UN Tourism Applauds Saudi Arabia’s Historic Milestone of 100 Million Tourist Arrivals

In a testament to its strategic vision and robust sector growth, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has welcomed over 100 million tourists, marking a significant milestone in its journey to become a global tourism powerhouse.

In an exceptional achievement, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has welcomed over 100 million tourists, a milestone celebrated by the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism). This remarkable accomplishment achieved seven years ahead of its original schedule, not only underscores Saudi Arabia’s emergence as a global tourism powerhouse but also highlights its leading role in the economic diversification and sustainable development of the tourism sector worldwide. This milestone, marked by the arrival of over 27 million international tourists and over 79 million domestic tourists with a combined total spend of over USD 67 billion, not only showcases the Kingdom’s robust tourism sector but also underscores the Saudi Ministry of Tourism’s commitment to advanced data gathering and statistical analysis, a priority echoed by UN Tourism.

The Kingdom’s success story is built on a foundation of strategic initiatives and reforms that have propelled its tourism sector to new heights. With a staggering 390% increase in demand for tourism activity licenses in 2023 and the contribution of tourism to the non-oil GVA estimated to exceed 7%, Saudi Arabia’s vision for the future is clear. With the tourism sector’s direct contribution to the GDP estimated to exceed 4%, the country has showcased its resilience, innovation, and commitment to excellence.

Strategic Partnerships and Global Leadership

UN Tourism has closely collaborated with Saudi Arabia, recognizing its efforts in developing a robust tourism infrastructure and statistical analysis capabilities. The inauguration of UN Tourism’s Regional Office for the Middle East in Riyadh in 2021 marked a significant step towards fostering tourism innovation, education, and rural development. This partnership has been instrumental in positioning Saudi Arabia as a leader in sustainable tourism practices and statistical excellence.

Elevating its global position in the tourism sector, Saudi Arabia has distinguished itself by leading the G20 in international tourist growth rate in 2023 compared to 2019. This recognition
underlines the Kingdom’s pivotal role in the global tourism sector’s recovery following the pandemic. Moreover, the Middle East has emerged as the sole region not only to rebound but also to outpace pre-pandemic tourism levels, with a 122 percent recovery in international tourist arrivals in 2023 compared to 2019. At the forefront of this remarkable growth, Saudi Arabia witnessed a staggering 156 percent recovery in international tourist arrivals compared to 2019, underscoring its central role in the region’s tourism boom.

A Testament to Resilience and Innovation

The Kingdom’s tourism sector has shown remarkable resilience, with inbound spending reaching over USD 37 billion in 2023 and a significant increase in hotel keys across the kingdom. These achievements are a testament to Saudi Arabia’s commitment to creating a prosperous and sustainable tourism sector.

Empowering the Workforce

The employment opportunities created by the tourism sector are a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia’s success. As of 2023, with 925.5 thousand jobs in the tourism sector and significant investments in training, the Kingdom is on track to make tourism the second-largest employer by 2030. This focus on workforce development ensures that the benefits of tourism growth are shared widely and sustainably.

Gratitude and Future Vision

UN Tourism extends its congratulations to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for this historic achievement. We commend the leadership, the Ministry of Tourism, and all partners for their unwavering support and dedication. As Saudi Arabia continues to drive towards its goal of 150 million tourists by 2030, UN Tourism looks forward to supporting its journey, celebrating its successes, and promoting a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future for global tourism. Saudi Arabia’s achievement of welcoming over 100 million tourists in 2023 is a beacon of what is possible through collaboration, innovation, and a clear vision for the future. The Kingdom not only promises a diverse and rich tourism experience but delivers on that promise, paving the way for a brighter future for the global tourism industry.

Related links:

International Tourism to Reach Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2024