

## Cultural Heritage Tourism in the Middle East - October 2015

Report Price: £295.00 | \$477.74 | €374.74

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“The Middle East is struggling with modernism, much as Western civilisation did during the Age of Enlightenment. For tourists, there’s always the allure of ‘this could be dangerous’. A lot of travellers want to have a ‘real’ cultural experience and in the Middle East you get that still. It’s not Disney!”

– Dr Robert Chadwick, co-director Wadi ath-Thamad Project, Jordan

This report looks at the following areas:

- Which country has the most UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Middle East?
- What is causing cultural traditions to be lost in the Middle East?
- Why is tourism as a job creator particularly important in certain countries?
- How did Dubai become the world’s busiest airport for international passengers?
- How has Oman retained its cultural heritage?
- Why has the number of tourist visits to Petra (Jordan) fallen so dramatically?

Terrorism, not tourism, dominates the headlines from the Middle East. Every day, the world is bombarded with a litany of grim news – the rise of the so-called ‘Islamic State’ (IS or ISIS), suicide bombers in Iraq, the civil war in Syria, young people being radicalised by jihadist ideas, millions of displaced people in squalid refugee camps, bulging at the seams.

Given that daily diet of catastrophes, it is not surprising that the entire region appears to be in meltdown. That is certainly not the case. Outside the conflict zones, international tourism in the Middle East is growing, albeit at a modest pace.

In 2014, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Middle East registered 51.04 million foreign tourist arrivals – fewer than in 2010 when the region welcomed 54.70 million foreign tourists but the interim years were affected by the fallout from the Arab Spring. Based on the latest data, however, international tourism is slowly recovering, not yet to 2010 levels, but moving in that direction.

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 “Egypt – where it all begins”  
 Iran  
 “Must See Iran”  
 A country rich in cultural heritage sites  
 Israel

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"Land of creation"

Jordan

"Delve into an antique land"

Instability in Syria and Iraq has a spill-over effect

Oman

"Beauty has an address – Oman"

A high-end destination

A mix of old and new

Saudi Arabia

"An enriching experience"

Venues accessible to non-Muslims

Promoting cultural heritage tourism

United Arab Emirates

"Seven Emirates – One Destination"

A bustling centre of commerce

Amid the modernity, culture has its place

Abu Dhabi

Dubai

Sharjah

Ajman

Umm al-Quwain

Ras-al-Khaimah

Fujairah

## The UAE – A Leading Aviation Hub

The world's busiest airport for international passenger traffic

A legal battle with American carriers

The 'super-connectors'

Emirates

Etihad Airways

The low-cost carriers

Air Arabia

FlyDubai

International tourist arrivals

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Leading destinations

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What draws foreign tourists to the Middle East?

Geopolitics plays a role

## International Tourism Revenues

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Figure 9: International tourism receipts, selected countries, 2010-14

- Source markets can influence the flow of tourism revenues
- Currency devaluation can work in a tourist's favour – or not

## Deterrents to Travel in the Middle East

- A negative image dampens demand
- Areas that are off-limits
- Legalities

## What Next?

- A ready market within MENA
- The rise in 'halal tourism'
- Looking towards the future

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