

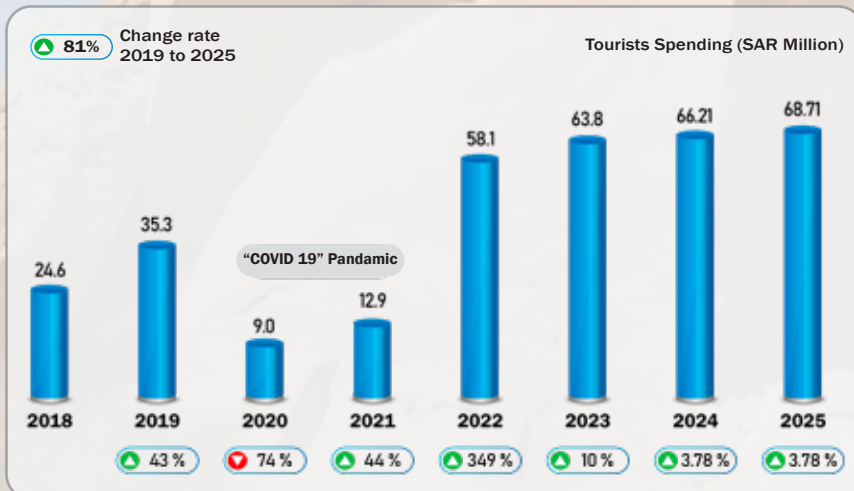
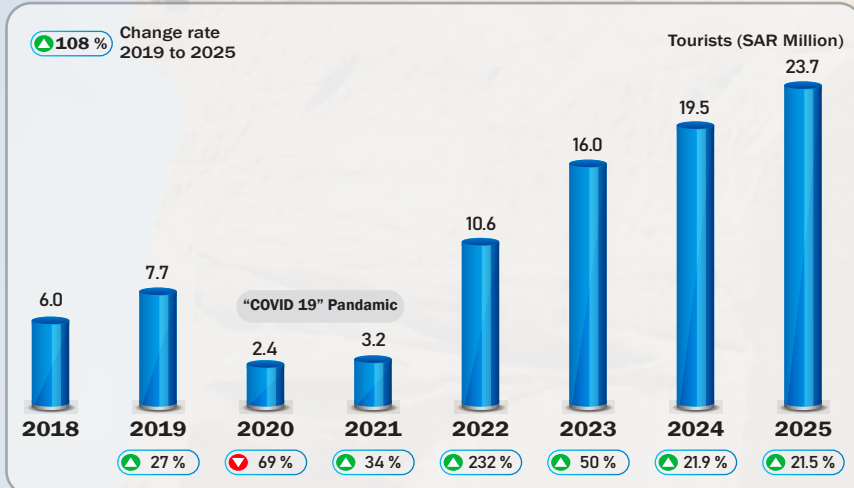


From Heritage to Hospitality

Saudi Arabia's **Cultural Tourism Vision**

Saudi Tourism's Expanding Horizon

Annual Growth of Inbound Tourism for non-Religious Purposes



Source: Ministry of Tourism, *Insights Advisory*

“Saudi Arabia’s cultural tourism is gaining momentum, fueled by **Vision 2030’s** diversification push and growing investment in heritage and entertainment assets. Government initiatives—like themed cultural years, such as the **2024** Year of the Camel, and open data on cultural infrastructure—are elevating visibility. Similarly, destinations such as Riyadh, AlUla, and the Eastern Province are becoming key anchors in a globally competitive, multi-nodal tourism landscape.”

Inbound Tourism Expenditure In 2024 Q3 YTD

123.3 Billion SAR

▲ 10% year-over-year

Tourism by Sector 2024

42%
Religious

24%
Leisure

22%
VFR*

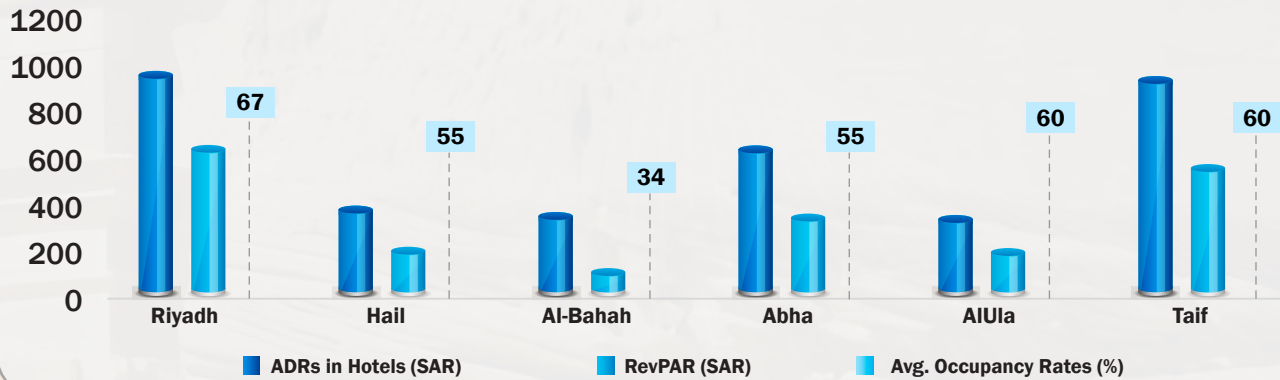
06%
Business

06%
Other

*Visiting Friends and Relatives

From Riyadh to AlUla: Mapping Saudi Arabia's Heritage-Driven Destinations

Performance Indicators of Tourist Hospitality Facilities (2024)



Source: GASTAT, Insights Advisory



Riyadh: Modern Heritage Capital



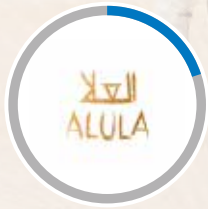
Hail: Land of Petroglyphs



Al-Bahah: Saudi's Hidden Cultural Haven



Abha: The Cultural Jewel of Asir Province



AlUla: Where Ancient Wonders Meet Timeless Landscapes



Taif: City of Roses

Cultural engagement is accelerating across the Kingdom, with over **80%** of Saudis aged **15+** attending at least one cultural or entertainment event. This trend aligns with **Vision 2030's** focus on culture as a key driver for tourism, signaling demand for cultural assets.

Spotlight on Flagship Cultural Festivals Driving Tourism Appeal



Janadriyah National Festival (Riyadh)

Held annually near Riyadh, Janadriyah Festival draws over a million visitors with traditional arts, cuisine, and **19-km** camel races. **Since 1985**, it has evolved into a two-week event featuring daily races and a rotating guest country.

Winter at Tantora Festival (AlUla)

Winter at Tantora, held in AlUla, blends global music, art, and heritage in a historic desert setting. Named after a traditional sundial, the festival aligns AlUla's rich past with modern tourism goals.



Buraydah Dates Festival (Qassim)

Held in Qassim from August for 2–3 months, the Buraydah Dates Festival showcases **45+** date varieties, creates **4,000+** seasonal jobs, and drives regional sales exceeding **SAR 1 billion (US\$266 million)** annually.



Taif Rose Festival (Taif)

The annual Taif Rose Festival, held at Al Rudaf Park, features live performances, music, and perfume-making workshops. In its second edition, it set a Guinness World Record with a **84,450-rose** basket, created over **168** hours by **190** volunteers.



Saudi's Cultural Fabric: Urban Heritage & Antiquities

The National Register of Antiquities now includes **8,848 sites** - underscoring Saudi Arabia's sustained commitment to cultural documentation and heritage preservation.

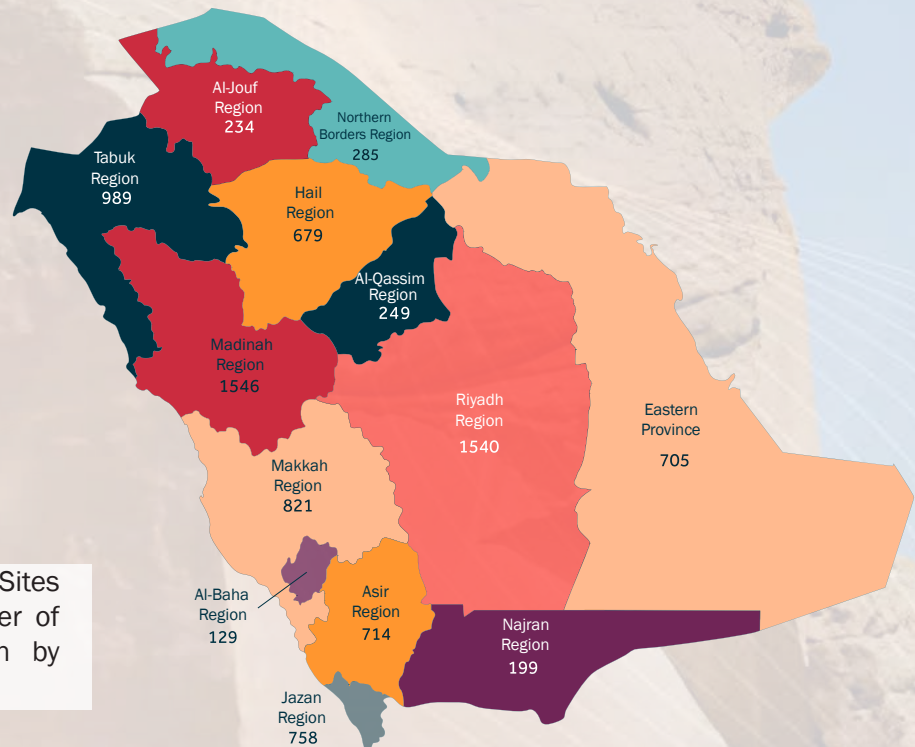


Figure 1: Number of Archeological Sites Registered in the National Register of Antiquities and their Distribution by Saudi Region till the end of 2023

Source: Ministry of Culture

The National Register of Urban Heritage also includes **3,677 sites**, reflecting ongoing research and documentation efforts in preserving urban heritage across Saudi Arabia.

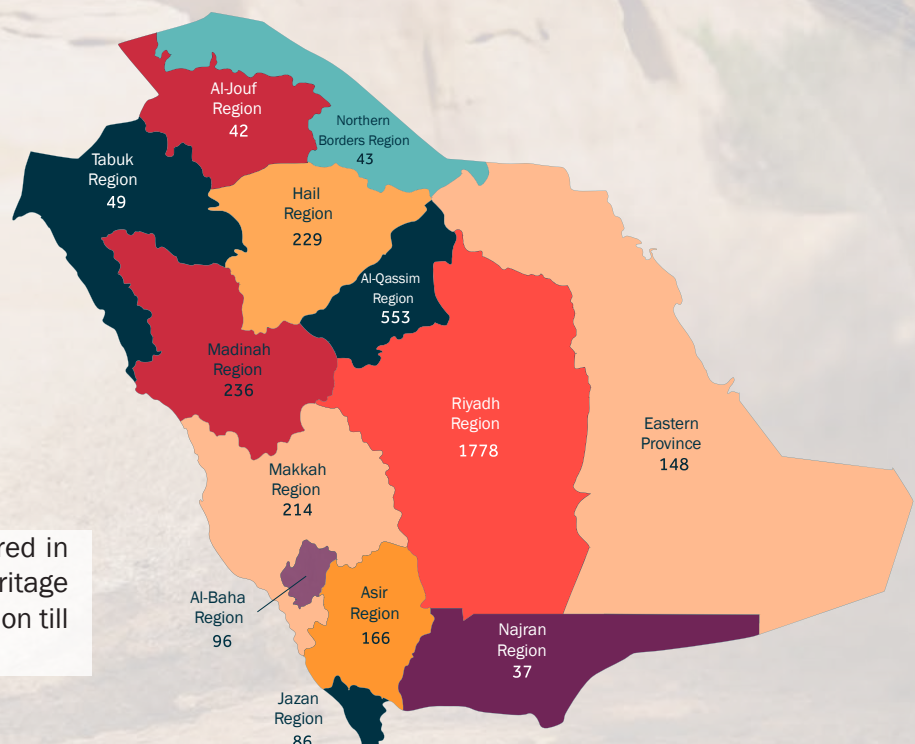


Figure 2: Number of Sites Registered in the National Register of Urban Heritage and their Distribution by Saudi Region till the end of 2023

Source: Ministry of Culture

Kingdom's Cultural Capital as a Lever for Cultural Tourism

The Kingdom strengthened its intangible cultural footprint with two new UNESCO inclusions—Harees dish and metal engraving—bringing the total to 13 listed items. This cultural diplomacy strategy is further supported by heritage documentation efforts, including 5,200 cataloged music pieces and 72 archaeological projects, reinforcing Saudi Arabia's global cultural positioning.

The Kingdom is leveraging AI to advance Arabic language processing through initiatives like the ALLaM app and Osus system. These efforts enhance global integration of Arabic while facilitating language interaction for experiential cultural tourists.

The Kingdom is collaborating with international artists and institutions to project a cultural narrative aligned with global sensibilities. **The Desert X AIUla 2024 edition, with 14 installations set in Wadi AlFann**, exemplified this approach—merging contemporary art with AIUla's natural heritage to engage global audiences in immersive, place-based storytelling.

Annual cultural festivals and themed Cultural Year events are key levers of Saudi Arabia's cultural capital. In 2024, the Year of the Camel featured flagship events like the AIUla Camel Cup and a major festival in Riyadh's Laysen Valley.

Cultural Years

The Ministry of Culture promotes key aspects of Saudi heritage through annual "Cultural Years," celebrating their cultural value with events and projects.

2021



Year of Arabic Calligraphy

2022



Year of Saudi Coffee

2023



Year of Arabic Poetry

2024



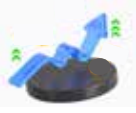
Year of Camel

2025



Year of Handicrafts

Future Outlook



The growing cultural sector is driving significant progress in festivals, creative production, and talent development, positioning Saudi Arabia as a key player in global arts and entertainment.



Saudi Arabia's expanding cultural capital, bolstered by UNESCO-recognized heritage sites and cultural year initiatives, is set to position the Kingdom as a premier destination for both local and international tourists. With the integration of intangible heritage like Harees, it will offer a comprehensive and immersive experience for cultural tourists.



Institutional support through initiatives like the Cultural Development Fund, combined with tourism efforts, will drive increased demand for hospitality infrastructure. This will have ripple effects, boosting investment in hotels, resorts, and experiential services to accommodate a diverse influx of international and domestic visitors.



Contact US.

For further information, clarification and discussion concerning the contents, please contact

**Navigating Complexity,
Simplifying Success**

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