

ABOUT \$6B EARNED BY UAE TOURISM AS THEY GET 14.5M HOTEL GUESTS



Dubai: According to the federal government's tourism regulatory body, the National Council for Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA), Dh 22 billion was generated last year from the United Arab Emirate's (UAE) tourism industry.

14.5 million guests were served in hotels and hotel apartments during that period with guest nights reaching slightly over 44.3 million. This was 15 per cent higher than levels witnessed in the year 2010 as the occupancy rate of hotels rose to 70 per cent.

His highness, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is the Prime Minister and Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates and also the Ruler of Dubai inaugurated the Arabian Travel Market yesterday and is now in operation.

His highness was accompanied by the, President of Dubai Civil Aviation, Shaikh Ahmad Bin Saeed who is also the CEO of Emirates Airline and Group, Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways chief executive officer and other dignitaries

Huge interest

The event, which is expected to last for four days, is expected to attract about 23,000 visitors from all over the world and more than 2,400 exhibitors from 87 countries.

Sheikh Mohammad , after the opening ceremony viewed UAE's 2011 latest statistics on its hotel industry.

Topping the list were visitors from Europe and countries. They were followed closely by those from Asia. Citizens from GCC countries (Bahrain, Oman Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) were third whereas Visitors from North American countries came in forth.

Achievements of private sector establishments and the government institutions that seek to promote tourism to attract tourist and foreign investments was hailed by the ruler of Dubai.

He further expressed confidence the human resource and national material and also emphasized on the importance and need of a modern and diversified tourism industry as a means of diversifying the sources of national income.

The Shaikh further noted that the UAE was now becoming a favorite destination for tourists and foreign investors.

The Director General of the National Council for Tourism and Antiquities (NCTA), Mohammad Khamis Al Muhairi, said that UAE's tourism industry had 14.5 million guests in 2011, translating to a 15% growth.

He further remarked that there were 10.5 European guest nights, 9.3 million Asians and six million nationals from the GCC countries.

Al Muhairi said that the tourism industry's contribution to UAE's GDP had reached 7 per cent in 2011 and that he expected it to grow further this year.

The NCTA Director General also said that by 2015, the United Arabs Emirates expects its hotel room capacity to reach 20,000 rooms. 70 per cent of these hotels, according to him are located in Dubai.

The Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) however said that the tourism industry contributed 31 percent of Dubai's GDP last year. This was an increase from the previous year and they hoped that there would be a rise this year.

The DTCM Director General, Khalid Bin Sulayem said that they expected a rise in the numbers of hotel guest in the year 2012, which will translate to a 10 percent rise. This is against last year's hotel guests and cruise passengers who numbered slightly over 9.3 million.

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