



UN Tourism Hosts First Regional Workshop on Wellness Tourism in the Middle East

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 10 September 2025: UN Tourism held the first Workshop on Wellness Tourism in the Middle East, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and developing innovative, wellness-focused tourism products.

Held at the UN Tourism Regional Office for the Middle East in Riyadh, the two-day event (9–10 September) brought together representatives from National Tourism Administrations and Organizations (NTAs/NTOs) from 12 Middle East Member States, with more than 30 participants in total, alongside industry experts and key stakeholders from across the region. The workshop explored the growing potential of wellness tourism as a driver of economic growth, tourism diversification, and sustainability for the Middle East.

Speaking about the importance of the workshop and the Kingdom's role in advancing wellness tourism in the region, a representative from the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia said: "Hosting this regional workshop in Riyadh underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment, in line with Vision 2030, to position tourism as a key driver of economic diversification and well-being. Wellness is deeply embedded in our heritage — from age-old healing traditions to cutting-edge wellness retreats — and we believe it will become a defining pillar of the region's tourism identity, contributing to a more sustainable, inclusive, and healthy future."

Zoritsa Urosevic, Executive Director UN Tourism, said: "Travellers are increasingly looking for experiences that connect and benefit their physical and mental wellbeing. Wellness tourism offers a unique opportunity to diversify the tourism portfolio and generate employment opportunities in the Middle East. This workshop will equipped Member States with practical tools, market insights, and product development strategies that respond to the evolving needs of today's travelers while creating opportunities for regional cooperation and coordination in this area."

Sharing best practices

The workshop featured interactive sessions led by Dr. László Puczkó, a Wellbeing and Experience Strategist and co-author of UN Tourism's Exploring Health Tourism report. Participants were engaged in sharing best practices, discussing challenges, and exploring opportunities to position wellness tourism as a key segment in tourism development in the region.

The event responds to priorities outlined by Member States during the 50th and 51st Meetings of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East, particularly in the areas of capacity building and product diversification.

Samer Al-Kharashi, Director of the UN Tourism Regional Office for the Middle East, added: “Wellness tourism aligns perfectly with the region’s ambition to offer meaningful, high-value travel experiences. By embracing wellness, destinations in the Middle East can tap into a global trend while promoting healthier lifestyles, cultural authenticity, and environmental stewardship. This workshop has been an important step in turning that vision into actionable strategies. Hosting this workshop through the UN Tourism Regional Office for the Middle East reflects our strong commitment to delivering initiatives that are tailored to the region’s unique context and priorities. It also reaffirms the Office’s role as a platform for engagement, collaboration, and knowledge exchange in support of regional development.”

Middle East tourism shows strong growth

According to the UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer, the Middle East welcomed 101 million international tourist arrivals in 2024, 8% more than 2023 and 41% above pre-pandemic levels. The Middle East was the first world region to surpass pre-pandemic tourism numbers already in 2023, underscoring its strong recovery and growing leadership in innovative tourism segments, including wellness tourism.

Related links:

[Wellness Tourism Workshop Building Capacity for a Competitive Wellness Tourism Segment in the Middle East](#)