



Iran's portion of 6% of Mideast tourists

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports a remarkable surge in foreign tourist arrivals to Iran in 2022, with 4.1 million visits recorded, a 315% growth compared to the previous year. Despite this impressive increase, Iran's share of global foreign

tourist journeys remains modest at 0.4% for 2022. This growth stands in stark contrast to the declines experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (83% drop) and 2021 (around 30% contraction). The Middle East region as a

whole saw a significant upswing, with 66 million foreign tourist journeys in 2022, a 163% rise from the previous year. Iran's portion of the total foreign tourists entering the Middle East is approximately 6%, indicating progress while highlighting further growth potential.

Tourism diplomacy

Under the current government, Iran has shifted its foreign policy toward enhancing relations with neighboring countries, resulting in a focus on tourism development and collaboration. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage emphasizes shared cultural ties, leading to

measures such as abolishing visa requirements, improving access to tourist sites, and promoting budget-friendly options. Joint cultural events and bilateral agreements with nations like Nigeria, Iraq, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Armenia further

illustrate this approach. This diplomatic outreach has shown results, with a decline in tourists from traditional markets (Europe and North America) but a boost in visitors from neighboring countries, particularly those with Islamic cultural affinities. The influx of

Chinese and Russian tourists has also risen compared to previous years. As Iran's tourism industry grows through strategic partnerships and policy changes, it continues to tap into the potential of its proximity to neighboring nations and shared cultural commonalities.

Countries with most tourists

In 2021, Turkish tourists accounted for over 15% of Iran's foreign tourist influx, securing the second spot after Iraq with approximately 35%. This was a notable increase from the previous year's 9% con-

tribution from Turkish visitors. Pakistan had a 10% share, Azerbaijan contributed 9%, and Kuwait held 2%, while other nations made up 29% of foreign tourist visits in Iran.

In 2022, a shift occurred with Iraq contributing 55% of foreign tourists, followed by Azerbaijan and Turkey at 6% each, Pakistan at 5%, and Kuwait at 2%, with nearly 98% of them visiting Iran for pleasure.

40% increase in domestic trips

The year 2022 marked a turning point with the arrival of Nowruz, signaling a departure from the pandemic's grip and inspiring nations to embrace tourists more warmly. A travel service coordination headquarters was established to facili-

tate these efforts, involving 23 executive bodies. The tourism industry saw promising growth, with official records showing over 52 million overnight stays in authorized lodging centers, indicating a 40% increase compared

to figures from two years prior. Nowruz 2023 continued this positive trend, witnessing a remarkable 57 million domestic travelers seeking accommodations in authorized centers. This occurred despite heightened Iranophobia measures

and negative campaigns, reflecting the industry's resilience. Despite challenges, the past two years have attracted 7.1 million tourists to Iran, defying predictions of collapse and showcasing the industry's vitality.

90% occupancy of hotels

In recent years, the tourism sector faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic sanctions. Despite these difficulties, the industry has shown positive shifts through containment efforts and strategic adaptation to health

protocols. This was particularly evident during the 2022 Nowruz celebrations, reflecting pent-up travel demand accumulated over three years. This positive trajectory continued into 2023, with an unprecedented surge in hotel and accommoda-

tion center visits, resulting in an average occupancy rate exceeding 90%. Recreational facilities, museums, and historical sites also experienced substantial activity, maintaining an average above 80% compared to the corresponding timeframe.

Iranophobia, enemy's plan to target tourism

Examining campaigns to paint an insecure picture of Iran, it's evident that one of the sectors that could bear the brunt of such conditions is the tourism industry. Iran's Leader emphasized in 2022 that adversaries intend

to hinder sectors, including tourism, using Iranophobia. These forces aim to suppress Iran's tourism growth, employing bias to undermine progress and competition with regional rivals.

The battle against Iranophobia is crucial, aiming to present a secure and magnificent Iran to the world. This effort remains a focus of the incumbent government and officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tour-

ism, and Handicrafts. While the industry faces hardships, the potential to showcase Iran's beauty, magnificence and security through tourism is essential in countering negative perceptions and promoting progress.