

دبي

للاقتصاد والسياحة
Economy and Tourism

SUSTAINABILITY INDUSTRY REPORT

MAY 2024

FOREWARD

DUBAI: A LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY – FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

Inspired by global objectives such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and UAE-specific initiatives like Net Zero 2050, Dubai's tourism and hospitality sectors are driving the city's sustainability agenda.

This 'Dubai Sustainability Report', published by the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), is a testament to our steadfast dedication to sustainable development and the strides we've made in fostering a city that not only thrives economically but also prioritises environmental stewardship and social inclusion.

With the call for sustainability echoing louder than ever, and with the UAE's Year of Sustainability extended into 2024, DET and our key stakeholders are committed to supporting efforts to make Dubai the best city to visit, live and work in, aligned with the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

This strategy also aligns with the ambitious goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, to further consolidate Dubai's position among the top three global cities for business and leisure over the next decade.

Government initiatives, a sustainable ecosystem and cutting-edge infrastructure have contributed to Dubai emerging as a global leader in sustainable development, while public-private partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders have been key drivers for Dubai's sustainability agenda, with businesses adopting innovative initiatives and technology to foster sustainable practices. The ongoing Dubai Sustainable Tourism initiative of DET continues to roll out sustainability programmes for the tourism and hospitality sectors, complemented by a citywide sustainability initiative, Dubai Can, launched in February 2022 by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council.

After the UAE hosted COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference, at Expo City Dubai in late 2023, we are now consolidating our efforts to make Dubai one of the world's most sustainable destinations. Central to this vision is preserving Dubai's historic attractions and cultural heritage while fostering innovation in fields like sustainable hospitality, eco-tourism, and smart city technology.

We also take immense pride in being recognised as one of the world's most inclusive and accessible destinations, where diversity is celebrated, and every individual is valued. By focusing on sustainable human capital development, we aim to empower our communities, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably across society, especially catering to the varied needs of People of Determination.

Within this report, you will find a comprehensive overview of our initiatives, ranging from green infrastructure projects to the promotion of clean energy strategies, showcasing our progress in areas like clean transportation and the conservation of natural areas. Furthermore, it highlights our public-private partnerships, the cornerstone of our sustainability agenda that has been instrumental in projecting Dubai as a global leader in sustainable urban development. Importantly, we also focus on the efforts being driven through our Dubai College of Tourism, to train the next generation of sustainability leaders and further embed green practices into all tourism-related operations.

In line with Dubai and the UAE's sustainable development and carbon reduction targets, this report lays out the bold action that has already been taken as part of Dubai's sustainability journey. We invite you to explore our achievements and join us in building a prosperous future. Together, through commitment and action, Dubai looks forward to achieving its visionary aspiration of becoming a net zero carbon city.

Yousuf Lootah

Head of the Environmental Sustainability and Social Responsibility Committee
Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism

INTRODUCTION

DUBAI'S GROUNDBREAKING DRIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As the world pivots towards embracing a greener future, Dubai's tourism and hospitality sectors are supporting the city's sustainability strategies, meeting international benchmarks and setting an exciting agenda for long-term economic development.

Key to the industry's strategy in this respect is meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. Adopted in 2015, the SDGs provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity, addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and more.

As one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the Dubai government has orchestrated several initiatives to promote growth while actively contributing to this global cause.

The Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, which aims to double the size of Dubai's economy while helping to establish it as one of the world's most sustainable cities, is underpinned by 100 transformative projects that will reshape the way people live, work and invest in the emirate.

The headline statistics are staggering and include economic targets of AED32 trillion over the next 10 years, doubling the city's foreign trade to reach AED25.6 trillion and adding 400 cities as key trading partners over the next decade.

Launched in January 2023 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the D33 Agenda positions tourism and Dubai's fast-growing reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities as core priorities.

A stated goal of the Agenda is to further consolidate Dubai's position as a leading city for business and leisure by providing a globally competitive environment for economic sustainability and driving down the cost of doing business across a number of sectors.

Moreover, the Agenda aims to integrate new generations of Emiratis into the private sector, making Dubai a hub for skilled workers, the fastest growing and most attractive business centre, and an international hub for multinational corporations (MNCs) and national small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

The D33 Agenda also reflects the SDGs for sustainable human development. The policy aims to accelerate growth by investing in talent, skillsets and advanced technology, and consolidating Dubai's



global competitiveness by growing its knowledge-based economy.

Its strategy to establish Dubai as one of the world's most liveable and sustainable cities also aligns with the emirate's 2040 Urban Master Plan, which provides a sustainable development roadmap for the city over the next 20 years.

With Dubai's population expected to rise from 3.3 million today to 5.8 million within the next 20 years, the Plan estimates that nature reserves and rural natural areas will constitute 60 per cent of the emirate'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.

Meanwhile, the total length of public beaches in the emirate will increase by as much as 400 per cent by 2040.

The Plan will also help consolidate Dubai's reputation as a leading business and tourism investment destination.

ALIGNING WITH UN SDGS

HOW DUBAI'S TOURISM SECTOR IS MEETING THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) is an initiative developed by Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) to help the tourism sector achieve its sustainability goals, aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, and supporting the D33 Agenda and the UAE's Net Zero 2050 strategy.

Dubai's dedication to integrating sustainability into its tourism sector is highlighted by its commitment to meeting the following SDGs:



SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM – PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

DUBAI CAN HIGHLIGHTS DUBAI'S 'CAN DO' APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

Since its inception in February 2022, the Dubai Can initiative has emerged as an extraordinary testament to the city's ambition and commitment to sustainability.

Championed by His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council, and launched in conjunction with private sector

partners, Dubai Can's approach is aimed at shifting perspectives and promoting a culture of conscious consumerism.

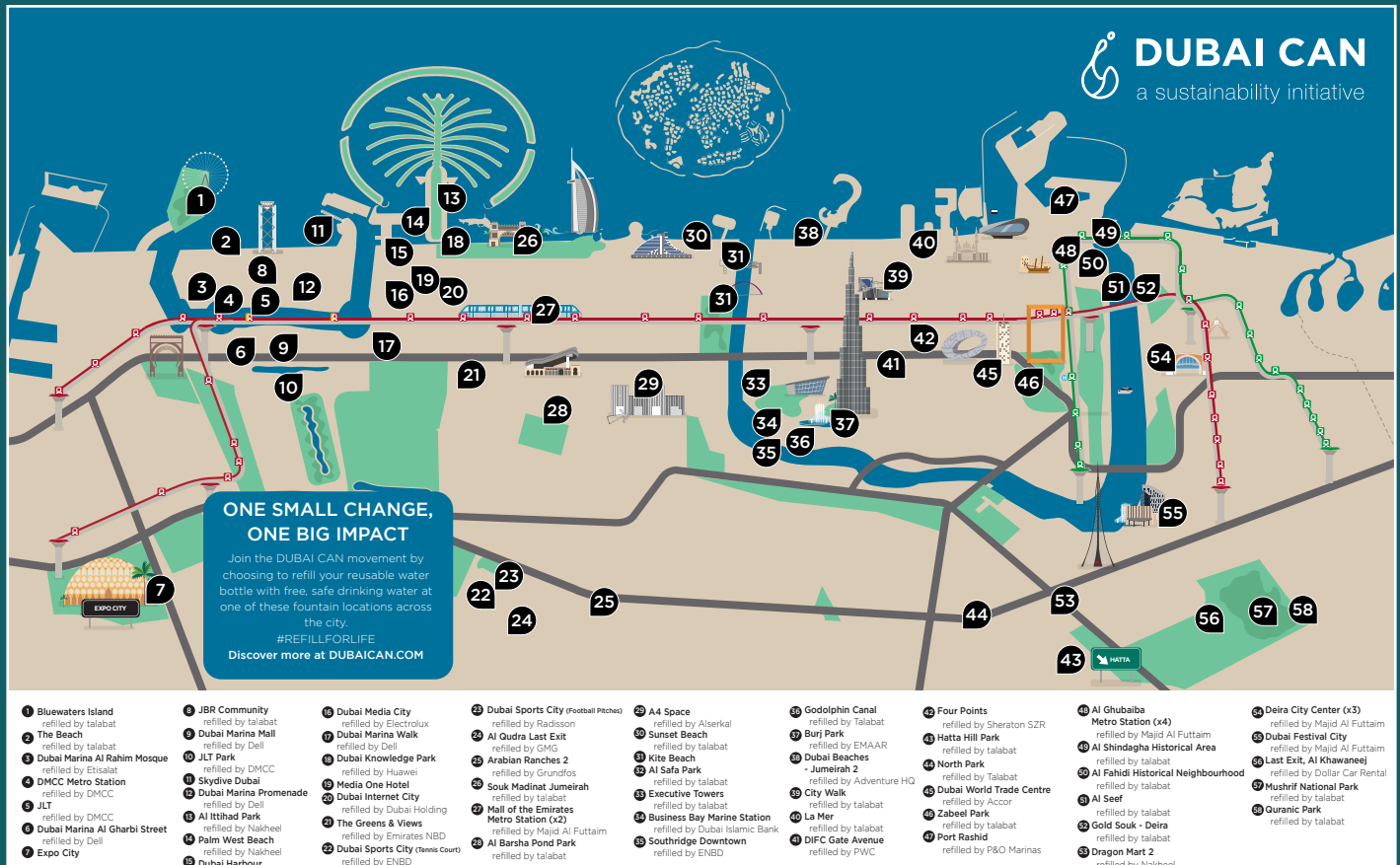
Recognising their detrimental environmental impact, the initiative promotes the use of refillable water bottles and fosters a 'refill for life' ethos. The results speak volumes: in just two years since its launch, the citywide initiative has successfully eliminated the use of more than 18 million 500ml single-use plastic water bottles. Such impressive outcomes underscore the combined efforts of the initiative, the steadfast commitment of the local community, and the importance of public-private partnerships in promoting sustainability.

The initiative has resonated profoundly within the private sector. Businesses across the city, encouraged by Dubai Can's adoption, have incorporated water fountains in their premises, thereby fostering sustainable behaviours within workplaces.

The strategy's success has also hinged on the installation of 50 public water fountains in key locations across the city, ranging from Kite Beach, Dubai Marina and Downtown Dubai to Hatta, Dubai Sports City, Port Rashid, and Dubai Internet City. Their presence not only offers a sustainable water solution but also serves as a constant reminder of the city's pledge to sustainability.



The Dubai Can initiative, undeniably, is setting a benchmark in sustainable development, underscoring Dubai's role as an innovator and leader on the global stage.



DUBAI REEF SPEARHEADS DUBAI'S MARITIME CONSERVATION PLANS

Launched in December 2023 by HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, Dubai Reef is the world's largest marine reef development project and marks a pioneering step in Dubai's efforts to promote ecological sustainability.

The landmark Dubai Can initiative will see the deployment of 20,000 purpose-built reef modules of various sizes across Dubai waters over the next four years. Covering a total area of 600 square kilometres, the volume of the reef modules will total more than 400,000 cubic metres combined. HH Sheikh Hamdan inaugurated the project with the

launch of the pilot reef modules in April 2024.

Dubai Reef aims to enhance biodiversity and safeguard Dubai's coastal and marine habitats, supporting fish populations, and increasing ecosystem resilience. The project will also encourage environmental stewardship, strengthen socio-economic prosperity and ecotourism, and preserve Dubai's marine heritage.

A citywide collaboration uniting key partners, the Dubai Reef initiative also supports the wider strategic goals and ambitions of Dubai and the UAE, including the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, and the UAE's Green Agenda – 2030.

DUBAI CAN KEY MILESTONES

50



PUBLIC WATER
FOUNTAINS
INSTALLED
ACROSS DUBAI

7million



500ML SINGLE-
USE BOTTLES
ELIMINATED IN
FIRST 12 MONTHS

18million



500ML SINGLE-
USE BOTTLES
ELIMINATED TO
DATE

DUBAI REEF IN NUMBERS

20,000  PURPOSE-BUILT
REEF MODULES

400,000  THE TOTAL AREA
IN CUBIC METRES
COVERED BY THE
REEF MODULES

600  THE TOTAL AREA
OF THE PROJECT
IN SQUARE
KILOMETRES



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT

DUBAI'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AGENDA

Dubai is taking an ambitious and holistic approach to sustainable tourism development by working hand-in-hand with the private sector to implement a series of bold, strategic initiatives overseen by Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

In 2021, the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) initiative mandated that all hotels in the city comply with **19 Sustainability Requirements**. The requirements encompass a holistic approach to sustainability, covering 19 essential areas. These range from sustainable management strategies, food and water management plans, and corporate social responsibility programmes for local communities to performance metrics, guest education, and employee training initiatives.

A notable point of emphasis is the creation of sustainability committees within hotel establishments, highlighting the significance placed on collaborative efforts.

These measures are not mere recommendations but a testament to Dubai's commitment to meeting the UAE's Net Zero 2050 strategy. To ensure accountability, DET's **Carbon Calculator**, introduced in January 2017 as part of the Tourism Dirham Platform and updated in early 2023, actively measures the hospitality industry's carbon footprint.

Hotels regularly report their carbon emissions, capturing data from nine different sources including electricity, water, and waste. Such rigorous reporting not only allows for a consistent tracking mechanism

but also helps hoteliers analyse their consumption patterns, paving the way for the identification of carbon emission sources and helping them implement energy-saving strategies.

Another highly useful tool is the individual **Hotel Emission Analysis Reports** that have been available to Dubai-based hoteliers since 2019. Enabled and accessible via the Carbon Calculator, these reports help hotels benchmark their sustainability performance against their industry peers while boosting Dubai's reputation as a world-leading smart city.

But it's not just about compliance – it's also about commendation. Recognising the efforts of the city's hoteliers, DET introduced the **Dubai Sustainable Tourism Stamp** in July 2023.

The initiative recognises operators that exhibit the highest adherence to the 19 Sustainability Requirements. A three-tiered system, with gold, silver, and bronze categories, the stamp serves as a public acknowledgment of a stakeholder's commitment to fostering a sustainable future.

In early 2024, DET awarded 70 hotels the Dubai Sustainable Tourism Stamp in recognition of their adherence to the Sustainability Requirements and their wide-ranging efforts in support of responsible tourism practices.

On a broader level, as Dubai pushes forward to achieve the targets of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, these ambitious sustainability initiatives are proving invaluable. They not only underline the city's dedication to sustainability but also position Dubai among the top three global destinations, merging ambitious economic growth plans with a responsible vision for the future.



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

DUBAI'S GREEN ENERGY INITIATIVES UNDERPIN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOALS

A revolutionary approach to promoting sustainable tourism relies on cutting-edge infrastructure. Over the past decade, Dubai has emerged as a global leader in sustainable development and clean energy innovation. The emirate's Clean Energy Strategy, targeting 100% of total power from clean sources by 2050, encapsulates its ambitious drive toward a sustainable future.

Central to this mission is the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, managed by the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). The world's largest single-site solar park, the facility currently generates 2,627MW at full capacity. In September 2023, DEWA confirmed plans to implement the sixth phase of development at the site, which will add a further 1,800MW of generating capacity, or enough energy to power more than half a million residences while reducing carbon emissions by 2.36 million tonnes annually.²

The solar park is not only the largest facility of its type on the planet³ – it's also one of the most innovative – playing host to the world's tallest solar power tower at 262.44 metres and an unparalleled 15-hour thermal storage, providing for round-the-clock electricity generation.

But the park isn't merely a solar marvel; it's also a hydrogen frontier, being home to the region's first solar-powered Green Hydrogen production plant. The facility is designed to accommodate future applications and test platforms for the different uses of hydrogen, including potential mobility and industrial uses.⁴

DEWA has already explored and developed a pilot project for green mobility based on hydrogen power,

with a view to shaping the UAE's clean hydrogen future.

The dividends of Dubai's pursuit of green energy solutions are borne out by government data. In 2020, clean energy constituted nine per cent of the emirate's energy mix, surpassing its own seven per cent target for that year.

Carbon emissions in Dubai plummeted by 22 per cent in 2019, notably surpassing the 2021 target of 16 per cent. They fell a further 21 per cent in 2021, putting the emirate firmly on track to meet its ambition of reducing carbon emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.⁵

DEWA is also venturing into hydroelectric power with a groundbreaking station in Hatta. This first-of-its-kind development in the Gulf will utilise water from Hatta Dam, generating a reliable 250MW of electricity, offering 1,500MW of storage capacity, and promising an impressive 80-year lifespan. Developed at a cost of AED1.4 billion (US\$381 million), the plant is scheduled to go online in Q1, 2025.⁶

Dubai is also accelerating the transition to a green mobility future. The emirate has set ambitious targets in this space, including ensuring all public transport services are carbon neutral by 2050, eliminating eight million tonnes of emissions annually.

DEWA has committed to expanding the city's network of public electric vehicle charging stations by 170 per cent by 2025 to reach more than 1,000 Green Charging Stations. According to official data, DEWA's EV Green Chargers have provided 13,264 MWh of electricity from 2015 to the end of 2022, powering a cumulative electric vehicle distance of over 66.3 million kilometres.

Ultimately, Dubai's Clean Energy initiatives align seamlessly with the UAE's National Energy Strategy 2050, which aims to source 50 per cent of domestic power requirements from clean energy in the next three decades while reducing overall energy consumption by 40 per cent and carbon emissions by 70 per cent.

² <https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/about-us/strategic-initiatives/mbr-solar-park>

³ Source: <https://www.mbrsic.ae/en/about/mohammed-bin-rashid-al-maktoum-solar-park/#:~:text=The%20Mohammed%20bin%20Rashid%20Al,investments%20totalling%20AED%2050%20billion.>


⁴ <https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/about-us/media-publications/latest-news/2021/05/green-hydrogen-project>

⁵ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/road-to-net-zero/2022/09/19/dubai-reduced-carbon-emissions-by-21-in-2021/>


⁶ <https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/about-us/strategic-initiatives/hatta-project>


DUBAI'S CLEAN ENERGY STRATEGY IN NUMBERS

100%  CONTRIBUTION OF CLEAN ENERGY TO DUBAI'S ENERGY MIX BY 2050

170%  INCREASE IN EV CHARGING STATIONS IN DUBAI BY 2025

21%  DECLINE IN CARBON EMISSIONS IN DUBAI IN 2021

2,627 MW  ELECTRICITY GENERATING CAPACITY AT DUBAI'S MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM SOLAR PARK, THE WORLD'S LARGEST CLEAN ENERGY FACILITY OF ITS KIND

1,500 MW  ELECTRICITY STORAGE CAPACITY AT HATTA'S HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANT, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE GULF REGION

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DESIGN

COP28 VENUE EXPO CITY DUBAI, A SHOWCASE FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Situated in Dubai South, Expo City Dubai is a pioneering urban destination designed as a model of sustainability and innovation, qualities that made it an apt location for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28).

Best known for hosting Expo 2020 Dubai – the first world expo staged in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region – the city provides key insights into Dubai's urban design and planning strategy as it transitions to Net Zero by 2050.

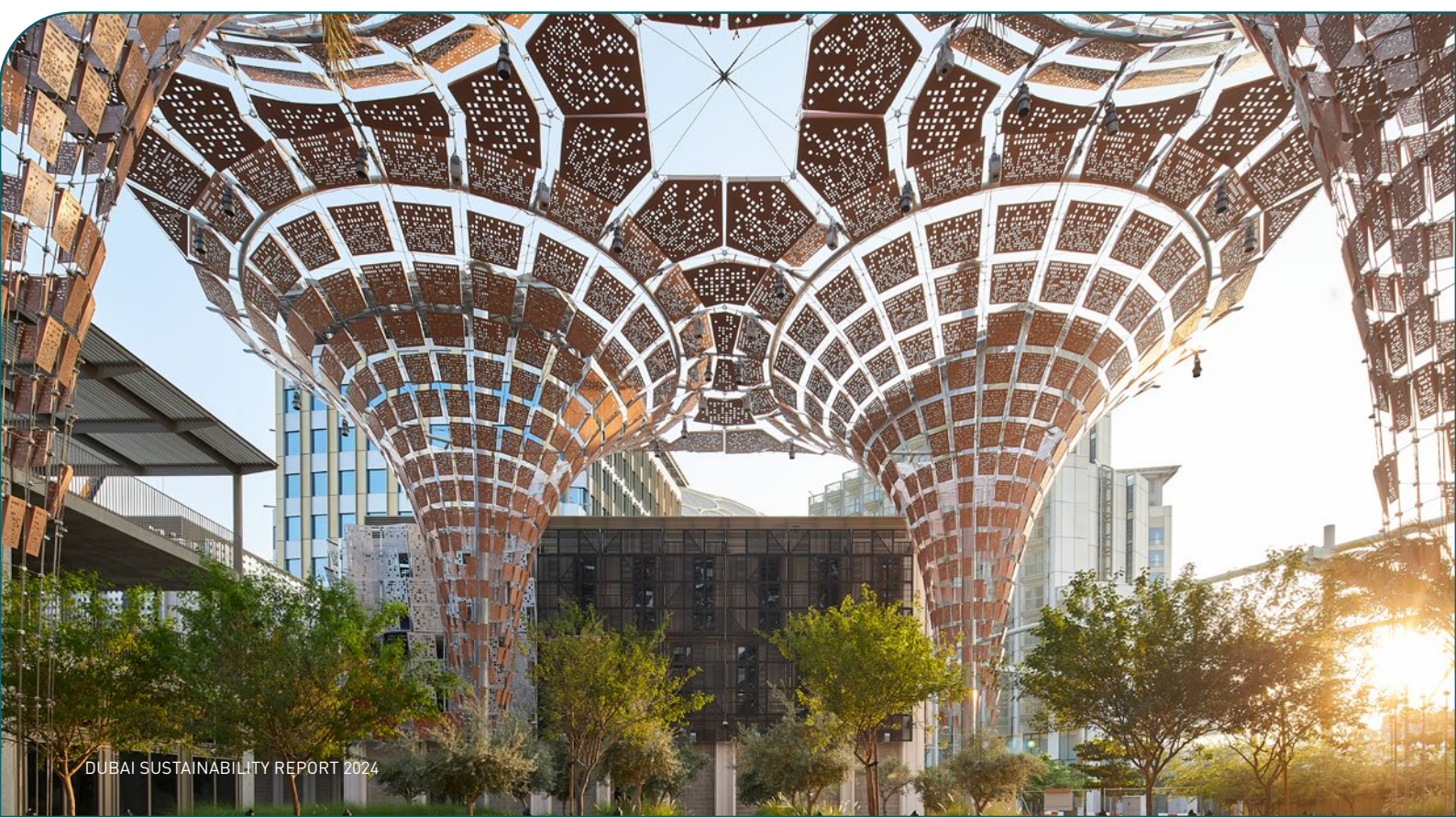
The city's location places it within convenient access to both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Its connectivity features, including the dedicated Route 2020 Metro Line, are designed to promote the use of public transport, thereby reducing individual carbon footprints.

Moreover, Expo City Dubai builds on the cutting-edge infrastructure set up for Expo 2020, repurposing key pavilions like Alif and Terra to serve as interactive educational centres focusing on mobility and sustainability, respectively.

As part of the broader Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, Expo City Dubai champions green technologies and efficient resource management. Designed according to 15-minute planning principles, it has incorporated solar energy, efficient waste management systems, and a host of other sustainability-oriented technologies. Water-saving innovations are also woven into the design of the city, with efficient irrigation systems and wastewater treatment facilities.

The construction of the site itself was also a showcase for world-leading sustainability practices. A huge undertaking by project management teams, architects, designers, engineers and consultants, 98 per cent of selected materials were procured in accordance with Sustainable Materials Guidelines, which incorporated parameters around embodied carbon content, recycling, responsible sourcing, regional procurement, and health impact.

The city serves as an inspirational model for other urban centres and perfectly encapsulated the themes of COP28. Its ability to seamlessly blend functionality, aesthetics, and responsible environmental practices makes it a beacon for global sustainability goals, as well as a living, breathing demonstration of what a sustainable urban future can look like.



EXPO CITY DUBAI INNOVATIONS

24/7 ENERGY MONITORING

EXPO CITY DUBAI BOASTS THOUSANDS OF SMART METERING SENSORS TO MONITOR ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND THE EFFICIENCY OF POWER, LIGHT, WATER AND CLIMATE CONDITIONING SYSTEMS

WORLD'S LARGEST 5G NETWORK

EXPO CITY DUBAI IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST PRECINCT PROVIDING FULL 5G WIRELESS COVERAGE

LANDMARK SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

EXPO CITY DUBAI IS HOME TO 123 LEED-CERTIFIED BUILDINGS – ONE OF THE LARGEST CONCENTRATIONS OF CERTIFIED ENERGY EFFICIENT BUILDINGS IN THE WORLD

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN WELLNESS

EXPO CITY DUBAI OFFERS A RANGE OF ALTERNATIVE GREEN TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS AND PROMOTES ACTIVE LIFESTYLES. THE PRECINCT IS HOME TO A 10KM CYCLING TRACK, A 5KM RUNNING TRACK AND 45,000 SQUARE METRES OF PARKS AND GARDENS

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

Recognising that collaboration is vital for achieving its sustainability aims, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), through its Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) initiative, continues to pursue alliances with key private sector and non-governmental stakeholders that are working toward the same goals.

Goumbook, a pioneering social enterprise in the UAE, collaborates with DET on initiatives such as Dubai Can, which has eliminated the use of more than 18 million 500ml single-use plastic water bottles in Dubai to date.

Goumbook was also responsible for The FoodWise Challenge, an educational campaign targeting schools and universities that promotes sustainable food choices and issues around food security, which aligns with the UAE's National Food Security Strategy 2051.

Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) is another important non-governmental collaborator, whose environmental preservation campaigns align with DET's objectives.

One of EEG's most successful initiatives is the urban afforestation programme, 'For Our Emirates We Plant'. Since its inception in 2007, the initiative has led to the planting of more than 2.1 million trees across the UAE, offsetting 12,467 MT of CO₂ emissions annually. This achievement equates to taking 2,657 cars off the road each year. The 2022 campaign attracted the involvement of 182 companies, 62 schools, and 209 families from across the country.

EEG's annual 'Clean UAE' programme is another popular initiative that last year drew more than 60,000 participants from across all seven emirates and resulted in the collection of more than 40,000 kilograms of waste from public spaces.

Through these collaborations, DET, along with its private sector partners, shows that public-private sector partnerships are crucial to the success of major sustainability initiatives. By fostering strong relationships in this area, Dubai is not only making major strides toward its own sustainability goals but is also setting a benchmark for other global destinations to follow.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

SPOTLIGHT ON HATTA: PIONEERING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WITH A FOCUS ON HERITAGE AND INNOVATION

WITH ITS RUGGED LANDSCAPES, STUNNING SCENERY AND 3,000-YEAR-OLD ARABIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HATTA HAS LONG CAPTIVATED VISITORS. NOW, IN LINE WITH THE HATTA MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN, THE POPULAR DESTINATION IS BOOSTING ITS REPUTATION AS A SHOWCASE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM.

At the heart of Hatta's ecotourism strategy lies the Hatta Mountain Reserve. Representing a distinctive environment in Dubai, the reserve encompasses elevations ranging from 250m to 1,060m, with wadi ecosystems of high archaeological and cultural significance. Notably, the reserve showcases some of the world's best-exposed Ophiolite formations – rare rock sequences uplifted from the ocean depths, characterised by serpentine minerals.

Recognising its ecological importance, the reserve is listed as a tentative UNESCO World Heritage site. Receiving 30 per cent of UAE's total annual rainfall, the region sustains a wide array of species, some of which are globally threatened, such as the Arabian leopard and Egyptian vulture.

Built in the early 1990s, two dams store rainwater, providing a habitat for wildlife, especially bird species like the Grey Heron and Western Reef Heron. Local communities have capitalised on the fertile land, establishing houses, farms, and cultivating trees like palm, sidr, mango and more.

Hatta's diverse terrain has become a magnet for mountain bikers, hikers, and nature enthusiasts. Hiking enthusiasts can explore Hatta by foot, trekking along winding wadis near the Oman border, experiencing varied terrains, from sandy patches to sharp rocks. The ever-growing popularity of Hatta's hiking trails, which currently span 32.6 kilometres across five routes, further showcases the destination's appeal.

Hatta is home to multiple eco-lodges, including Sedr Trails and Damani Lodges, with more in the development pipeline. Reflecting local culture and heritage, these facilities offer guests a highly immersive experience. Moreover, the Hatta Honeybee Garden, nestled amid Hatta's mountains, emphasises the ecological significance of bees. Apart from witnessing thousands of honey bees up-close, visitors can indulge in honey-inspired products, reflecting the region's dedication to sustainable practices.

The Dubai government is implementing ambitious plans to further grow Hatta's appeal as a thriving ecotourism destination and to establish Hatta as a showcase of Emirati heritage.

Developed in line with the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the **Hatta Master Development Plan** encompasses a holistic approach to not just developing Hatta as a tourism hub but to do so in a manner that is deeply rooted in the preservation of its natural habitat and cultural heritage. Key to its implementation are public-private partnerships that are providing crucial investment and job opportunities to bolster the local economy.

The Development Plan covers four key pillars: **Wellbeing, Tourism, Sports & Activities, and Sustainability**. It also aims to improve community services and develop innovative green transportation solutions.

Projects such as the redeveloped **Hatta Heritage Village** and the **Hatta Souq** provide visitors with a window into the history and traditions of the region.

The Hatta Heritage Village features 30 traditional dwellings constructed using mountain stones, mud and palm trunks. Natural resources sourced from the Hatta mountains have also been used to build the Hatta Souq to ensure harmony with its surroundings.

The souq itself will house shops selling local vegetables, fruits and products as well as cafes and restaurants, entertainment areas and spaces for food carts.

Efforts are also being made to showcase the area's many archaeological sites, including the Hatta tombs, which date back to the Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as the Falaj Al Shari'a, with a view to getting them ultimately listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The Hatta campaign will also highlight the area's historical monuments including the **Hatta South Tower** and the **Hatta North Tower**; the region's two main forts, the **Mountain Fortress** and the **Al-Hara Fortress**; and the **Davidic Aflaj**, an ancient irrigation system. Hatta has seven underground Aflajs (channels) built to channel the flow of underground water and three famous mosques: **Al Hail Mosque**, **Al Wali Mosque**, and most notably, **Al Sharia Mosque**, which was constructed more than 200 years ago.

New hiking tracks and mountain bike trails are being developed for outdoor enthusiasts keen to explore the area's natural beauty, while a visitor's centre will be built in Hatta to showcase the area's collection of tourism attractions.

The Master Plan includes a strong focus on economic development programmes and providing support for local entrepreneurs, who are being encouraged to develop innovative projects that will help stimulate economic growth, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are widespread and community based.

Hatta's development projects include the planting of more than 13,000 native trees and programmes supporting local farmers, thereby contributing to both environmental sustainability and the local economy. Furthermore, a special Supreme Committee, with representatives from the government and private sectors, has been established to roll out these initiatives responsibly. In another first, the Committee has developed an Urban Design Manual that provides design guidelines for buildings in the region's mountainous topography.

In line with Dubai's broader sustainability objectives, the Hatta Master Development Plan aims to create a destination that is deeply sensitive to its environment and committed to the welfare of its residents.

From supporting local farmers to creating sustainable transportation and housing, Hatta aims to set a new benchmark for how tourism and community development can go hand in hand.

SPOTLIGHT ON DUBAI HISTORICAL DISTRICT: BRINGING DUBAI'S HISTORY TO LIFE

The **Dubai Historical District** is testament to the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to preserve the emirate's unique heritage and culture as part of its broader sustainability objectives.


Located close to the iconic Dubai Creek, this massive urban regeneration project is transforming the Al Shindagha area of Dubai into a cultural hub for visitors, aiming to preserve the emirate's rich history.


Today, the area houses 60 key attractions, the majority of which showcase Emirati heritage. From museums and forts to art centres and traditional trading stores, there will be a broad spectrum of attractions awaiting tourists.

A unique feature of the district will be tours led by local Emirati guides. These tours are built around the district's five main pillars: tradition, heritage, trade, community, and place-making. The aim is to provide insights into Dubai's ancestral legacy, emphasising its rich art and cultural traditions.

KEY ATTRACTIONS

 **AL FAHIDI HISTORICAL NEIGHBOURHOOD:** A journey into the mid-19th century, this neighbourhood encourages visitors to immerse themselves in 'Old Dubai'. Traditional wind towers, art galleries, museums, and authentic Emirati food provide a rich cultural experience. The iconic Al Fahidi Fort, Dubai's oldest building located on the outskirts of the neighbourhood, is currently being renovated and will become a must-visit attraction that embodies centuries of history and evolution. Events like the **Sikka Art Fair and Heritage Week** further enrich the experience for visitors.

 **AL SHINDAGHA MUSEUM:** Visitors to this museum, which is set against the serene backdrop of Dubai Creek, can delve deep into Dubai's vibrant history through state-of-the-art multimedia experiences. Highlights include exhibitions showcasing Dubai's urban evolution, traditional crafts and jewellery, and ancient Emirati agriculture and farming methods.

 **SARUQ AL-HADID MUSEUM:** Opened in 2016 and set in the former residence of Sheikh Juma bin Maktoum Al Maktoum, this museum is a gateway to an ancient civilisation, showcasing artefacts recovered from the Iron Age archaeological site of the same discovered on the edge of the Rub Al-Khali desert.

PROTECTED AREAS AND CONSERVATION SITES

CONSERVATION AREAS DEMONSTRATE DUBAI'S ECO-TOURISM STRATEGY IN ACTION

Dubai is one of the fastest-growing cities in the world with unique ecosystems and wildlife. In order to preserve the emirate's natural beauty, Dubai authorities established eight protected areas in 2014.

Covering 31 per cent of Dubai's total landmass, the reserves represent the four major ecosystem types found in the emirate: mountain, desert, coastal and marine.

Working with a range of partners, Dubai Municipality works to protect, restore and promote the ecosystems and natural biodiversity of the reserves through a range of scientific research, monitoring, educational, and sustainable recreational initiatives.

AL MARMOOM DESERT CONSERVATION RESERVE

The Al Marmoom Desert Conservation Reserve is the largest protected area in Dubai, accounting for almost 23 per cent of the emirate's land mass. Situated in Saih Al Salam, it is home to native animals including the Arabian Oryx and gazelles, and supports diverse bird, reptile, and invertebrate species. As a Category II (National Parks) Protected Area under the IUCN, it is one of the first unfenced desert sanctuaries open for sustainable public recreation.



DUBAI DESERT CONSERVATION RESERVE

The UAE's first national park and one of its most biologically diverse environments, the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR) spans 225 square kilometres, or about 5 per cent of Dubai's land mass.

It is home to more than 50 plant species, 120 birds and 43 mammals and reptiles, including Arabian Oryx and gazelles. Located in the southeast of Dubai, it is one of the UAE's most popular destinations for desert lovers and wildlife safaris.

AL WOHOOSH DESERT CONSERVATION RESERVE

Located close to the Sharjah border, Al Wohoosh Desert Conservation Reserve is home to 91 species of fauna, from desert foxes to insects. Despite its relatively small size, the reserve boasts remarkable floral diversity, with native tree species ranging from Ghafs and Sidrs to Samars and Miswaks.





GHAF NIZWA CONSERVATION RESERVE

Despite being Dubai's smallest protected area, Ghaf Nazwa Conservation Reserve in Margham is home to one of the country's largest Ghaf Tree groves, a species that was declared the UAE's national tree in 2008. Managed by the Dubai Municipality, it also houses traditional farms growing palm trees and medicinal plants. Pottery fragments unearthed on archaeological digs suggest the area once sheltered nomadic travellers.

JABAL NAZWA CONSERVATION RESERVE

Located in the southeast of Dubai, Jabal Nazwa Conservation Reserve is renowned for its isolated 'mountain' of limestone, called an Inselberg, which is surrounded by sand dunes. The area, which supports a unique and rich biodiversity, is also known for its traditional honey making.



HATTA MOUNTAIN RESERVE

Located in the Hajar Mountains – the highest peaks of the eastern Arabian Peninsula – the Hatta Mountain Reserve is renowned for featuring some of the best exposed Ophiolite rock formations in the world. The reserve boasts an abundance of wildlife, thanks to its numerous wadis and two manmade dams, that were constructed in the early 1990s to store rainwater for agricultural use. These reserves are home to birds including the Grey Heron and Western Reef Heron. The abundance of water has also brought life to the surrounding areas, with palm, alban, sidr, mango, neem and tamarind trees growing in nearby farms.

JABAL ALI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Home to pristine beaches and mangrove forests, Jabal Ali Wildlife Sanctuary is renowned for being Dubai's last remaining breeding ground for the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), with an average of 40 nests being recorded in the area over the last five years. The reserve's vast sea-grass beds nurture fish and feed Green Turtles and Dugongs, while its coral reefs are frequented by a variety of cetaceans including bottlenose dolphins and finless porpoises. The sanctuary's international importance was recognised in 2015 when it was named an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).



RAS AL KHOR SANCTUARY

This expansive reserve located in the heart of Dubai Creek is home to thousands of native flamingo birds as well as more than 200 migratory species, whose number can collectively exceed 25,000 each winter. It was the first area in the UAE recognised under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

INTELAK: FOSTERING INNOVATION IN DUBAI'S TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR

Established in September 2016, Intelak – which in Arabic means ‘taking off’ – brings together budding entrepreneurs, ideators and mentors to build an innovative ecosystem that aims to redefine the future of aviation, travel and tourism industries not just in the Middle East but globally.

Comprising of three key platforms – Intelak Incubator, Intelak Accelerator and the Intelak Idea Lab – Intelak is an important enabler for entrepreneurial growth, supported by Dubai’s strategic investment priorities, sustainability ambitions and reputation as a hyper-connected, global hub for business.

Intelak, which is spearheaded by five principle partners comprising of The Emirates Group, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), Accenture, Microsoft and Amadeus, has proven to be a gamechanger, boosting innovation while helping steer these fast-growing industries towards sustainable development.

Crucially, Intelak recognises the importance of promoting sustainable practices across the travel and tourism ecosystem. Intelak’s intensive training programmes, workshops, and mentorship opportunities ensure that entrepreneurs are well-equipped to prioritise sustainability in their ventures.

One of the key facets of sustainability is ensuring economic inclusivity and growth. By emphasising local talent and solutions that cater to the specific needs of the UAE and the broader region, Intelak fosters a sustainable economic landscape.

Many start-ups under Intelak’s umbrella have developed solutions related to efficient resource utilisation. From optimising flight paths to save fuel, to creating platforms that streamline hotel bookings to reduce operational waste, these initiatives play a pivotal role in promoting the sustainable use of resources.

INTELAK SUCCESS STORIES

HANDISCOVER

Handiscover is the world’s first community-based holiday accommodation-booking website dedicated to People of Determination and those with physical disabilities.

RIGHTHEAR

Named Best Bootstrapped Startup of The Year in 2020 by Geektime, RightHear is turning public spaces into accessible environments for the blind and visually impaired, giving them the confidence to navigate public spaces independently.

ASSAIA INTERNATIONAL

Assaia’s AI-based software suite effectively manages and optimises airside processes for airports, airlines and ground handlers. Together with partner airports, Assaia’s real-time video analysis technology reduces aircraft turn-around time by more than 12 per cent, the occurrence of unsafe behaviour by more than 60 per cent, and the CO2 emitted during a turn by more than 30 per cent.

LUMITICS

Lumitics’ Smart Food Waste Trackers seamlessly measure, track and identify food waste in commercial kitchens. The device can be deployed to track leftover food from the buffet line and the production kitchen, helping reduce waste and boosting sustainability.

RECAPP

RECAPP is the first digital waste management solution in the UAE that provides door-to-door collection of recyclables for individuals and businesses, while rewarding responsible behaviour for its members. RECAPP centres the needs of the community, making it more feasible for residents and businesses to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles.

GHAITH WATER SYSTEM

Ghaith’s proprietary Atmospheric Water Generators provide clean and drinkable water by draining vaporised H2O from the atmosphere, absorbing and condensing it below its dew point to generate liquid water.

TRAVAXY

Travaxy empowers travel providers to better serve senior and disabled travellers. Its tailored distribution system enables agents to find the most accurate travel offers by disability type, ensuring customers enjoy a stress-free holiday.

INTELAK IN NUMBERS

2,950 APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED TO
DATE

3,500+ MENTORING
HOURS

140+ MENTORS
WORKING IN
THE INTELAK
NETWORK

US\$140m INVESTMENTS
RAISED BY
INTELAK ALUMNI

100 START-UPS
LAUNCHED
TO DATE

SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CAPITAL

DUBAI COLLEGE OF TOURISM SPEARHEADS DUBAI'S GREEN PUSH

The provision of high-level education and training is fundamental to successfully enacting Dubai's sustainable tourism plans. The Dubai College of Tourism (DCT) – the emirate's leading education services provider specialising in hospitality and tourism – is responsible for spearheading these efforts.

DCT's Dubai Sustainable Tourism course, which is accessible via the organisation's professional online learning platform, Dubai Way, was recently revamped to include practical modules on water and energy conservation, as well as sustainable procurement. Such enhancements equip professionals in the travel and hospitality sectors with the expertise to incorporate wholesale sustainable practices in their operations.

Since its inception in 2019, the sustainability course has been pivotal in amplifying Dubai's sustainable tourism credentials. Tangible results can be seen in hotels installing solar panels, creating water bottling plants, and initiating water conservation methods. The tourism sector has also seen a surge in on-site farms, fostering locally-sourced produce and supporting local suppliers – a move aligning with UAE's food security directives.

Moreover, the course now integrates case studies from key industry stakeholders including Atlantis, The Palm, Armani Hotel Dubai, and Four Seasons Resort Dubai, which shed light on some of the major sustainability initiatives being introduced across the emirate's hospitality ecosystem.

Almost 9,000 students have completed the course to date, with hundreds more poised to graduate in 2024.

DCT is also playing a major role in promoting Emiratisation in Dubai's tourism industry through a series of programmes designed to empower Emirati talent in the sector.

The Emiratisation initiatives encourage young nationals to join the tourism industry, preparing them for a suitable career based on their skills and competencies.

One of the most popular courses offered as part of the initiative is the Online Tour Guide training programme, which is open to local Emirati talent and national companies that employ highly qualified Emiratis.

DCT recognises the significant role UAE nationals can play in introducing visitors to Dubai to Emirati culture, heritage and customs. They are also ideally placed to provide insights and share experiences with tourists that stem from their own understanding of Emirati society and its unique culture and traditions.



ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL

ESTABLISHING DUBAI AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST INCLUSIVE DESTINATIONS

In line with Dubai's efforts to help establish itself as leading destination for People of Determination and their families, Dubai College of Tourism (DCT) offers an 'Autism and Sensory Awareness' course within the Dubai Way training platform.

The training module builds upon the 'Inclusive Service' training and 'Dubai Way' courses, ensuring that the city's tourist-facing workforce is equipped with the knowledge to provide visitors with the highest standard of service when visiting Dubai. The course also underpins DCT's aim to secure Dubai's position as a Certified Autism Destination, as designated by International Board for Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES).

IBCCES is recognised as the international standard for autism training and certification. Millions of people with special needs and their families from around the world look to them for guidance on travel questions and approved destinations.

DCT equips tourism and hospitality professionals with the necessary knowledge and experience to best accommodate visitors with special needs. It provides insights into autism perspectives, sensory awareness, and basic safety protocols. It also explains the unique and varied challenges travellers with autism face on a daily basis and provides practical guidance on supporting their needs in physical environments ranging from hotels and tourism attractions to public transportation.

As part of the process of confirming Dubai as a Certified Autism Destination, hotels, attractions, Dubai International Airport and Emirates Airline check-in facilities have been assessed by IBCCES auditors to ensure they meet a set of detailed requirements in terms accommodating people with hidden disabilities and their families. In June 2023, H Dubai became the first hotel to receive the certification, while other major organisations including Emaar Hospitality Group, Atlantis The Palm and Atlantis The Royal, have since been certified.

Some of Dubai's most popular tourism attractions



have also been certified, including Aquaventure, MOTIONGATE™ Dubai, The Green Planet, Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo and Aventura Park.

The drive to ensure Dubai becomes a certified autism-friendly destination is also supported by Dubai Airports' Sunflower lanyard initiative and the operator's various services for hidden disabilities. The discrete lanyard is worn by travellers with autism and permits access to family and priority lanes, both at departure and arrivals.

DUBAI WAY IN NUMBERS

128,000

STUDENTS
COMMENCED
TRAINING ON
THE PLATFORM

54,286

STUDENTS
PASSED DUBAI
WAY LEVEL 1

33,523

STUDENTS
PASSED DUBAI
WAY LEVEL 2

14,052

STUDENTS
TRAINED ON
INCLUSIVE
SERVICE

14,144

STUDENTS
COMMENCED
AUTISM AND
SENSORY
AWARENESS
TRAINING
SINCE APRIL
2023

INDUSTRY GUIDANCE & SUPPORT

DET BUILDS INDUSTRY SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

In line with its efforts to boost sustainability across the tourism ecosystem, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) continues to introduce a number of practical initiatives under the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) banner.

In 2017, DET launched the **12 Steps Towards Sustainability Manual**. The initiative, created in partnership with the Green Building Council, serves as a sustainability roadmap for the more than 800 hotels operating in the emirate. It provides practical steps designed to help them boost their environmental performance, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver greater operational efficiencies.

The manual is structured around four critical themes: **energy conservation, water conservation, waste management, and sustainability engagement**. In addition to offering practical solutions for resource conservation, it addresses employee training, guest engagement, and long-term green policy initiatives.

The guidelines encourage hotels to adopt new technologies like Building Management Systems (BMS) and control sensors, in line with Dubai's

vision to become a smart city. The ultimate goal is to create a hospitality ecosystem where sustainability is not an afterthought, but an integral part of daily operations.

In consultation with key public and private stakeholders, DET has refined the manual over time to ensure it continues to meet Dubai's broader sustainability objectives, while introducing new innovations and practices for hoteliers. Ultimately, the manual is an evolving document, inspiring hotels and their staff to find new ways to boost their contribution to Dubai's environmental sustainability goals.

DET has also introduced a number of educational outreach programmes designed to promote engagement with the industry. In 2017, it launched the **Hospitality Sustainability Board Game**. The interactive game, which has featured prominently at a variety of industry events over the ensuing years, encourages industry stakeholders to reduce their carbon footprint, while fostering a collaborative environment where the private sector can more actively support DST initiatives.

Ultimately, the board game simplifies complex sustainability concepts, helping hoteliers grasp how sustainable practices can benefit their operations, while driving home the manual's guidelines.

These initiatives demonstrate DET's commitment to establishing sustainability as a core pillar of Dubai's tourism ecosystem. With these practical steps, DET has set a benchmark not just for Dubai but for tourism industries worldwide.





DIGITAL REPUTATION SCORE

DUBAI: A WORLD LEADER IN SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

As the world pivots towards a greener future, Dubai's commitment to sustainable hospitality has shone through. A recent analysis of digital reputation scores, based on the perceived environmental sustainability of hotels located in seven major global cities, offers compelling insights into Dubai's commitment to the cause.

While the world was grappling with the challenges of the past few years, Dubai's hotels stood tall, with the sector reporting an impressive digital reputation score of 8.4 in 2019, 2021, and 2022. Even despite a slight dip to 7.8 in the first half of 2023, Dubai still ranked among the top cities in the list.

Over the years, Dubai has either led or been among the top two cities in terms of these environmental sustainability scores. This consistent performance underscores the emirate's leading credentials in promoting environmental sustainability in its hotel industry compared to its global counterparts.

CLOSING REMARKS

Dubai and the UAE have implemented bold citywide and national sustainability strategies, and the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) is pleased to have shared this in-depth report detailing some of the efforts and initiatives involving the city's tourism and hospitality sectors that are putting the ambitious targets within reach.

Driven by the city's visionary leadership, Dubai's sustainability agenda will continue to support global programmes, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and align with the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda, D33, Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, and the UAE's Net Zero 2050 strategy.

Underpinned by 100 transformative projects, the D33 Agenda is critical not just economically, but also for establishing Dubai as one of the world's most sustainable and liveable cities. Reshaping the way people live and work is a key part of Dubai's sustainability objectives to make the emirate even more inclusive and accessible, to serve the expectations and needs of People of Determination.

Hosting last year's UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) was a milestone for the emirate, as the event concluded with nearly 200 parties agreeing to advance the 'beginning of the end' of the fossil fuel era before the end of the decade.

DET is committed to building on this momentum of COP28 by continuing to collaborate with key public and private sector stakeholders and partners in spearheading a new era of sustainability for the tourism and hospitality sectors across the emirate.

From implementing the highest standards and backing campaigns to change consumer behaviour, to engaging with DET on key initiatives and embracing educational opportunities, their support has been instrumental, and we look forward to working together as we embrace a greener future and make Dubai a leading global sustainable destination.