

Saudi welcomes 100m+ travellers in 2023, seven years earlier than expected

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Dhaka: Saudi Arabia welcomed over 100 million tourists in 2023, seven years earlier than expected, said World Travel and Tourism Council.

According to WTTC, the importance of this achievement cannot be overestimated, with the arrival of over 27 million international tourists and 79 million domestic tourists.

UN Tourism also applauded the Kingdom for its achievement, calling it a significant milestone in its journey to become a global tourism powerhouse, as per reports.

The accomplishment achieved seven years ahead of its original schedule, not only shows Saudi Arabia's emergence as a global tourism powerhouse but also signifies its leading role in the economic diversification and sustainable development of the tourism sector

worldwide, added reports.

This early achievement was driven by Saudi Arabia's proactive approach, which was set in motion in 2019 to nurture a dynamic tourism ecosystem, also informed reports.

WTTC explained, a 390 per cent increase in applications for tourism activity licenses in 2023 reflects the strong growth of the sector and the success of the country's strategic initiatives.

Additionally, the growing contribution of the Travel and Tourism sector to Saudi Arabia's non-oil gross value added (GVA) is estimated to exceed seven per cent and exceed USD 37 billion in domestic tourism spending.

It may be mentioned here that the Kingdom is making changes to improve its tourism infrastructure and become a top destination for tourists worldwide.

WTTC further said that one significant change is how it charges fees for tourism licenses. Now, these fees are customised to fit the needs of investors, making rules more supportive and flexible.

Also, Saudi Arabia is helping the travel and tourism industry by reducing government fees by almost 22 per cent. They plan to cut costs even more, up to 70 per cent.

WTTC also mentioned, the Kingdom's strategic focus on tourism has played a significant role in job creation, with the sector estimated to have employed over two million people in 2023.

This achievement aligns with Saudi Arabia's goal to make tourism a leading employment sector by 2030, illustrating the government's focus on fostering economic inclusivity and competitiveness.

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