

Ramadan travel falls short compared to 2019, reports ForwardKeys



According to travel data analytics company [ForwardKeys](#), Ramadan travel for 2023 is far behind what it was pre-pandemic in 2019.

Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys, explained: "A major factor in assessing the recovery of Ramadan travel are the dates when the festival falls due. In 2019, Eid al-Fitr was in June, a much better time of the year to travel, as the end of Ramadan was close to the start of the long summer school holidays in Saudi Arabia."

As of March 31, outbound flight bookings from the GCC states for the three weeks running up to Eid Al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, were 38% behind where they were in the equivalent period in 2019; and for the three weeks after Eid al-Fitr, they are 67% behind.

GCC outbound flight bookings for the peak Ramadan holiday period, April 14 to 24, are better, 32% behind 2019. Flight bookings from Saudi Arabia are 44% behind but travel from other major GCC countries is seeing a stronger recovery, with Kuwait 27% behind, Qatar 11% behind, UAE 6% behind and Bahrain 2% ahead.

Flight bookings to GCC countries are more encouraging, currently 12% behind 2019. The major drag is travel to Saudi Arabia, where flight bookings are 40% behind 2019; and bookings for Kuwait are 43% behind. However, bookings for Bahrain are 16% ahead and for Qatar, UAE and Oman are 39%, 47% and 48% ahead respectively.

"Analysis of where Ramadan holidaymakers from GCC countries are going reveals that the top trending destination is the Maldives, 177% ahead of 2019. It is also benefitting from a surge in affluent visitors, as evidenced by a nine-percentage point increase in the share of premium cabin bookings. It is followed by Qatar, 91% ahead, Thailand 65% ahead, the Netherlands 37% ahead, Pakistan 25% ahead, UAE 22% ahead, Italy 20% ahead, France 14% ahead and the UK 1% ahead."