

# SAUDI ARABIA INDUSTRIOUSLY DEVELOPS SPORTS TOURISM



According to Saudi Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khatteb, Saudi Arabia has welcomed 2.5 million sports tourists over the past four years and hosted 80 international sporting events as part of its rapid transformation under Vision 2030.

Events such as the Jeddah Formula 1 attracted visitors from 160 countries, created 20,000 jobs, and generated a SAR 900 million economic impact for the Saudi economy. **The minister emphasized Saudi Arabia's growing role in the global sports tourism industry.** He stated that sports tourism accounts for 10 percent of international tourism expenditure and is expected to grow by 17.5 percent by 2030.

Saudi Arabia has hosted various global sporting events, including the WWE Super Showdown, the Saudi Pro-Golf Championship, the Battle of the Champions, Formula E, the E-Prix, the International Handball Federation Super Globe, and the Saudi International Meeting for Disabilities Sport. By 2030, the Kingdom expects to welcome 150 million international tourists each year, with direct flights available from 250 destinations.

"Our ambitions don't stop there. As the country to host the FIFA World Cup, Saudi Arabia aims to bring together more fans worldwide than ever—creating an unprecedented global gathering," said Al-Khatteb. He added, "With 60 percent of the world's population within an eight-hour flight, we are well positioned to deliver one of the most accessible and connected tournaments in history." The Minister emphasized that "the 2034 FIFA World Cup is a natural next step in Saudi Arabia's ongoing transformation journey."

The Kingdom's investment in 15 stadiums is designed with the future in mind. These stadiums will accommodate a significant influx of fans, support long-term infrastructure needs and sporting ambitions, and transform into vibrant sports and community engagement hubs.

Experts believe Saudi Arabia's future lies with its youth and generations. As 63 percent of Saudis are under 30, this demographic drives the nation forward with their talents.

Currently, over 20,000 players participate in the Schools League, which is supported by 18 regional youth training centers throughout Saudi Arabia. **Additionally, a \$300 million annual investment is made to strengthen the development of football clubs.**

Since 2015, women's sports have seen a remarkable increase of 149 percent, highlighting the country's progress towards becoming a diverse, competitive, and globally engaged sporting nation.

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