

# DUBAI TOURISM ANNUAL VISITOR REPORT 2020



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*"Our strategic development plans are focused on creating the best possible environment and infrastructure to... support the fulfilment of the greatest human aspirations for both our citizens and people from around the world"*

- His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai



# FOREWORD

In a year marred by pandemic-driven volatility, 2020 forced the world into an unpredictable 'pause' – oscillating between peaks of uncertainty, and troughs of human loss. Yet, despite being subject to what remains undeniably amongst the worst of our times, Dubai was anything but a silent spectator. As a city committed to global citizenship, 2020 presented an opportunity for the Emirate to epitomise this philosophy – starting with its own exemplary management of the health and wellbeing of its society, to actively aiding Covid-19 containment and relief measures for the international community. Throughout this period, Dubai's resilience received global acclaim as it delicately balanced the sustenance of lives and livelihoods. Refining its approach real-time demonstrating uncompromised efficacy in safeguarding both visitors and residents, it became the first city to reopen and welcome the world.

While all sectors of the global economy suffered the inevitable consequences of the pandemic, tourism witnessed the most sudden decimation, with many cities continuing to experience prolonged lockdowns to date. Despite international travel being dramatically hamstrung in 2020, Dubai's share of the global market rose by 0.3 percent YOY – the only city to register a positive spike, when international tourism declined by 74%. This achievement was testament to Dubai's undeniable consideration as one of the world's safest and top priority destinations for international, leisure and business tourism.

The strategic measures that collectively yielded Dubai's performance were consequence of its successful approach to strict pandemic curtailment – (a) immediate healthcare for the affected; (b) aggressive prevention for the vulnerable; and (c) mass vaccination programmes for the exposed. The immediacy and the agility with which the city's entire governmental, public and private sector ecosystems came together to respond, not just momentarily but consistently throughout the year, ensured health and safety remained a priority at every human touchpoint within the Emirate's borders. This foundation allowed Dubai to not only open rapidly, but also remain open thereafter in the face of resurgent waves of the pandemic that have plagued the world, forcing many other destinations to remain closed to visitors.

Post ensuring its ability to protect people within its environment, came the role of inspiring the world to regain optimism about life and travel – both of which, were enabled by Dubai Tourism's highly effective, innovative communications strategy, which focused on encouraging the global community to envision a brighter tomorrow. 'Till We Meet Again', 'Ready When You Are' and 'Live Your Story' went beyond the zeitgeist of 2020, to keep Dubai foremost in the minds of millions, enabling them to be buoyed by the reality of an imminent return to normalcy. These campaigns were timed with precision so that Dubai was able to hit the ground running when international travel to the city officially resumed on 7 July, fuelling accelerated recovery of its tourism and hospitality sectors through the remainder of the year.

Credibly supporting the communication pillar, the stellar DUBAI ASSURED Covid-19 safety compliance programme lended much needed confidence in the city's ability to protect the health of all visitors, as it reopened its borders. The landmark initiative received overwhelming support from all industry stakeholders, with inspection reports revealing nearly 99 per cent compliance with prescribed protocols within the first two months of deployment.

In addition to its status as one of the safest destinations on the planet, 2020 saw Dubai deliver a host of world-firsts that will undeniably be the benchmark for future global events and travel. Setting the template for 'pandemic-proofed' events, Dubai hosted AI Everything in July, the first live in-person business conference to announce the restart of the global MICE sector amid the pandemic. The decisive nod it received from the world business community was symbolic of the confidence Dubai managed to instil, garnering their commitment to engage with the city's events calendar. This affirmation allowed for a pursuant series of major trade events during the second half of 2020, wrapping the year on a high with the phenomenally successful GITEX Technology Week, that led on to Gulfood in 2021 – making Dubai the only city in the world to host two mega expositions during this period.

Looking ahead, the consistency in delivery and the superlative success with which the Emirate has managed both its tourism and events industries, underlined global endorsement of the city's readiness to officially inaugurate Expo 2020 Dubai on 1 October 2021. The upcoming event – the largest of its kind ever to be staged in the Arab world – will further showcase Dubai's indomitable spirit to achieve the impossible, transforming itself into the world's #1 innovation hub, creating an indelible legacy for all humanity. These aspirational goals are also encapsulated in the 2040 Urban Master Plan, which was recently launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The future-defining sustainable development strategies outlined therein, call for a measured expansion of Dubai's tourism and hospitality verticals, complementing holistic efforts to make the city the world's most-visited destination in the near future.

As we stand today and take stock of the year gone by, we acknowledge each and every partner within Dubai's tourism, events and hospitality ecosystem for their vital support through one of the most challenging periods on record. It is this spirit of symbiotic partnership that remains at the heart of our journey to making Dubai the world's #1 tourism destination, as we look beyond this present moment in time.



# DUBAI MOVING FORWARD

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

**Dubai's 2040 Urban Master Plan will dramatically transform the city over the next 20 years while helping to consolidate its reputation as one of the world's top tourism destinations**

In a city renowned for its relentless drive and commitment to breaking new ground, the 2040 Urban Master Plan, which was recently announced by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, represents one of the largest urban development strategies ever launched by a major global city.

The all-encompassing nature of the strategy touches every aspect of business and society in this thriving, multicultural metropolis, whose population is forecast to grow from 3.3 million today to 5.8 million by 2040. At its core, the plan maps out Dubai's sustainable development for the next two decades, with an emphasis on enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors to the city, while reinforcing its reputation as a global destination for investment, commerce, business and tourism.

Under the plan, Dubai will be further transformed into a green oasis, with parkland and recreational spaces accounting for 60 per cent of the city's total area by 2040, more than double the allocated space today. Green corridors will be established linking the main urban areas, providing sustainable transit routes for the city's residents with the addition of bike lanes and mass transit services.

The strategy will also help consolidate Dubai's reputation as a leading business and tourism destination with an increase in total space dedicated to hotels and tourism activities by 134 per cent compared with today, while the area used for commercial activities will increase to 168 square kilometres. In a move that will further enhance Dubai's status as one of the world's top beach holiday destinations, the Master Plan calls for the total length of public beaches to increase by as much as 400 per cent in 2040.

The Master Plan also incorporates the Hatta Development Plan, which aims to raise the enclave's profile as a top nature- and adventure-tourism destination, while promoting sustainable development.



# EXPO 2020 DUBAI

## WELCOMING THE WORLD TO DUBAI

### Expo 2020 Dubai will showcase the emirate's entrepreneurial spirit and its growing reputation as one of the world's greatest cities

Expo 2020 Dubai – the first World Expo and the largest event ever to be staged in the Middle East and North Africa with over 200 exhibiting participants – will showcase and celebrate Dubai's pioneering spirit, resilience and determination to the world, providing a fitting and timely counterpoint to the global challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the course of 182 days, the world's spotlight will shine on this remarkable city, highlighting its incredible growth and development, while providing a preview of what it will become in the coming decades as a global hub for talent incubation, innovation and sustainable development.

Expo 2020 Dubai's overarching theme and purpose, 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future', acknowledges that creating sustainable solutions to global challenges demands collaboration between cultures, nations and regions. It will celebrate Dubai's vibrancy and unique vision for the future, and showcase humanity's achievements despite the unprecedented challenges the world has faced this past year.

As it seeks solution to some of the world's most pressing challenges, Expo 2020 Dubai's primary goals are two-fold: create a competitive knowledge economy and promote a sustainable approach to the environment and infrastructure. Expo 2020 Dubai's sub-themes (Opportunity, Mobility, Sustainability) ideally reflect these objectives.

Sustainability is integral to Expo 2020's overarching goals to create a cleaner, safer healthier world and is reflected in all facets of construction, activities and programming.

In early 2021, Expo 2020 organisers successfully staged a preview event from 22 January to 10 April, giving UAE residents an opportunity to preview one of Expo 2020's signature visitor experiences. The preview also enabled organisers to trial Expo 2020 Dubai's Covid-19 health and safety best practices – from social distancing and capacity controls to on-site rapid testing for staff and vendors.

## EXPO 2020 TO DELIVER LONG-TERM ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Expo 2020 Dubai aims to leave lasting positive impact, building partnerships that will reinvigorate the economy of the UAE, the

region, and the world helping transform the emirate into a global hub for entrepreneurship, innovation and research and development.

Expo 2020 Dubai will consolidate Dubai's reputation as one of the world's most popular destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI). Despite the challenges presented by Covid-19 last year, Dubai attracted AED24.7 billion (US\$6.73 billion) in FDI across 455 projects in 2020, according to data from the Dubai FDI Monitor.

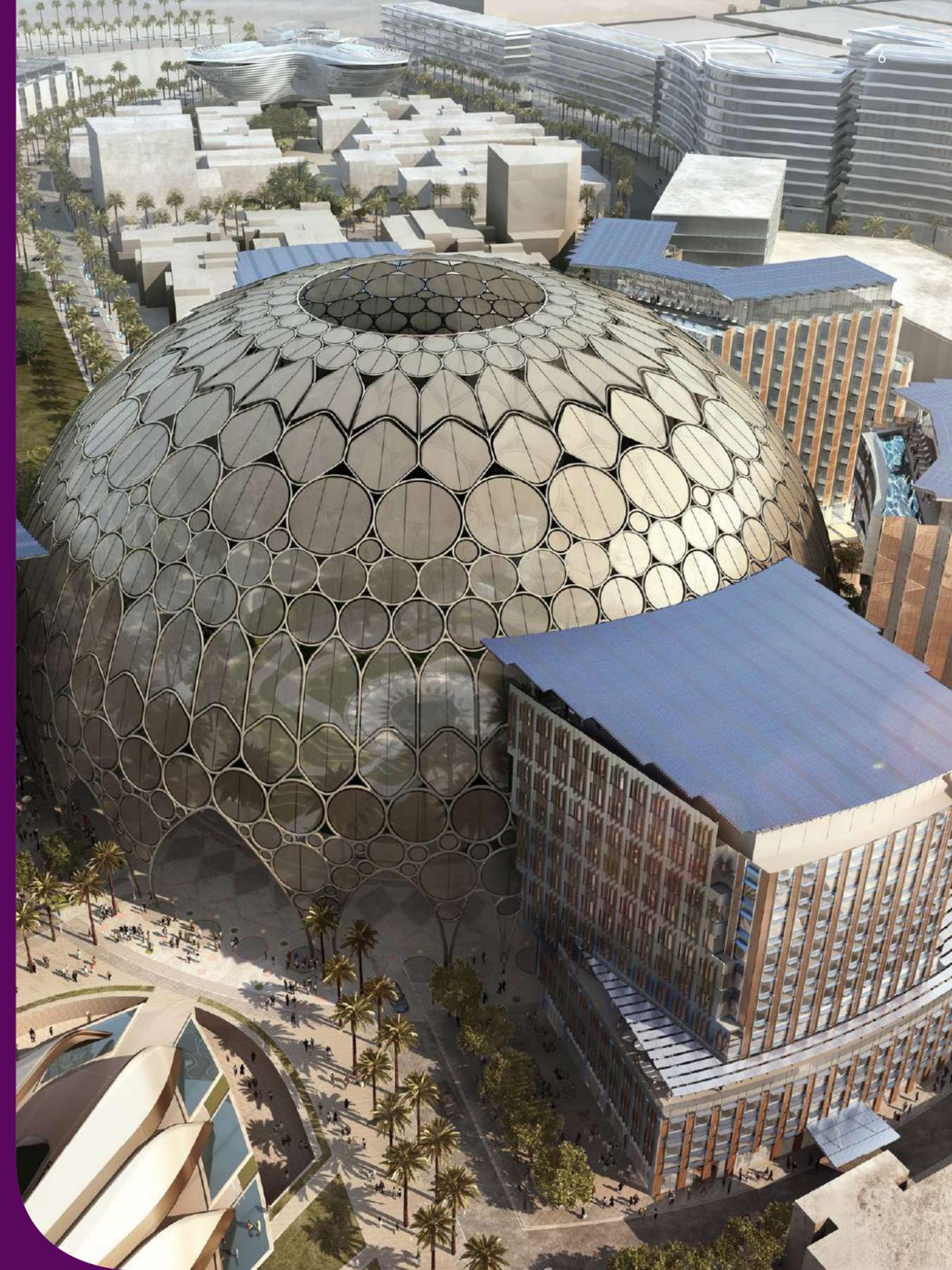
## CREATING A POSITIVE LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

While Expo 2020 organisers' primary goal is to deliver an exceptional six-month event, just as important is the creation of a meaningful legacy that champions sustainability for the long-term benefit of all mankind.

When Expo 2020 Dubai concludes in March 2022, its Dubai South site will transform into District 2020, a futuristic smart city that showcases sustainable urban development for the 21st century and beyond. District 2020 will become a blueprint for future cities and a showcase for smart living, with integrated Internet of Things (IoT) applications that will make life simpler and easier for residents and workers.

District 2020 forms a key pillar of Dubai's plan to become a global innovation hub, with advanced research and development labs focusing on the development of disruptive technologies, ranging from IoT to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Its global significance is reflected in the calibre of foundation partners who will establish a major presence in the precinct when Expo 2020 Dubai concludes. Global firms including Siemens, Dubai's own DP World and various Fortune 500 companies will be joined by start-ups, accelerators and universities, creating a cutting-edge ecosystem that will drive research and development for decades to come.

District 2020 will be a showcase microcosm of Dubai's potential to impact and shape the world for the better, creating a sustainable legacy for the planet and its people.



# COVID-19 RESPONSE

## DUBAI: A WORLD-LEADING APPROACH TO TACKLING COVID-19

**Dubai authorities acted swiftly to contain the threat of Covid-19 to residents and visitors while providing vital economic support to all tourism industry stakeholders**

Dubai has been at the forefront of the fight to combat Covid-19, as evidenced by the unprecedented social and economic measures implemented in the emirate to contain the spread of the virus. Recognising the significant threat posed by the pandemic, authorities took swift and decisive action in early March 2020 to provide support to all sectors of the economy, including tourism and hospitality.

Under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai launched an AED1.5 billion (US\$410 million) economic stimulus package on 12 March to support companies and the business sector in Dubai. The package, which was one of the first of its kind worldwide, was designed to boost financial liquidity in the emirate's economy and reduce the impact of the global economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

It also successfully reduced operational costs while simplifying business procedures for tourism industry stakeholders. Highlights of the package included a reduction in municipality fees imposed on sales at hotels from 7 per cent to 3.5 per cent; an exemption on fees charged for the postponement and cancellation of tourism and sports events scheduled for 2020; a freeze on fees levied for hotel category ratings; and a suspension of those charged for the sale of tickets, issuance of permits and other government fees relating to entertainment and business events staged in the emirate.

These public sector initiatives were also matched by efforts in the private sector to support the economy during this challenging period. Leading retail and hospitality groups in the city, which have played a pivotal role in contributing towards the diversity of Dubai's destination offerings, launched various relief measures.

Over the course of 2020, government authorities issued five economic stimulus packages, with a combined value exceeding AED7 billion (USD1.9 billion). It also extended various initiatives in support of the city's tourism and hospitality operators, including an initiative to refund hotel establishments and restaurants 50 per cent of the 7 per cent municipality fees charged on sales. In addition, the 'Tourism Dirham Fee' was halved.

Following the closure of the UAE's international borders in April, Dubai authorities adopted a dynamic and aggressive approach to curtailing the threat posed by the pandemic, implementing important and decisive measures to underpin the economy and safeguard the city's residents. A comprehensive sterilisation programme was also implemented incorporating daily sanitation of Dubai's streets and community areas, as well as public transportation services, in a bid to combat Covid-19.

## DUBAI TOURISM SPEARHEADS CITY-WIDE REOPENING STRATEGY

While government authorities worked tirelessly to bring the pandemic under control, in line with guidelines established by Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management, Dubai Tourism began formulating a comprehensive plan for welcoming back visitors to Dubai, as part of a multi-phase recovery strategy.

Working closely with industry stakeholders and partners, the organisation developed a range of innovative initiatives that reflected the new tourism paradigm, cautiously mapping out comprehensive health protocols and precautionary measures designed to reassure travellers about Dubai's status as a safe city to visit for business and leisure.

New rules were enforced for all businesses operating in the tourism ecosystem. In addition to mandatory social distancing and mask-wearing requirements, the city's hoteliers adopted stringent disinfection measures covering contact points in lobbies and other areas including restaurants and swimming pools in addition to capacity restrictions. Lobby areas were also fitted with advanced equipment for contactless screening of guests.

In the retail space, Dubai's mall operators installed thermal scanners and cameras to monitor traffic at entry points, while its F&B outlets were allowed to reopen but with strict distancing guidelines including reduced seating arrangements. Public parks and beaches also reopened but with strict guidelines and capacity restrictions enforced.

With these preventative measures in place, the focus shifted to gradually restarting various sectors with precautionary measures across the board, Dubai opened its domestic tourism market in May. Throughout May and June, Dubai welcomed holidaymaking residents from across the country, drawn to the emirate by the many staycation offers launched by the city's hoteliers during this period, which included discounts on guestrooms, F&B and family entertainment offerings. The success of the domestic tourism push combined with the effective citywide management of the pandemic paved the way for the reopening of the city to international tourists on 7 July.



## DUBAI ASSURED PROGRAMME BOOSTS CONFIDENCE

Given the influx of visitors from across the country, and the return of limited global travellers, ensuring their safety and security was the fundamental priority for Dubai Tourism and its partners. As a result, the Department formalised its zero-tolerance approach to the management of health and safety protocols at hotels, retail outlets and tourist attractions with the launch of a new and innovative compliance programme, the 'DUBAI ASSURED' stamp.

The compliance programme, developed in conjunction with Dubai's Department of Economic Development (Dubai Economy) and Dubai Municipality, officially certified every hotel, retail establishment, F&B outlet and tourist attraction in the emirate and served as a visual identity that reassured residents and visitors. DUBAI ASSURED quickly earned strong support from the industry, with more than 1,000 establishments receiving certification within the first month of the programme.

Since the reopening of the city to domestic tourism in May and international tourists in July, inspection teams reported 98-99% compliance with measures, while for those not complying, heavy fines and penalties were imposed. At the same time, a comprehensive array of air travel protocols was introduced to safeguard all international visitors arriving at Dubai International Airport (DXB) and the city's broader tourism ecosystem. In addition to strict Covid-19 screening protocols installed at the airport, all passengers arriving in or transiting through DXB, were required to present a negative Covid-19 PCR test prior to entry and on departure.

These precautionary procedures formed part of the UAE's mass Covid-19 testing regime, which saw it rank among the world's top countries in terms of the number of tests administered per head of population. Furthermore, Emirates became the first airline in the world to offer passengers free global insurance cover for Covid-19-related medical expenses should they be diagnosed with Covid-19 during their trip.

In the hospitality space, many of the city's biggest operators also implemented advanced Covid-19 safety measures designed to safeguard their guests and staff. Jumeirah Group's luxury Jumeirah Al Naseem resort in Dubai, for example, became the first hotel in the world to receive the prestigious 'Safeguard' Covid-19 secure label from Bureau Veritas, a world-leader in testing, inspection and certification services.



## GLOBAL ACCLAIM FOR DUBAI'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Dubai's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of hygiene and safety in line with international best practices received a strong endorsement from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which awarded the city a 'Safe Travels' stamp in recognition of the stringent measures taken to combat Covid-19. The recognition represents another important validation of the ongoing efforts made by Dubai's tourism sector in minimising the threat posed by Covid-19 and providing a safe and secure experience for visitors to the city, while setting the benchmark for other destinations to follow.

More broadly, it also highlights the strength of the UAE's response to combating the threat posed by Covid-19 and the country's efforts to safeguard its society and economy. Key to its response has been its world-leading rollout of Covid-19 vaccines. According to official data, more than 10 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered by the second week of April 2021, placing the country second overall in terms of global vaccination rates behind Israel.

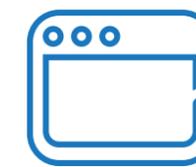
The UAE also played a leading role globally, providing 557 tonnes of medical supplies and other humanitarian aid to 38 countries worldwide severely impacted by the pandemic. By mid-way through 2020, the UAE was widely recognised as the most active provider of foreign COVID-19 assistance in the world, providing assistance in times of need to 70 countries, including China, Italy, the United Kingdom, Iran, Pakistan, Brazil, Russia, Yemen, and Afghanistan, among others with strong support from Emirates Airlines and DP World who formed an alliance for rapid transport, storage and distribution hub of vaccines to the developing world through Dubai.



**GOLDEN VISA - 10 YEAR  
RENEWABLE MULTI-  
ENTRY VISA**



**5 YEAR RENEWABLE  
RESIDENCY VISA FOR  
INVESTORS**



**VIRTUAL WORKING VISA  
- ONE YEAR VISA FOR  
PROFESSIONALS TO  
RELOCATE AND OPERATE  
FROM DUBAI**



**RETIREMENT VISA - 5  
YEAR VISA FOR  
INDIVIDUALS 55+**

## GROUNDBREAKING VISA INITIATIVES ATTRACT WORLDWIDE ATTENTION

Having led the world in implementing strict Covid-19 safety measures that enabled international visitors to travel to Dubai with confidence, Dubai's authorities broke new ground with the development of a range of new visa initiatives and programmes designed to consolidate the emirate's reputation as a leading business and leisure destination.

Headlining these initiatives is the hugely successful Golden Visa programme awarding permanent residency in the form of 10-year renewable visas to individuals who have contributed to the success and development of the UAE's society and economy, including investors and business leaders.

The government also introduced a five-year renewable residency visa for private investors, talented secondary and tertiary students and entrepreneurs encouraging these individuals to develop long-term ties to the Emirates, aiding the country's economic growth.

Another hugely popular visa initiative introduced in 2020 was the Virtual Working Programme, which enabled foreign working professionals and their families to relocate to Dubai, while continuing to work remotely for their employers thus accelerating business and tourism growth during a period of unprecedented global uncertainty.

Dubai also laid claim to another regional first with the launch of the retirement-age residency scheme, 'Retire in Dubai'. The initiative provides applicants aged 55 and above the opportunity to retire in the emirate and enjoy its many lifestyle benefits. The five-year renewable retirement visa also provides applicants with a range of incentives and benefits for retirees covering healthcare, real estate, insurance and banking.

Helping consolidate Dubai's position in the tourism sector was the launch in 2020 of a new five-year Multiple Entry Tourist Visa, which enables visitors of all nationalities to enter the UAE multiple times and remain in the country for 90 days during each stay, which can be extended for a further 90 days. The scheme was subsequently ratified by the UAE cabinet in 2021.

## A DYNAMIC DESTINATION FOR ARTISTS AND CREATIVES

Helping consolidate Dubai's appeal to entrepreneurs and innovators from around the world is the new Al Quoz Creative Zone, a dynamic hub for artists and designers to live, work and create. The integrated precinct will offer an array of facilities, services and incentives to drive innovation and boost investment in the city's fast-growing creative economy, which the government predicts will double in size by 2025. The zone covers creative fields ranging from print and audio-visual media to digital gaming design, and encourages world-leading creative brands to open branches and shops in Al Quoz boosting and diversifying Dubai's retail proposition.

Launched by HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai Crown Prince and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, the creative zone will grant artists and creative entrepreneurs exclusive 'Al Quoz Creative Membership', which will provide them access to a wide range of incentives including fees exemptions, reduced rents and logistic business support.

Its development reflects the main goals of the Dubai Creative Economy Strategy, which aims to double the creative industry's contribution to Dubai's GDP to five per cent within the next five years. In line with this goal, the strategy seeks to more than double the number of creative companies based in Dubai from 8,300 to 15,000 by 2025, and more than double the number of creators based in the emirate, from 70,000 to 140,000.

# 2020 IN SUMMARY

Dubai's proactive approach to tackling the Covid-19 pandemic ensured the city's tourism and hospitality industries were well-placed to post a rapid recovery in the second half of 2020



**JANUARY-MARCH**

- Record 3.27 million visitors in January and February, a rise of 4.2 per cent year over year
- Two Covid-19 economic stimulus packages in March worth AED1.5 billion and AED3.3 billion providing a boost to businesses impacted by the pandemic.



**MAY**

- Gradual Reopening including domestic tourism



**JULY/AUGUST**

- The Ai Everything X Restart Dubai Summer Conference 2020, becomes the region's first live, interactive networking business event kick-starting the reopening of the global events
- Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) continues the momentum in August



**OCTOBER**

- Dubai Tourism launches the Virtual Working Programme, enabling working professionals from all over the world to live and work remotely in Dubai
- The third phase of the integrated global marketing campaign, #Live Your Story begins



**DECEMBER**

- 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) commences
- The UAE Strategy for Domestic Tourism launches, spearheaded by the innovative World's Coolest Winter marketing campaign.



**APRIL**

- Launch of groundbreaking #Till We Meet Again marketing campaign reinforcing Dubai's appeal as a must-visit destination.



**JULY**

- Launch of Dubai Assured Programme in collaboration with Dubai Municipality and Dubai Economic to ensure compliance with safety protocols of all tourism ecosystem players and grant of WTTC Safe Travel Stamp
- Additional economic stimulus worth AED1.5 billion also supporting Tourism ecosystem by extending refund of 50% of the 7% municipality fees charged to December 2020, and reducing 'Tourism Dirham Fee' fee by 50% till end of 2020.
- Dubai opens its doors to international tourists on 7 July and launches the next phase of its global marketing campaign, #ReadyWhenYouAre



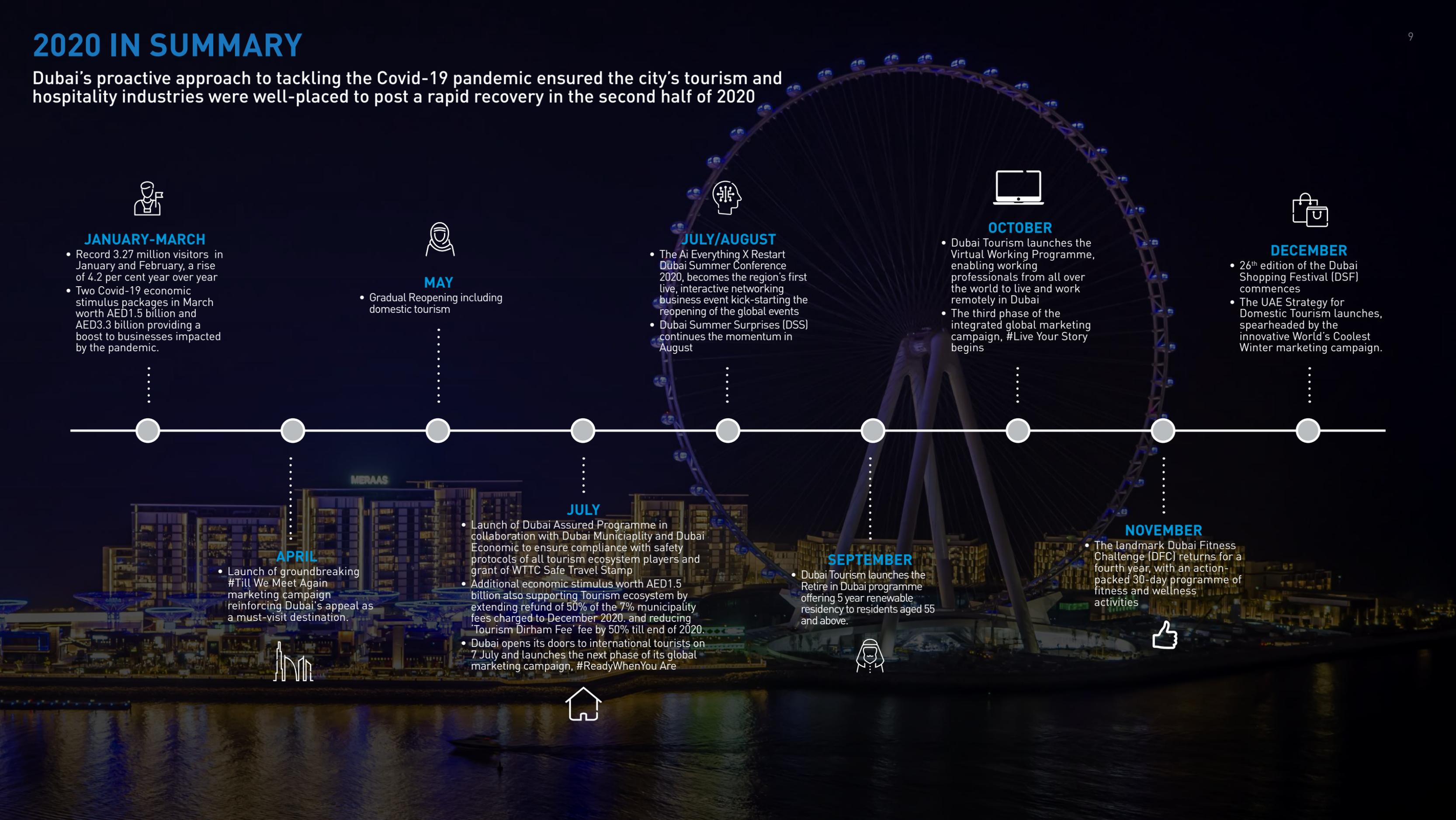
**SEPTEMBER**

- Dubai Tourism launches the Retire in Dubai programme offering 5 year renewable residency to residents aged 55 and above.



**NOVEMBER**

- The landmark Dubai Fitness Challenge (DFC) returns for a fourth year, with an action-packed 30-day programme of fitness and wellness activities



# DUBAI 2020 PERFORMANCE AND TOURISM OUTLOOK

## DUBAI: A SHINING LIGHT IN AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

Dubai's tourism sector demonstrated its remarkable resilience in 2020, despite the global challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic

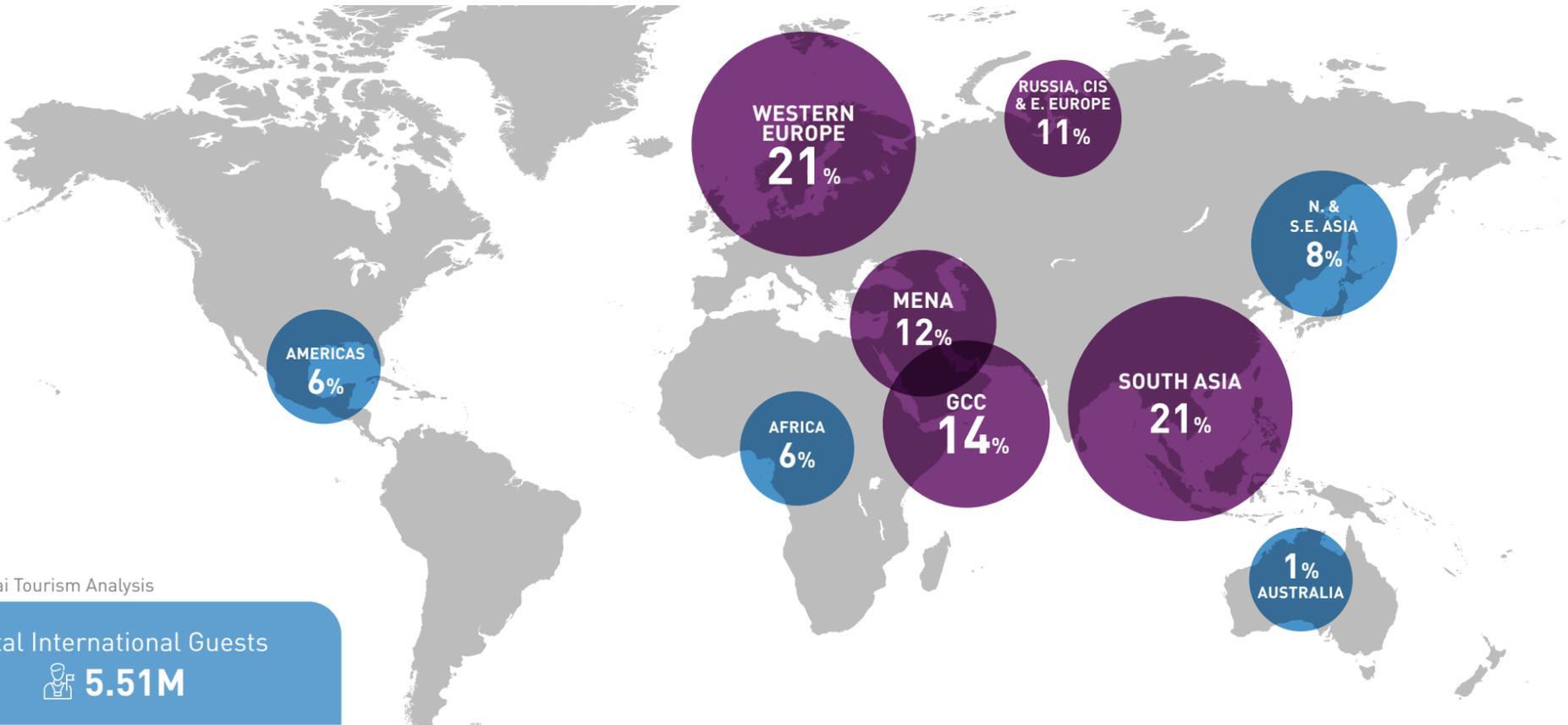
In what was one of the most testing years to date for the global travel industry, Dubai continued to demonstrate why it is firmly established as one of the world's most popular leisure and business travel destinations.

Under the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the city's hospitality and tourism industries implemented a series of world-leading preventative measures designed to safeguard international visitors to the city from the threat of the pandemic.

These initiatives, spearheaded by the DUBAI ASSURED Covid-19 safety compliance programme and a three-phased, integrated marketing communications strategy headlined by the 'Live Your Story' campaign, not only enabled the industry to reopen while rival destinations worldwide remained closed, but also gave international travellers the confidence to travel to the city and enjoy its remarkable array of attractions. These efforts, which were the result of public and private sector collaboration, were recognised by The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which awarded the city the 'Safe Travels' stamp, providing further reassurance to international source markets.

Hence, despite the broader impact of the pandemic on global travel, Dubai welcomed 5.51 million overnight visitors in 2020. More importantly, the emirate further consolidated its reputation as one of the world's most popular destinations, welcoming 1.44 per cent of all global travellers in 2020; an improvement of 0.3 per cent compared to 2019 – a year in which it set a new benchmark for overnight visitors, with 16.73 million arrivals.

## SOURCE MARKETS BY REGION JAN-DEC 2020



Source: Dubai Tourism Analysis

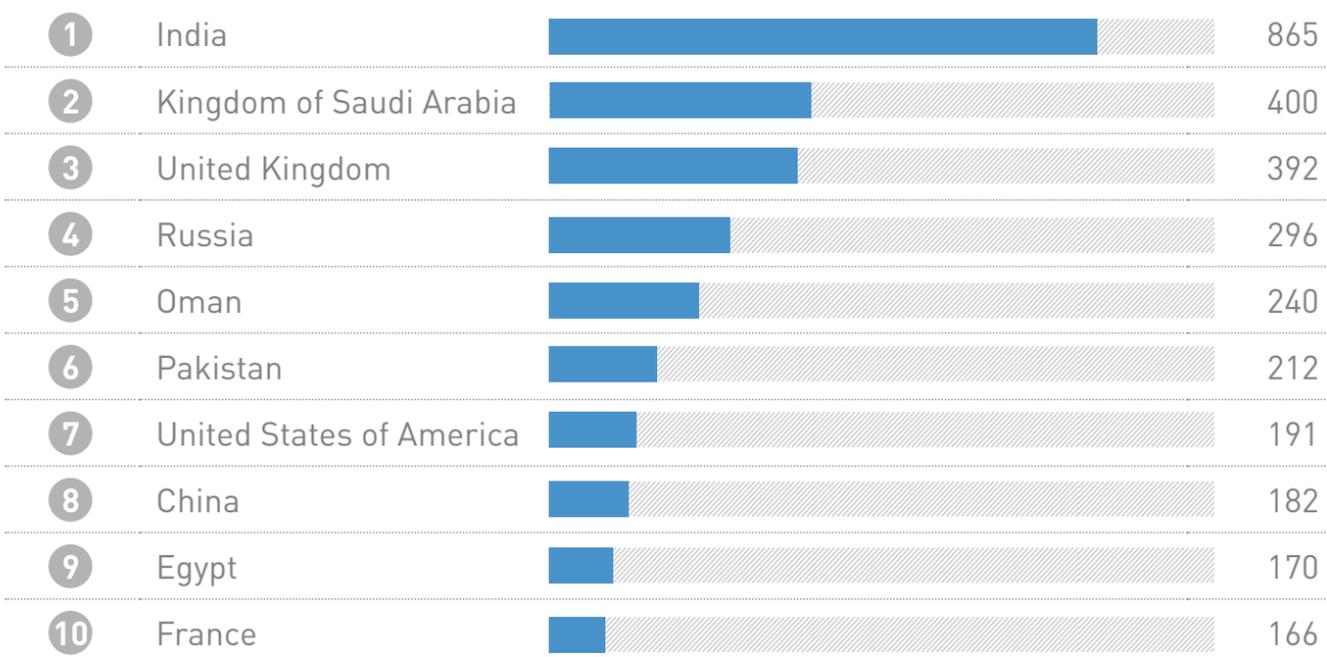
Total International Guests  
**5.51M**



# TOP 20 SOURCE MARKETS FOR VISITORS TO DUBAI

('000 Visitors Jan - Dec 2020)

## TOP 10 SOURCE MARKETS



## TOP 11-20 SOURCE MARKETS

Rank	Country	2020
11	Germany	165
12	Philippines	104
13	Kuwait	84
14	Nigeria	81
15	Italy	76
16	Kazakhstan	74
17	Sudan	62
18	Ukraine	60
19	Canada	59
20	Iran	59

## IN FOCUS: TOP SOURCE MARKETS

Despite the travel restrictions that impacted air passenger traffic flows in 2020, India, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and United Kingdom (UK) consolidated their positions as Dubai's top three visitor source markets respectively in 2020, together accounting for 30 per cent of all visitors to the city.

India ranked first with 865,000 visitors – more than double the number contributed by second-placed KSA. The enduring success of targeted marketing campaigns in India, headlined by Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's #BeMyGuest campaign, helped consolidate Dubai's appeal as one of the country's leading outbound tourism destinations.

KSA once again ranked as Dubai's most important GCC market with 400,000 visitors. Demonstrating Dubai's popularity as a winter weekend getaway destination among Saudis, 97.5 per cent of all arrivals travelled to the emirate in Q1, prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns, which saw the Kingdom close its borders to outbound travel during the summer months.

The UK contributed 392,000 visitors in 2020, consolidating its position as one of Dubai's most-important tourism source markets. Thousands of British travellers made Dubai their preferred winter holiday destination after the UK government chose to remove the emirate from its quarantine exemption list on 14 November. The massive influx of visitors resulted in the Dubai-London-Heathrow travel corridor being named the world's busiest air route in the final weeks of December 2020 and into 2021.

Rounding out Dubai's top five source markets for 2020 were the Russian Federation and Oman, with 296,000 and 240,000 arrivals respectively. Russia continued its rise up the rankings of top source markets, moving from sixth to fourth overall, replacing China in the top five compared to 2019.

Oman slipped one place to fifth after reporting a record-breaking performance in 2019 with more than one million visitors. GCC-wide Covid-19 travel restrictions, which included the closure of borders with Oman during certain periods of 2020, impacted the number of weekender arrivals from the Sultanate.

Elsewhere in Dubai's top 10 list of source markets, Pakistan accounted for 212,000 visitors, rising to sixth overall from ninth in 2019, while the People's Republic of China slipped to eighth from fifth in 2019. Despite this anomaly, China remains one of Dubai's most important tourism source markets moving forward, as evidenced by the country's stellar pre-pandemic performance.

Meanwhile, Egypt and France consolidated their positions as Dubai's largest source markets in MENA and Western Europe respectively, with Egypt ranking ninth overall with 170,000 visitors and France rounding out the top 10 with 166,000 visitors. The rise in visitation from Egypt was aided by Emirates Airline's decision to introduce dedicated A380 flights on its Dubai-Cairo route in the final quarter of 2019.

In Africa, Nigeria was the star performer, rising three positions to 14th overall among Dubai's top visitor source markets in 2020, while Sudan entered the top 20 for the first time, reaching 17th with 62,000 visitors.



# GLOBAL COMPARISONS

Dubai's highly proactive and successful approach to combating the threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to international travellers to the city is reflected in the impressive performance of its tourism and hospitality sector in 2020 compared to other destinations worldwide.

Dubai's increased share of the global travel market, which rose to 1.44 per cent of all international travellers in 2020, up from 1.14 per cent in 2019 and 1.12 per cent in 2018, highlights the success of world-leading safety measures designed to safeguard travellers, which gave them the confidence to visit the city when it reopened to international tourists on 7 July.

It follows a positive trend evident throughout much of the previous decade. In the 2012-15 period, the number of tourists visiting Dubai grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nine per cent, compared to the global average of five per cent for the same period. Meanwhile, in the years spanning 2012 to 2019, Dubai's visitor numbers rose by six per cent CAGR, compared to five per cent CAGR worldwide.

While many destinations remained closed to international travel in 2020, Dubai forged ahead with the reopening of its tourism and hospitality sector in the second-half of the year, making it a magnet for holidaymakers and business travellers seeking a safe getaway from the pressures brought about by the pandemic in their home countries.

Highlighting Dubai's remarkable resilience during this period, which coincided with the pandemic's rapid spread globally, is the year-on-year arrivals data benchmarked against global figures for both months.

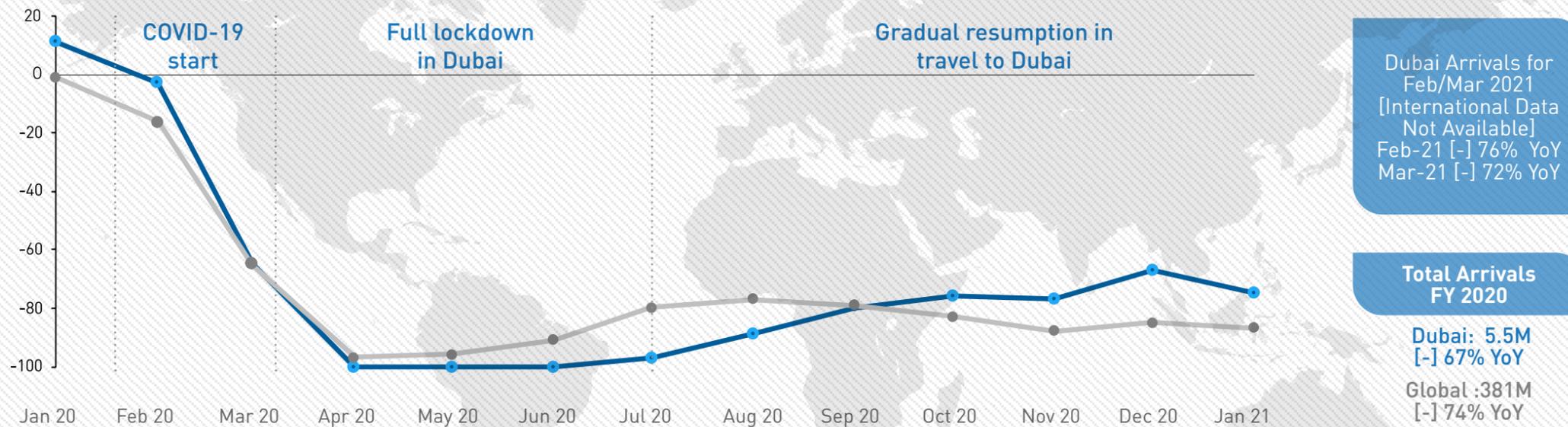
In January, with traveller numbers declining one per cent globally compared to 2019, Dubai saw an 11 per cent year-on-year increase in tourism arrivals, while in February, the emirate reported a marginal (-3 per cent) decline in year-on-year arrivals, compared to the significant 16 per cent decline reported worldwide.

With the implementation of measures designed to safeguard visitors the success of Dubai's tourism recovery strategy is showcased in Q4, 2020 data highlighting its relatively strong performance compared to other destinations worldwide at this time.

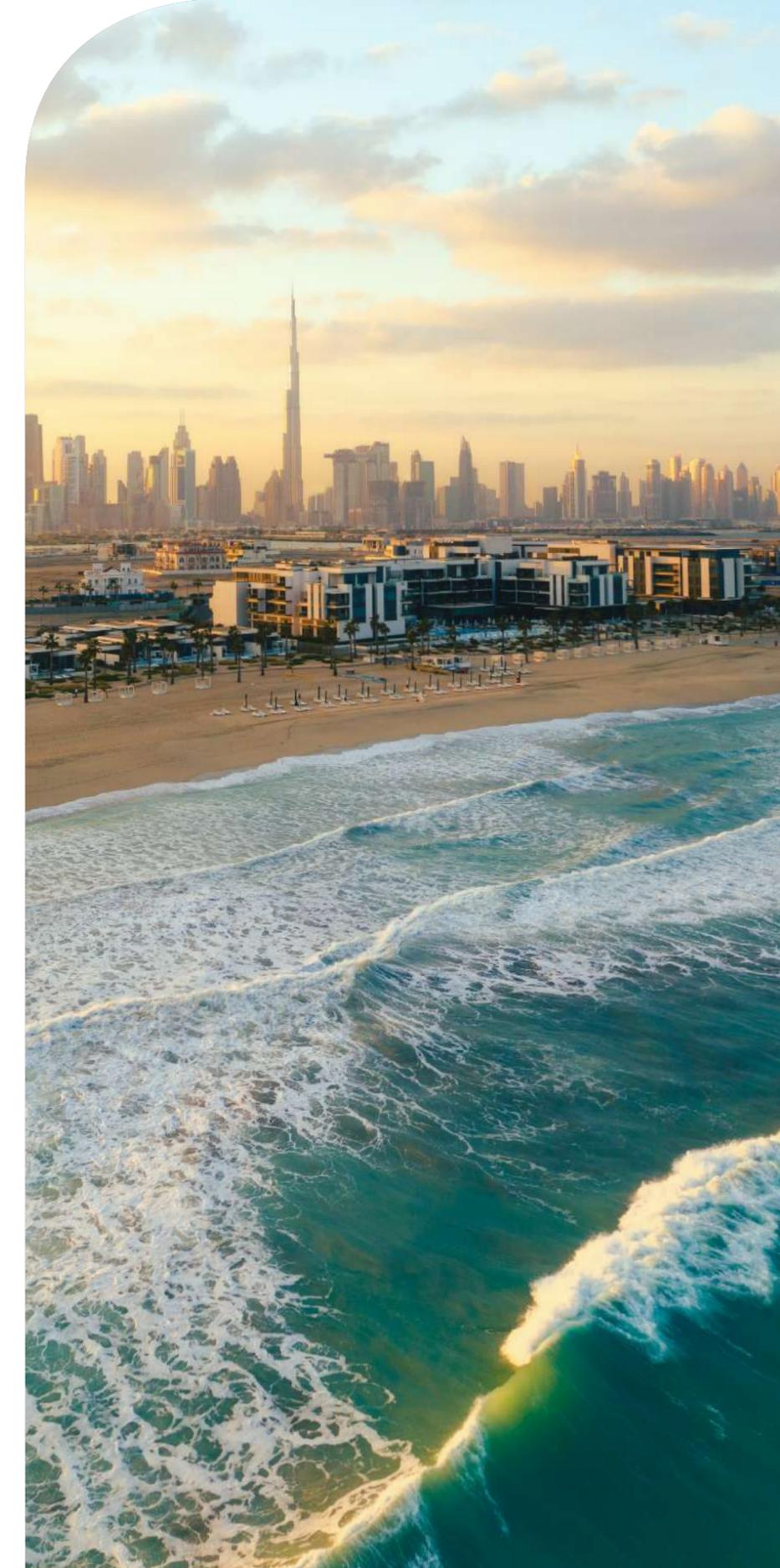
By December, Dubai's year-on-year monthly visitor numbers had recovered to be just 67 per cent down on 2019 levels, compared to the global average of -85 per cent. This figure was replicated in the full-year 2020 results, with Dubai's total visitor count also being down 67 per cent compared to the worldwide average of -74 per cent.

So, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, Dubai's inbound tourism performance once again outshone the global tourism average, following a trend that stretches back to 2012.

## TOURISM ARRIVALS 2020-21: Dubai vs Global



Source: UNWTO World Tourism Barometer Report , COVID - 19 Related Travel Restrictions a Global Review for Tourism, DTCM internal analysis  
 Notes: 1. Dubai's figures based on DTCM Reported Actuals 2. Global figures based on UNWTO World Tourism Barometer Report. Volume 19 – Issue 1 – Jan 2021 and March 31 2021



# VISITOR TRENDS

## DUBAI: A SAFE HAVEN FOR INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYMAKERS IN 2020

### Dubai's world-leading approach to combating Covid-19 made it the destination of choice for families

Dubai once again proved its popularity as one of the world's top family-friendly holiday destinations in 2020, with families and couples accounting for 75 per cent of the 5.5 million international visitors who visited the emirate last year.

Furthermore, 74 per cent of all travellers who visited Dubai in 2020 did so for leisure, highlighting the success of the emirate's international marketing strategy showcasing its family-friendly attractions. By comparison, the number of travellers who stated leisure as their main purpose of travel in 2015 was just 64.9 per cent. This trend also highlighted the impact of Dubai's introduction of new tourist visa initiatives, including five-year multi-entry visas for visitors of all nationalities.

## VISITORS CHOOSE TO STAY LONGER IN DUBAI IN 2020

Leisure travellers also chose to stay longer in Dubai last year, with their average length of stay rising to 9.7 days, up from just 6.1 days in 2019. Business travellers, who accounted for 12 per cent of all visitors to Dubai in 2020, also stayed in the city for an average period 55 per cent longer than 2019 (7.3 days vs 4.7 days). The average length of stay across all visitor categories also rose to 9.7 days in 2020, compared to 8 days in 2019.

This overall trend highlights Dubai's international reputation as a safe haven from the pandemic, as well as its committed approach to ensuring its main attractions remained safely open during much of the year.

Consistent with 2019 trends, women accounted for 48 per cent of all visitors to the emirate, while the number of solo travellers increased as an overall proportion of the total visitor count, rising from 12 per cent in 2019 to 15 per cent in 2020.

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORS ALMOST UNANIMOUS IN THEIR PRAISE FOR DUBAI

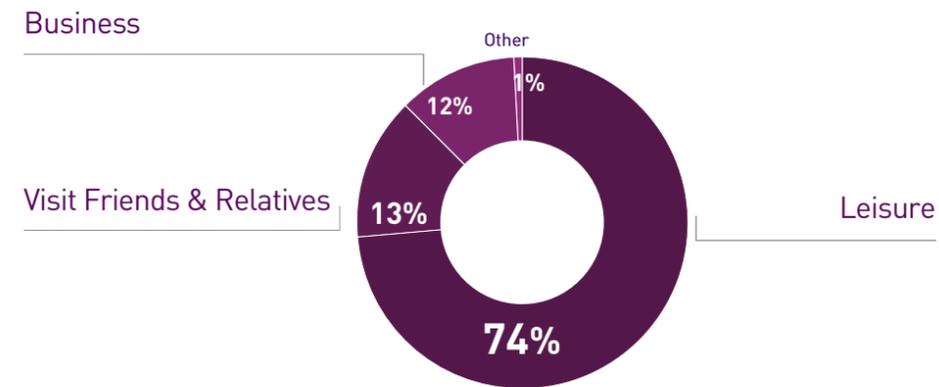
The vast majority of international visitors to Dubai in 2020 were once again overwhelmingly impressed by their experience, according to the latest DIVS report. The city received a record-high net satisfaction score of 99.9 per cent in the survey, up from 99.8 per cent in 2019.

Importantly, the proportion of survey respondents who said they were "extremely happy" with their Dubai experience rose from 68.9 per cent in 2019 to 73.4 per cent in 2020. This result also set a new benchmark for this category, with the previous highest score being 69.1 per cent in 2017.

Given this extraordinary performance, it is little surprise to learn that the percentage of survey respondents who said they would be 'active advocates' in promoting Dubai as a destination to others rose to 83.4 per cent in 2020, up from 77.3 per cent in 2019.

This key stat contributed to Dubai achieving a net positivity score of 99.4 per cent in 2020, marking the fourth consecutive year the destination had registered a score in category above 99 per cent

### PURPOSE OF VISIT (LENGTH OF STAY)



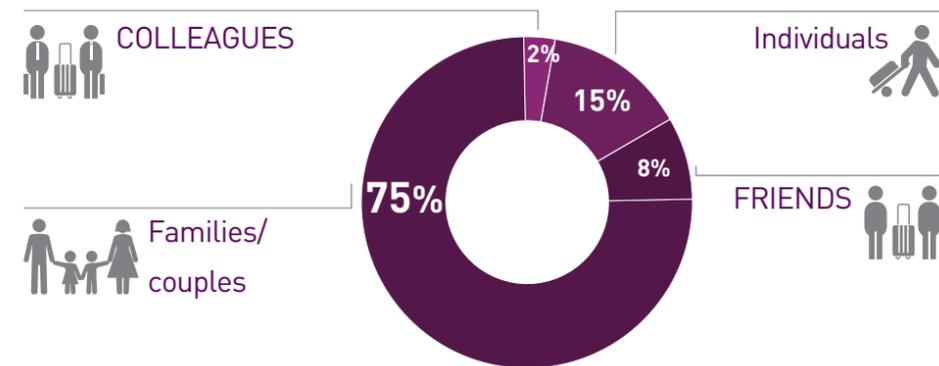
### Gender



### LENGTH OF STAY

9.7 Days

### Party make up

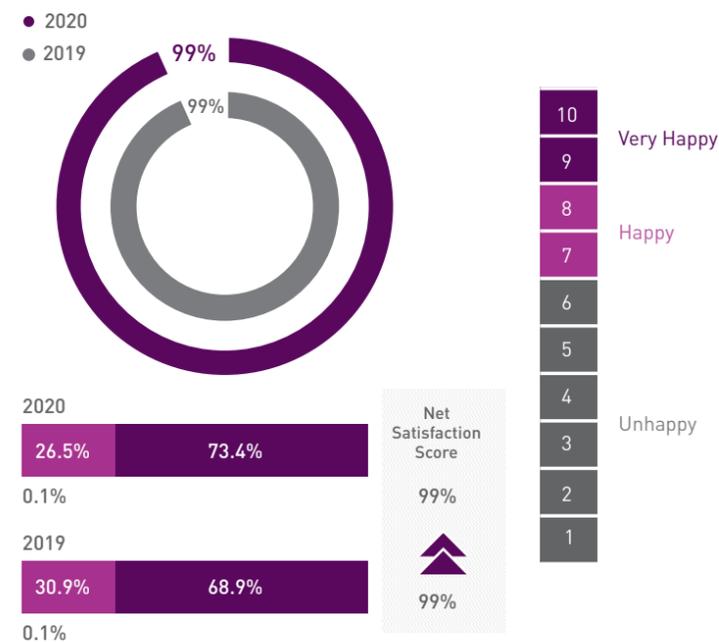


### AVERAGE PARTY SIZE

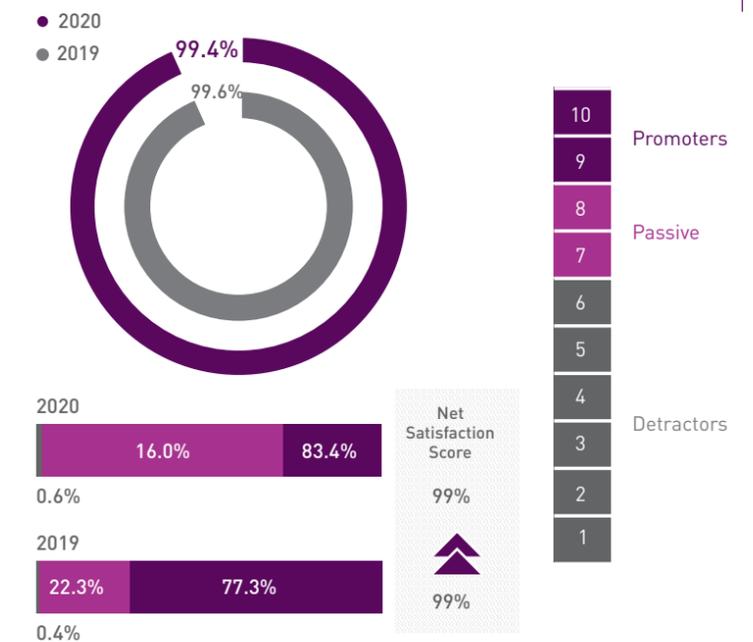
2.7

Source: Dubai International Visitor Survey 2020

### OVERALL SATISFACTION



### ADVOCACY





## WORLD'S COOLEST WINTER CAMPAIGN PROVES A MAJOR HIT

Dubai was also a major beneficiary of the UAE Strategy for Domestic Tourism – the country’s first-ever unified domestic tourism initiative – which launched in December 2020 and was spearheaded by the innovative World’s Coolest Winter marketing campaign.

Over the course of the 45-day, multiplatform campaign more than 950,000 UAE residents holidayed across the country resulting in a 17 per cent increase in hotel occupancies across the UAE, while ADR reached an impressive AED 450 over the course of the campaign.

The campaign encouraged UAE citizens and residents to discover the hidden gems of the Emirates through compelling short films focusing on five key pillars: culture, food, outdoor adventure, activities and fitness UAE residents and visitors were also encouraged to shoot their own images and videos of their outdoor adventures and share them on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #WorldsCoolestWinterChallenge.

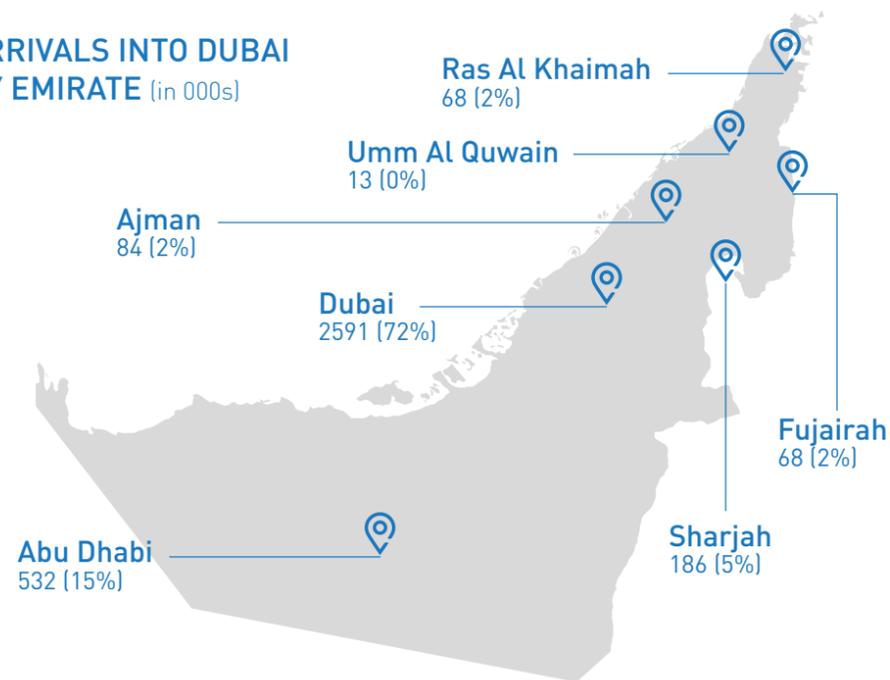
Celebrating the campaign’s success, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai tweeted: "We concluded #WorldsCoolestWinter campaign to promote domestic tourism. The campaign attracted 950,000 domestic tourists and AED1 billion in revenue within one month. Over 2,000 media reports and 215 million views on videos that captured the UAE’s beauty and the impact of teamwork." His Highness later revealed plans to launch an even larger campaign on 15 December 2021 "as the world begins to recover from the pandemic"

## ARRIVALS TO HOTELS BY NATIONALITY

### DOMESTIC ARRIVALS (in 000s)



### ARRIVALS INTO DUBAI BY EMIRATE (in 000s)



### INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (in 000s)



### TOP 10 DOMESTIC ARRIVALS

	vs. SPLY	
UAE	-3%	
IND	210%	SPYL = "Same Period Last Year"
PHL	241%	
EGY	259%	"Decline attributed to inter Emirate travel restrictions in place"
PAK	252%	
UK	103%	
JOR	140%	
USA	130%	
CHN	-7%	
FRA	184%	

## DOMESTIC TOURISM

### DOMESTIC TOURISM PROVES KEY TO SUCCESS

A concerted effort to encourage UAE residents to explore the wonders of Dubai proved crucial in underpinning the industry’s performance in 2020

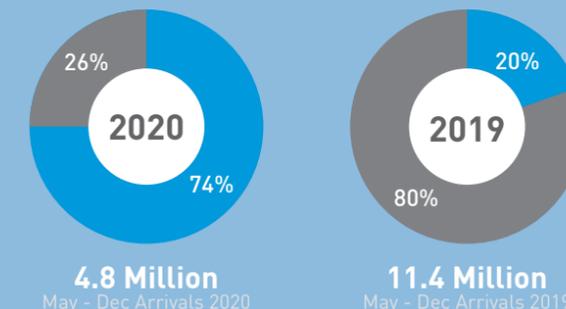
While travel restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic significantly limited the number of international visitors to Dubai in 2020, it conversely had a large and positive impact on its reputation as the UAE’s leading domestic tourism destination, with millions more UAE residents choosing to stay home and holiday in the emirate than ever before.

The popularity of staycations is borne out by data that shows more than 3.5 million UAE residents holidayed in Dubai between May and December 2020, up 55 per cent compared to the same period in 2019.

During the early summer months of 2020 when the UAE’s international borders remained closed, UAE residents took the opportunity to enjoy Dubai’s prime attractions, particularly in June – a period that coincided with the phased reopening of the city’s tourism, retail and recreational facilities.

Many of the city’s key attractions, including Atlantis Aquaventure water park, At the Top, Burj Khalifa, The Green Planet and Ski Dubai offered special discounts and incentives targeting domestic tourists throughout this period, successfully boosting the sector’s overall performance.

### EVOLVING SHARE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM



# HOTEL INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

## HOTELIERS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Dubai's hoteliers once again demonstrated why they're recognised among the world's best in 2020, adopting and implementing strategies designed to boost the industry's performance during the pandemic

While the Covid-19 pandemic devastated many of the world's biggest hotel markets in 2020 as a result of the disruption caused to international travel, Dubai's hoteliers implemented a range of strategies designed to capitalise on changing visitor trends, including a stronger focus on the domestic market.

The result was an overall performance that showcased why Dubai's hotel sector is regarded among the world's best, particular when compared with other well-established destinations in Europe and Asia.

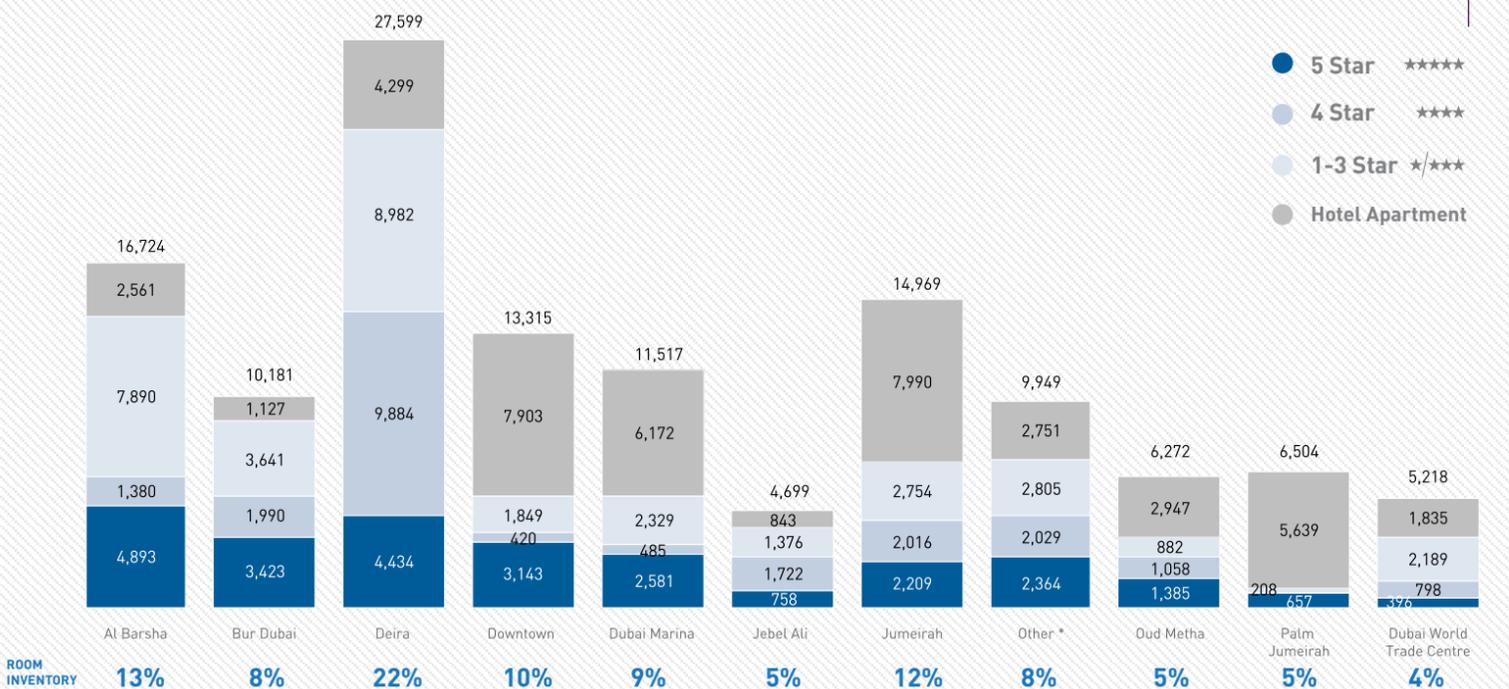
By analysing key performance data provided by STR for December 2020, Dubai outshone London, Paris and Singapore in terms of its ability to mitigate Covid-19's impact on average daily rates (ADR) and revenue per available room (RevPAR) in a year-on-year context.

Dubai's ADR performance in December, for example, was just 15.4 per cent down year on year. By comparison, Singapore suffered a 48.3 per cent YoY decline in ADR during the month.

Meanwhile, Dubai's occupancy rate reached an impressive 54 per cent in December, far outstripping London and Paris, which recorded rates of 36.6 per cent and 30.1 per cent respectively.

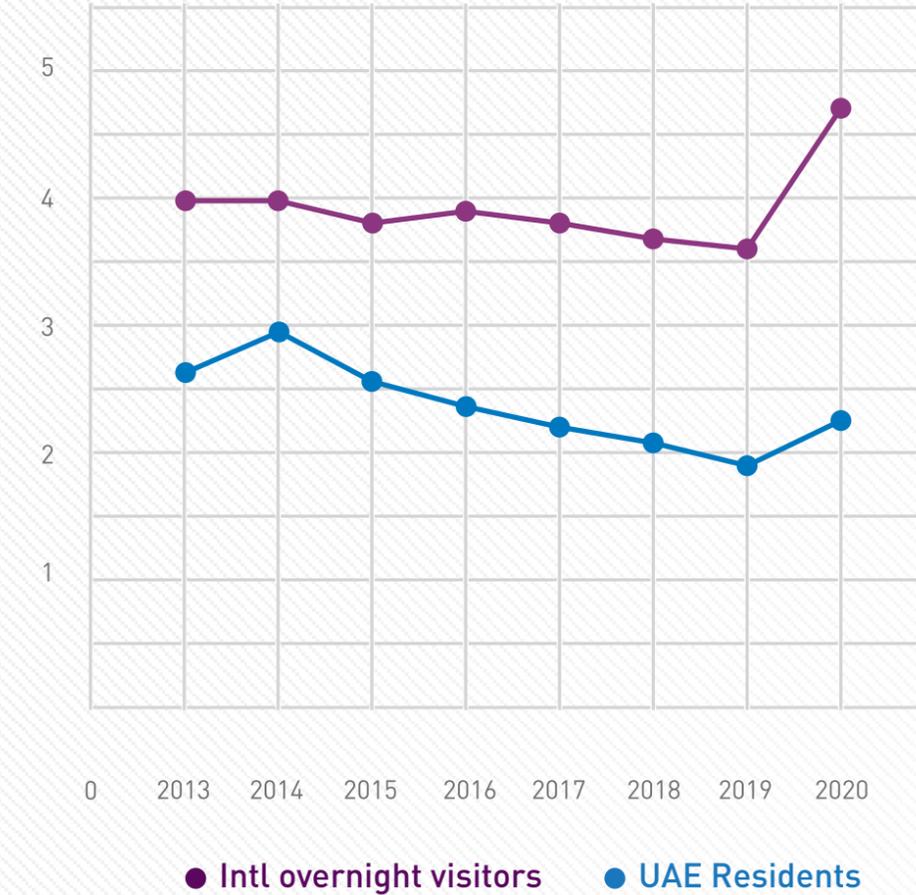
In total, Dubai's hoteliers reported 8.8 million guest arrivals and 20.5 million room nights sold in 2020, and an overall average occupancy rate of 54 per cent, which was a remarkable achievement given the emirate's borders were closed to international travellers for more than three months during the year.

### NUMBER OF ROOMS AVAILABLE BY LOCATION



Source: Dubai Tourism Analysis

### AVERAGE HOTEL LOS [IN NIGHTS]



Source: Dubai Tourism Analysis

## HOTELIERS ADAPT TO SHIFT IN GUEST DEMOGRAPHICS

The key to the industry's overall success was a marked shift in hotel guest demographics. In stark comparison to 2019, when international arrivals accounted for 76 per cent of the 17.5 million hotel guests recorded, in 2020, domestic arrivals accounted for 52 per cent of the total, or 4.55 million guests.

In response to the closure of the country's borders, Dubai's hoteliers shifted focus, promoting weekend getaway packages to UAE residents, particularly families, which helped boost average occupancy rates and cushion the impact of a shortfall in international guests.

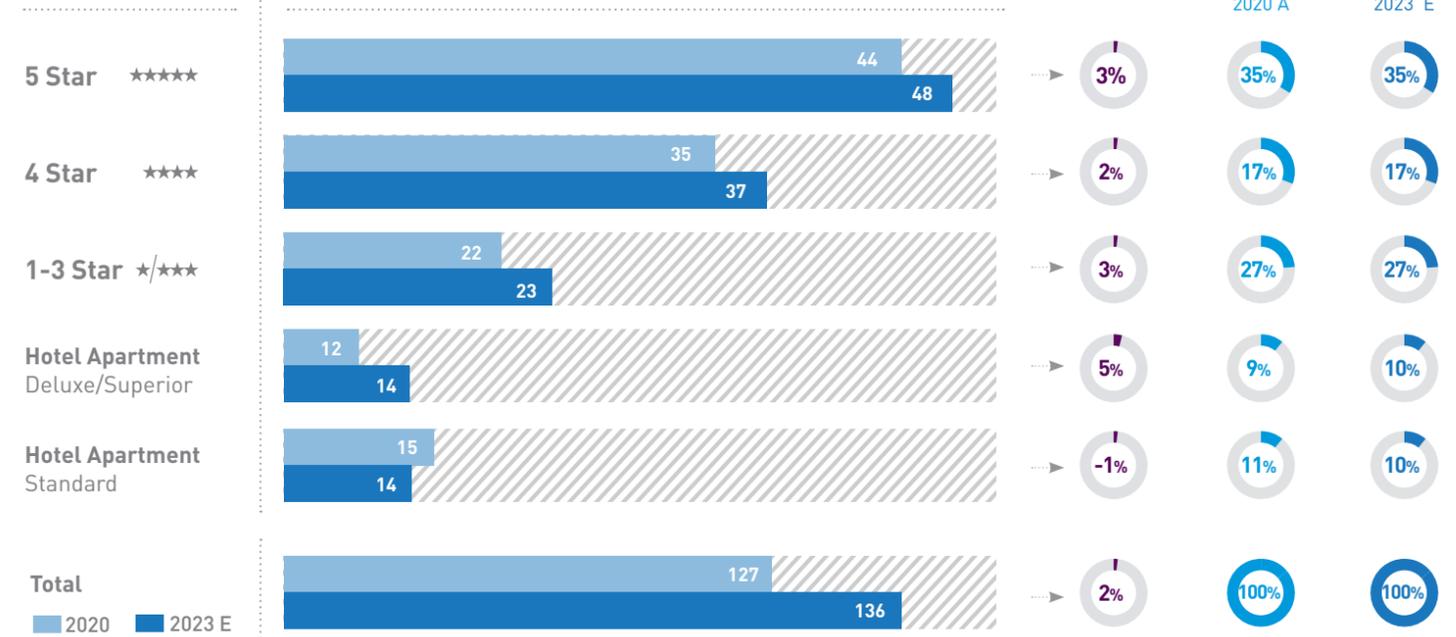
This trend is supported by key data, which shows the average length of stay in nights for both international visitors and domestic guests rose to 4.7 and 2.3 nights respectively in 2020, up from 3.6 and 1.9 in 2019.





CATEGORIES

DUBAI HOTEL INVENTORY BY CLASSIFICATION ('000 ROOMS)



A = Actuals E = Estimates

Source: Dubai Tourism Analysis

**STRONG HOTEL PIPELINE SHOWCASES DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**

Looking ahead, Dubai’s reputation as one of the world’s top destinations for luxury hotels is set to be further enhanced, with the number of five-star guestrooms set to rise from 44,067 to 48,284 by 2023, representing a CAGR of 3.1 per cent.

In fact, five-star accommodation accounts for 44.6 per cent of Dubai’s total hotel pipeline of 9,465 guestrooms to 2023, compared to 18.8 per cent for the one- to three-star category, with the latter’s total inventory forecast to increase from 21,557 guestrooms in 2020 to 23,343 in 2023, representing a CAGR of 2.7 per cent.

In total, Dubai’s total guestroom inventory is forecast to rise from 126,947 in 2020 to 136,412 in 2023. Demand for premium hotel apartment accommodation, particularly as a result of more international visitors taking advantage of new visa options enabling them to travel to Dubai for work and leisure for longer periods, will see this accommodation category grow by more than 5.2% per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth) to 13,782 guestrooms by the same year.

With the impact of the pandemic curtailing international travel, Dubai’s fast-growing inventory of hotel-apartments and one- to three-star hotels accounted for the highest average occupancy rates across all accommodation categories in 2020, registering 65 per cent and 59 per cent respectively. These results came despite the fact they accounted for 20 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of the emirate’s total accommodation inventory last year.

Dubai’s successful tourism diversification strategy, which has targeted new visitor segments from untapped global markets, has also resulted in a proliferation of new accommodation options, particularly in relation to holiday homes.

Since the introduction of legislation governing the sector in 2015, Dubai’s holiday homes market has boomed, with data from AIRDNA showing number of available units rising from 1,641 in 2015 to 9,977 in 2020, representing a CAGR of 43.5 per cent.

	2013	2016	2018	2019	2020
Hotel Guest Arrivals	11.0M	14.4M	16.2M	17.5M	8.8M
International	81%	79%	77%	76%	48%
Domestic	19%	21%	23%	24%	52%
Room Nights Sold	23.7M	28.0M	30.1M	32.1M	20.5M
Total Hotel Room inventory	85K	103K	116K	126K	127K
Available Room Nights	30.2M	36.2M	39.9M	42.9M	37.8M
Occupancy	81%	78%	76%	75%	54%

Source: Dubai Tourism Analysis

# MARKETING & EVENTS

## A SOPHISTICATED STRATEGY FOR UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

**Dubai Tourism's 'always-on' marketing strategy proved hugely successful in captivating global audiences locked down by the pandemic**

As international borders closed across the world in the first half 2020, Dubai Tourism settled on a highly successful, multidimensional marketing strategy that leveraged the strength of its online presence to ensure the city remained foremost in the minds of travellers temporarily locked down as a result of Covid-19.

The three-phased, integrated communications strategy leveraged three distinct messages, each of which was designed to capitalise on Dubai's reputation as one of the world's most-visited destinations and to reassure potential visitors about the city's world-leading approach to tackling Covid-19. The messaging itself remained subtle and sensitive to the needs of an audience affected by the pandemic. The campaign also enabled Dubai Tourism to specifically target segments of this audience once the market reopened. It ultimately proved one of Dubai Tourism's most successful marketing strategies to date as evidenced by the 250 million-plus social media impressions it generated across 26 key markets worldwide.

The sophisticated campaign took a bespoke and highly personalised approach to audience engagement, as evidenced by the emotive titles given to each of its three phases. Phase 1, which was branded 'Hope', was spearheaded by the hugely successful 'Till We Meet Again' social media campaign, which launched in April 2020 and has since racked up more than 12 million views to date on YouTube alone.

Phase 2 of the campaign, which was entitled 'Promise', rolled out globally in July under the slogan 'Ready When You Are'. The landmark digital campaign, which encouraged visitors to consider Dubai as the first destination on their post-lockdown wishlist, attracted more than 16 million unique views on YouTube.

Both campaigns featured innovative promotional tools that showcased Dubai's status as a safe and secure destination for international travellers to visit and create their own memorable experiences during a time of great uncertainty for the world.

A key example of this approach was Dubai Tourism's highly successful partnership with social media giant Snapchat on the #Till We Meet Again campaign - four augmented reality (AR) Snapchat Lenses were made available in the UK and France, which virtually transported users to Dubai to experience popular destinations including the Burj Khalifa, the Dubai Frame, Al Seef, and Madinat Jumeirah. More than 9.2 million Snapchatters in both countries accessed the lenses over the campaign's two-week period



A post-campaign brand study found that 30 per cent of all Snapchat users in the UK and France were keen to visit Dubai as a result of the campaign once travel restrictions eased, while their overall awareness of the city greatly exceeded campaign expectations.

These reminders of Dubai's incredible attractions and global appeal as an international travel destination, ensured it was always foremost in people's minds as they pondered where they might escape to once travel restrictions were lifted.

## PERSONALISED STORYTELLING PROVES REASSURING IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

In October, Dubai Tourism launched Phase 3 of its 2020 campaign, 'Live Your Story', which showcased the unique ways in which travellers can create their own special holiday experiences during their stay in Dubai.

Spearheaded by a dynamic, upbeat short film that quickly racked up almost one million YouTube views, the campaign showcased a range of activities that go well beyond the city's world-famous landmarks and attractions, from heritage to entertainment, outdoor adventures to beach activities, and gastronomical and family-oriented experiences.

The campaign, which also highlighted the range of exciting 'Only in Dubai' options awaiting travellers to the city, launched on Emirates' popular inflight entertainment system and in 20 languages in key territories that had successfully combatted the spread of Covid-19 and had opened their borders for outbound travel.

Ultimately, the campaign's success serves as the foundation for a new customer-focused approach that Dubai Tourism will adopt for all future marketing efforts. The unique and highly personalised storytelling approach was first used to great effect in Dubai Tourism's landmark and long-running #BeMyGuest campaign, featuring Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan. In 2019, the theme was further developed to great effect in the high-profile 'A Story Takes Flight' campaign, which featured Hollywood superstars Gwyneth Paltrow, Kate Hudson and Zoe Saldana, and was directed by Emmy and Director's Guild-award-winning filmmaker Reed Morano

## MEDIA COVERAGE

### Pioneering approach boosts Dubai's global profile

The success of Dubai's audience engagement strategy, combined with its hard-earned reputation for ensuring the safety and security of visitors to the city in the second-half of 2020, can be measured by the extensive and positive global media coverage the city received during this period.

From June to November, Dubai received a remarkable 8,900 pieces of coverage worldwide, encompassing newspaper, magazine and television reports, reaching a combined audience of more than 18 billion consumers in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa and the GCC.

Breaking down these findings further also demonstrates the inherent benefits of Dubai's decision to reopen its borders to international visitors in July, as well as its phased reopening of its hospitality, tourism and MICE industries, particularly in relation to major festivals and events that were successfully staged in the second half of 2020.

These high-profile initiatives resulted in huge volumes of media coverage, comprising 3,200 articles including 32 front page stories in major English- and Arabic-language dailies from June to November 2020.

Dubai Tourism authorities also led a highly proactive engagement campaign with local and international media, conducting dozens of face-to-face interviews during this period ensuring that local and international media were kept regularly updated and informed on Dubai's plans in the age of Covid-19.

## C2C MARKETING

### EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING COMES TO THE FORE IN 2020

In a year that saw a massive rise in social media usage as lockdowns spread across the world, Dubai's highly successful

approach to experiential marketing shone brightly amid the impact of the pandemic.

Working with celebrities and influencers from across the globe, Dubai Tourism's influencer campaigns reached 75 million consumers worldwide in 2020 supported by famous personalities canvassing as advocates for the city including Egyptian singer Amr Diab, American actress and producer Eva Longoria and Portuguese footballing legend Luis Figo

Locally, Dubai Tourism recruited a team of resident advocates from across Dubai's multicultural spectrum, whose personal accounts of living in the city proved extremely popular with potential visitors from across the globe. Their stories, which are catalogued on the Dubai Tourism website, are written in their own language, providing their compatriots with valuable insights into their time in Dubai.

Additionally, coinciding with the beginning of the UAE's countrywide lockdown, Dubai Tourism distributed Lego packs and Dubai-themed Monopoly games to 18 international markets to ensure Dubai remained foremost in the minds of key industry partners.

Another successful initiative was a collaboration with French OTA Easyvoyage.com in the development and promotion of three exciting travel packages in conjunction with leading influencers in the country. The initiative focused on the development of organic content to reinforce the authenticity of each influencer's experience, with editorial content detailing their time in the city published on Easyvoyage.com and Purepeople.com, which is the biggest online celebrity magazine in France.

As part of the #Ready When You Are marketing campaign, 11 Dubai themed landing pages were created with Kayak – featuring key opinion leaders (KOLs) in the UK, Russia, Italy and Germany.

Another successful campaign involved the creation of sophisticated, experiential content promoting Dubai's authentic attractions to international adventurers in conjunction with US-based travel website, Passion Passport. The New York-based publisher created a custom video series entitled "Dubai: Within Reach", which featured a selection of creative professionals from across the US travelling to Dubai to experience its burgeoning arts and design, culinary and culture scenes.



# BUSINESS MARKETING

## PROMOTING DUBAI AS A WORLD-CLASS BUSINESS HUB

Dubai Tourism's business marketing efforts gathered momentum in 2020 – a year in which the impact of the global pandemic across all economic sectors led to businesses around the world re-evaluating their longer-term plans and strategies and closely assessing the environments that provide them with the best opportunities for sustainable growth.

According to Euromonitor International's Resilience Index, the UAE emerged among the world's most resilient economies in 2020 post-Covid-19; combined with other metrics around Dubai's competitiveness and global standing – such as the third most-desirable destination in which to live and work according to the Global Talent Competitive Index; one of the world's top 5 cities to find a job in 2020, according to FutureLearn's New Index; and first globally (UAE) for macroeconomic stability according to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report – a robust case is being made for Dubai as a business hub of choice.

Content Partnerships and collaborations with the likes of CNN, BBC, Euronews and CNBC continue to drive important results for the city, with these partnerships clocking in almost 4,000 minutes of air time over the course of 36 months.

Dubai Tourism's own platforms also evolved in 2020, with the development of a new digital ecosystem to drive company set up in Dubai based on research and key findings. Offered in 11 languages and with 10 sector deep dives, the multimedia hub and social presence is complemented by a year-round programme of content development, from videos and social assets to guides and infographics. This content development has also been extended to the created to B2B assets including presentations, for stakeholders to use in Dubai and around the world when promoting the city.

Leveraging all these owned and third-party platforms, in 2020 Dubai Tourism shifted a greater focus to generating leads for the city – converting interest from business leaders and entrepreneurs around the world and converting these into tangible opportunities for Dubai, identifying the relevant stakeholders, including freezones and start-up hubs, to connect them with.

Opportunities were also at the heart of the new 'Open Your Eyes' campaign produced and launched in 2020, with a series of six films bringing together the diverse range of business and lifestyle offerings and proof points into narratives that positioned Dubai at the forefront of transformation and innovation.

# TRADE ENGAGEMENT

## TRADE ENGAGEMENT KEY TO BOOSTING DUBAI'S PROFILE DURING THE PANDEMIC

DTCM (Dubai Tourism) ramped up its face-to-face engagement with industry stakeholders in key growth markets in the first quarter of 2020.

In January, Dubai Tourism in conjunction with Expo 2020 Dubai, marked a major milestone as presenting sponsors of North America's largest annual travel trade event, the New York Times Travel Show 2020, staged at the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan, New York.

As presenting sponsors, Dubai Tourism showcased the wonders of Dubai to more than 35,000 show attendees alongside a delegation of more than 700 exhibitors from across the international travel and tourism, hospitality, leisure and entertainment sectors.

Dubai Tourism's headlining involvement at the New York Times Travel Show culminated with its exhibition stand winning the 'Best in Show' award ahead of 700 rival exhibitors.

In March, Dubai Tourism hosted more than 400 industry stakeholders and operators during its annual multi-city roadshow across Ghana and Nigeria comprising a record 52 Dubai-based partners, including representatives from Emirates Airline, Expo 2020 Dubai and Dubai Parks & Resorts.

In April, at the height of the pandemic, Dubai Tourism launched a new and highly sophisticated webinar programme as part of its trade engagement strategy, which was designed to ensure Dubai remained top of mind among industry stakeholders as a safe, must-visit destination.

In the four months leading up to the city's reopening to international visitors on 7 July, Dubai Tourism hosted close to 350 virtual sessions with trade partners and stakeholders from across the world. The sessions attracted over 60,000 participants including travel agents, tour operators and international meeting, conference and incentive (MICE) travel planners. Many of these meetings were hosted in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners including Emirates Airline and Expo 2020 Dubai.

The webinars successfully supplanted previously planned fam trips, roadshows and trade shows that could not be held due to the pandemic. They highlighted Dubai's world-leading approach to managing the pandemic, and the extensive health and safety protocols that had been put in place to protect residents and visitors to the city. Other topics included Expo 2020 Dubai and post-pandemic scenarios and strategies aimed at accelerating tourism growth.



# FESTIVALS & EVENTS

## THE WORLD STAGE: HOW DUBAI SPEARHEADED A GLOBAL EVENTS REVIVAL

In 2020, Dubai set the benchmark for how world-class events can be successfully staged and safely managed, despite the pandemic

While much of the global events industry was forced to shut down last year, Dubai's prudent management of the Covid-19 pandemic saw it emerge as the world's leading events hub in the latter half of 2020, becoming one of the first few cities in the world to restart its events sector and bring back live events, with precautionary measures across the board.

Thanks to strict preventative health and safety measures, Dubai's events industry got back to business in the summer, delivering an unmissable successful programme of festivals and events that both captured the world's attention and helped drive visitation to the emirate in the second-half of the year. This set the template for the protocols to be followed to deliver a safe and successful event.

Kicking off proceedings was the Ai Everything conference staged at Dubai World Trade Centre on 16th July, which became the first major live in-person business event staged in the city following the resumption of economic activities. The event's success provided a template for Covid-19-safe events staged across the city in the second-half of 2020.

Next up was the annual Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) programme, which featured a comprehensive array of live events, including indoor and outdoor concerts by renowned international and regional artists like Jimmy Carr, and Al Al Sayed among others. August also saw Arab singing sensations Saif Nabeel and Mohammed Assaf perform live at the Dubai Opera, while top Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam enthralled fans at a live concert at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Dubai had earlier hosted several other live events including the Tomorrowland Around the World festival in July, which featured a stellar line up of international singers and DJs. The festival was streamed live exclusively to Festival Arena at Dubai Festival City, which became the only physical venue in the world to present the event to a live audience and also the first socially distanced entertainment event in the UAE.

As part of the Eid in Dubai celebrations, music fans were treated to performances by Emirati singer Hussain Al Jassmi and the talented Yara at Dubai Opera. Fans were also able to attend a Hologram Concert featuring the late Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum at the same venue.

DSS also marked the opening of malls across Dubai, which helped drive the city's retail-led economic recovery. Residents and visitors flocked to the city's major retail destinations, taking advantage of key promotions and events including the Fall/Winter Collection retail campaign, the Dubai Home Festival, the Dubai Fitness Challenge and the iconic Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), which kicked off in December.



## DSF CELEBRATES 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN STYLE

The 25th edition of Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), from 26 December 2019 till 1 February 2020, included a bumper calendar of events as part of its anniversary celebrations, including live concert performances by global superstar John Legend, Syrian singer Faia Younan and Saudi artist Ayed Yousef. Gamers were kept entertained by the groundbreaking Fortnite event at swyp Market Outside the Box (MOTB), which was headlined by YouTube sensation FaZe Adapt and featured famous Arab gamers including Ahmed Al-Nasheet, Ryan Al Ahmary, Khalid Al Shammari and Abdullaah Al Alawi.

World-class theatre productions staged under the DSF banner included the Broadway-style musical Mughal-e-Azam at Dubai Opera and Liz Pichon's on-stage production of Tom Gates at the Theatre in Mall of the Emirates. DSF 2020 once again culminated with a collection of dazzling fireworks displays that lit up the night sky at various locations across the city, including the popular tourist attractions The Frame, The Beach and La Mer.

Another major highlight of Dubai's 2020 events calendar was a stunning performance by legendary Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli and a troupe of renowned Israeli singers, including Idan Raichel, at Dubai Opera in December. The concert, entitled 'A Celebration of Peace', was held to mark the historic normalisation of relations between the UAE and Israel, which was driving a new era of peace for the region.



## DUBAI FITNESS CHALLENGE MARKS BIGGEST INSTALMENT YET

The landmark Dubai Fitness Challenge (DFC) – the world’s first annual citywide fitness initiative – returned in October for its fourth edition, with an action-packed 30-day programme of fitness and wellness activities, including a robust programme of virtual sessions following strict Covid-19 safety guidelines, including social distancing, hygiene and sanitisation requirements.

More than 1.5 million residents signed up to the initiative, which challenged participants to complete at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day for 30 days. To help them in their quest, participants were provided free access to three dedicated Fitness Villages and 10 community-centric Fitness Hubs. They could also take advantage of more than 200 virtual sessions and 2,000+ fitness classes, the latter of which were at 150 prime locations across the city during the course of the month. The action-packed DFC calendar also featured flagship programmes, including the mega citywide fun run, Dubai Run, and the mass cycling event, Dubai Ride.

The 2020 instalment of the Dubai Run attracted more than 100,000 runners from across the city, each of whom had the option to complete distances of 2km, 5km or 10km. To help them prepare, participants were also offered free access to six 28-day training programmes specially curated by some of the region’s leading professional coaches and athletes, including Manal Rostom, Tania Lolla Kaddoura, Abdullah bin Hajjar, Luke Mathews, Lee Ryan and Luke Gaffney.

For Dubai Ride, cyclists could either take to a 4km loop around Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Boulevard in Downtown Dubai, or join thousands of others for a 14km ride down Sheikh Zayed Road. The latter provided a memorable spectacle, with thousands of cyclists taking over the usually busy, world-famous motorway.

In an effort to further consolidate DFC’s growing global profile, Dubai Tourism organised a virtual fitness event in November for more than 50 media entities working for major new organisations based in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu.

DFC 2020 was also actively promoted in other international markets whose borders remained open at the time, including countries in Africa and the GCC, as well as India and Russia. These markets benefitted from creative engagements across conventional, social and digital media platforms in parallel with marketing campaigns run by Dubai Tourism.





# BUSINESS EVENTS

## BRINGING BUSINESS BACK

**Dubai broke new ground with its approach to staging major business events in 2020**

Dubai led the world in reactivating its business events calendar in the second half of 2020.

Following the official resumption of local events on 15 September and international events on 1 October, Dubai played host to a number of major trade shows and exhibitions, including Gitex Technology Week in December and Gulfood in February – making it the only city in the world to successfully host two large scale international events at this time. Both events attracted 50,000+ attendees from more than 100 countries respectively.

Earlier in the year, Dubai Business Events (DBE), the city's official convention bureau, signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with entities across the public and private sector, formalising and reinforcing collaborations designed to attract more conferences, congresses and meetings to Dubai.

The MoUs further strengthened DBE's landmark Al Safer Congress Ambassador Programme, an initiative that aims to tap into the expertise and network of UAE-based scientists, academics, industry leaders and government representatives to help attract international business events to Dubai.

The success of the Al Safer programme was highlighted later in the year, when DBE confirmed it had secured three major international conferences for 2021, the International DIP Symposium on Diabetes, Hypertension, Metabolic Syndrome and Pregnancy; World Independent Advertising Award Conference; and Omnilife Latin America Incentive.

DBE also helped secure other first-time events including the Arab Association of Urology Annual Congress (2020), Premier Financial Alliance Annual Incentive (2021) and Tfest (2021), while Florida-based Jeunesse Global confirmed it would send three incentive groups – from Asia Pacific, Europe and Japan respectively – to Dubai in 2021.

Over the course of 2020, DBE enhanced its engagement with meetings industry professionals globally, primarily through a comprehensive programme of webinars and virtual meetings and established the Dubai Business Events Stakeholder Committee providing a vital platform for the industry to come together to find new pathways for growth.



## CLOSING COMMENTS

As the world continues to grapple with new realities surfacing from the Covid-19 pandemic, Dubai's leadership has been exemplary in its decisive prioritisation of social welfare as the precursor to economic acceleration. This strategy, in tandem with its committed public-private partnership model to enable fiscal stabilisation, ensures Dubai remains firmly on track to becoming the world's most-visited city for leisure and business in the future.

Working in conjunction with Dubai's tourism ecosystem, the city's decision makers reinforced Dubai's reputation as a must-visit destination for people from all walks of life in 2020, providing an exemplary model for a sustainable future.

Activating its physical assets and enabling service sector, with its agile and responsive marketing machinery, has placed Dubai on the radar of millions of holidaymakers and business travellers worldwide. Layering that with the city's stellar display of reliability, and consistency throughout the pandemic in relation to safety and security, takes it a step further – providing much needed reassurance to visitors from every segment.

Together with the tourism travel fraternity, we look forward to welcoming people from across the world to Expo 2020 Dubai, and join us in commemorating the UAE's Golden Jubilee.