



The UAE Tourism Sector

Opportunities for Indian Investment



Legal Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the UAE-India CEPA Council in partnership with Envoy Strategy, an economic, political, and communications advisory firm. The contents of the document are intended for general information purposes only. Any person or entity considering establishing a business in the UAE or developing trade ties with any UAE- or India-based entity are strongly advised to seek appropriate professional advice, or to engage directly with relevant governmental authorities. The UAE-India CEPA Council is not liable for any loss or damage caused by a person or entity's reliance on any information, comment, or statement provided in this document. The UAE-India CEPA Council does not give any warranty, either express or implied, as to the accuracy, completeness, or fitness for a particular purpose of any information, comment, or statement provided in this document.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
The UAE's Travel and Tourism Market: Key Dynamics	2
Emirates in Focus	3
The Importance of India to the UAE's Tourism Market	8
Indian Investments in UAE's Tourism and Hospitality Sector	9
Investment Opportunities in the UAE's Tourism and Hospitality Sector	11
The UAE's Global Tourism Appeal	12
Key Benefits to Indian Investors	14



Executive Summary

This paper explores opportunities for India to benefit from the UAE's tourism market, a sector which has experienced remarkable growth and diversification over recent years. In 2023, the sector contributed AED 220 billion (USD 59.9 billion) to the country's GDP, representing 11 percent of total economic output and supporting over 800,000 jobs. International visitors dominated tourism activity, accounting for 75.9 percent of total spending, while domestic tourism contributed 24.1 percent. Hotel establishments welcomed over 28 million guests, generating AED 43.5 billion (USD 11.8 billion) in revenue. The UAE's tourism appeal spans various income groups, catering to luxury and budget-conscious travelers alike, with a nearly even distribution of tourists across high-, medium-, and low-income brackets.

India has emerged as a cornerstone of the UAE's tourism success, with approximately 4.5 million Indian visitors in 2023, making it the UAE's largest international market. Indian tourists contribute significantly through luxury shopping, entertainment, and fine dining. Strategic alignment with India's expanding middle class, streamlined visa processes, and shared cultural ties have further solidified the UAE's position as a preferred destination for Indian travelers.

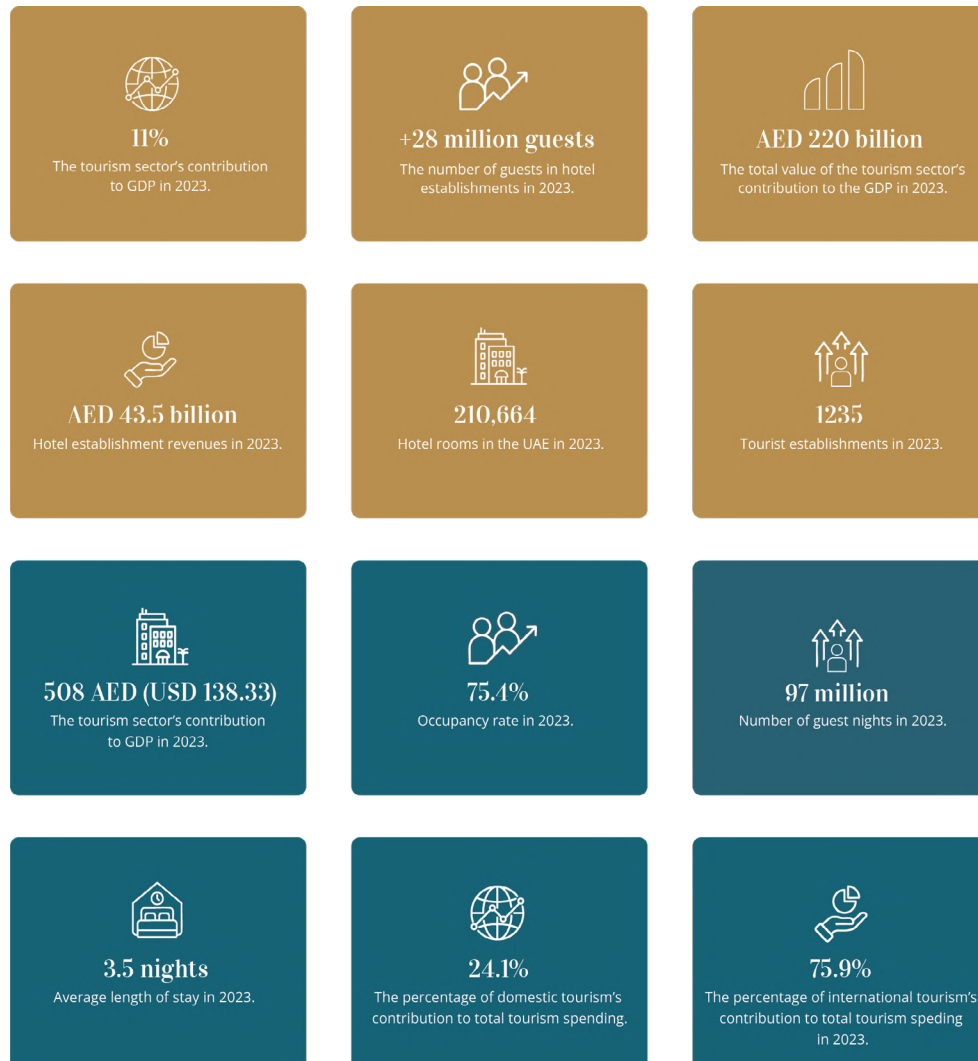
Synergies between the UAE and India extend beyond tourism to investments in hospitality. Indian companies have established a strong footprint in the UAE, catering to diverse demographics. UAE investors have reciprocated by injecting nearly USD 20 billion into Indian companies, including hospitality ventures since 2017.

With a shared vision, the UAE and India are poised to unlock the full potential of their tourism partnership. Coordinated efforts to enhance connectivity, streamline visa processes, and foster investment through the UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will ensure that tourism remains a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, driving growth, cultural exchange, and economic opportunity.

The UAE's Travel and Tourism Market: Key Dynamics

The UAE has experienced significant growth and diversification in its tourism sector over many years, attracting substantial foreign investment, including from Indian companies. In 2023, the contribution of the tourism sector to the UAE's GDP was nearly AED 220 billion (USD 59.9 billion). The number of international visitors to the UAE in 2023 was nearly 40 percent higher than in 2019. Over 28 million guests stayed in hotel establishments in 2023, showcasing the country's high volume of tourist activity. The sector generated AED 43.5 billion (USD 11.8 billion) in hotel establishment revenue. With 210,664 hotel rooms and 1,235 tourist establishments, the UAE has a substantial capacity to accommodate further visitor numbers.

Performance of the UAE's Tourism Sector



The aforementioned figures highlight the success of the UAE's tourism policies and its strong infrastructure, diverse tourist attractions, and commitment to ongoing development. A key aspect to the UAE's tourism sector growth has been the implementation of the UAE Tourism Strategy 2031. This strategy aims to:

- Raise the tourism sector's GDP contribution to AED 450 billion (USD 122.5 billion) by 2031.
- Strengthen the position of the UAE as one of the best destinations in the world for tourism.
- Boost competitiveness by attracting AED 100 billion (USD 27.23 billion) as additional tourism investments.
- Welcome 40 million hotel guests.

The strategy includes 25 initiatives and policies to support the development of the UAE's tourism sector. It is based on four key directions:

- Strengthening the unified national tourism identity.
- Developing and diversifying specialised tourism products.
- Building tourism capabilities and encouraging the contribution of national cadres in the tourism sector.
- Increasing investments in all tourism sectors.

Emirates in Focus

Dubai

Dubai experienced record-breaking tourism growth in 2023, attracting 17.15 million international overnight visitors. This marks a 19.4 percent increase from the 14.36 million tourists that visited the emirate in 2022, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, including the previous record of 16.73 million visitors set in 2019. Accommodation and food services activities saw an 11 percent boost, reinforcing Dubai's position as a top global destination for travellers from both traditional and new markets.

In 2023, Dubai's hotel sector achieved an average occupancy rate of 77.4 percent, up from 72.9 percent in 2022, exceeding the pre-pandemic occupancy rate of 75.3 percent in 2019. The city's hotel capacity also expanded, with a 19 percent increase in available rooms since 2019. By the end of December 2023, Dubai offered 150,291 rooms across 821 establishments, compared to 146,496 rooms at 804 establishments in 2022, and 126,120 rooms across 741 establishments in 2019.

Room demand has soared, with occupied room nights reaching 41.7 million in 2023, an 11 percent increase from 2022's 37.43 million and a 30 percent rise from 2019. Dubai will see the opening of 31 new hotels in 2024 and is expected to add 16 new hotels in 2025. This translates to a cumulative total of 867 hotels in operation by the end of 2025, providing a sum total of over 10,000 hotel rooms.

Dubai has set ambitious targets to boost inbound tourist numbers to 23-25 million by 2025. The emirate is targeting various tourism sub-sectors, including leisure, business, destination weddings, and medical and wellness tourism.

Abu Dhabi

In 2023, Abu Dhabi's tourism sector witnessed unprecedented growth, attracting nearly 24 million domestic and international visitors. This included a 27 percent increase in hotel guests and a 54 percent rise in international arrivals, contributing around AED 49 billion (USD 13.34 billion) to the UAE's GDP. The emirate's efforts to elevate its tourism profile aligns with its ambitious 2030 strategy, which aims to solidify Abu Dhabi as a leading global destination. Abu Dhabi's 2030 Tourism Strategy outlines an ambitious roadmap, with goals to increase annual visitors from 24 million in 2023 to 39.3 million by 2030. In line with this strategy, it is expected that Abu Dhabi will experience a seven percent annual growth rate in visitor numbers up to 2030, with the aim to nearly double the sector's GDP contribution to AED 90 billion (USD 24.5 billion). Additionally, the plan will expand hotel capacity from 34,000 rooms in 2023 to 52,000 by 2030, contributing to an estimated 178,000 new jobs in the tourism sector.

Abu Dhabi's success in attracting international visitors is driven by strong interest from key markets including India, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, and Saudi Arabia. The emirate's stunning natural landscapes, pristine beaches, and iconic sites like Qasr Al Hosn, Qasr Al Watan, and the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque attracted more than 8.7 million visitors in 2023.

Meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) tourism saw a 44 percent surge in activity in 2023, with 960,000 delegates attending 2,477 events across the emirate. This increase bolstered Abu Dhabi's economy and stimulated the food and beverage sector, which recorded a 21 percent revenue jump. Prestigious events, including the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, the Mother of the Nation Festival, the Al Hosn Festival, and the Liwa Festival, attracted visitors from around the globe, reinforcing Abu Dhabi's position as a world-class event destination.

Abu Dhabi's luxury tourism sector is poised for substantial growth, with new high-end developments on Saadiyat Island and other parts of the city. The Saadiyat Cultural District, slated for completion by the end of 2025, will feature globally renowned institutions such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Museum of Natural History, the Zayed National Museum, and the Guggenheim Museum, positioning Abu Dhabi as a global cultural powerhouse.



India has emerged as a key market, significantly contributing to Abu Dhabi's tourism growth. In the first half of 2024, hotel guests from India increased by 37 percent compared to the previous year. Recognising the potential of Tier-II cities like Hyderabad and Bangalore, the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT) has expanded its focus, working with airline partners to improve connectivity and cater to these rapidly growing markets.

With targeted efforts across multiple sectors—including MICE, weddings, and cultural tourism - Abu Dhabi is well on its way to transforming its tourism landscape and attracting more Indian visitors to the emirate.

Ras Al Khaimah

Over recent years, Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) has witnessed substantial growth in its tourism sector. In 2023, the emirate welcomed a record 1.22 million overnight visitors, marking an eight percent year-on-year increase. This influx brought a revenue growth rate of 18.4 percent compared to the previous year. Notably, the MICE and wedding segments showed strong performance, with MICE revenue up by 23 percent and wedding revenue surging by 103 percent. RAK has an ambitious plan to triple visitor numbers and tourism revenue by 2030, aiming to boost tourism's contribution to the emirate's economy from five percent to nearly 33 percent.

Marjan, the master developer of Al Marjan Island, has ambitious plans to add 8,000 hotel rooms, 12,000 residential units, and 600 holiday villas in the coming years. The island has already attracted significant interest from Emirati, British, and Indian investors, who are among the top buyers of properties on the island. The ongoing tourism boom has fueled a wave of residential projects across RAK, particularly around popular tourism hotspots.

Conveniently located just 45 minutes (83 km) from Dubai International Airport , RAK is increasingly favored by Indian travellers. Its unique blend of natural beauty and adventure-oriented experiences continues to draw both nature lovers and thrill -seekers alike, cementing RAK 's status as a top destination for diverse travellers.

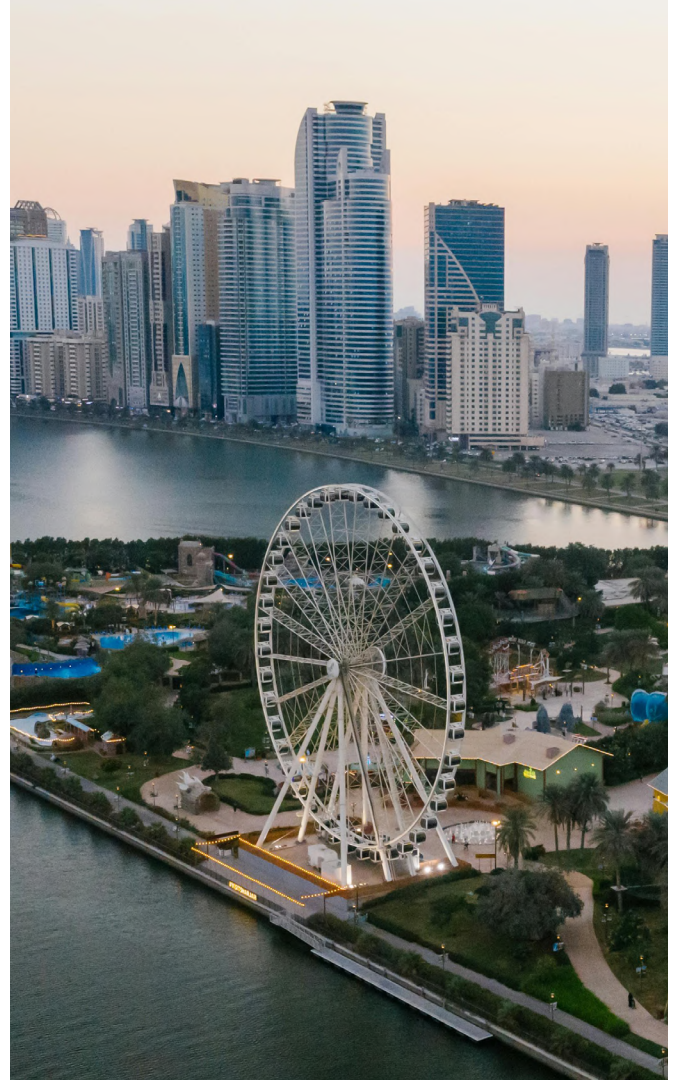
The completion of the Wynn Al Marjan Island Casino is expected to contribute to a boom in RAK's tourism sector. The Wynn development will include 1,542 rooms and suites, including 22 private villa estates. There will also be 22 lounges, restaurants, and bars, alongside a theatre. It will have various other facilities, including a shopping esplanade, a five-star spa, and a meetings and events centre. The project, under construction, is a joint venture between affiliates of Wynn Resorts, Marjan, and RAK Hospitality Holding. Once completed, it will become a new landmark for travellers to RAK from all over the world.



Sharjah

Sharjah, renowned as the Cultural Capital of the UAE, is celebrated for its dedication to preserving the region's history and heritage. The city blends tradition with modernity, offering a unique cultural experience. In 2023, Sharjah experienced 11 percent growth in hotel guest numbers, welcoming over 1.5 million visitors to the emirate.

Sharjah has a number of natural tourist attractions, including the Kalba Hanging Gardens, Al Hafiya Lake, and the Mleiha National Park. Furthermore, the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation, Sharjah Archaeology Museum, Heritage Museum, desert safaris, Khorfakkan Beach, Al Majaz Fountain, Sharjah Desert Park, Al Qasba, and Sharjah Aquarium offer an array of captivating experiences for visitors. Each attraction adds to Sharjah's appeal, providing tourists with a rich blend of culture, history, nature, and leisure activities.



Ajman

Ajman, the smallest of the seven Emirates in the UAE, is gaining popularity as a destination for Indian weddings. It offers a perfect blend of modern facilities, serene beaches, luxurious resorts, natural beauty, and Arabian heritage. All these elements create a unique wedding experience. The Fairmont Ajman, a luxurious five-star beachfront property, has become popular among Indian couples seeking a memorable destination wedding.

Fujairah

Fujairah plays a pivotal role in boosting domestic tourism, attracting visitors from across the UAE due to its distinctive climate, stunning geography, and proximity to Oman, which also makes it a popular destination for Omani tourists. The emirate is famous for its archaeological sites, including castles, museums, and historic villages. It is also home to a wide range of hotels operated by leading international and regional hotel brands.

The Fujairah Tourism and Antiquities Department is working to increase the number of visitors to the emirate by enhancing services and investments in famous archaeological sites, such as the Al Bidya Mosque, Fujairah Museum, heritage areas, and the castles and forts of Al Bithnah, Masafi, Al Hail, Auwhalah, Sakamkam, and Habhab. It has recently completed a project to restore more than 12 castles. An 80 percent increase in tourist arrivals is expected by 2028, fueled by Fujairah's stunning beaches, historical sites, and strategic location.

Umm Al Quwain

Umm Al Quwain (UAQ) offers a diverse array of experiences. Tourists can indulge in water sports like jet skiing, sea fishing trips, and kite surfing, or enjoy serene activities such as kayaking through mangroves and horseback riding along scenic trails. On World Tourism Day 2024, the Umm Al Quwain Department of Tourism and Archaeology unveiled plans for its first eco-trail to open in early 2025 within the emirate's pristine mangrove reserve. This initiative offers tourists an exciting opportunity to connect with nature, providing an immersive experience that raises awareness about the rich biodiversity and ecological value of the UAQ coastal lagoon.



The Importance of India to the UAE's Tourism Market

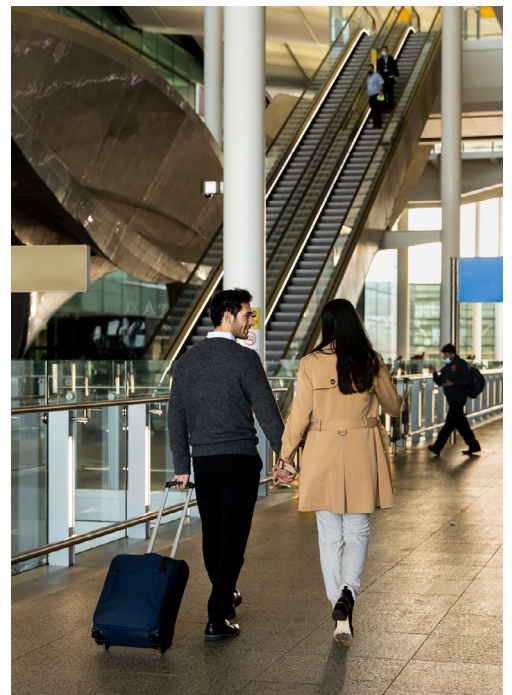
Indian tourists are essential to the UAE tourism sector's continued growth. In 2023, the UAE stood out as the leading international destination for Indian travellers, hosting approximately 4.5 million visitors from India. Dubai remained the prime attraction, welcoming 2.46 million Indian tourists. Beyond Dubai, other emirates have witnessed significant growth, driven by strategic connectivity enhancements and tailored experiences.

Abu Dhabi, for instance, has expanded its direct air links with Indian cities, with airlines such as IndiGo introducing routes from Mangaluru, Tiruchirappalli, and Coimbatore, alongside Akasa Air's new offerings. Ras Al Khaimah, with its emphasis on adventure tourism and affordable accommodation, recorded a 13 percent increase in Indian visitors in 2023. Meanwhile, Sharjah's rich cultural heritage, family-friendly attractions, and cost-effective lodgings contributed to a three percent rise in Indian arrivals.

India's outbound travel boom aligns with the UAE's strategic positioning as a global tourism gateway. With international departures from India projected to soar from 27 million in 2019 to over 80 million by 2040, the UAE is likely to benefit not only from its proximity to India but also its reputation as a bridge for Indian tourists seeking experiences in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. This pivotal role strengthens the UAE's connectivity to India while embedding it in broader global tourism networks.

Indian travellers' overseas spending further highlights this global link. In 2023, Indian traveller expenditure reached USD 33 billion, a figure expected to rise to USD 45 billion by 2024. These figures place Indian tourists among the top global spenders, with an average outlay of USD 1,200–1,400 per trip. In the UAE, this spending is heavily concentrated on luxury shopping, entertainment, and fine dining sectors that directly benefit from the nation's position as a premium tourism and retail destination.

The UAE's strategic alignment with India's expanding middle class - a demographic expected to double by 2047 - reinforces its global tourism credentials. The ease of travel, shared cultural ties, and streamlined visa processes position the UAE as a preferred destination for India's outbound travellers while also serving as a transit hub for Indian tourists travelling to other global destinations. As Indian passport holders nearly doubled from 52 million in 2013 to 93 million in 2023, the UAE's role as a connector between India and global destinations is more vital than ever. By aligning its tourism offerings with India's evolving preferences and tapping into the broader growth of Indian outbound travel trends, the UAE will not only secure its status as a top destination for Indian tourists, but also will cement its role as a global tourism bridge, linking India's dynamic market with the wider world.



Indian Investments in UAE's Tourism and Hospitality Sector

Indian companies are significant investors in the UAE's tourism and hospitality sectors. Tata Group's Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has a strong presence in the UAE. IHCL employs around 1,000 staff in the UAE. The UAE has three Taj hotels – the 296-room Taj Dubai in Business Bay, the 325-room Taj Exotica Resort and Spa, and the 200-room Taj JLT.



Indian travel-tech company OYO has also made inroads into the UAE hospitality sector. In June 2024, OYO announced the opening of its first luxury hotel in Dubai - Palette Royal Reflections Hotel and Spa. OYO has over 700 properties in the UAE, including over 200 in Dubai alone.

In the luxury segment, Indian-born entrepreneur Kabir Mulchandani has also shaped the UAE's hospitality landscape. He is the owner of Dubai-based real estate firm, FIVE Holdings, which owns luxury party hotels and resorts in West Asia, Spain, and Switzerland. Mulchandani owns three hotels in the UAE - FIVE Jumeirah Village, FIVE LUXE, and FIVE Palm Jumeirah. Established in 2011, FIVE Holdings is set to go public on the Dubai Financial Market (DFM) in 2025. In October 2023, FIVE Holdings issued a USD 350 million green bond on the Nasdaq Dubai Exchange.

Another notable Indian-owned hospitality chain in Dubai is Flora Hospitality. It has established a prominent presence in Dubai, catering to a diverse clientele with multiple properties across the city. Among the company's offerings are the Flora Creek Deluxe Hotel Apartments, Flora Al Barsha Hotel, and Flora INN Hotel at Dubai Airport.

Indian hospitality firm, Lemon Tree Hotels Limited, through its management subsidiary Carnation Hotels, announced plans for its first hotel in Dubai in 2019. It has expanded its footprint into the UAE with the establishment of the Lemon Tree Hotel in Jumeirah, Dubai. The hotel is well known for its interiors, attentive service, and convenient location near key landmarks like the Burj Al Arab and Mall of the Emirates.

Indian hospitality brand Signum Hotels, which currently operates 12 properties in India, is expanding into Dubai with a focus on consumers looking for both short-term and long-term accommodation options. Signum Hotels offers serviced apartments in prime locations, including the Bay Area, La Mer, Jumeirah Lake Towers, Emaar Greens, and Sheikh Zayed Road. The firm is planning further investment over the next two years to establish a stronger foothold in Dubai's competitive hospitality market.

In 2013, the famous Indian hotel brand, ITC Hotels, entered into a management agreement with the RP Group Hotels and Resorts to operate five hotels under its 'WelcomHotel' and 'Fortune' brands, including properties in Dubai.

Mahindra Holidays and Resorts India Limited operates the Arabian Dreams Hotel Apartments in Dubai, UAE under its Club Mahindra brand. The property is strategically located, providing easy access to Dubai's major attractions, shopping centres, and cultural sites.

Founded by Indian entrepreneur Raj Shetty, the Ramee Group operates properties in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The company's portfolio ranges from luxury hotels to serviced apartments, catering to various segments of travellers.

Through these investments, Indian companies and entrepreneurs continue to enhance the UAE's vibrant tourism and hospitality sectors, meeting the demands of both local and international tourists, while further strengthening UAE-India ties.



Investment Opportunities in the UAE's Tourism and Hospitality Sector

The UAE's Tourism and Hospitality Success Story

The UAE's tourism and hospitality sectors have attracted some of the world's most prominent brands, including Marriott International, Hilton Hotels and Resorts, the Accor Group, and InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG). Alongside these international giants, UAE-based icons such as the Burj Al Arab and Atlantis Hotel are globally recognised for redefining luxury and hospitality standards.

For Indian investors, the UAE's unique blend of luxury offerings, modern infrastructure, and a multicultural environment offers a safe and highly lucrative avenue for investments. The country's diverse accommodation options, ranging from boutique hotels to serviced apartments, cater to a wide spectrum of tourists, ensuring sustained demand across key segments.

Investment Areas Tailored for Indian Businesses

Indian investors can explore a variety of high growth opportunities in the UAE's tourism and hospitality sector, including:

- **Luxury and Boutique Hotels:** Premium offerings catering to high net-worth individuals and luxury seeking travellers.
- **Eco and Sustainable Tourism:** A growing market as sustainability becomes a global priority.
- **Adventure and Sports Tourism:** Popular among India's young, experience-driven demographic.
- **Medical and Wellness Tourism:** High-quality healthcare facilities catering to affluent patients from India and beyond.
- **Food and Beverage Ventures:** Opportunities in fine dining, themed restaurants, and regional cuisines.
- **Theme Parks and Entertainment Venues:** High demand from family travellers.
- **Cultural and Heritage Tourism:** Strong interest from Indian tourists seeking immersive experiences.
- **Cruise and Maritime Tourism:** Opportunities in a fast-growing niche.

Each of these areas provides Indian businesses with unique entry points into a market driven by innovation, quality, and sustainability.



The UAE's Global Tourism Appeal Sector

For Indian investors, the UAE's location as a bridge between East and West offers access to both regional and international tourism markets. The UAE attracts millions of global visitors annually with events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix, international cricket tournaments, and cultural festivals.

Faith-Based Tourism: A High-Growth Segment

Faith-based tourism is a burgeoning sector with strong appeal to Indian travellers. Landmarks such as the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, the Abrahamic Family House, the BAPS Hindu Temple, and the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation continue to attract significant interest. The UAE's inclusive approach to religion, with temples, churches, and mosques existing side by side, resonates with Indian values of tolerance and diversity.

Faith-based tourism in the UAE is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15 percent, with an increase in value from USD 326.83 million in 2023 to over USD 1.32 billion by 2033. For Indian investors, this represents a significant opportunity to engage in projects and initiatives that leverage public interest in religious venues as cultural attractions.



Medical Tourism: A Strategic Growth Area

The UAE's medical tourism sector is experiencing robust growth, driven by initiatives like the Emirates Health Services Innovation Strategy (2023-2026). Furthermore, Abu Dhabi's Medical Tourism e-portal connects international patients with top-tier healthcare services, attracting over 15,000 medical tourists annually. For Indian healthcare providers and wellness businesses, partnerships in the UAE can offer access to a global patient base.





UAE: A Destination Wedding Hub

The UAE's world-class infrastructure, picturesque resorts, luxury hospitality offerings, services, and diverse tourism attractions have made it the ideal destination for organising memorable destination weddings. The UAE offers a multitude of stunning backdrops and world-famous landmarks for wedding celebrations, including the Burj Khalifa, Dubai Frame, Museum of the Future, Ain Dubai, Saadiyat Island, Al Marjan Island, Al Wadi Desert, as well as a broad portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts.

The UAE is already a popular choice among Indian couples for a destination wedding. As per recent estimates, up to 5,000 Indian weddings now occur outside the country every year, mostly in the UAE and Southeast Asia. The UAE hosts 80 percent of outbound Indian weddings, largely thanks to geographic proximity, world-class facilities, and strong diaspora ties.

The Gulf Region's Leader in MICE

With a growing reputation for hosting successful conferences, exhibitions, incentives, corporate meetings, the UAE has emerged as a global MICE hub. The UAE is leading the way in the Gulf region, holding a 50 percent share of the region's total MICE market. The Dubai World Trade Centre, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), and Expo Centre Sharjah are some of the leading players in the MICE industry. The UAE has hosted and hosts several large-scale events, including the Dubai Expo, the Dubai Airshow, the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC), the World Government Summit, GITEX Global, the UNCTAD World Investment Forum, the International Conference on Conference on Advanced Robotics, the 13th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC13), and the 12th World Environment Education Congress.



Key Benefits to Indian Investors



The UAE's tourism offerings align closely with Indian consumer trends, including the growing demand for luxury, adventure, and wellness experiences. With Indian outbound travel expected to reach 80 million departures by 2040 and spending projected to exceed USD 45 billion by 2024, Indian businesses have a chance to partner with the UAE to benefit from these rapidly emerging dynamics.

A Win-Win Partnership

For Indian investors, the UAE represents more than just a destination—it is a gateway to global tourism opportunities. Whether through luxury hospitality, sustainable tourism, or medical and faith-based tourism, the UAE provides a stable and profitable platform for Indian businesses to expand and thrive. Investing in the UAE's tourism and hospitality sector is not just an opportunity; it is a strategic move to be part of the future of global tourism.

A Bright Future of the UAE-India Tourism Partnership

The UAE-India tourism partnership is poised for further growth, underpinned by strong cultural ties, regional proximity, economic linkages, and close people-to-people exchanges. To fully unlock this partnership, certain forward-looking measures could be explored to ensure sustainable expansion of the tourism partnership between the two nations.



Enhancing Aviation and Connectivity

While both countries have robust air connectivity, greater strides can be made to improve affordability and accessibility. Revisiting current regulatory arrangements to reflect the growing demand for air travel between the UAE and India could be a transformative step towards further strengthening the tourism partnership between the two countries. Expanding flight routes, particularly from Tier-II and Tier-III Indian cities, would provide travellers with more convenient and cost-effective options.

Facilitating Seamless Visa Access

Efforts to liberalise visa regimes by the UAE and India are a testament to the commitment of both countries to facilitate people-to-people exchanges. Much has been done on this front; however, both governments could potentially continue to explore efforts to further improve access for tourists travelling to both countries.

Facilitating Greater Investment Engagement

In order to strengthen bilateral ties in the tourism sector, the UAE and India should consider the development of new mechanisms to enhance engagement between investors and other important stakeholders. Both countries possess complementary strengths that could yield a range of mutual benefits, particularly by leveraging the advantages of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Since the implementation of CEPA, public and private sector stakeholders from both nations have significantly increased their collaboration, not just at the federal-level but also at state-, emirate-, and local-levels. The agreement has opened new opportunities for engagement and investment, acting as a transformative catalyst for businesses in both countries. Enhanced interaction and information exchange under CEPA could lead to innovative offerings, and new opportunities for expanded collaboration.

With a shared vision and coordinated strategies, the UAE and India can address key challenges such as improving connectivity, implementing visa reforms, and fostering targeted investments while capitalising on CEPA's benefits. These efforts have the potential to unlock the full scope of their tourism partnership, positioning it as a central pillar of the bilateral relationship.

