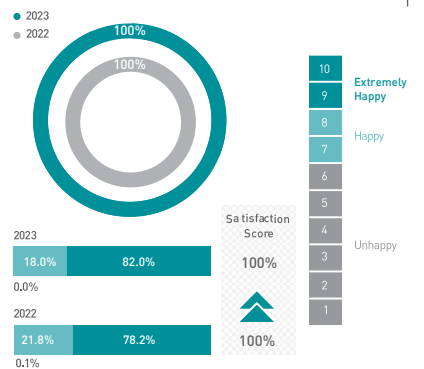
### LENGTH OF STAY



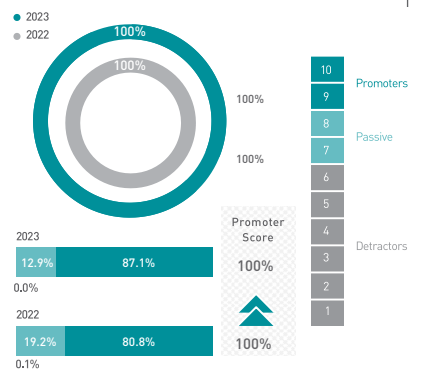
### PARTY MAKE-UP



### OVERALL SATISFACTION



### ADVOCACY



Notes:  
 (1) Length of Stay Data Source Dubai Immigration Daily Data, this is a new source and hence data not comparable with previous years



# ECOSYSTEM

## GASTRONOMY

### GLOBAL ACCLAIM FOR DUBAI'S GASTRONOMY SCENE

**Dubai continued to build on its reputation as one of the world's top dining destinations in 2023**

Home to more than 13,000 F&B outlets, from charming local eateries to prestigious MICHELIN-starred restaurants, Dubai showcases its rich cultural tapestry through its diverse gastronomic offerings. This variety not only distinguishes Dubai on the world culinary map but also reflects its dynamic multicultural makeup.

In 2023, global buzz for the city's gastronomic offerings continued to build, with UK-based Compare the Market ranking Dubai among the top 10 cities for food lovers. Two of Dubai's finest and most original restaurants, Trèsind Studio and Orfali Bros Bistro, secured spots in The World's 50 Best Restaurants list, while the MICHELIN Guide Dubai 2023 profiled 90 local eateries, honouring three restaurants with two stars; 11 restaurants with one star; and granting Bib Gourmands to a further 17 dining outlets.

Dubai's reputation continued to build across the Middle East and North Africa, with 15 of the city's restaurants named among the MENA 50 Best Restaurants for 2023. Notably, Ossiano earned the Highest New Entry Award, coming in at fourth place in the top 50 ranking.

In line with Dubai's commitment to the UAE's Net Zero 2050 push, sustainability is becoming a pillar of the city's food scene. In 2023, MICHELIN awarded its prestigious Green Star to three restaurants – Lowe, BOCA, and Teible – for their commitment to sustainable practices. BOCA additionally won the Sustainable Kitchen of the Year at the Gault&Millau UAE Awards 2023.

The enthusiasm for Dubai's dining offerings is echoed by diners themselves: 62 per cent of respondents to Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism's (DET) Gastronomy Always On (GAON) March 2023 survey expressed satisfaction with the city's dining experience. The overwhelming majority (70 per cent) also praised the variety of available cuisines, the exceptional quality of food on offer, and the high standard of service, reinforcing Dubai's status as a premier culinary hub.

Furthermore, 69 per cent of respondents rated Dubai the world's leading gastronomy hub, ahead of traditional favourites Milan, Paris, New York and London.



Dubai is now recognised among the world's top gastronomy destinations, and its dining scene continues to evolve in line with the expansion and development of the city.

# RETAIL EVENTS

## 2024 RETAIL CALENDAR INTRODUCES FRESH INNOVATIONS

**An action-packed, year-round schedule of retail and lifestyle promotions boosts Dubai's standing as one of the world's most dynamic destinations**

Building on the success of its 2023 Retail Calendar, which showcased an exciting line-up of citywide events and activities designed to establish Dubai among the world's best places to visit, live, and work in, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment's (DFRE) 2024 Retail Calendar introduced an ambitious schedule of festivals and events that further elevate Dubai as a leading global destination for retail and cultural experiences.

This year's calendar of 17 unique events – each curated to showcase the rich tapestry of Dubai's retail and lifestyle offerings – aligns with Dubai's broader strategic goal to double the size of its economy within the next decade and secure its rank among the world's top three cities as part of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33.

Kicking off proceedings once again in January was the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), the landmark event celebrated globally for its spectacular retail and entertainment offerings. Marking its 30th edition this year, the festival successfully set the tone for a year-round celebration of shopping, culture, and entertainment.

In addition to its regular promotions and 36 incredible fireworks display and 30,000+ individual drone appearances, this year's DSF introduced a host of exciting initiatives, headlined by Sole DXB – the region's 'coolest lifestyle and street-culture festival'. Staged at Dubai Design District (d3), the event featured sports tournaments, DJ sets and live performances, as well as activations, workshops, and programmes with designers, creatives, speakers and brands from across the region.

Other first-time highlights included the Gulf Historic Dubai GP Revival – dubbed 'the ultimate racing event' of the season; The Big Football Weekend – a three-day sporting extravaganza headlined by legendary English football manager Sam Allardyce; EarthSoul Fest at Dubai Media City Amphitheatre – the UAE's first eco-conscious music festival that combined music, art and sustainability; and Canteen X, a spin-off of the much-loved Etisalat Beach canteen, at Mushrif Park. The 38-day festival concluded with the inaugural 321 Festival starring Arab superstars; Hussain Al Jassmi, Tamer Hosny and Balqees which attracted more than 8,569 visitors. 321 also featured 150 dancers, 100 drummers, a 50-strong children's choir, 7 local performers, and two thrilling air displays featuring 9 planes flown by Aerosparks and Fursan Al Emarat (The Knights).

DSF also welcomed lovable inflatable characters of Dubai Lights; The Anooki, who made their first appearances in the city at Hatta Wadi Hub, d3, Al Seef and Etisalat MOTB, charming all those they met and sharing their planet-positive messaging.

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Meanwhile, the DSF Mega Raffle gave shoppers the chance to win a new car every day throughout the festival as well as a huge AED500,000 (US\$136,000) cash prize at the conclusion of DSF.

To support Dubai's SME sector, DSF provided a platform for more than 350 local and regional entrepreneurs and vendors to showcase their businesses at destinations across Dubai, including foodie pop-up The Hub, fashion showcase, The ICONS Exhibition, Souk al Freej and more.

Other annual favourites making a return in the first half of 2024 included Chinese New Year which featured an exciting line-up of events, activities, and retail promotions and Dubai Food Festival, a celebration for food lovers to enjoy an array of international cuisines and local delicacies.

The Holy Month of Ramadan and Eid also featured prominently in this year's calendar, with a host of unique experiences offered across the city that blended spiritual significance with community festivities.

A welcome addition to the 2024 calendar is the Great Online Sale. This rolling three-day promotion staged throughout the year offers consumers the convenience of snagging deals from home or on-the-go, highlighting Dubai's unique approach to pioneering digital retail trends.

Moreover, strategic sales events such as the 3 Day Super Sale and the Dubai Summer Surprises Final Sale are set to not only offer significant discounts, but will also feature mega raffles and prizes, adding an element of excitement to the shopping experience, with the highly anticipated DSS promising to take summer fun, shopping and entertainment to new heights.

Meanwhile, specialised events like the Dubai Fashion Season highlight global and local fashion trends, supporting major brands and up-and-coming designers, and driving seasonal sales. Similarly, the Dubai Home Festival caters to the expanding market for home decor and interior design, offering consumers the opportunity to purchase premium furniture and homewares at competitive prices.

The calendar also features a raft of community focused well-being initiatives, headlined by the Dubai Fitness Challenge, the hugely popular annual event that promotes health and fitness by encouraging residents and visitors to engage in daily physical activity. This initiative is part of a broader effort to position Dubai as one of the most active cities in the world.

Cultural diversity is celebrated with events like the Festival of Lights, which brings the Indian community's Diwali festivities to the fore with music, dance, and fireworks, highlighting Dubai's reputation as one of the world's great multicultural cities.

Ultimately, DFRE's 2024 Retail Calendar successfully enhances Dubai's appeal as one of the world's most dynamic destinations. Through this initiative, Dubai continues to innovate its retail and entertainment offerings, thereby supporting its long-term economic goals and reinforcing its position as one of the world's most liveable cities.



# CRUISE

## CRUISING TO SUCCESS

**Dubai's cruise sector continues to move from strength to strength, as highlighted by the success of its 2023-24 season**

After a breakout 2022-23 season, Dubai's cruise sector geared up for even greater success this year, with visits by more than 150 passenger ships scheduled during the 2023-24 cruise calendar.

Last year's season marked one of the best on record, with the city's two major passenger terminals – Dubai Harbour Cruise Terminal and Hamdan bin Mohammed Cruise Terminal at Mina Rashid – both celebrating record-breaking milestones.

Dubai Harbour Cruise Terminal, which was named the World's Best New Cruise Development when it opened in 2021, welcomed 300,000 passengers during the 2022-23 season – roughly four times the number of its inaugural year, alongside a 40 per cent increase in ship calls.

Meanwhile, Mina Rashid - which was recognised as the Middle East's Leading Cruise Port at the World Travel Awards for 2023 – expected to welcome 28 per cent more visitors in 2023-24 compared with the previous season.

Dubai's cruise infrastructure ranks among the industry's most advanced. Mina Rashid, which is also home to the impressive Port Rashid Marina, can accommodate up to seven cruise ships simultaneously and offers a wealth of amenities, including dining, shopping, and entertainment options.

Dubai's 2023-24 season commenced with the arrival of the 2,894-passenger liner Mein Schiff 2 at Mina Rashid last October. It signified the start of a bustling season that saw home port calls by vessels operated by MSC, TUI and Aida Cruises among others, helping

consolidate Dubai's reputation as the region's leading cruise hub.

Dubai also hosted a significant number of away port calls during the season by renowned operators including Cunard, P&O Cruises, Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line and Silversea Cruises.

Dubai's strategic importance as a cruise hub is amplified by its role in the Cruise Arabia alliance, a collaborative effort involving key regional ports that is designed to enhance the Middle East's appeal as a global cruise destination. The alliance facilitates a more interconnected and seamless cruise experience for visitors to the region, showcasing Dubai's pioneering approach to integrated regional tourism development in the cruise sector.

Sustainability is also at the forefront of Dubai's cruise agenda, with the city welcoming cutting-edge, environmentally friendly vessels such as MSC World Europa and Costa Toscana during the 2023-24 season, both of which are powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG). This focus on eco-friendly operations reflects Dubai's commitment to sustainable travel and its ambitions to integrate environmental stewardship into its tourism and economic development plans.

The expansion of Dubai's cruise industry to date is testament to the collaborative efforts of public and private tourism and maritime sector stakeholders. Their work has successfully attracted a growing number of cruise operators to Dubai, drawn by its diverse attractions, world-class infrastructure, exceptional connectivity by air and sea, and strategic geographical position situated within eight hours flying time of two-thirds of the world's population.

The success of the 2023-24 season not only enhances Dubai's reputation as a top-tier cruise destination but highlights the importance of the sector to helping realise the ambitious goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to further consolidate Dubai's position as one of the world's top three cities for business and leisure.





# AVIATION

## FLYING HIGH: DXB CELEBRATES AVIATION MILESTONE

**Dubai named busiest international air hub for 10th consecutive year and second busiest overall**

Dubai International Airport (DXB) achieved another historic milestone in 2023, with the region's largest aviation hub being named the world's busiest airport for international travel for the 10th consecutive year, and for the first time, the second-busiest airport overall.

This remarkable achievement underscores Dubai's continued leadership of the global aviation sector and highlights its strategic importance as a major travel hub connecting East and West.

In 2023, DXB handled 86.9 million passengers, marking a 31.7 per cent increase from the previous year and exceeding the pre-pandemic figure of 86.4 million passengers set in 2019, according to official data published by operator Dubai Airports.

India was DXB's top destination country in terms of traffic with 11.9 million passengers, followed by Saudi Arabia with 6.7 million, the UK with 5.9 million and Pakistan with 4.2 million.

According to Airports Council International (ACI), the surge in passenger volume not only outpaced the growth rates of DXB's closest peers, including Dallas/Fort Worth and London Heathrow, but also positioned

the airport just behind Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson, which retained its title as the busiest airport globally.

DXB's impressive increase in passenger traffic is indicative of the broader recovery in international air travel, which, driven by factors such as China's reopening and persistent travel demand despite economic uncertainties, saw more than 8.5 billion people flying in 2023. This recovery reached 93.8 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, auguring well for sustained growth in 2024.

Dubai Airports estimates DXB will receive 88.8 million passengers in 2024, putting it within touching distance of the record high of 89.1 million set in 2018.

DXB's continued growth is testament to the strategic vision of operator Dubai Airports. From inaugurating new terminals and expanding its airline partnerships to broadening its global connectivity, the operator has honed DXB's strategy over the past decade to enhance the passenger experience. Its focus on operational excellence has established new benchmarks within the aviation industry, reinforcing its status as a leader in global aviation.

The city is set to unlock a new era of aviation growth through the AED128 billion (US\$34.9 billion) investment into the phase two expansion of Dubai World Central - Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC), which will increase the hub's capacity to up to 260 million passengers a year.

Within the next decade, all operations will shift from DXB to DWC, and the collective efforts of the emirate's aviation, travel and tourism industries will continue to play a pivotal role in enhancing Dubai's status as one of the world's most important aviation





# FUTURE OUTLOOK

## DUBAI'S TOURISM GROWTH TO ACCELERATE IN 2024

**New global research from Oxford Economics predicts Dubai will welcome more than 20 million international visitors in 2024**

Dubai's tourism sector is expected to build on its record-breaking 2023 performance this year, with the city forecast to welcome more than 20 million international arrivals, establishing it as the world's second-most popular destination for the first time.

The prediction is a key highlight of Oxford Economics' latest Middle East & Africa Inbound Tourism Outlook report. Published in December 2023, the report identifies key regional tourism trends, benchmarking its performance against global markets and offering insights into potential 2024 outcomes.

The report, which ranks the top 25 cities worldwide by international visitor arrivals, shows Dubai clearly ahead of former second-placed city, Hong Kong, for 2024, as well as London, Tokyo and Macao, which round out the projected top five destinations.

Dubai is just one of two cities in the Middle East to feature in the list of top 25 destinations.

The forecast increase in arrivals is also matched by a commensurate rise in expenditure, with Oxford Economics predicting visitors to Dubai will spend a combined US\$21 billion in 2024, up from US\$14 billion in 2019, further boosting tourism's contribution to the city's economy.

Dubai's enduring global appeal as a dynamic, multi-faceted tourism hub is also evident in the report, with the city clearly highlighted as the leading regional destination for outbound travellers from markets as diverse as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to the USA and China.

Ultimately, the report not only serves to highlight Dubai's dominant position as a leading global destination, but also notes tourism's importance to Dubai's long-term economic growth strategy as outlined in the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to establish Dubai as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure.



# CHINA RECOVERY

## YEAR OF THE DRAGON: HOW DUBAI WILL BENEFIT FROM CHINA'S TOURISM RECOVERY

As the world moves on from the post-pandemic era, one of the most eagerly watched industry trends is the resurgence of Chinese outbound tourism.

After years of restrictions and cautious reopening, 2024 is set to mark a significant milestone in the country's recovery, with Dubai set to benefit greatly as millions of Chinese return to travelling overseas.

According to Oxford Economics, the number of international trips taken by Chinese travellers is expected to roughly double from 2023, despite the total number still being 22 per cent below the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. A full recovery is not expected until 2025, indicating a more gradual rebound compared to other major global source markets.

Despite this, the Middle East – and Dubai, in particular – is witnessing a quicker recovery in terms of Chinese visitor arrivals compared to other global regions.

In 2024, Oxford Economics predicts that travel to the region, led by the UAE, will exceed pre-pandemic volumes, driven largely by an influx of visitors to Dubai. This resurgence is supported by restored flight capacities and the relative ease of travel, with Chinese visitors to the UAE able to apply for a visa on arrival for stays of up to 30 days.

Chinese tourists have traditionally been among the top spenders globally, and despite the decline in outbound tourism since the pandemic, their per capita expenditure remains relatively strong. Oxford Economics forecasts that Chinese outbound spending will recover at a faster rate than expected, with luxury travel destinations such as Dubai expected to benefit greatly from this trend.

Looking beyond 2024, Oxford Economics predicts China will regain its pre-pandemic share of the global outbound travel market by 2026 and will increasingly contribute to the global tourism economy, boosting visitor expenditure.

Dubai, with its strategic location just eight-to-nine-hours' flying time from China's major cities, alongside its world-renowned tourism attractions and ultra-modern infrastructure, is ideally placed to benefit from this growth.

## PARTNERSHIPS

### DUBAI SHOOTS AND SCORES ON THE WORLD STAGE

Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism's new multi-year strategic partnership with world-renowned football club Real Madrid Club de Fútbol marks a significant step in Dubai's efforts to capture new visitor



source markets and demographics worldwide.

The collaboration, which has seen Dubai become the club's first Official Destination Partner, also aligns with the emirate's broader D33 economic agenda, which aims to bolster the city's appeal as one of the world's premier tourism destinations.

The alliance is set to enhance Dubai's visibility on the global stage, leveraging Real Madrid's extensive worldwide fanbase. It involves various activations and unique experiences designed to engage Real Madrid supporters and encourage them to visit Dubai to discover everything the city has to offer.

The partnership extends to both the men's and women's Real Madrid football teams and will showcase Dubai promotions situated inside the club's world-famous Santiago Bernabéu Stadium. It promises to deliver exceptional experiences and high-quality services to fans attending the games, further promoting Dubai as a leading tourism destination.

A key point of interest is the newly opened Real Madrid World theme park, located at Dubai Parks and Resorts™, the largest destination of its kind in the Middle East. The theme park will feature a myriad of attractions including a Real Madrid Museum, amusement rides, football skill games, as well as dining and shopping venues that will sell official merchandise.

Dubai's commitment to forming strong public and private sector relationships, as highlighted by Emirates Airline's long-standing and successful sponsorship of Real Madrid, has played a critical role in its success to date. These partnerships are instrumental in enhancing Dubai's global reputation and attracting more visitors and fresh investment to the city.

Ultimately, the alliance with Real Madrid represents a strategic engagement that utilises the universal appeal of football to market Dubai globally. By partnering with one of the world's most celebrated football clubs, Dubai enhances its reputation among sporting fans and makes itself an even more attractive destination for tourists and residents alike.





## CLOSING STATEMENT

The record-breaking achievements of Dubai's tourism sector in 2023 highlight the emirate's unwavering commitment to delivering unique visitor experiences.

By welcoming 17.15 million international visitors – surpassing pre-pandemic benchmarks – and repeatedly earning international accolades for the strength of its tourism offering, Dubai has firmly established itself as a world-leading destination.

The city's accomplishments in 2023 underscore its unique ability to cater to diverse visitor interests by providing an unrivalled combination of exceptional amenities and dynamic cultural experiences, while also forging a reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities.

Looking ahead, Dubai's tourism sector remains integral to the success of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to solidify the city's status as a leading global hub for business and leisure.

By building on the highly effective collaboration between government and industry stakeholders to date, the emirate is well-positioned to accelerate its progress and establish new global benchmarks for tourism excellence.

Ultimately, Dubai's relentless efforts to break new ground will further consolidate its position as one of the top three global cities for business and leisure, and the best city to visit, live and work in.