

**DUBAI DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMY AND TOURISM**
ANNUAL VISITOR REPORT 2025



WELCOME NOTE

Dubai entered 2026 on the back of another record tourism performance for the city, with more visitors than ever before, robust growth, and momentum across a diverse range of source markets.

Guided by the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the city continued to demonstrate its ability to deliver excellence across all key tourism pillars, elevating service standards and giving both new and repeat visitors experiences to remember.

New hotels such as Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab and Mandarin Oriental Downtown enhanced the hospitality scene, while culinary excellence was recognised with the naming of the city's first Three-MICHELIN-Star restaurants, FZN by Chef Björn Frantzén and Trèsind Studio.

It was also an important year in our accessibility journey, with Dubai becoming the Eastern Hemisphere's first Certified Autism Destination™, recognising the efforts made in enhancing facilities and delivering training across the city.

Together, these developments solidified not just the foundations for continued tourism growth, but robust infrastructure and ecosystems that have built institutional resilience. That resilience has been demonstrated through changing global economic and travel conditions over the years, weathering challenges and allowing the destination to ascend to new heights.

As we move beyond the regional developments that affected the sector in early 2026, we remain confident that the collective track record of stakeholders across the sector, together with the resolute leadership that guides us, will allow the industry to refocus on its long-term goals under the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, to further consolidate Dubai's position as a leading global city for business and leisure.

His Excellency Issam Kazim

CEO of the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM)



01 2025 PERFORMANCE: DIVERSIFIED DEMAND

Diversified tourism strategy delivers record results in 2025

2025 proved another record year for Dubai's tourism sector, with the emirate exceeding global performance benchmarks and reinforcing its reputation as one of the world's leading destinations

Dubai's tourism sector continued its upward trajectory in 2025, welcoming 19.59 million international overnight visitors, a five per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase compared with the 18.72 million visitors recorded in 2024.

The landmark performance can largely be attributed to rising year-round demand from an increasingly diverse global visitor base, supported by deepening international partnerships and targeted marketing campaigns that continued to expand Dubai's reach across traditional and emerging source markets.

The result marks a third successive year of record visitor numbers, underlining Dubai's sustained global appeal and its ability to attract travellers from across the world drawn to the city's unique destination offering.

Dubai's achievements are also testament to the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and align with the ambitious goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to double the size of Dubai's economy in the decade up to 2033 and further strengthen the emirate's position as one of the world's leading cities for business and leisure.

Dubai's continued success is underpinned by a collaborative tourism ecosystem led by the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), which works with government entities, private-sector stakeholders and more than 3,000 international partners to promote Dubai across the world while continually enhancing the visitor experience.

Diverse source markets drive record visitor numbers

A defining feature of Dubai's tourism success in 2025 was the strength and diversity of its global visitor base. DET worked with partners worldwide to expand Dubai's reach, capturing demand across multiple regions while reinforcing the city's reputation as a truly global destination.

Western Europe once again ranked as Dubai's largest regional source market, accounting for 21 per cent of total arrivals



and contributing 4.10 million visitors, a 9.6 per cent increase compared with 3.74 million in 2024.

Dubai's enduring appeal as a winter-sun and lifestyle destination for European travellers, combined with its strong global connectivity, remains a key competitive advantage. The emirate receives dozens of daily direct flights from major hubs including London, Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam, supported by frequent services from Emirates, flydubai and several leading European carriers.

Elsewhere, **CIS and Eastern Europe** and **South Asia** each delivered 2.89 million visitors, representing 15 per cent of total arrivals respectively. These markets remain central to Dubai's tourism growth strategy, supported by strong air connectivity and the city's appeal for both leisure travel and visiting friends and relatives.

Proximity markets also continued to play an important role in driving year-round visitation to Dubai. The **GCC region** accounted for 2.99 million visitors (15 per cent of the total), while the rest of the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** region delivered 2.17 million visitors (11 per cent).

Combined, these nearby markets accounted for 26 per cent of total international arrivals, highlighting Dubai's continued popularity as a short-haul getaway destination.

Strong demand was also recorded from long-haul markets such as **North East and South East Asia** (1.85 million visitors; 9 per cent) and **the Americas** (1.4 million visitors; 7 per cent).

Meanwhile, **Africa** contributed 897,000 visitors (5 per cent) and **Australasia** delivered 401,000 visitors (2 per cent), further demonstrating the depth of Dubai's appeal as a leading global destination for both business and leisure travellers.

Dubai outpaces global tourism growth rates

Dubai's 2025 performance was even more impressive when measured against global tourism trends.

According to UN Tourism's latest World Tourism Barometer¹, visitor arrivals worldwide increased by 4 per cent in 2025, reaching an estimated 1.52 billion travellers as international travel continued its post-pandemic recovery.

Against this backdrop, Dubai's 5 per cent YoY increase in overall visitor numbers outperformed the global average and also exceeded growth recorded across several major tourism regions.

While Europe, the world's most-visited region, recorded a four per cent increase in annual visitor numbers in 2025, and the Middle East reported three per cent growth, Dubai maintained a stronger trajectory, highlighting its popularity as a major international destination and unrivalled ability to convert strong travel demand into sustained visitation.

These results underline the effectiveness of Dubai's tourism diversification strategy, in line with the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which combines world-class connectivity, innovative marketing initiatives and a continually evolving destination offering that appeals to

travellers from many cultures and demographics.

Strategic partnerships and global campaigns drive demand

Dubai's record visitation was further supported by a proactive programme of international marketing campaigns and strategic partnerships designed to strengthen the city's profile in key international source markets.

During 2025, the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), part of DET, launched several high-profile campaigns showcasing Dubai's diverse destination offering. These included the 'Find Your Story' campaign featuring Millie Bobby Brown and Jake Bongiovi, as well as 'Dubai. That's How You Summer' and 'Dubai, Ready for a Surprise?', the latter starring Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma.

Alongside these campaigns, DET expanded its global network of partnerships with leading travel, hospitality and technology organisations including Marriott International, Hyatt, Visa, Premier Inn and Amadeus, enhancing the visitor journey while strengthening Dubai's visibility across international distribution platforms.

A major highlight of the year was the

launch of the *Beautiful Destinations Academy, Powered by Dubai*, a pioneering professional development initiative created in partnership with global travel content platform Beautiful Destinations. The programme is setting new global standards in travel storytelling and digital destination marketing, further positioning Dubai at the forefront of tourism innovation.

International investment strengthens Dubai's tourism ecosystem

Dubai's strong tourism performance is supported by the emirate's continued ability to attract international investment into the sector. The city maintained its position as the world's leading hub for Greenfield Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects in 2025, reinforcing tourism and hospitality as key pillars of Dubai's broader economic growth strategy.

This sustained inflow of global capital continues to strengthen Dubai's tourism ecosystem, supporting new destination developments, expanding hospitality capacity and enhancing visitor infrastructure. In doing so, it contributes significantly to the emirate's gross domestic product (GDP) while advancing the long-term ambitions of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33.



¹UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer: <https://www.untourism.int/un-tourism-world-tourism-barometer-data>

World's Busiest Hub in 2025 Dubai International Airport (DXB)

95.2M passengers



Global recognition for Dubai's role as a tourism innovator

Dubai's continued momentum in 2025 was also reflected in a series of global milestones and accolades that reinforced the city's reputation for accessibility, safety and world-class hospitality.

One of the year's most significant achievements came in April 2025, when Dubai was recognised as the first Certified Autism Destination™ in the Eastern Hemisphere, highlighting the city's commitment to inclusive tourism and travel experiences.

Dubai also continued to gain international recognition for the strength of its

hospitality and gastronomy offerings. The World's 50 Best Hotels 2025 list featured three Dubai properties – Atlantis The Royal (No. 6), Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab (No. 20) and The Lana Dubai (No. 35) – while the city's culinary scene received further global acclaim, with Trèsind Studio and Orfali Bros both ranking among The World's 50 Best Restaurants, reflecting the diversity and creativity that define Dubai's gastronomy landscape.

Further reinforcing Dubai's global standing, the city retained its position as the world's busiest international airport hub, with Dubai International Airport (DXB) welcoming 95.2 million passengers in 2025, the largest number in its history.

Dubai's consistently strong performance

over the past decade reflects the continued effectiveness of its long-term tourism strategy, which combines global marketing, strategic partnerships and sustained investment in infrastructure and destination development.

As the sector continues to evolve, Dubai is strengthening its position across multiple areas, from diversified source markets and expanding hotel capacity to new visitor experiences, major events and global recognition for its hospitality and gastronomy sectors.

Together, these developments highlight how Dubai's tourism ecosystem continues to adapt to changing traveller expectations while reinforcing the emirate's position as one of the world's best cities to visit, live and work in.

02 ACCOMMODATION

Dubai hoteliers meet rising demand while maintaining value

Dubai's hotel sector continued to perform strongly in 2025, welcoming record visitor numbers while delivering outstanding value and service standards

Dubai's hotel sector remained a cornerstone of the emirate's tourism success in 2025, absorbing rising visitor demand while delivering benchmark performances across key industry indicators, from occupancy and room rates to overall guest value.

Supported by continued investment and a diverse accommodation offering, the sector balanced modest supply growth with rising occupancies and healthy room rates.

This performance highlights Dubai's position as one of the world's most dynamic hotel markets, capable of expanding its inventory while maintaining the balance between consumer value and investor returns across both premium and mid-market segments.

The sector's strength also reflects the resilience of Dubai's tourism ecosystem, supported by world-class infrastructure, strong international connectivity and a sophisticated global marketing strategy that continues to drive demand across leisure, business and events travel segments.

Maturing hotel market supports tourism growth

Dubai's hotel sector continued to evolve in 2025 as the emirate strengthened its position among the world's leading hospitality markets.

By the end of the year, the city's hotel inventory reached 154,264 rooms across 827 establishments, broadly maintaining parity with the 154,016 rooms across 832 hotels recorded in 2024.

While this stability reflects the growing maturity of Dubai's hospitality market, steady growth across premium and budget hotel categories also highlights Dubai's growing appeal to increasingly diverse visitor source markets.

The number of five-star hotels operating in the city increased from 168 to 173 in 2025, reinforcing the emirate's reputation as one of the world's leading luxury hospitality destinations.

At the same time, the city's budget accommodation offering continued to expand, with the number of 1-3-star properties rising



from 277 to 280 in 2025, ensuring a balanced accommodation mix that caters to travellers across multiple price points.

Several landmark hotel openings during the year further strengthened Dubai's hospitality offering and expanded the diversity of its accommodation portfolio.

Among the most notable additions was Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab in March, with the ultra-premium beachfront resort further strengthening Dubai's reputation as a global luxury tourism destination.

Another milestone was the opening of Ciel Dubai Marina, Vignette Collection by IHG, which officially claimed the title of the world's tallest hotel when it opened in November, adding a striking new architectural landmark to the city's skyline while further enhancing Dubai Marina's status as a premier hospitality district.

Other additions during the year included Mandarin Oriental Downtown, Dubai, which brought the brand to the city's central business district, and Cheval Maison – Expo City Dubai, which expanded the emirate's growing supply of extended-stay accommodation.

Together, these openings highlight continued investor confidence in Dubai's tourism sector and the city's ability to attract leading international hospitality brands across multiple accommodation segments.

DUBAI HOTEL SUPPLY 2025



827

Total hotels



154,264

Total rooms

SEGMENT BREAKDOWN

173

5-star hotels

195

4-star hotels

280

1-3 star hotels

KEY OPENINGS 2025

- **Cheval Maison – Expo City Dubai**
- **Ciel Dubai Marina** – world's tallest hotel
- **Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab**
- **Mandarin Oriental Downtown**

Strong demand drives record occupancies

The record number of visitors to Dubai in 2025 resulted in unprecedented demand for guestroom accommodation, with occupied room nights across the city increasing to a record 44.85 million, up four per cent from 43.03 million in 2024.

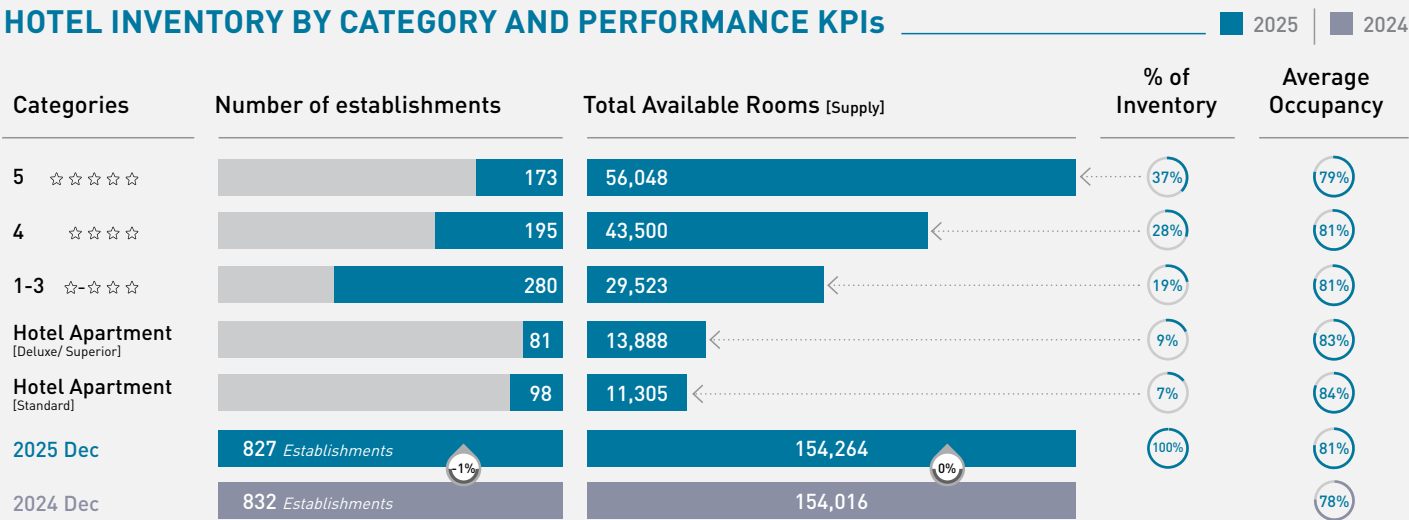
The citywide average hotel occupancy rate also climbed, reaching 80.7 per cent in 2025, compared with 78.2 per cent in 2024 and 77.4 per cent in 2023. This performance placed Dubai among the world's highest-occupancy hotel markets last year, highlighting the sector's ability to absorb growing visitor demand.

The average length of stay held steady at 3.7 nights, reinforcing Dubai's popularity as both a short-break destination and a longer-term leisure and business travel hub.

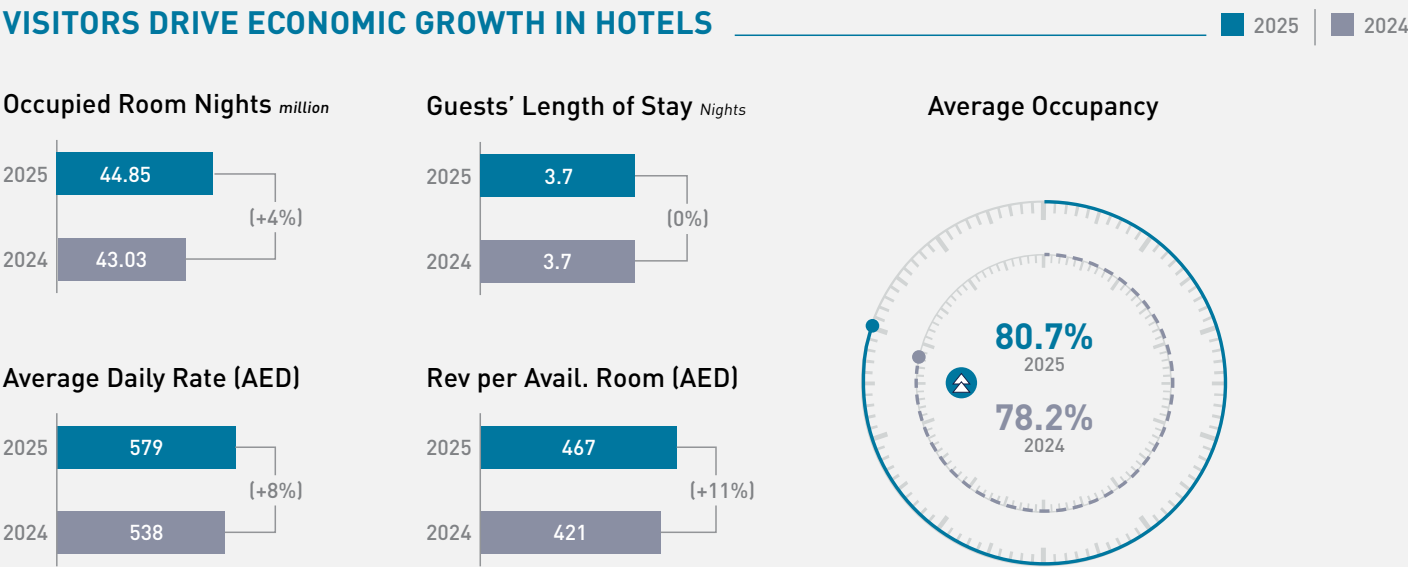
Together, these indicators underline the strength of Dubai's hotel sector, which continues to cater to rising visitor demand while maintaining high occupancy levels across the city's growing accommodation supply.



HOTEL INVENTORY BY CATEGORY AND PERFORMANCE KPIS



VISITORS DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN HOTELS



Delivering value in a competitive global market

Alongside Dubai's impressive occupancy performance, the emirate's hotel sector maintained pricing strength in 2025, highlighting the market's ability to balance demand growth with a competitive value proposition that appeals to guests across a wide range of demographics and budgets.

Reflecting the industry's strength in this area, the average daily rate (ADR) rose eight per cent YoY to AED 579, up from AED 538 in 2024.

At the same time, Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) rose by an impressive 11 per cent YoY to AED 467, up from AED 421 in 2024.

The rise in both ADR and RevPAR reflects strong international

demand and highlights Dubai's ability to maintain pricing strength amid increasing global competition.

Importantly, Dubai continues to maintain a strong value proposition relative to other global gateway cities. According to STR Global hotel benchmarking data, average daily rates in established tourism capitals such as London, Paris, New York and Singapore typically exceed those recorded in Dubai.

This positioning allows Dubai to offer world-class hospitality experiences while remaining competitively priced relative to these and other destinations, a factor that continues to support strong visitor demand across both leisure and business travel segments.

The ability to sustain rising ADR while maintaining high occupancy levels demonstrates the sector's capacity to absorb growing visitor numbers without eroding pricing power, a key indicator of the long-term strength and sustainability of Dubai's hotel market.



03 VISITOR TRENDS

Unique experiences and smarter travel patterns shape the visitor journey

Dubai's diverse destination offering underpinned its record-breaking tourism performance in 2025

In addition to record visitor numbers, Dubai's tourism performance in 2025 was also shaped by evolving traveller preferences and behaviours.

The latest Dubai International Visitor Survey (DIVS) shows that the city continues to appeal to a broad mix of leisure travellers, particularly couples and families, as well as business visitors and short-break guests. At the same time, Dubai's expanding range of attractions and experiences is encouraging visitors to explore beyond the city's traditional landmarks.

High visitor satisfaction and strong online reputation scores across hotels, attractions and restaurants further reinforce Dubai's reputation for delivering consistently high-quality experiences.

Digital technologies are also playing an increasingly important role in shaping travel preferences. Alongside the continued influence of social media platforms, 2025 saw the emergence of AI-powered travel planning tools, reflecting a shift in how travellers research destinations, compare options and plan their trips.

Leisure travellers, couples and families drive demand

Dubai's visitor profile in 2025 was dominated by leisure travel, reflecting the city's well-established popularity as a global holiday destination.

According to the Dubai International Visitor Survey 2025 (DIVS), leisure travellers accounted for 78 per cent of international arrivals in 2025, up slightly from 77 per cent in 2024. The share of those visiting friends and relatives stood at 13 per cent, while business travel accounted for 8 per cent of visitors.

This combination highlights Dubai's dual role as both a major leisure destination and an international hub for business and commerce.

The gender profile of visitors also reflected the city's broad international appeal, with 53 per cent male and 47 per cent female travellers.



In terms of travel party composition, couples remained the largest segment at 44 per cent, followed by families with children (18 per cent) and multi-generational family groups (15 per cent).

The average party size increased to 2.8, up from 2.6 in both 2023 and 2024, suggesting a gradual shift towards larger travel groups and shared travel experiences.

Taken together, these trends highlight the strength of Dubai's core leisure segments while also demonstrating the destination's ability to attract a balanced mix of travellers, from couples, families and business visitors to those visiting friends and relatives.

Iconic landmarks and newer attractions shape the visitor experience

While Dubai’s flagship attractions remained central to the visitor experience in 2025, a growing number of travellers also explored the city’s newer landmarks and lifestyle destinations.

Dubai Mall was once again the emirate’s most visited attraction, drawing 97 per cent of international visitors, while outdoor and experiential activities also showed notable gains. Beach and marine experiences attracted 79 per cent of visitors, up from 72 per cent in 2024, with desert safaris rising to 49

per cent, compared with 43 per cent the previous year.

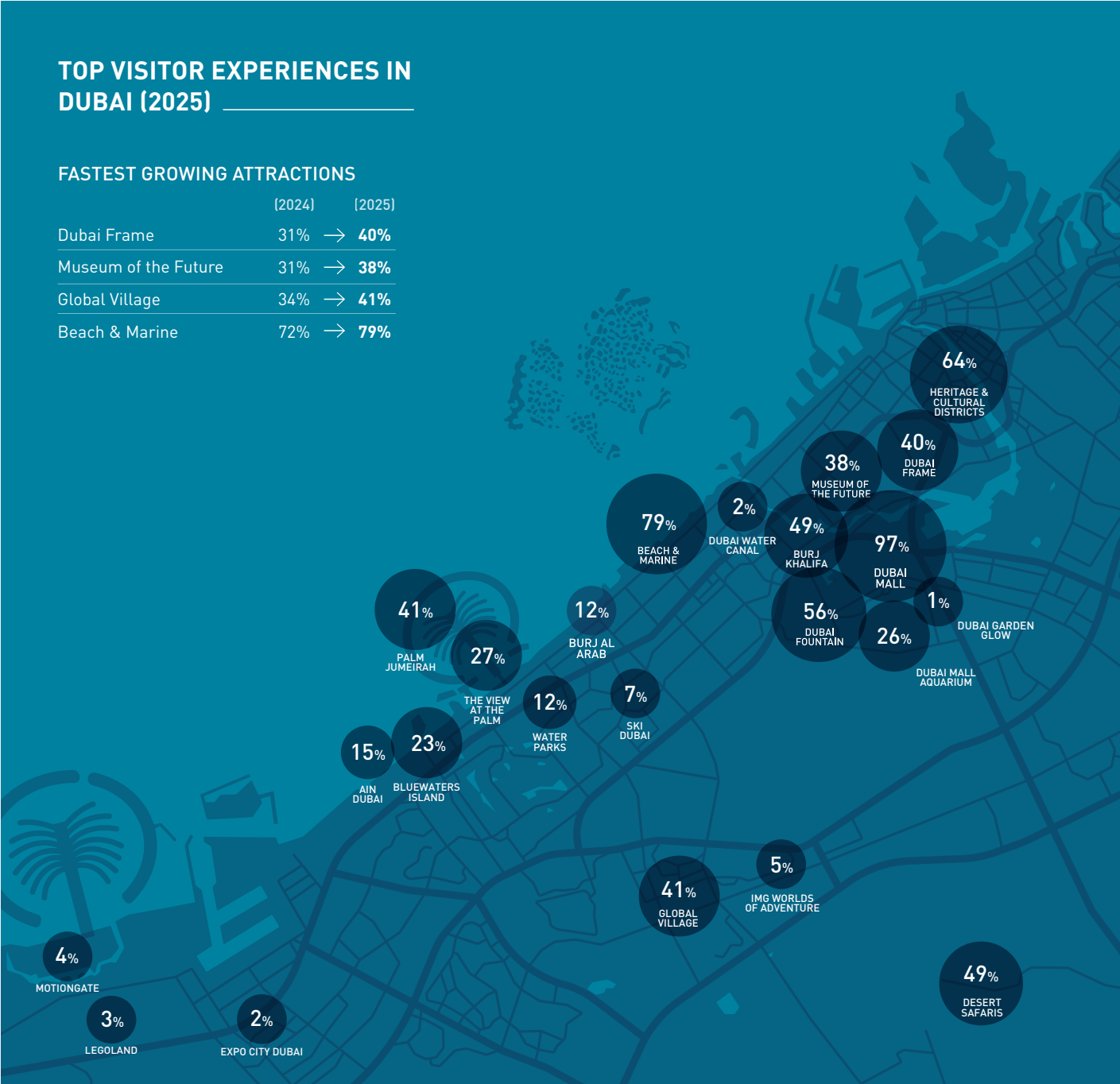
Among Dubai’s major landmarks, At the Top, Burj Khalifa welcomed 49 per cent of visitors, slightly above 2024 levels. Global Village attracted 41 per cent of visitors (+7 per cent YoY), while Palm Jumeirah also drew 41 per cent (+3 per cent YoY), highlighting the continued popularity of Dubai’s waterfront and family-oriented destinations.

Some of the strongest growth came from attractions that combine architecture, culture and immersive storytelling. Dubai Frame attracted 40 per cent of visitors in 2025, up from 31 per cent in 2024, while the Museum of the Future welcomed 38 per cent, compared with 31 per cent the previous year.

Other attractions that generated strong visitor engagement included The View at The Palm (27 per cent), Dubai Mall Aquarium (26 per cent) and Bluewaters Island (23 per cent).

Meanwhile, Dubai’s heritage and cultural districts attracted 64 per cent of visitors, reflecting keen interest in the city’s history and the success of initiatives designed to promote Dubai’s cultural identity and heritage attractions.

Taken together, the results show that while Dubai’s iconic attractions remain central to its appeal, travellers are increasingly exploring a wider mix of cultural, lifestyle and nature-based experiences during their time in the city.



Visitor satisfaction remains high across all segments

Dubai continued to record exceptionally high visitor satisfaction levels in 2025, reflected in both visitor survey results and strong online reputation scores.

According to DIVS, 99.7 per cent of visitors reported being either happy or extremely happy with their experience in Dubai, broadly consistent with the results recorded in 2024.

Advocacy also remained exceptionally strong, with a promoter score of 99.4 per cent, indicating that the vast majority of visitors would actively recommend Dubai to others.

Online sentiment tells a similar story. The latest Digital Reputation Report shows that hotels recorded an overall performance score of 9.2 out of 10 in 2025, up from 9.1 in 2024, pointing to continued improvements in perceived quality across the city's accommodation sector.

Guest services were a particular highlight, with hotels achieving 9.5 for both service and food and 9.2 for cleanliness, reflecting the consistently high standards Dubai's hospitality sector is known for.

Strong online ratings were also recorded across the wider tourism ecosystem. Attractions achieved an overall score of 9.4, while restaurants scored 9.7, highlighting high levels of visitor satisfaction across experiences that extend well beyond the hotel stay.

Overall, these results reinforce Dubai's reputation for service excellence and consistently high-quality visitor experiences, reflected not only in formal surveys but also in the real-time digital feedback that increasingly shapes travel decisions worldwide.

AI-powered platforms increasingly shaping travel plans

One of the most notable shifts in visitor behaviour in 2025 was the emergence of AI-powered tools in how visitors plan their trip to Dubai.

According to DIVS, 14 per cent of visitors surveyed said they used AI to help plan their trip. While still a minority behaviour overall, the figure indicates early adoption and highlights the potential for AI to play a much larger role in travel planning in the years ahead.

Among all visitors, ChatGPT was by far the most used AI tool, cited by 9 per cent of respondents. It was followed by Google Gemini (3 per cent), Meta AI (2 per cent), and other platforms (3 per cent). When viewed only among those who used AI tools, ChatGPT accounted for roughly two-thirds of AI-assisted trip planning, indicating a clear early leader in this emerging behaviour.

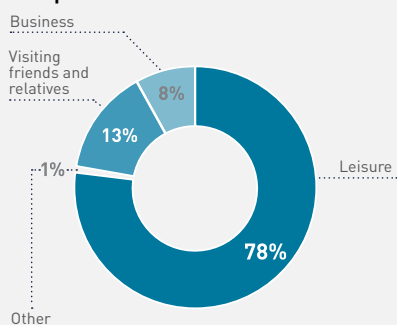
This trend is consistent with broader shifts in global travel planning. According to McKinsey's analysis of the June 2025 Skift US Travel Tracker survey, more than half of respondents had used AI-based planning tools for travel², while Deloitte notes that generative AI use in trip planning tripled between 2023 and 2025, led by millennials³.

AI tools are increasingly being used to build itineraries, compare accommodation options, identify activities and experiences, and tailor recommendations to individual preferences.

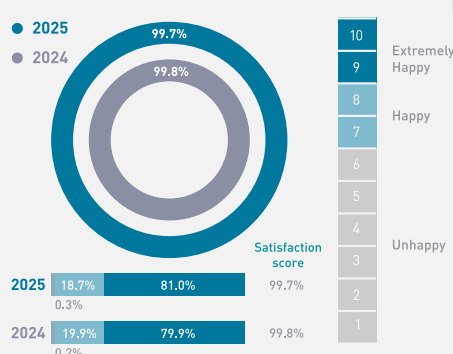
For Dubai, with its breadth of attractions, strong digital content ecosystem and global brand reach, this presents a major opportunity and makes it especially well-suited to discovery through conversational and AI-assisted planning interfaces.

VISITOR SATISFACTION AND ONLINE REPUTATION

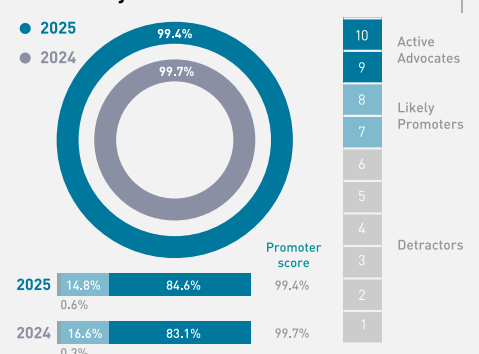
Purpose of Visit



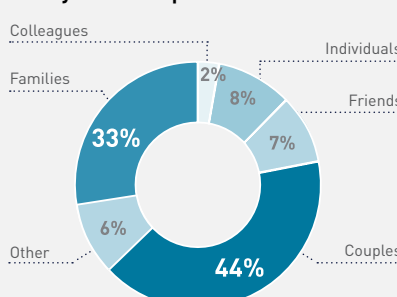
Satisfaction



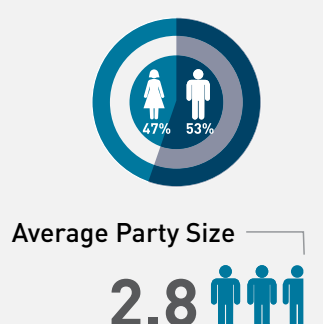
Advocacy



Party Make-up



Gender



Average Party Size



TOP AI PLATFORMS USED FOR PLANNING DUBAI TRIPS (2025)

9%
CHATGPT

3%
GOOGLE GEMINI

2%
META AI

3%
OTHER PLATFORMS

Source: Dubai International Visitor Survey (DIVS); Digital Reputation Report

²Remapping Travel with Agentic AI', Skift Research and McKinsey & Company

³2026 Travel Industry Outlook', Deloitte



04 ECOSYSTEM

Packed events calendar powers Dubai's visitor economy

From retail promotions and food festivals to cultural celebrations, Dubai's events ecosystem continues to drive tourism demand and enhance the city's global appeal

Dubai's reputation as one of the world's most vibrant destinations was further reinforced in 2025 through a packed calendar of retail festivals, cultural celebrations and culinary experiences that brought residents and visitors together throughout the year.

Organised by Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), part of DET, these citywide initiatives play a central role in Dubai's tourism strategy, generating sustained footfall across retail, hospitality and entertainment sectors while reinforcing the emirate's reputation as a global lifestyle destination.

From the iconic Dubai Shopping Festival and Dubai Summer Surprises to major community celebrations such as Eid in Dubai and immersive culinary experiences across the city, the year's programme highlighted the strength of Dubai's integrated tourism ecosystem, where retail, gastronomy, entertainment and culture combine to create compelling reasons to visit year-round.

RETAIL

Retail festivals continue to drive visitor engagement

Dubai's globally recognised retail festivals once again played a major role in energising the city's tourism economy, attracting residents and international visitors through a powerful mix of sales promotions, entertainment and immersive experiences.

The year began with the landmark 30th edition of the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), which celebrated three decades of

transforming the city into one of the world's leading retail destinations. Running for 38 days, the festival combined world-class entertainment, gastronomy activations, cultural experiences and retail promotions across the city.

New experiences such as The Uncommon x DSF at Al Marmoom introduced nature-inspired pop-up concepts that blended gastronomy, outdoor entertainment and cultural programming, demonstrating the festival's continued evolution from a traditional shopping event into a broader lifestyle experience.

Dubai's retail sector maintained its momentum through the summer with Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) 2025, which delivered its biggest edition to date.

Spanning 66 days from June to August, the festival introduced three curated shopping seasons – Summer Holiday Offers, Great Dubai Summer Sale and Back to School – to sustain consumer engagement throughout the summer months.

Each themed promotion combined limited-time flash sales, entertainment and family experiences, helping drive a 110 per cent increase in average consumer spending across this year's festival.

More than 1,050 brands across 3,800 retailers and over 100 retail destinations participated in DSS 2025, offering thousands of sales promotions alongside concerts, family attractions and citywide activations spanning 35 venues across the city. The programme also generated strong consumer engagement through raffles and promotions, awarding more than AED 20 million in prizes to more than 1,200 winners.

Dubai's wider tourism ecosystem also played a key role in amplifying the festival's impact. More than 150 hotels, 22 attractions and five summer camps combined to offer 183 exclusive promotions, while DSS Entertainer unlocked more than 7,500 offers spanning dining, attractions, spas, salons, fitness experiences, staycations and family-friendly activities.

As the year drew to a close, DFRE launched the 31st edition of DSF. Kicking off in December, the latest instalment featured headline initiatives such as the DSF Mega Raffle, offering daily prizes including cars and cash awards, and culminating in a grand prize draw of AED 400,000 on the festival's final day.

Together, these flagship retail events continue to reinforce Dubai's position as one of the world's most dynamic destinations, attracting visitors from across the world while boosting economic growth across the city's retail, hospitality and tourism sectors.

EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Citywide cultural and seasonal celebrations draw visitors to Dubai

Dubai's diverse calendar of festivals and seasonal celebrations continues to play an important role in shaping the visitor experience, offering residents and international travellers a wide range of cultural, entertainment and lifestyle experiences throughout the year.

In 2025, major public celebrations such as Eid in Dubai highlighted the city's ability to combine traditional festivities with dynamic destination experiences. Across the Eid Al Adha holiday period, residents and visitors enjoyed curated staycations, attraction offers and community events spanning beachfront resorts, desert retreats, cultural venues and family entertainment hubs.

Popular experiences ranged from outdoor adventure activities at Hatta Wadi Hub and immersive attractions such as AYA Universe, to family-friendly entertainment

at major landmarks including Dubai Frame and Expo City Dubai.

Meanwhile, emerging entertainment platforms continued to broaden Dubai's events ecosystem. The Dubai Esports and Games Festival (DEF) returned for its fourth edition as the city's flagship gaming and esports event, delivering its biggest and most immersive programme to date. The 2025 instalment brought together gaming enthusiasts, families and industry professionals through a packed calendar of competitions, exhibitions and interactive experiences across the city.

A highlight of the programme was GameExpo at the Dubai World Trade Centre, which hosted large-scale tournaments, live entertainment and free-to-play gaming zones. Beyond entertainment, DEF also highlighted the growing intersection between gaming, education and the creative industries. Through initiatives such as the DEF Educational Engagement Programme, students participated in workshops and competitions led by global technology partners, reinforcing Dubai's ambition to position itself as a leading regional hub for esports, gaming innovation and digital entertainment.



GASTRONOMY

Culinary innovation and global recognition strengthen Dubai's gastronomy sector

Dubai's culinary scene continued to play an increasingly important role in shaping the emirate's tourism offering in 2025, with gastronomy emerging as a key driver of visitor experiences.

A dynamic year-round calendar of food-focused events, promotions and dining experiences ensured that both residents and visitors remained consistently engaged with the city's diverse F&B landscape.

From curated restaurant programmes to large-scale public events, Dubai's gastronomy offering reflected its positioning as one of the world's most vibrant and multicultural dining destinations.

It also reinforced the F&B sector's role in supporting the ambitions of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to establish the emirate among the top three global cities for living, working, and investing.

Citywide initiatives such as Dubai Restaurant Week invited diners to experience specially curated set lunch and dinner menus at more than 100 restaurants across the city. More than 10,000 guests took up the offer, making it one of the most successful instalments of the initiative to date.

Community-focused events also continued to bolster Dubai's reputation as a dining destination catering to all tastes and budgets. The popular e& Beach Canteen, held at Nessnass Beach, brought together a diverse line-up of local and international food vendors alongside live entertainment, workshops and interactive dining experiences.

The 18-day street-food-style event provided a platform for homegrown F&B businesses alongside a selection of international vendors to showcase their signature dishes, offering visitors accessible dining experiences in a vibrant beachfront setting.

Seasonal celebrations also formed an important part of the city's culinary calendar in 2025. During the Festival of Lights (Diwali), restaurants across Dubai introduced special menus and dining experiences celebrating Indian culinary traditions.

From refined tasting menus at MICHELIN-recognised venues to accessible family-style dining concepts, these celebrations reflected Dubai's multicultural character and the strong influence of global cuisines on the city's restaurant scene.

Meanwhile, major culinary events continued to attract both consumers and industry professionals. The popular Taste of Dubai festival returned to Dubai Media City Amphitheatre, bringing together leading restaurateurs, celebrity chefs and live cooking demonstrations presented to thousands of visitors.

Dubai's wider calendar of festivals and events also played its part in 2025. During Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS), food-focused promotions such as the Big Eid Eat encouraged residents and visitors to take advantage of themed dining

experiences, curated menus and chef-led activations across dozens of F&B outlets.

At the industry level, Gulfood, the region's largest food and beverage trade exhibition, welcomed thousands of exhibitors and industry leaders from around the world to Dubai World Trade Centre, reaffirming the emirate's role as a global hub for food innovation, trade and culinary trends.

Alongside these events, Dubai's restaurants continued to gain significant recognition from leading industry authorities. The MICHELIN Guide Dubai 2025 featured 119 restaurants, reflecting the continued expansion and growing sophistication of the city's dining scene.

The latest edition awarded two restaurants the maximum Three MICHELIN Stars – FZN by Björn Frantzén and Trèsind Studio – with the latter becoming the first Indian-cuisine restaurant in the world to achieve this distinction.

A further three restaurants retained two stars, while 14 restaurants were awarded one star, highlighting the depth and diversity of Dubai's fine dining scene. In addition, 22 restaurants received Bib Gourmand recognition for exceptional value dining, while three restaurants earned MICHELIN Green Stars for their commitment to sustainability.

Meanwhile, the Gault&Millau UAE 2025 guide featured a record 192 restaurants, with Dubai outlets accounting for the vast majority of this number. This prestigious culinary guide, which rates restaurants based on the quality of food rather than service or décor, underscores Dubai's growing reputation as a global gastronomy hub.

On the global stage, Dubai-based restaurants Trèsind Studio (27th) and Orfali Bros (37th) secured places on The World's 50 Best Restaurants list in 2025, with both being celebrated for their originality and the exceptional quality of cuisine on offer.





CONCLUSION

Record year highlights Dubai's resilience as a global tourism destination

Dubai's tourism sector ended 2025 on a high, with December marking the first time the city attracted more than two million international overnight visitors in a single month

Dubai welcomed 2.04 million visitors in December, representing a 6 per cent increase YoY, surpassing the previous monthly record set in January 2025.

This milestone provided a fitting conclusion to a year that saw Dubai attract 19.59 million international overnight visitors, reinforcing the city's position among the world's leading tourism destinations and building strong momentum heading into 2026.

Dubai's sustained tourism growth continues to be underpinned by significant investment in infrastructure and connectivity, in line with the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33. This strategy supports the emirate's ability to welcome an ever-increasing number of visitors while delivering consistently high-quality services and experiences.

Dubai International Airport (DXB) also retained its position as the world's busiest airport for international passengers for the 12th consecutive year, welcoming 95.2 million passengers, the most international passengers handled in a year by any airport in history.

Looking ahead, a number of major infrastructure projects will further strengthen Dubai's long-term tourism capacity.

These include the AED 128 billion expansion of Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC) which is set to become the world's largest airport when fully operational, and the AED 34 billion Dubai Metro Gold Line and the AED 20.5 billion Dubai Metro Blue Line, which will improve connectivity between key districts and support the continued growth of both the city's population and visitor economy.

More broadly, Dubai's development strategy reflects a wider regional shift towards further economic resilience and diversification. Across the GCC, governments are prioritising stronger trade partnerships, investment in advanced technologies and improved infrastructure to support sustainable, long-term growth.

These structural reforms are helping to reinforce the region's role as a major hub for global trade, investment and innovation, with Dubai at the heart of this push.

While the outlook for 2026 remains subject to evolving regional dynamics, Dubai's tourism sector looks to the future from a position of considerable strength.

The emirate's diversified visitor base, world-class infrastructure, strong aviation connectivity and highly collaborative tourism ecosystem provide a resilient foundation for continued growth.

Dubai has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to navigate periods of global and regional uncertainty, supported by a highly diversified economy, visionary governance and sustained investment in cutting-edge infrastructure, with a core focus on promoting innovation.

These strengths position the emirate to build on its long-term momentum as market conditions continue to evolve.

Together, these fundamentals reinforce Dubai's long-term outlook as a leading global destination for tourism, business and investment, ensuring the record performance of 2025 serves as a benchmark for continued growth in the years ahead.



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