

New projects such as Warner Bros. World launched in Abu Dhabi last week could pave the way for events such as the World Cup and Olympics.



Spotlight

GAME-CHANGER

Sky is the limit for UAE mega projects

Major attractions are turning the Emirates into a tourism beacon — and opening new horizons for its economy

Caline Malek Dubai

With the construction and opening of a number of mega-projects across the UAE, expectations are running high that the Emirates will continue to be a top tourist destination well beyond 2020.

From the recently opened Dubai Opera, Warner Bros. World and Louvre Abu Dhabi to the upcoming completion of Dubai Creek Tower and Dubai Square, the Emirates is taking the lead in global tourism. The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry last week predicted positive years ahead for the UAE economy.

“The quality of UAE tourism and infrastructure is quite high already,” said Dr. Nasser Saidi, a former chief economist and head of external relations of Dubai International Financial Center.

“If you compare it with other countries in the region, it has the most developed and integrated infrastructure, especially from a transport and logistics point of view, from air, roads, ports, airports, metro and rail.”

Saidi said that high-quality infrastructure in hotels and conference centers made the UAE a leader in the region.

“Adding to the infrastructure always helps, but it will have a marginal impact given the existing infrastructure,” said Saidi, who was Lebanon’s minister of economy and trade and minister of industry between 1998 and 2000. “What is important is to diversify the nature of the activities for tourists.”

“If you have new types of activities, that will attract more visitors.”

Although falling oil prices since mid-2014 have affected GCC economies, mega-projects will ensure the UAE continues to be a leading destination for tourists, according to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry report.

The report, based on data from international research institutions, including Haver Analytics, Fox Economics, the UN Conference

on Trade and Development and the International Monetary Fund, says that the country’s solid and diversified economy has overcome the effects of lower oil prices and weakened global trade.

“Foreign direct investment inflows to the UAE increased by 7.8 percent, making it the largest FDI (foreign direct investment) recipient in the Middle East and North Africa region and the GCC,” it read. “The UAE economic outlook is buoyed by an upswing in government spending on infrastructure projects as part of the preparations for Expo 2020.”

It predicted that the UAE economy would return to long-term growth in 2018 and beyond, thanks to a diversification of the government’s sources of income.

“I see tourism in the UAE contributing a great deal to the economy in the future,” said Asim Rahman, managing director at Saifco Travel and Tourism in Dubai.

“Middle Eastern countries were mainly depending on oil in the past and they wanted to shift their dependency on other sectors such as tourism. The region is a tourism hub, and visitors from all over the world come here due to different opportunities — it also has good security, which affects a lot of customers.”

The Dubai Creek Tower, expected to be a notch higher than Burj Khalifa in the Dubai Creek Harbor, is planned to be the tallest tower in the city, with Emaar completing the concrete placement for its pile cap two months ahead of schedule.

Rahman said that new attractions, theme parks and shopping malls would boost tourism in the future and pave the way for the country to potentially host international events, including the World Cup and the Olympics.

“The number of tourists is increasing, and it will continue,” he



DUBAI OPERA

- **SIZE** 5,500 square meters
- **OPENING DATE** Aug. 31, 2016
- **CAPACITY** 2,000 seats

said. “Tourism is important because the UAE is emerging as a services industry now. It’s supporting businesses, and tourism is vital to help the economy grow further.”

Dubai Square, a new retail area in Dubai Creek Harbor, aims to reach almost more than twice the size of Dubai Mall, at 8.07 million square feet of gross floor retail space.

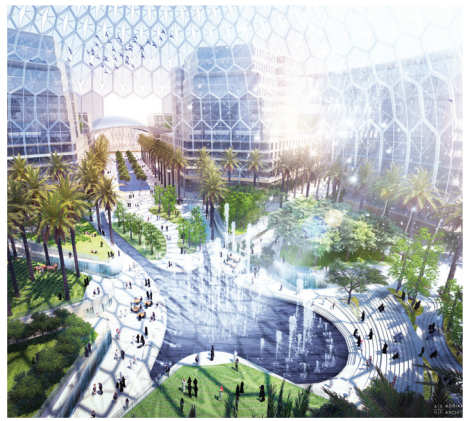
“There is huge potential in tourism in the UAE, which is why I work in the business,” said Mohammed Shah, general manager at Regal Tours Worldwide in Dubai.

“I see billions coming in, and it is better than we think — the government wants to promote tourism as another source of

income instead of relying on traditional sources and maintaining its reputation as a tourism hub. They’re always focused on building what people around the world want, while keeping safety high on the agenda.”

He said that the government is at the forefront of tourism. “When tourists spend a dollar here, they feel they received five dollars of value,” he added. “If you look at the history of World Expos, each country which hosted an Expo has grown, developed and flourished, whether it’s China, Italy or France — if it happened with all these countries, why can’t it happen with the UAE?”

Dubai Expo 2020 also promises a major favorable impact on the



EXPO2020 DUBAI

- **SIZE** 4.38 square kilometers, including a two-square-kilometer gated area
- **OPENING DATE** Oct. 20, 2020
- **EXPECTED VISITS** 25 million



WARNER BROS.

- **SIZE** 1.65 million square feet
- **COST** \$1 billion
- **EXPECTED VISITS** 30 million in 2018

enhanced hospitality, security and logistics capabilities, as well as Dubai World Trade Center’s new Co-Ex, which is being built adjacent to the Expo 2020 site.”

The Co-Ex is planned to expand to 180,000 square meters after 2021, enhancing Dubai’s reputation as the premier host of events in the region.

“The Co-Ex is one example of infrastructure projects that have been brought forward due to Expo 2020, creating additional benefit for the broader UAE economy,” he said.

“Other projects include the extension of the Dubai Metro red line, Route 2020, as well as multiple DEWA substations, major road works and hotels in Dubai South. We look forward to welcoming the world to the UAE in 2020, offering millions of people an experience that will ensure they return again and again.”

Tourism agencies report witnessing more visitors, even in the usually slow summer period. “We are getting a lot more tourists than expected, especially Indian nationals, because visitors benefit from so many activities here,” said Smarth Vij, general manager at Forever Tourism in Dubai.

In Abu Dhabi, last week’s launch of Warner Bros. World is seen as another milestone in the emirate’s quest to cement its position as a leading tourist destination.

“The park is another great addition to Yas Island’s award-winning attractions,” said Mohammed Al-Mubarak, chairman of Miral. “It gives us great pride to have partnered with Warner Bros. Consumer Products to launch the world’s largest Warner Bros. indoor theme park in Abu Dhabi. We are thrilled fans will be able to enjoy the outcome of this partnership.”

For Dr. Yousif Alobaidli, general director of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center in Abu Dhabi, tourism is the sector with the greatest potential to create jobs and develop other sectors of the economy, including transport, travel and hospitality.

“This sector is expected to grow faster than the wider economy and many other industries over the next decade, and it is anticipated to support over 370 million jobs by 2026,” he said.

“The UAE has the necessary assets to invest in tourism, in particular in cultural tourism. This sector will be a game-changer in the future.”

A GUIDE TO EXPO 2020 DUBAI

Expo 2020 Dubai will last for six months from **Oct. 20, 2020**. It aims to bring together **180 countries** and millions of people to celebrate human ingenuity: **‘Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.’**

4.38 sq km

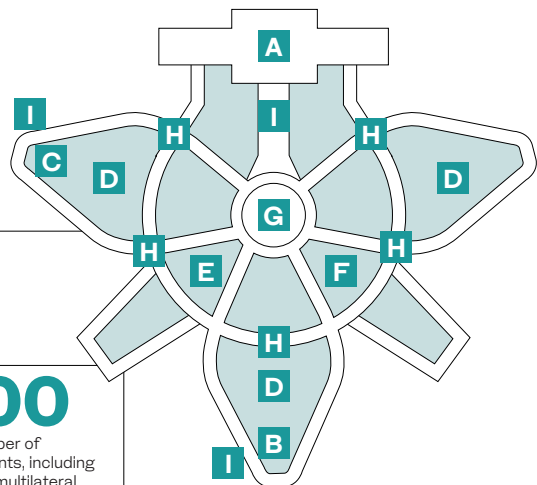
The total area which the Expo site covers including a 2 sq km gated area. It is located adjacent to Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai South.



70% of all visitors are anticipated to come from outside the UAE — the largest proportion of international visitors in Expo history.

200

The number of participants, including nations, multilateral organisations, businesses and educational institutions which are expected.



- EXPO 2020 DUBAI SITE MAP**
- A** Conference and Exhibition Campus
 - B** Sustainability Pavilion
 - C** Mobility Pavilion
 - D** Thematic Districts
 - E** Culture Plaza
 - F** UAE Pavilion
 - G** Al Wasi Plaza
 - H** Shade Structure
 - I** Public Realm



Expo 2020 Dubai is the first World Expo to take place in the MEASA (Middle East, Africa and South Asia) region.

828m
Burj Khalifa
Dubai, UAE
2010

928m
Creek Harbour
Tower Dubai,
UAE 2020

Tale of the tape

The Dubai Creek Tower, expected to be a notch higher than Burj Khalifa in the Dubai Creek Harbor, is planned to stand as the tallest tower in the city, with Emaar completing the concrete placement for its pile cap two months ahead of schedule

At a glance: Dubai Square

- Inspired by London’s Oxford Street, Los Angeles’s Beverly Hills, Paris’s Champs-Élysées, Tokyo’s Ginza, Piazza della Repubblica in Florence and Madrid’s Plaza Mayor
- Gross floor retail space of 750,000 square meters, equivalent to the size of over 100 football pitches
- **2.6 million square metres of retail, hospitality and residential gross floor area**
- 5.7 million square meters total built up area
- **9,262 residential units in Dubai Square District**
- 1,563 hotel keys in Dubai Square District
- **Spread over three levels**
- Several lifestyle districts including the region’s largest and first Chinatown spread over three floors
- **Leisure attractions include an ice park, water park and entertainment arena**
- Technological innovation permeates every aspect of Dubai Square’s function

Source: www.expo2020dubai.com