

Travel & Tourism | Cities

COVID-19: pandemic impacts on Middle East & African city tourism

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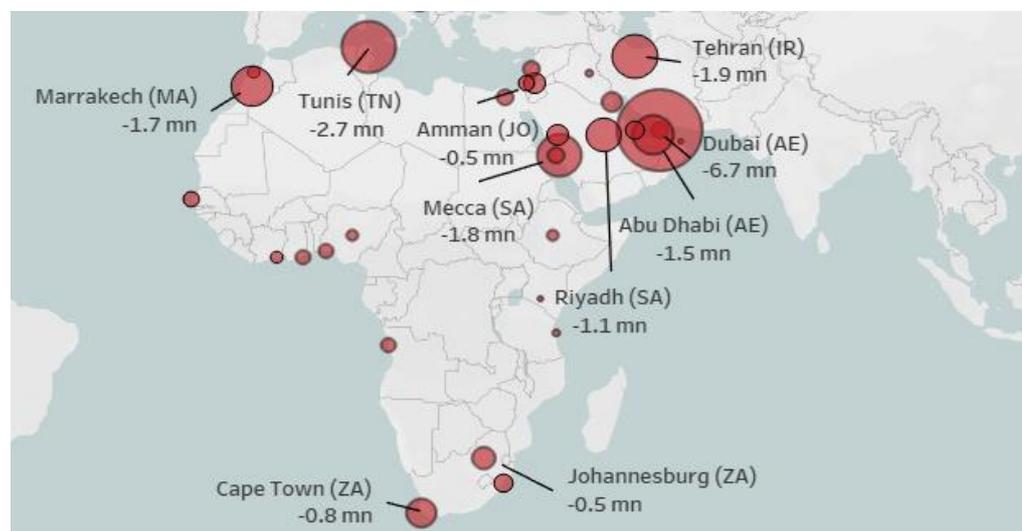
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An estimated 24 million fewer international visitors will travel to Middle East & African cities in 2020.

Key points

- The COVID-19 global pandemic has led to one of the largest global crises since the second world war. The spread of the virus spans 185 countries, many of which have implemented a range of measures to slow the spread, at a cost of major disruption to the global economy and to global travel.
- Middle East and African inbound arrivals are forecast to decline 34% in 2020, with a loss of 55mn visitors compared to 2019.
- Collectively, Middle East and African city visitor arrivals are forecast to decline 37% in 2020 compared to 2019, equating to a loss of 24mn visitors for the 31 cities included in our GCT service.
- Middle East and African cities may face a more volatile recovery than those in many other regions as almost two-thirds of their total international visits come from long-haul source markets. It is likely that tourist sentiment towards long-haul travel will take longer to recover than that for domestic tourism and short-haul trips.
- The declines in the 15 largest Middle East and African city destinations for international visitor arrivals represent a decline of more than 21mn visitors compared to 2019, with the largest declines in Dubai (6.7mn), Tunis (2.7mn) and Tehran (1.9mn).
- Domestic city visitor arrivals in the Middle East and Africa are forecast to decline 20% in 2020, a loss of 22 million visitors. Measures to encourage domestic tourism will be vital in the initial recovery phase as domestic tourism is forecast to recover quicker than international travel.

Decline in international Middle East & African city tourist arrivals (mn), 2019-2020



To access the full report, please follow this [link](#).

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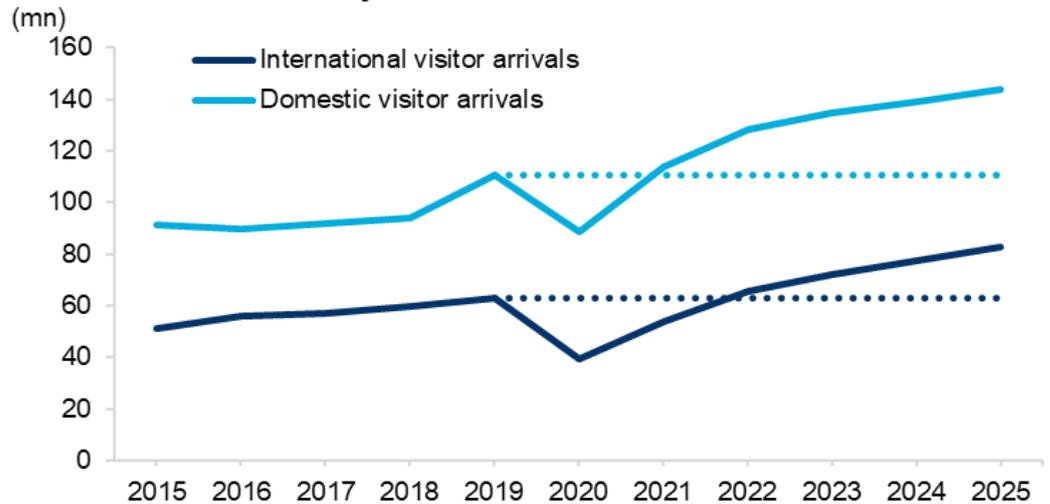
Impact on city inbound travel

Travel demand to the Middle East and Africa may not experience quite as large an impact from the pandemic as other regions, but significant losses in international visitor arrivals are still expected in many cities in 2020. Dubai is expected to be the worst affected city in the region, losing 6.7mn visitors, while international visitors to Tunis and Tehran are forecast to decline 2.7mn and 1.9mn.

Recovery of city travel

International travel to the Middle East & African cities is forecast to see a quicker return to 2019 levels than at the global level, with visitor arrivals expected to surpass those of 2019 by 2022. The less severe spread of coronavirus in the Middle East and Africa may render inbound travel more attractive compared to other regions, where the spread of the virus has escalated more quickly. Domestic travel to the Middle East & African cities will enjoy a quicker rebound, with domestic visitor arrivals outpacing 2019 levels by 2021.

Middle East & African city international vs domestic visitor arrivals



Source: Tourism Economics

The Middle East and Africa will benefit from this faster recovery in domestic travel as on average, domestic visitors account for 63% of the region's cities' arrivals.

Domestic visitor arrivals to Middle East and African cities will surpass 2019 levels in 2021, with international visitor arrivals exceeding 2019 volumes by 2022.