AL-REHLA | Issue 1311
Tourism | Daily | Digital
19 October 2026

Winner of the "Most Influential Tourism Newspaper in the Arab World 2026" Award by AFUSU

Saudi Arabia Leads Regional Hotel Development with 110,000 Rooms in a $90 Billion Pipeline

100,000 Smart Routes and 950 Landmarks: Digital Maps Guide Visitors Through Islam's Two Holy Mosques

Tunisia's Testour Pomegranate Festival Returns for Its 10th Edition with Six Days of Heritage, Arts and Local Flavours

Dubai Brings Together 135 International Leaders and Experts at World Green Economy Summit, Spotlighting Business Tourism





Abu Dhabi Signs Agreement to Host World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings in 2029, Bringing Global Event Back to UAE After 26 Years

Official agreement signed in Bangkok confirms Abu Dhabi as host of the October 2029 meetings, bringing together international financial leaders and placing business tourism in the spotlight.

Abu Dhabi – UAE | Al Rehla

The United Arab Emirates has signed a formal agreement with the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to host their 2029 Annual Meetings in Abu Dhabi, marking a significant milestone in the capital's preparations to welcome one of the world's most prominent international economic gatherings.

The agreement was signed in Bangkok, Thailand, on October 18, 2026, as the institutions concluded their 2026 Annual Meetings.

It follows the official selection of Abu Dhabi as the host city in April 2026 and will bring the meetings back to the UAE for the second time, 26 years after Dubai hosted the event in 2003.

Agreement Signed by Four Leading Financial Officials

The signing ceremony brought together Mohamed bin Hadi Al Hussaini, UAE Minister of State for Financial Affairs; Khaled Mohamed Balama, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE; Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group; and Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF.

The agreement establishes a framework for coordination between the organisations responsible for hosting the meetings.

The Annual Meetings rank among the world's major international economic gatherings, addressing financial stability, economic growth, development financing and challenges facing the global economy.





Kristalina Georgieva
Managing Director of the IMF



Ajay Banga
President of the World Bank Group



Khaled Mohamed Balama
Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE



Mohamed bin Hadi Al Hussaini
UAE Minister of State for Financial Affairs

From Bangkok to Abu Dhabi

The World Bank Group and IMF Annual Meetings are generally held in Washington, D.C., for two consecutive years before moving to another member country in the third year.

Bangkok hosted the 2026 edition from October 12 to 18, welcoming representatives of member countries, government officials, business leaders, experts and international organisations.

The IMF currently has 191 member countries. However, the final number of countries and delegations attending the 2029 meetings in Abu Dhabi has not yet been announced.

Business Tourism at the Heart of the Event

The 2029 Annual Meetings hold particular significance for Abu Dhabi's business tourism sector, given the participation of finance ministers, central bank governors, financial institution executives, investors and international media representatives.

Hosting such a gathering

requires extensive conference facilities, hospitality services, hotel accommodation, air and ground transportation, as well as supporting events and professional meetings.

The event will provide an international platform to showcase Abu Dhabi's infrastructure, hospitality offering and capacity to host major global conferences.

However, the hosting agreement does not constitute the announcement of specific hotel contracts or confirmed economic returns.

Official estimates of tourism expenditure, visitor numbers and hotel room nights associated with the 2029 meetings have yet to be released.

Who Is Behind the Hosting Agreement?

The UAE will coordinate preparations through its relevant government and financial institutions in cooperation with the World Bank Group and the IMF.

The governing bodies of the two international institutions approved Abu Dhabi's selection in April 2026, before the process advanced to the formal hosting agreement in October.

The UAE Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of the UAE are involved in the institutional arrangements, while detailed implementation plans, including specific venues, facilities and contracted service providers, have not yet been fully announced.

Alrehla Perspective | What Will the Meetings Bring to Abu Dhabi?

Unlike conventional commercial conferences, the World Bank Group and IMF Annual Meetings bring together senior economic policymakers, global financial institutions and representatives of international organisations.

For Abu Dhabi's hospitality and tourism industries, the event's significance lies in the accommodation, transport, conference and supporting services required by participating delegations.

A clearer assessment of its economic impact will depend on the release of official organisational and attendance figures.

The signing of the agreement represents a confirmed institutional milestone, while the event's actual tourism and financial outcomes will only become measurable as the 2029 meetings take place.

100,000 Smart Routes and 950 Landmarks: Digital Maps Guide Visitors Through Islam's Two Holy Mosques

Available in seven languages and accessible through more than 650 QR codes, the interactive services help pilgrims navigate facilities and monitor crowd density in the Tawaf and Sa'i areas in real time.







Makkah – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Smartphones have become practical navigation tools for visitors to the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, following the introduction of interactive digital maps capable of generating more than 100,000 routes between landmarks and facilities.

Complemented by electronic services displaying real-time crowd density in the Tawaf and Sa'i areas, the technology helps pilgrims navigate the Two Holy Mosques using updated location information and operational guidance.

These initiatives form part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to enhance the pilgrimage and Umrah experience while improving visitor mobility in high-density areas.

950 Landmarks and Facilities Mapped

The interactive mapping system features more than 950 points of interest, including entrances, prayer areas, restrooms, elevators, service centres and information desks, alongside major religious landmarks.

The platform can generate more than 100,000 dynamic routes, with navigation guidance updated to reflect operational changes, crowd movements and temporary closures.

More than 650 QR codes also provide

" The smart interactive mapping system represents a qualitative leap in spatial guidance, helping facilitate the movement of visitors and Umrah pilgrims while improving the efficiency of navigation within the Two Holy Mosques."

Eng. Ghazi bin Dhafer Al-Shahrani, CEO of the General Authority for the Care of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque



direct access to the maps, allowing visitors to navigate the facilities using their smartphones without downloading an additional application.

Real-Time Crowd Monitoring in Tawaf and Sa'i Areas

On July 17, 2026, the General Authority for the Care of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque announced an electronic service providing live crowd-density indicators for the Tawaf and Sa'i areas.

The service allows pilgrims to check congestion levels and identify less crowded routes based on updated information.

The digital tools complement on-site guidance services and interactive information screens installed throughout the Two Holy Mosques.

Digital Transformation Led by the Holy Mosques Authority

Engineer Ghazi bin Dhafer Al-Shahrani, Chief Executive Officer of the Authority, inaugurated the interactive mapping system in February 2026, highlighting its contribution to improved wayfinding, visitor safety and access to updated operational information.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Saqr, Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Digital Transformation, explained that the maps rely on field data and integrate with a metric addressing system and colour-coded location identification.

The services also include accessible routes for people with disabilities, identifying elevators and facilities designed to accommodate their needs.

Alrehla Perspective | How Can Pilgrims Use the Service?

Pilgrims and visitors can access the official platform at alharamain.gov.sa and select the interactive map for their chosen mosque. Alternatively, they can scan designated QR codes displayed at various locations.

Available in seven languages, the maps allow users to identify their location, select a destination and view an appropriate route.

Before entering the Tawaf or Sa'i areas, visitors can also consult the crowd-density indicators while continuing to follow on-site instructions, particularly when entrances are temporarily closed or routes are changed.



Dubai Brings Together 135 International Leaders and Experts at World Green Economy Summit, Spotlighting Business Tourism

The global summit opens on October 21, bringing together government officials, investors and international companies to discuss sustainable finance, energy and technology.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Dubai is preparing to welcome 135 speakers, including government officials, business leaders, investors and international experts, for the 12th World Green Economy Summit (WGES), taking place on October 21–22, 2026, at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

The event reinforces Dubai's position as an international hub for economic conferences and business tourism, bringing together leading voices in sustainable investment, technology and finance.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the summit will take place under the theme "From Success to Scale: Showcasing the Green Economy."

Four Key Themes Connect Investors and Decision-Makers

The summit is organised by the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), and the World Green Economy Organization (WGEO).

Its programme focuses on four key themes: energy technology and infrastructure, business strategies and transformation, water and food security, and finance.

Discussions will also address artificial intelligence, governance, supply chains and





"The summit's organizers seek to bring perspectives closer together and strengthen cooperation among governments, the business sector, investors, international institutions, and innovators."

Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer
Vice Chairman of the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy.

the circular economy, alongside practical solutions and established initiatives in energy and sustainability.

International Leaders and Professional Networking Opportunities

The announced speaker lineup includes Arshad Mansoor, President and CEO of the Electric Power Research Institute; Bashar Al Natoor, Global Head of Islamic Finance at Fitch Ratings; and Avinash Kumar, President and Co-Founder of Earthood.

Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, Vice Chairman of the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy and Managing Director and CEO of DEWA, reaffirmed the organisers' commitment to strengthening cooperation among governments, businesses, investors, international institutions and innovators.

What Does the Summit Mean for Dubai's Business Tourism Sector?

The summit's tourism significance lies in its ability to attract professional delegations that use Dubai's conference facilities, hotels, transport networks and hospitality services.

According to organisers, the summit typically brings together more than 3,300 participants from over 30 countries annually. These figures, however, should not be interpreted as confirmed attendance for the 2026 edition.

No verified figures have yet been released regarding tourism expenditure generated by this year's summit or investment agreements concluded specifically during the event.

Alrehla Perspective | Opportunities for Business Travellers

The summit provides opportunities for professional networking with organisations involved in energy, finance and sustainability.

Prospective participants are advised to register in advance through the official website, review the conference programme, and arrange accommodation and transportation to the Dubai World Trade Centre.

72 HOURS | ALREHLA TRAVEL GUIDE

72 Hours in Tetouan: From the Secrets of Its Andalusian Medina to the Mediterranean Coast

Three days exploring historic souks, museums, Spanish-era architecture and Tamuda Bay — a journey through Morocco's "White Dove" beyond the conventional tourist trail.

Tetouan – Morocco | Al Rehla

Tetouan offers travellers an opportunity to experience centuries of history, rich cultural traditions and Mediterranean relaxation within a three-day escape. Here, Andalusian architecture stands alongside traditional Moroccan souks and European-style buildings, while the Mediterranean coastline lies just a short drive from the city centre.

Known as the White Dove, Tetouan is particularly appealing for its walkable historic quarters, allowing visitors to explore much of its cultural heritage on foot before heading towards the beaches and resorts that line the nearby coast.

Day One | Inside the Andalusian Medina

Begin your journey at Feddan Square, one of Tetouan's most recognisable public spaces, before entering the historic medina, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997.

The old town is enclosed by approximately five kilometres of historic walls, punctuated by seven gates. Beyond them, narrow alleyways reveal a distinctive Andalusian influence in the architecture, arrangement of markets and design of traditional homes.

A visit to Souk El Gharsa El Kebira offers a glimpse into Tetouan's artisanal heritage, with traditional textiles, handcrafted products and workshops preserving centuries-old skills.
Continue towards the Mellah, the city's historic Jewish quarter, where another chapter of Tetouan's multicultural past comes into view.

As evening approaches, explore the streets beyond the medina walls, where buildings dating from the Spanish Protectorate period create a striking architectural contrast, reflecting the city's layered history and cultural influences.

Day Two | A Journey Through Museums and History

Dedicate your second day to discovering Tetouan's museums, beginning with the Archaeological Museum, home to collections unearthed from important sites across northern Morocco, including Lixus, Tamuda and Ksar Sghir.

Its exhibitions feature Roman mosaics, pottery, coins and bronze artefacts, offering a fascinating introduction to the region's ancient civilisations.

The museum's Andalusian garden also houses five mosaic panels dating back to the second century AD.

According to Morocco's National Foundation of Museums, the museum welcomes visitors from 10:00 AM to 6:00





PM, except on Tuesdays.
Continue to the Loukach Museum of Religious Heritage, which explores Morocco's religious, scholarly and artistic history through exhibitions dedicated to Quranic schools, Islamic arts and historic libraries.

According to its official website, the museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Together, these museums reveal a side of Tetouan that goes far beyond its picturesque streets, highlighting the intellectual and artistic traditions that shaped the city.

Day Three | From Martil to Tamuda Bay

Reserve your final day for Tetouan's Mediterranean coastline, beginning in Martil, where the seafront promenade provides an inviting setting for a leisurely stroll and a meal overlooking the water.

From there, continue towards M'diq and Tamuda Bay, an elegant coastal destination known for its beach resorts, water sports facilities and yacht marinas.

According to the Moroccan National Tourist Office, the area's sandy bay stretches for approximately 15 kilometres, offering a combination of seaside accommodation, relaxation and marine activities.

During October, coastal walks and waterfront dining remain appealing options, although swimming and water sports depend on weather and sea conditions.

Travellers can choose to stay in central Tetouan for convenient access to the historic city, while arranging transportation for the coastal excursion on the third day.



My Travel Experiences

Silent Tourism: The Luxury of Travel in a World Seeking Tranquility

By:
Dr. Hossam Darwish
President of the Afro-Asian Union for Tourism
Secretary-General of the Arab Tourism Media Club

In a world where life is moving ever faster, and cities are increasingly overwhelmed by noise, screens, and relentless rhythms, a new form of tourism is emerging with a different message: silent tourism, where psychological well-being becomes an essential part of the travel experience.

Tourists are no longer seeking only famous landmarks and souvenir photographs. Many are increasingly looking for destinations that offer an opportunity to escape daily pressures, restore their sense of balance, and reconnect with nature, away from the noise and demands of everyday life.

Silent tourism is built around simple yet profound experiences, such as staying in peaceful mountain villages, walking through forests, meditating on beaches, visiting oases, and enjoying accommodation in small establishments that respect the environment and personal privacy, while reducing reliance on digital devices throughout the journey.

The real opportunity behind this form of tourism lies in its ability to transform tranquility into economic value. Rather than focusing solely on increasing visitor numbers, destinations can develop tourism products that prioritize the quality of the experience, longer stays, and responsible spending, while preserving natural resources and local identity.

Egypt possesses promising assets for this type of tourism, from the oases of the Western Desert to the mountainous regions of South Sinai, and from peaceful coastal villages to natural landscapes that offer visitors an experience distinct from conventional tourism.

However, success requires professional planning, workforce training, and intelligent digital marketing that reaches travelers seeking privacy and serenity, without turning peaceful locations into overcrowded destinations that lose their distinctive character.

The future of tourism will not depend solely on the places we visit, but also on the feelings we bring home with us.

Perhaps the greatest luxury of tomorrow's journey will not be what we see, but what we rediscover within ourselves.





Tunisia's Testour Pomegranate Festival Returns for Its 10th Edition with Six Days of Heritage, Arts and Local Flavours

The Tunisian city of Testour, in the governorate of Béja, is preparing to host the 10th edition of the Pomegranate Festival from 27 October to 1 November 2026, under the slogan "Heritage... The Flavour of the Future". The event brings together cultural tourism, agricultural heritage and artistic performances, highlighting pomegranates as one of the region's local products that help showcase its identity and attract visitors.

According to a report published by Tunis Digital on 6 October 2026, the festival programme includes artistic performances, scientific lectures, exhibitions and activities for children, alongside evening concerts featuring a number of Tunisian artists. The six-day event offers visitors an opportunity to discover Testour's distinctive cultural and heritage character.

Six Days of Tunisian Arts and Heritage

The festival opens on 27 October with the inauguration of its 10th edition at the Tichilla Hotel at 10:00 a.m. The opening programme features an Aissaouia performance entitled "Testour Malouf", followed by a scientific lecture on pomegranate quality and ways to enhance its market value. The exhibition will open at 3:30 p.m., ahead of an evening performance by artist Fawzi Ben Gamra.









On 28 October, the programme continues with activities for children and performances of muwashshahat and Malouf, while 29 October will feature artistic performances, including the "Majorettes of Ksar Hellal" and a performance by Ahmed Mejri, in addition to an evening event entitled "Lovers of the Nuba".

On 30 October, the programme includes a lecture on strengthening the resilience of agricultural systems, followed by an artistic evening entitled "Mahfel Jeraba" and a concert by singer Nawal Acham. The programme for 31 October focuses on western Tunisian culinary arts and Malouf, alongside an evening performance by singer Imen Cherif.

The festival concludes on 1 November with activities for children and a performance by artist Ramzi Abdelwahab, followed by the Sufi evening "Al-Halla", featuring Ahmed Zaitoun.

Pomegranates and Local Products at the Heart of the Tourism Experience

Beyond its artistic performances, the festival also aims to promote pomegranates as a local product, enhance their value and support economic and cultural activity in the region. The scientific lectures focusing on pomegranate quality and marketing offer an opportunity to explore ways to develop the product's marketing potential and strengthen its value in the marketplace.

The event also provides an opportunity to discover local heritage and learn about the food, crafts and cultural activities associated with the region. The festival can support tourism in Testour by attracting visitors and stimulating accommodation, restaurant and local retail services during the event.

A Tip for Tourists Visiting Testour

If you are planning to visit Testour during the festival, it is best to set aside at least a full day to explore the activities and stroll around the city. Checking the daily programme in advance will help you choose the performances that best suit your interests.

Visitors are encouraged to sample local pomegranate products and visit exhibitions and artisans to support the local economy. It is also advisable to ask about sales locations and prices before making purchases. Those travelling from other governorates should consider booking accommodation early and confirming performance times and venues before setting off.

For a richer experience, visitors can combine attending the festival with exploring Testour's distinctive architectural character and heritage, while respecting historic sites and helping keep public spaces clean.



Dubai Completes 107 Projects Worth AED 1.6 Billion to Enhance Beaches, Parks and Leisure Destinations

Beach developments account for 36% of investment, while more than 100 commercial opportunities have been introduced for the private sector. Khor Al Mamzar Beach has welcomed over 1.75 million visitors since opening.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Dubai Municipality has announced the completion of more than 107 public infrastructure and community development projects worth AED 1.6 billion in 2026, covering beaches, parks, recreational areas and urban improvements. The initiative also includes more than 100 investment and leasing opportunities within public facilities, supporting the expansion of outdoor experiences for residents and tourists.

The completed projects highlight Dubai's continued investment in public destinations, from beaches and landscaped parks to nature trails and community spaces, offering visitors more opportunities to explore the emirate beyond its established tourist attractions.

Beach Developments Account for 36% of Investment

Beach development projects accounted for 36% of the announced investment, equivalent to approximately AED 576 million, while urban beautification, landscaping and planting initiatives represented 22%, or approximately AED 352 million.

The completed works included improvements to Al Mamzar's coastal facilities, the development of neighbourhood parks, upgrades to public spaces and additional projects in Dubai's rural areas.

Among the notable coastal developments is Khor Al Mamzar Beach, which opened in May 2026. Spanning approximately 2.75 million square feet, the destination offers facilities for water sports, walking, cycling and night swimming, alongside recreational areas and visitor amenities.

Khor Al Mamzar Beach Welcomes 1.75 Million Visitors

Dubai Municipality's visitor figures indicate growing demand for its recreational destinations, with public parks recording an 18% increase in visitor numbers during the first half of 2026 compared with the corresponding period a year earlier.

Quranic Park registered a 47% increase in visitors, while Mushrif National Park recorded growth of 20%.

Meanwhile, Khor Al Mamzar Beach welcomed more than 1.75 million visitors between its opening in May and the municipality's September 2026 reporting period, demonstrating strong public interest in the newly developed waterfront destination.

New Community Destinations Beyond Traditional Tourist Areas

The completed projects also extended to the Hewi Dubai initiative in Nad Al Sheba, neighbourhood parks, community majlis



that the value of public infrastructure projects extends beyond construction expenditure to their contribution to everyday life and urban development.

Bader Anwahi
Chief Executive Officer of the Public Facilities Agency at Dubai Municipality

facilities and infrastructure serving rural districts.

These developments broaden access to public spaces across the emirate, providing settings for family recreation, sports and social activities.

They also reflect Dubai's emphasis on integrating outdoor experiences and green spaces into everyday urban life, expanding the range of places residents and visitors can enjoy.

More Than 100 Investment Opportunities

Dubai Municipality has made available more than 100 investment and leasing opportunities across its public facilities, with a particular focus on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and increasing private-sector participation in commercial and recreational services.

These opportunities are linked to activities serving visitors to parks, beaches and other public destinations, adding a commercial dimension to urban development projects.

The announced opportunities do not represent completed investment agreements or realised revenues, but rather commercial spaces and activities made available to potential investors.

Dubai Municipality Highlights Community and Economic Value

Bader Anwahi, Chief Executive Officer of the Public Facilities Agency at Dubai Municipality, emphasised that the value of public infrastructure projects extends beyond construction expenditure to their contribution to everyday life and urban development.

He highlighted the completion of more than 107 projects valued at AED 1.6 billion as evidence of the scale of improvements undertaken across the emirate's **public facilities.**

Anwahi also underscored the importance of enabling businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to participate in commercial opportunities within public destinations, extending their economic contribution beyond traditional recreational and community functions.

Tourism and Economic Benefits Beyond Infrastructure

The tourism significance of these investments lies in improving the quality and accessibility of outdoor destinations while providing facilities and experiences suited to families, beachgoers and visitors interested in recreational activities.

The upgraded public spaces also create opportunities for hospitality, food and beverage outlets, leisure operators and visitor services, connecting investment in public infrastructure with local commercial activity.

The developments align with the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan and the Dubai Quality of Life Strategy 2033, which emphasise green spaces, community facilities, sustainable development and accessible public amenities.

Together, Dubai Municipality's completed projects demonstrate how investment in everyday urban infrastructure can contribute to the visitor experience, complementing the emirate's hotels, major attractions and internationally recognised landmarks.

Jordanian Mansaf: The Dish That Brings People Together and Earned UNESCO Recognition

From jameed and tender lamb to the traditions of communal hospitality, the story of a dish that has become a symbol of Jordanian identity.



Amman – Jordan | Al Rehla

In Jordan, mansaf is far more than a traditional meal. It is an expression of generosity, hospitality and social connection, deeply rooted in family occasions, celebrations and gatherings where people come together around a shared table.

Although its ingredients are relatively simple, the dish carries a cultural significance that extends well beyond food, encompassing traditional preparation methods, serving customs and the social relationships built around it.

Jameed: The Ingredient That Defines Mansaf

Traditional mansaf is prepared with lamb or goat meat, cooked with spices in a rich yoghurt-based sauce and served with rice or bulgur over a layer of thin shrak bread.

At the heart of the dish is jameed, a dried, fermented yoghurt product reconstituted with water, which gives mansaf its distinctive flavour and character.

The ingredients are traditionally arranged on a large communal platter and garnished with nuts, particularly toasted almonds.

According to UNESCO, mansaf is historically connected to Jordan's agricultural and pastoral traditions, where dairy products and meat have long formed an important part of local food culture.

This connection reflects the close relationship between traditional cuisine, the natural environment and the communities that preserve it.



From the Kitchen to the Heart of Social Life

The cultural importance of mansaf begins long before it reaches the dining table.

Its preparation can become a family occasion in itself, bringing relatives together to exchange stories, conversations and culinary knowledge passed down through generations.

During major celebrations, large platters are carried to gathering spaces where several guests traditionally share the same dish.

UNESCO notes that five to seven people may gather around a single platter, reflecting a longstanding custom of communal dining.

Eating mansaf with the right hand is another traditional practice associated with the dish, although individual plates and utensils have also become common in contemporary settings.

Recipes and serving customs vary between regions and families, yet mansaf continues to hold a central place in Jordanian social life.

UNESCO Recognition in 2022

In 2022, UNESCO inscribed "Al-Mansaf in Jordan, a Festive Banquet and Its Social and Cultural Meanings" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The recognition went beyond the dish itself, acknowledging the traditions associated with its preparation and presentation, as well as its role in strengthening community identity and social bonds.

UNESCO also highlighted the important role of women in passing down mansaf recipes and cooking skills across generations, alongside the contribution of educational institutions to safeguarding these traditions.

The inscription placed an internationally recognised spotlight on a culinary practice that remains deeply embedded in everyday Jordanian culture.

A Traditional Flavour Supporting Local Producers

Mansaf's economic significance extends to the agricultural and food products used in its preparation, particularly jameed, ghee and other dairy products.

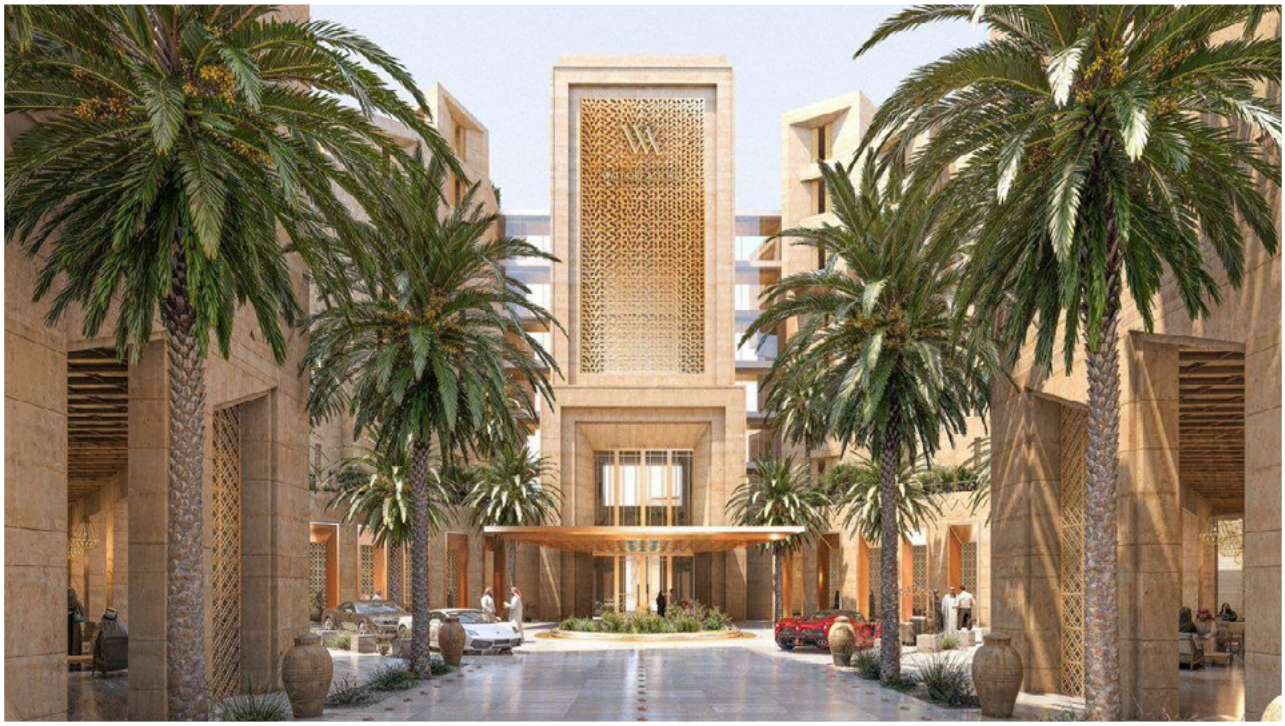
In Jerash Governorate, Jordan's official tourism website highlights a local experience involving a woman who produces jameed and traditional dairy products, offering visitors an opportunity to discover the methods behind these foods.

The initiative illustrates how culinary heritage can support small businesses and rural tourism while creating economic opportunities for women and local communities.

For travellers, such experiences offer a deeper connection to Jordanian culture, allowing them to discover not only the flavours of traditional cuisine but also the people and practices that keep it alive.

Mansaf remains much more than a dish served to guests. It is a living social tradition that reflects Jordan's relationship with hospitality, the land and family, offering visitors an authentic taste of the country's cultural identity.

Saudi Arabia Leads Regional Hotel Development with 110,000 Rooms in a $90 Billion Pipeline



HVS study identifies 200,000 hotel rooms in the development pipeline across the Gulf and North Africa, including 88,000 under construction, with Egypt ranking second at 42,000 rooms.

Amman – Jordan | Al Rehla

Saudi Arabia has emerged as the largest hotel development market across the Gulf and North Africa, with approximately 110,000 rooms in various stages of development, forming part of a regional hotel and resort investment pipeline valued at an estimated $90 billion, according to a study released by international hospitality consultancy HVS in September 2026.

Published ahead of the Future Hospitality Summit (FHS World) in Dubai, the study identified approximately 200,000 hotel rooms in the region's development pipeline, including 88,000 rooms currently under construction and another 25,000 in the final planning stages.

The findings highlight the scale of investment activity reshaping the region's hospitality landscape, with Saudi Arabia accounting for approximately half of the regional development pipeline.

Saudi Arabia Leads Regional Hotel Expansion

Saudi Arabia's hotel development pipeline spans several major destinations, including Riyadh, Makkah, Madinah, Diriyah, NEOM, the Red Sea and AMAALA.

The projects cover a broad range of hospitality segments, from hotels serving religious tourism and pilgrimage to luxury resorts, branded residences and upper-midscale accommodation.

This diversity reflects the expanding scope of hospitality investment across the Kingdom, encompassing religious tourism, business travel, leisure destinations and coastal developments.

However, the 110,000-room figure represents the overall development pipeline, rather than rooms already completed or entirely under construction.





the scale of the hotel development pipeline reflects continued investor confidence in the region's long-term tourism and hospitality fundamentals

Hala Matar Choufany
President of HVS Middle East, Africa and South Asia

Projects are at different stages of planning and execution.

Egypt Ranks Second as the UAE Expands Its Hospitality Portfolio

Egypt ranked second in the regional hotel development pipeline, with approximately 42,000 rooms across projects in various stages of development.

These projects are concentrated in destinations including Cairo, the North Coast and the Red Sea, alongside integrated tourism and mixed-use developments.

The United Arab Emirates ranked third, with continued hotel development activity across Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah, including major integrated tourism projects such as Wynn Al Marjan Island.

The study also highlighted the diversity of hospitality investments across the region, including luxury resorts, branded residential developments, mixed-use destinations and international hotel brands expanding into more accessible accommodation segments.

HVS Highlights Long-Term Investor Confidence

Hala Matar Choufany, President of HVS Middle East, Africa and South Asia, said the scale of the hotel development pipeline reflects continued investor confidence in the region's long-term tourism and hospitality fundamentals.

She highlighted the increasing diversity of project financing models, including





government-backed investment and public-private partnerships, particularly within Saudi Arabia's major tourism destinations.

Choufany also pointed to growing investor interest in mixed-use developments and branded residences as part of the evolution of hospitality investment and operating models across the region.

From Hotel Investment to Integrated Tourism Destinations

The findings illustrate a broader transformation in regional hospitality investment, as hotel developments increasingly form part of integrated destinations combining accommodation, entertainment, retail and visitor services.

These developments are economically significant because of their links to construction, hotel operations, asset management, tourism services and supply chains.

Nevertheless, the value of the development pipeline should not be confused with investment already deployed or tourism revenue generated.

Assessing the actual economic performance of these projects requires separate data on completed hotel openings, occupancy rates,



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8.57 Million Visitors and VND 46 Trillion in Tourism Revenue: How Phu Quoc Became a Tourism Powerhouse in Vietnam

The island accounts for nearly 79% of An Giang's tourism revenue, while a 60% surge in international visitors supports its hospitality, entertainment and tourism sectors.

Phu Quoc – Vietnam | Al Rehla

Surrounded by turquoise waters and tropical beaches, Phu Quoc has evolved far beyond a traditional island getaway. The Vietnamese destination has emerged as one of southern Vietnam's leading tourism economic hubs, welcoming more than 8.57 million visitors and generating an estimated VND 45.976 trillion in tourism revenue during the first nine months of 2026.

According to figures released by An Giang provincial authorities, visitor arrivals increased by 30.5% year-on-year, while tourism revenue climbed 47.7%, exceeding the island's annual revenue target by approximately 1%.

International Arrivals Reach 1.92 Million

Phu Quoc welcomed more than 1.92 million international visitors during the nine-month period, representing growth of 60.2% compared with the previous year.

In September alone, foreign arrivals reached 208,447, an increase of 85.2% year-on-year, despite the month falling within the island's rainy season.

International air connections linking Phu Quoc with Asian and European markets have supported visitor traffic, alongside the destination's expanding accommodation options and diverse tourism experiences.

Beyond Beaches: Building an Entertainment Economy

Phu Quoc's tourism offering now extends well beyond its luxury resorts and white-sand beaches, encompassing marine activities, large-scale entertainment attractions and evening experiences.

The Hon Thom cable car, stretching across the sea, is among the island's best-known attractions. Entertainment complexes also feature productions such as Kiss of the Sea, alongside experiences designed to extend visitors' activities into the evening.

Pham Trung Luong, former Deputy Director of Vietnam's Tourism Development Research Institute, has emphasised that successful destination development requires innovative, interconnected tourism products that bring individual attractions together into a cohesive visitor experience.

Phu Quoc Generates Nearly 79% of An Giang's Tourism Revenue





An Giang province recorded approximately VND 57.922 trillion in tourism revenue during the first nine months of 2026, with Phu Quoc accounting for nearly 79% of the total.

The stronger growth in revenue compared with visitor arrivals indicates an increase in average tourism revenue per visit.

However, the available figures do not establish whether the increase resulted from higher daily spending, longer stays or changes in tourism service prices.

Airport Expansion and Convention Facilities Ahead of APEC 2027

Vietnamese authorities are progressing with major infrastructure projects in Phu Quoc ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings scheduled for 2027.

The developments include the expansion of Phu Quoc International Airport, construction of a convention centre and a multipurpose performance venue, and improvements to transport links and road infrastructure.

According to an August 2026 report by the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam, approximately 98% of the convention centre's concrete structural work had been completed, while concrete works at the new airport terminal had reached around 95% at that time.

These projects form part of Vietnam's officially announced preparations for APEC 2027, although facilities still under construction should not be considered operational.

Alrehla Perspective | What Does Phu Quoc Offer Arab Travellers?

Phu Quoc combines tropical beach escapes, luxury resort accommodation, marine activities and evening entertainment, allowing visitors to enjoy varied experiences during a single holiday.

Vietnam permits eligible foreign passport holders to stay in Phu Quoc visa-free for up to 30 days, subject to applicable entry requirements.

Travellers planning to visit other destinations in mainland Vietnam should check the relevant visa conditions before departure.

HERITAGE BECOMES INVESTMENT GOLD

The Al-Shorbagy Secret and Europe's Historic Castles: Why Are Guests Willing to Pay ?More to Sleep Within the Walls of History

By Azhar Youssef

Ask a traditional hotel investor twenty years ago to describe their ideal project, and the answer would probably have been a soaring tower of glass and steel in the heart of a major city.Today, however, that equation is changing.

Glass towers have become increasingly similar across global capitals, while a 200-year-old stone building in a historic neighbourhood has emerged as a rare asset attracting the attention of major developers.

Recent developments suggest that history is no longer confined to the pages of school textbooks. It is increasingly being transformed into a potentially lucrative investment asset, offering hospitality properties a competitive advantage that modern developments cannot easily replicate.

Historic Cairo: A $5 Million Investment to Create an Exceptional Hotel

In the heart of Fatimid Cairo, directly opposite Bab Al-Futuh and overlooking the historic minarets of Al-Hakim Mosque, an investment agreement worth $5 million was signed this week between Egypt's Urban Development Fund and a consortium comprising Anania and Bayt Al Qahira.

The project is not about building a massive hotel with hundreds of rooms. Instead, it involves transforming a neglected heritage building into Al-Shorbagy Boutique Hotel, featuring just 36 accommodation units: 22 rooms and 14 suites.

Why only 36 units?

Because heritage boutique hospitality follows a distinctive investment philosophy: fewer rooms, higher rates and enduring appeal.

Western and Gulf travellers visiting Al-Muizz Street are no longer necessarily satisfied with a brief daytime tour before returning to a distant modern hotel.

Increasingly, they seek the experience of opening their bedroom windows at dawn to centuries of history, with the call to prayer echoing from ancient minarets.

For that sense of exclusivity, some travellers may be willing to pay a premium exceeding 40% compared with modern hotels, according to the proposition behind this investment approach.

Expedia's Global Data: Travellers Are Searching for a Sense of Place

Egypt's heritage hospitality initiative is not an isolated development.

According to the Unpack '27 global travel report released by Expedia Group this week, emerging travel preferences reinforce the appeal of accommodation with a distinctive historical character.

The report highlights two notable findings:

- 20% growth in bookings for accommodation in castles and historic buildings worldwide.
- 56% of travellers selecting hotels based on their architectural character and distinctive historical atmosphere, rather than star ratings alone.

Today's traveller is increasingly drawn to experiences that move beyond standardised hotel rooms.

Guests want somewhere with a story to tell, a distinctive identity and an atmosphere worth capturing and sharing.

Converting historic properties into luxury boutique hotels can deliver two benefits simultaneously: an alternative approach to capital investment through adaptive reuse rather than constructing new high-rise buildings, and a hospitality product positioned around authenticity and exclusivity.

The commercial success of such developments, however, ultimately depends on acquisition costs, restoration requirements, operating efficiency, room rates and market demand.

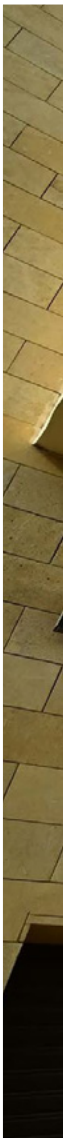
Alrehla's Smart Investor Notebook

Authenticity has commercial value. Rather than demolishing historic buildings to replace them with conventional structures, investors can explore restoration and adaptive reuse. Preserving architectural identity may support premium room pricing, although profitability depends on the full cost of renovation and operation.

Boutique luxury creates differentiation. Small heritage hotels, typically featuring 20 to 50 rooms, can appeal to discerning guests seeking privacy and cultural depth. Their operational efficiency must nevertheless be assessed individually, as smaller properties do not automatically have lower costs per room.

Location is part of the experience. When the historic street outside a hotel's entrance becomes an extension of the guest experience, the surrounding city effectively adds value to the property's hospitality offering without requiring the developer to recreate its cultural attractions.





Coming Next in Part Two"When Oman Builds with Earth: The Billion-Dirham Story Behind the Revival of Meknes' Historic Walls and Al Batinah's Traditional Homes."


فندق الشوربجي
BOUTIQUE HOTEL AL-SHORBAGY





Religious Tourism Drives Asian Travel Growth as Bookings to Mecca from Indonesia Rise by Over 50%

Traveloka's Q3 2026 report highlights growing demand for heritage and nature destinations, while Melbourne records more than triple the bookings from Singapore.

Singapore – Alrehla

Mecca recorded a surge of more than 50% in accommodation bookings from Indonesia during the third quarter of 2026, compared with the same period a year earlier, according to the Traveloka SEA Index, which highlighted strong interest in religious, cultural and nature-based destinations across Southeast Asia.

Released on October 14, the report examined travel search and booking trends across five key markets—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam—using platform data collected between July and September 2026.

Mecca, Jeddah and Medina Among Fastest-Growing Destinations

Religious tourism emerged as a notable trend among Indonesian travellers, with Mecca, Jeddah and Medina entering the top 10 fastest-growing international destinations for bookings.

Domestically, Wonosobo and Sukabumi also gained momentum, reflecting interest in highland destinations and cooler climates.

Heritage Destinations Attract Malaysian and Vietnamese Travellers

Malaysia showed growing interest in Indonesia's cultural heritage attractions, particularly the historic Borobudur Temple, alongside increased bookings to Magelang and Yogyakarta.

Meanwhile, bookings from Vietnam to Luang Prabang in Laos more than doubled year-on-year, albeit from a smaller starting base, while searches for New York increased by 152%.

Melbourne Leads as Nature Destinations Gain Ground

Melbourne, Australia, recorded more than triple the accommodation bookings from Singapore, reflecting interest in destinations offering distinctive seasonal experiences.

In Thailand, Khao Yai emerged as the fastest-growing domestic destination, while Chongqing, China, led international growth.

Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island also stood out, with booking growth exceeding the benchmark rates across all five markets covered by the index.



Flames Engulf Lyon Tourist Office as Protests Reach the Heart of France's Visitor Destinations

Masked groups attack a visitor information centreuhb in Place Bellecour as authorities respond to unrest across Lyon, Paris and other French cities.

Lyon – France | Alrehla

Place Bellecour, one of Lyon's most prominent tourist landmarks, became the scene of clashes and vandalism after a tourist information office was set on fire on Saturday, October 17, 2026, during wider demonstrations over social and economic issues across France.

Footage published by French and European media showed flames rising from the building as security forces attempted to disperse violent groups and secure access for emergency firefighters.

Tourist Information Office Caught in the Clashes

According to reports by Le Monde and Euronews, masked individuals attacked the tourist office in Place Bellecour, damaging parts of its frontage before the fire broke out.

Police deployed tear gas and water cannons during the confrontations, while local authorities reported that violent groups had obstructed firefighters attempting to reach the scene.

Lyon Mayor Grégory Doucet condemned the vandalism, emphasising that public buildings belong to the community and must not become targets of violence.

Authorities had not released a final financial assessment of the damage.

Protests Spread Beyond Lyon

The incident occurred during nationwide demonstrations on October 17, involving students, trade union members and other protesters expressing concerns over rising living costs and the condition of public services.

Paris, Marseille and other French cities also experienced clashes and vandalism, although several demonstrations remained peaceful.

French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the violence, stressing the importance of respecting the law and holding those responsible for attacks accountable.

From Screen to Wellness Journey: Egyptian Study Explores How Digital Images Influence Health Tourism Decisions



Ain Shams University examines the role of online content in shaping travellers' intentions to visit health tourism destinations, with Presidential Health Adviser Mohamed Awad Tag El-Din chairing the doctoral examination committee.

Cairo – Egypt | Alrehla

Can a single image of a wellness destination inspire someone to travel? This question was at the heart of a doctoral dissertation discussed at the Faculty of Commerce, Ain Shams University, on October 17, 2026, examining how digital destination imagery influences travellers' intentions to visit health tourism destinations, with a particular focus on environmental wellness tourism in Egypt.

The research addresses an increasingly important issue for Egypt's tourism industry: how to communicate the country's natural wellness attractions through credible, engaging digital content.

From Digital Content to Travel Decisions

Researcher Ayat Abdel Nabi Mohamed Abdel Nabi presented her doctoral dissertation, titled "The Mediating Role of the Digital Image of Health Tourism Destinations in the Relationship Between Content and Visit Intentions: A Field Study of Environmental Wellness Tourism in Egypt."

The study examined the relationship between information and images published online, the perceptions audiences develop of wellness destinations, and how those perceptions relate to their intentions to visit.

It also explored digital marketing as a means of showcasing Egypt's natural wellness resources. However, the available coverage did not disclose detailed statistical findings or measurable effects on tourist arrivals.

Presidential Health Adviser Chairs Academic Committee

The examination committee was chaired by Dr. Mohamed Awad Tag El-Din, Presidential Adviser for Health and Prevention, alongside Dr. Gehan Abdel Moneim Ragab, the dissertation supervisor and a professor of marketing, and Dr. Reem Mohamed El-Alfy, Assistant Professor of Business Administration.



Dr. Farid Moharram El-Garhy, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, welcomed the presidential adviser during his visit to the university.

In earlier statements, Tag El-Din had highlighted Egypt's medical expertise, healthcare institutions and supporting capabilities as important foundations for developing health tourism services.

Tourism and Economic Significance

The research highlights the importance of building traveller confidence through reliable online content, an essential consideration for destinations offering wellness and therapeutic experiences.

Its subject matter provides a research framework that tourism businesses and destination marketing organisations can draw upon when reviewing how health and wellness services are presented to prospective visitors.

No new tourism investment projects or measurable economic returns resulting from the study were announced.

Alrehla Perspective | Choosing a Wellness Destination

Before booking a wellness holiday, travellers should verify the services offered, check facility licences and the qualifications of healthcare providers, and avoid relying solely on promotional photographs.

It is equally important to distinguish between relaxation-focused wellness experiences and medical treatment, review the full cost and booking conditions, and seek medical advice when travelling to address a health condition.





Oman Air and Finnair Expand Connectivity to Helsinki and Melbourne Through New Codeshare Partnership

The agreement introduces connections via eight European gateways and Bangkok, expanding travel options to and from Oman without launching new direct flights.

Muscat – Oman | Alrehla

Oman Air and Finnish carrier Finnair announced a new codeshare agreement on Sunday, October 18, 2026, expanding travel options between Oman, Finland and Australia through a network of European and Asian airports.

The commercial partnership strengthens Oman's international air connectivity and marks Oman Air's first newly announced codeshare agreement since joining the oneworld alliance in June 2025.

The agreement enables the Omani national carrier to extend its reach through Finnair's network, offering passengers access to additional destinations beyond its existing nonstop services.

Helsinki Accessible Through Eight European Gateways

Under the agreement, passengers can connect to Helsinki via London Heathrow, where Oman Air operates 11 weekly flights from Muscat.

The partnership also covers Finnair-operated services to Helsinki from Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Munich, Zurich, Milan and Rome.

These connections provide additional travel options between Oman and Northern Europe by linking the carriers' existing networks, without introducing a direct Muscat–Helsinki service.

Melbourne Connections via Bangkok

The partnership also extends to Australia, offering connections to Melbourne through Bangkok, which Oman Air serves with two daily flights.

Finnair is scheduled to begin operating its Helsinki–Melbourne service via Bangkok on October 25, 2026, introducing another connecting option to Australia through the combined network.

As members of the oneworld alliance, passengers of both airlines may also benefit from reciprocal frequent-flyer privileges, subject to membership tiers and applicable conditions.

A Commercial Partnership Built on Global Alliance Membership

Rohan Patel, Head of Partnerships and Alliances at Oman Air, highlighted the agreement as a further step in leveraging the carrier's oneworld membership and expanding travel options through Helsinki and Finnair's international network.

Fredrik Wildtgrube, Senior Vice President of Alliances and Airline Partnerships at Finnair, welcomed Oman Air passengers to the Finnish carrier's network and pointed to opportunities for further cooperation between the two airlines.

Neither airline disclosed the financial value of the agreement or specific passenger-volume targets.



Gulf Air Group Earns Global Workplace Certification as Mumtalakat Leads Bahrain's Aviation Sector

Great Place to Work certification highlights employee experience across the group that owns Bahrain's national carrier and the operator of Bahrain International Airport.

Muharraq – Bahrain | Alrehla

Gulf Air Group has earned the Great Place to Work certification, an internationally recognised accreditation assessing organisational culture and employee experience, highlighting the importance of human resources management within one of Bahrain's leading aviation groups.

The certification body listed Gulf Air Group among its accredited organisations in Bahrain, according to records updated in October 2026.

Certification Based on Employee Feedback

The Great Place to Work certification is based on the Trust Index methodology, which evaluates key aspects of the employee experience, including credibility, respect, fairness, organisational pride and camaraderie.

Unlike annual rankings of the best workplaces, the certification is an organisational accreditation based on employee feedback and the certification body's assessment criteria. It does not, in itself, represent a competitive ranking among airlines.

A Group Owned by Bahrain's Sovereign Wealth Fund

Gulf Air Group Holding was established in 2010 to consolidate aviation assets under Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, the Kingdom's sovereign wealth fund.

The group's portfolio includes Gulf Air, Bahrain's national carrier; Bahrain Airport Company, the operator of Bahrain International Airport; and Gulf Aviation Academy.

The group is chaired by Khalid Hussain Taqi, who also serves as Managing Director of Local Impact Investments at Mumtalakat.

Alrehla Perspective | Why Does Workplace Culture Matter to Tourism?

Airlines and airports depend heavily on skilled professionals across ground operations, hospitality, passenger services and operational management.

From this perspective, the certification reflects aspects of the group's workplace culture, although it does not directly demonstrate improvements in flight punctuality, passenger satisfaction or financial performance.

The verified information available does not establish a direct link between the certification and increases in tourism traffic or revenue.

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