



World Bank Group Integrated Solutions for Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Heritage

In the Gulf Cooperation Council
(GCC) Countries

The Opportunity

Tourism is widely recognized as a powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation in countries around the world. Globally, the travel and tourism sector has grown to be one of the largest economic sectors. It accounts for 10.4% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), supports 1 out of every 10 jobs with over half for women, represents 7% of total world trade and generates 30% of the world's export in trade. In 2018, international tourist arrivals reached an unprecedented U.S. \$1.4 billion (UNWTO).

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are currently undertaking ambitious transformational programs to diversify their economic base. This transformation includes re-balancing the roles of the public and private sectors and integrating economies into global value chains. GCC member states are emphasizing economic diversification from oil-related sectors and strengthening the role of the private sector in diversified economic activities. For many countries, there is also a strong focus on inclusive growth, especially for women and youth.

GCC countries have uniquely promising socio-economic opportunities to leverage tourism development strategies for high-yield returns. For Middle Eastern economies overall, the travel and tourism sector has grown fast, accounting for about 8.7% of regional GDP and 7.2% of total employment in 2018. Additionally, the GCC is particularly well-positioned to benefit from tourism given the quantity and quality of cultural and natural heritage assets (WTTC 2018). GCC countries are home to 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and many other unique cultural and natural assets.

Travel and tourism development projects can spur regional cooperation by developing cross-regional travel routes and fostering trade. An investment in culture, tourism and the creative industry is an investment in building economic ties with new partners and fostering integration.

The Vision

Develop tourism as a driver for growth, economic diversification and job creation in a sustainable manner for GCC countries.

Sustainable tourism is “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNWTO, 2016).”



Incentivize private sector investments in cultural heritage and tourism products and facilities. Destinations create products, investment-generation programs linked to demand, new public-private partnerships (PPPs) and new legal and regulatory frameworks that work together to enable sector growth.



Build the capacity to manage sustainable destinations by ensuring quality and standards in service, safety and security, signage, trails and visitor support facilities. Collections of high-quality, reliable data and statistics can better inform the policy decisions that are critical to long-term viability.



Ensure tourism delivers jobs and income to communities. Human capital programs can be designed and delivered to increase access to jobs. Programs that manage talent and match jobs to industry demand enable local people to participate in their community's tourism industry and benefit from its growth.



Promote integrated urban-rural regeneration and revitalization in historic cities, towns and villages by protecting natural and cultural assets. Urban-rural development can be productively aligned with improvement projects in infrastructure, service delivery, heritage conservation and management and local economic development programs.



Adopt regional and spatial planning solutions across multiple geographical areas. Urban and rural economies can be planned and connected for holistic development of tourism circuits, which in turn generates diversified tourism products as well as cultural and creative industries.



Enable strong and competitive regulatory structures and realistic development strategies for GCC countries to access market growth. Aviation regulations, visas, restrictive labor regulations and tax policy and administration can be managed in ways that favor a reduction in cross border trade barriers and lower the cost of participation.



Why the World Bank Group?

With a tourism and cultural heritage portfolio of approximately U.S. \$4.4 billion representing 186 projects in over 50 countries across the globe, the World Bank Group is uniquely positioned to help GCC countries succeed in cultural heritage and sustainable tourism.



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CULTURAL HERITAGE



What Can We Provide You?

The World Bank has partnered with the Government of Saudi Arabia since the early 2000s to provide advisory services, technical assistance, global knowledge and capacity building on tourism and cultural heritage. The Bank also has engaged with Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE and Oman for potential technical and advisory services.



**POLICY
ADVISORY AND
ANALYTICAL
SERVICES**



**TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE IN
IMPLEMENTATION
AND INVESTMENTS**



**CONVENING
POWER AND
GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIPS**



**CAPACITY BUILDING
AND GLOBAL
KNOWLEDGE
SHARING**



**Finance,
Competitiveness
and Innovation**

Value chain diagnostics
Tourism development strategies
Data management and digital development
Business enabling environment
Integrated destination development
Tourism product diversification
Access to finance for SMEs
Standards and capacity building



**Urban
Development
and Resilience**

Cultural heritage conservation and management
Site planning and management
Tourism infrastructure and services
Heritage-led urban regeneration
Regional economic development
Urban-rural infrastructure and services
Disaster risk management
Cultural landscape and intangible heritage



**Environment
and Natural
Resources**

Nature-based and eco-tourism
Natural park and trail planning
Biodiversity
Management of protected areas
Environmental protection
Environmental standards, risks and mitigation measures



**Social
Development**

Stakeholder and community engagement
Community-driven development
Social inclusion
Social standards, risks and mitigation measures



Agriculture

Agribusiness and tourism linkages
Innovation in production
Processing and market development
Supply chains



Transport

Airports
Connectivity
Transport planning
Access to tourism attractions

We look forward to hearing from you. For expressions of interest, project needs or any questions at all, please contact any of the individuals below.

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