

Saudi Arabia to highlight record tourism at ATM 2025

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Saudi Arabia's travel and tourism sector continues on an upward trajectory, with the Kingdom welcoming 30 million international visitors in 2024, representing a 9.5 percent increase from the previous year. This impressive growth will be under the spotlight at the upcoming Arabian Travel Market (ATM), where Saudi Arabia will present its latest tourism milestones, showcase new projects and highlight its vision to become a premier destination.

ATM 2025 will feature several prominent exhibitors from the Kingdom. In addition to the Saudi Tourism Authority, returning exhibitors include SAUDIA, flynas, Qiddiya Investment Company, Sixth Gulf Travel Company, Taiba Investment, Makkah Clock Royal Tower, A Fairmont Hotel, Cruise Saudi, and L'azure Hospitality. First-time exhibitors this year include flyadeal, Riyadh Air, Diriyah Company, Aseer, BAAN Holding Group, Makkah Hotel & Towers, Alhussam Tourism, and StayKSA.

These exhibitors, along with many others, will be highlighted in a dedicated Saudi Land hall, an expanded version of last year's ATM Saudi Village, which will be representative of the Saudi Arabian culture, heritage and tourism, while reflecting the upward trajectory of the Kingdom's travel industry, which has seen Saudi Arabian exhibitor presence increase by 16pc this year.

Recent research conducted by VIDECA, on behalf of ATM, has highlighted Saudi Arabia's remarkable status as the largest and fastest-growing economy within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. In 2023, Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached an impressive USD 1.1 trillion, translating to a per capita GDP of USD 32,500. This positions the nation as one of the most significant and influential markets in the region.

The report further reveals that the contribution of the non-oil sector to the country's GDP has increased substantially, reaching 63pc in 2021. This represents a significant leap from 39pc in 2000, indicating a strategic diversification of the economy away from reliance on oil revenues.

Saudi Arabia also experienced a surge in inbound leisure tourists in 2023, growing from 1.12 million in 2019 to 6.2 million. Meanwhile, domestic travel grew from 48 million to 78 million in the same period.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: "Saudi Tourism Authority's unwavering commitment to the event highlights the Kingdom's rapid progress in establishing itself as a world-class tourism hub and reflects the broader momentum of investment, innovation and ambition that is driving the region's travel sector forward.

This year, ATM 2025 will have one of the strongest Saudi presences to date, with leading airlines, hospitality brands and cruise representation taking centre stage."

VIDECA estimates that Saudi Arabia's Total Air Market (TAM) will grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.2pc, reaching USD11.3 billion by 2028. With SAUDIA focusing on international expansion and new airline Riyadh Air aiming to connect the Kingdom with over 100 cities by 2030, the report predicts that this will have a significant impact on the international air travel market, which is

expected to grow at a CAGR of 14.1pc until 2028.

The report also outlines how Saudi Arabia's hotel market accounted for 60% of the GCC's hotel market in 2024, emphasising its dominant position in the region. Hotel bookings are predominantly driven by the domestic market, which accounts for approximately 70pc of the Gross Booking Value (GBV). With 40,000 hotels under development, adding approximately 320,000 rooms, the Kingdom's hotel market is set to accelerate further.

Saudi Arabia's growing importance in the global travel industry will be explored during the ATM Conference Programme, which will unfold across three stages - the Global Stage, the Future Stage and the New Business Events Stage and will feature 68 sessions, led by 185 high-profile speakers.

On 28 April, Turky Kari, Executive Director of Marketing, AROYA Cruises, will join a distinguished panel on the Global Stage to explore the Considerations and Implications of Involving Communities in Destination Revitalization.

Meanwhile, Abulkarim Aldarwish, MEA President, Saudi Tourism Authority, will join tourism leaders and travel experts to discuss Big Ticket Events: Global Impact and Learnings on the Business Events Stage.

ATM 2025 is poised to welcome 55,000 attendees and will serve as a platform to showcase over 2,800 exhibitors from more than 161 global destinations. The event will centre on the transformative power of connectivity as part of the theme "Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow's Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity."

Held in conjunction with Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2025's strategic partners include Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Destination Partner; Emirates, Official Airline Partner; IHG Hotels & Resorts, Official DMC Partner.

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