

UAE, Saudi among 2023's top destinations worldwide for tourism growth

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Dhaka: The United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked among the top 10 tourism destinations in the world with the strongest inbound tourism growth in 2023 compared to 2019, said the travel analysis company ForwardKeys in a report.

The analysis reflected the continued recovery of the global tourism sector following the Covid-19 pandemic. Particularly, the Middle East and Africa region shone the most among the top 10 global performers.

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The new tourism hotspot Saudi Arabia came 5th in the global ranking of international arrivals in 2023. The number of inbound visitors returned to pre-Covid levels due to the rising number of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims as well as the marketing efforts to promote the country as a tourism

destination in an effort to diversify its economy, as per the report.

The Kingdom followed the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico and Greece in the top five, dominated by “sun and beach” destinations.

Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates ranked 8th on the list, with tourist arrivals in 2023 just 7 per cent below of pre-Covid levels, thanks to an influx of tourists from the US and Russia as well as strong air connectivity that brought more Chinese travellers into the country.

Egypt ranked the world's 10th top-tier tourism destination globally, with international arrivals in 2023 estimated to be 10 per cent shy of pre-pandemic levels, partly because of the return of Russian travellers to the country and also because it returned to tourists' bucket-list as a historical destination.

At a press briefing on November 3 at World Travel and Tourism Council's global summit in Rwanda, Olivier Ponti, Vice President—Insights, ForwardKeys, said, globally, inbound tourism in 2023 is 27 per cent behind 2019 levels, however, the recovery is set to accelerate in the fourth quarter to 13 per cent below pre-Covid levels.

However, Ponti also mentioned, the Israel-Gaza war, running for nearly a month, and the continuing Ukraine war, are impacting travel to those countries as well as nearby destinations.

“On destinations that were going strong, like Egypt and Jordan, there is a negative impact of this war,” he said, pointing to a rise in booking cancellations.

“If the situation is prolonged, then the perception of tourists will change and it will be seen as a region that is not safe and that damage is much worse.”

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