

# Overview of United Arab Emirates

Tucked into a corner of the traditional, conservative Middle East lies the unique, progressive United Arab Emirates. Like most countries on the peninsula, the UAE made its wealth from oil and gas. Unlike its more traditional neighbours, it then expanded into tourism. Today it is a modern, trend-setting conglomeration of high-rise cities with state-of-the-art tourist infrastructure, magnificent beaches and a paradise of duty free shopping.

The majority of people in the UAE are expatriates and most of them are there to live and work in Dubai. The city is a playground of palm-shaped islands, colossal skyscrapers, malls the size of small towns, seven star hotels, supercars, Michelin-star restaurants and luxury beach resorts. To the west of Dubai lies Abu Dhabi, the capital, where visitors can enjoy large gardens and parks, green boulevards, sophisticated high-rise buildings, modern communication services and transport, international luxury hotels, rich shopping malls and cultural centres.

Alongside the two famous emirates sits Sharjah, the world capital of Islamic Culture. This conservative emirate plays host to the best museums and art galleries in the country. Surrounded by mountains and desert oases, Ras Al Khaimah is fast becoming a destination for adventurous travelers. Visitors can also relax on the beaches in Ajman, visit the fort of Fujairah at the foothills of the Hajar Mountains, or take a break from the glitz and glamour in low-key Umm Al Quwain.

The modern cities on the Persian Gulf give way to a desert interior, home to magnificent dunes on the edge of the Empty Quarter, stunning desert oases such as the Liwa Oasis, and rugged archaeological sites in the Hajar Mountains. The UAE presents an astonishing mix of outlandish luxury and remote adventure, which will fascinate visitors to this unique land.

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## Key Facts

**Language:**

Arabic is the official language of the Emirates, but English is widely spoken.

**Passport/Visa:**

All visitors to the United Arab Emirates must hold a passport that is valid for six months. Visitors must hold documents and confirmed tickets for their next destination and have a sponsor in the UAE to cover their stay. It is highly recommended that passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

**Currency:**

The currency of the United Arab Emirates is the Dirham (AED), which is divided into 100 fils. There are no currency regulations in the UAE and all major currencies are readily exchanged at banks and large hotels. The Dirham is fixed against the US Dollar. The best exchange rates are found at private moneychangers who operate throughout the territory, particularly in the more popular souks (markets) and shopping centres. Most major credit cards are accepted. ATMs are common throughout the UAE. Banking hours are generally Saturday to Thursday from 8am to 3pm, but some are also open until 8.30pm, after a midday break.

**Electricity:**

Electrical current is 220 volts, 50Hz. The most frequently used plugs are the flat, three-pin type.

# Travel to United Arab Emirates

## Overview

Most tourists start their UAE adventures in Dubai. Visitors can scale the heights of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, visit the narrow lanes and preserved Arabian architecture of the Bastakia Quarter, take a sunset cruise on the traditional Dhow boats in Dubai Creek, or get lost in the storied shopping malls or the traditional souks in the Deira district. Sport fanatics will be entertained with events such as rugby sevens and horse racing.

The colossal Sheikh Zayeh Mosque in Abu Dhabi is a crown jewel in the capital city. Visitors can take a day trip out to Jebel Hafeet, the second highest peak in the UAE, offering stunning panoramic views out over the desert. The rugged, twisted Hajar Mountains are also prime territory for road trips, with fantastic hiking, trekking and bird watching opportunities.

Sharjah is the cultural capital of the Arab world. The city is home to the Sharjah Arts Museum, a diverse collection of works featuring many local artists, and the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation, which traces Islamic history and culture back to its earliest years.

With 400 miles (650km) of coastline along the Persian Gulf, the UAE is a renowned beach destination. There are numerous beach resorts in Ajman and Ras Al Khaimah. Luxury Hotels in the big cities often have their own private beaches, which non-residents can pay to use. Watersports are hugely popular, with many visitors enjoying jet-skiing, diving and snorkeling holidays.

For the more adventurous traveller, the desert beckons. Intrepid explorers can experience 4x4 safaris, dune buggy rides, camel rides, sand-boarding and even traditional Bedouin-style dinners. Ancient cities and forgotten civilisations lie hidden in the desert sands, such as the spectacular city of Musandam. Here, the bright lights of Dubai and Abu Dhabi will feel centuries away.

## Climate in United Arab Emirates

Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, the UAE has a sub-tropical arid climate and is warm and sunny in winter, but hot and humid during the summer months. The humidity is particularly high in the coastal areas. Rainfall is virtually non-existent, with occasional short showers occurring mainly in winter (December to March). Localised thunderstorms sometimes occur in summer.

## Health Notes when travelling to United Arab Emirates

No vaccinations are required for entry to the UAE, though a certificate is required for yellow fever if visitors are arriving from an affected area. Tap water in the major cities is safe to drink but sticking to bottled water may be preferable elsewhere. Medical care is excellent in the main cities, but extremely expensive, while medicines and medical care are not always available in the outlying areas. Health insurance is essential as visitors may be prevented from using healthcare facilities without travel insurance or without the means to settle any medical fees.

## Safety Notes when travelling to United Arab Emirates

Most visits to the UAE are trouble free. Crime is not a problem, but there is deemed to be a threat of terrorism against Western interests and gathering points, particularly entertainment venues. It is therefore wise to be vigilant when frequenting these. It is also wise to avoid political gatherings and demonstrations. Terrorists continue to issue statements threatening to carry out attacks in the Gulf region, including references to attack Western interests, such as residential compounds, military, oil, transport and aviation interests.

## Customs in United Arab Emirates

The Emirates states are all Muslim, therefore alcohol is not served except in hotels. It is an offence to drink or be drunk in public and penalties are severe. Some prescribed and over the counter medicines from outside the country may be considered to be a controlled substance within the UAE and will not be allowed into the UAE without prior permission from the UAE Ministry of Health Drug Control Department (DCD). A passenger arriving with such medication without permission may be subject to prosecution. Dress and behaviour should be modest, particularly during the month of Ramadan when it is disrespectful to smoke, drink or eat in public between sunrise and sunset. Women's clothes should cover the tops of the arms and legs. Cohabiting, adultery and homosexual behaviour are illegal in the UAE, and it is an offence to swear or make rude gestures, or show a public display of affection. In general, the country has a tolerant approach to Western visitors, but local laws and sensitivities should be respected.

## Duty Free in United Arab Emirates

Visitors to the UAE do not need to pay customs duty on 400 cigarettes, 50 cigars and 500g tobacco; and goods to the value of AED 3,000. Alcohol allowances vary. Dubai: 24 cans of beer or 4 litres of any other alcohol; Abu Dhabi and Fujairah: 4 litres of alcohol provided traveller is not Muslim; Sharjah: 2 litres of alcohol and 1 case beer. Fruit and vegetables from cholera-infected areas are strictly prohibited.

## Doing Business in United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates, although a very warm country, requires formal business attire from both men and women. Women should dress conservatively, being careful to cover up as much as possible. It is unlikely that visitors will come into contact with local women in business, as it is an overwhelmingly male-dominated society. Punctuality is considered a sign of respect and is essential, even though it is not uncommon to be kept waiting on occasion. With interruptions in meetings quite prevalent, patience is expected.

The Arabic greeting of 'Salaam Aleikum' is advisable instead of 'Hello' and politeness helps to build strong relationships. Shaking hands is common, but men should only shake the hand of a woman after she offers it, otherwise a simple bow of the head will suffice. Often agreements are verbal and will be acted upon. Dates in documents should be detailed in both Gregorian dates and the Hijrah date. Gifts are appreciated but not necessary, though foreigners should be sure to avoid anything involving alcohol or pig-related products, as the UAE is a Muslim country. Friday is the day of rest and most likely very little business will occur on this day. General business hours are 9am to 5pm Sunday to Thursday. During the holy month of Ramadan businesses may halt in the middle of the day and only continue after the fast has been broken in the evening.

## Communication in United Arab Emirates

The international code for the United Arab Emirates is +971. Travellers can purchase local SIM cards for unlocked phones at the airports or city shops. WiFi is widespread, but the internet is censored to filter out any material and websites deemed undesirable by the authorities.

## Tipping in United Arab Emirates

Tipping practices are similar to most parts of the world. Where no service charge is included, 10 percent is adequate and many hotels and restaurants add a service charge, so it is best to check the bill.

## Passport/Visa Note

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## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

United States citizens require a passport valid for 6 months after date of arrival. No visa is required for tourist stays under 30 days.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian passports must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of entry. Canadians entering the UAE as tourists must obtain an entry stamp at the port of entry. This entry stamp is free and valid for 30 days. It's renewable for a further 30 days.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

Passports must be valid for 6 months after date of entry. British passport holders can get a visitor's visas on arrival for a maximum of 30 days.

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Passports must be valid for at least six months from the departure date. Australians are eligible for a free 30-day visitor visa-on-arrival.

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish nationals require a passport valid for six months from the departure date, and can obtain a visa on arrival for a maximum of 30 days.

### Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

Passports must be valid for at least six months from the departure date. New Zealand nationals are eligible for a

free 30-day visitor visa-on-arrival.

**Entry requirements for South Africans:**

South African nationals require a passport valid for six months from the departure date. A visa is required.

## **Tourist Offices**

Dubai Department of Tourism: +971 4 223 0000 or <http://www.emirates.org>

## United Arab Emirates Embassies

### In the United States:

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 243 2400.

### In Canada:

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 565 7272.

### In the United Kingdom:

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Ireland): +44 (0)20 7581 1281.

### In Australia:

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Canberra, Australia (also responsible for New Zealand): +61 (0)2 6286 8802.

### In South Africa:

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 342 7736.

## Foreign Embassies in United Arab Emirates

### American Embassy

United States Embassy, Dubai: +971 (0)4 309 4000.

### Canadian Embassy

Canadian Embassy, Abu Dhabi: +971 2 694 0300.

### British Embassy

British Embassy, Dubai: +971 4 309 4444.

### Australian Embassy

Australian Embassy, Abu Dhabi: +971 2 401 7500.

### Irish Embassy

Irish Embassy, Abu Dhabi: +971 2 495 8200.

### New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand Embassy, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (also responsible for the United Arab Emirates): +966 1 488 7988.

### South African Embassy

South African Embassy, Abu Dhabi: +971 2 447 3446.

# Currency

The currency of the United Arab Emirates is the Dirham (AED), which is divided into 100 fils. There are no currency regulations in the UAE and all major currencies are readily exchanged at banks and large hotels. The Dirham is fixed against the US Dollar. The best exchange rates are found at private moneychangers who operate throughout the territory, particularly in the more popular souks (markets) and shopping centres. Most major credit cards are accepted. ATMs are common throughout the UAE. Banking hours are generally Saturday to Thursday from 8am to 3pm, but some are also open until 8.30pm, after a midday break.

## Exchange rate for 1 AED - U.A.E Dirham

<b>0.00</b> BMD Bermudan Dollar	<b>0.25</b> EUR Euro	<b>0.27</b> USD U.S. Dollar	<b>0.22</b> GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	<b>41.77</b> JPY Japanese Yen	<b>0.37</b> CAD Canadian Dollar
<b>0.25</b> CHF Swiss Franc	<b>0.41</b> AUD Australian Dollar	<b>10.76</b> UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	<b>121.19</b> KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	<b>25,410.19</b> LBP Lebanese Pound	<b>1.33</b> LYD Libyan Dinar
<b>1.87</b> BOB Bolivian Boliviano	<b>0.00</b> NPR Nepalese Rupee	<b>0.00</b> OMR Omani Rial	<b>0.00</b> QAR Qatari Rial	<b>0.37</b> SGD Singapore Dollar	<b>2.95</b> SEK Swedish Krona
<b>0.00</b> TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar	<b>0.00</b> VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	<b>15.87</b> DOP Dominican Peso	<b>0.00</b> HRK Croatian Kuna	<b>4.63</b> MXN Mexican Peso	<b>166.68</b> XOF West African CFA Franc
<b>0.00</b> PGK Papua New Guinean kina	<b>0.00</b> BSD Bahamian Dollar	<b>0.00</b> FJD Fiji Dollar	<b>0.00</b> HNL Honduran Lempira	<b>36.55</b> DZD Algerian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> MMK Myanma Kyat
<b>0.00</b> BWP Botswana Pula	<b>1.02</b> PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	<b>256.20</b> CLP Chilean Peso	<b>105.61</b> AMD Armenia Dram	<b>6.36</b> CZK Czech Koruna	<b>4.81</b> MDL Moldova Lei
<b>38.19</b> ISK Icelandic Krona	<b>3,435.09</b> UZS Uzbekistan Sum	<b>1.02</b> ILS Israeli New Sheqel	<b>0.19</b> JOD Jordanian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	<b>10.42</b> UYU Uruguayan Peso
<b>0.00</b> MUR Mauritian Rupee	<b>0.00</b> NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	<b>2.97</b> NOK Norwegian Krone	<b>1.10</b> PLN Polish Zloty	<b>1.02</b> SAR Saudi Riyal	<b>0.00</b> LKR Sri Lanka Rupee
<b>10.04</b> THB Thai Baht	<b>1.39</b> BRL Brazilian Real	<b>1.26</b> RON Romanian New Leu	<b>2.13</b> HKD Hong Kong Dollar	<b>166.68</b> XAF Central African CFA Franc	<b>6,935.95</b> VND Vietnamese Dong
<b>239.80</b> ARS Argentine Peso	<b>0.00</b> XCD East Caribbean Dollar	<b>0.00</b> GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	<b>2.75</b> MAD Moroccan Dirham	<b>0.00</b> BHD Bahrain Dinar	<b>0.27</b> PAB Panamanian Balboa
<b>0.46</b> AZN Azerbaijan Manat	<b>1,070.19</b> COP Colombian Peso	<b>24.14</b> KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	<b>98.83</b> HUF Hungarian Forint	<b>2.97</b> TJS Tajikistan Ruble	<b>4,388.24</b> IDR Indonesian Rupiah
<b>13.09</b> EGP Egyptian Pound	<b>370.97</b> KRW South Korean Won	<b>2,035.69</b> PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	<b>1.29</b> MYR Malaysian Ringgit	<b>138.77</b> CRC Costa Rican Colón	<b>0.46</b> NZD New Zealand Dollar
<b>75.86</b> PKR Pakistani Rupee	<b>24.95</b> RUB Russian Rouble	<b>5.05</b> ZAR South African Rand	<b>0.86</b> TND Tunisian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> BBD Barbadian Dollar	<b>0.50</b> BGN Bulgarian Lev
<b>8.83</b> TRY Turkish Lira	<b>15.64</b> PHP Philippine Peso	<b>8.82</b> TWD New Taiwan Dollar	<b>318.01</b> NGN Nigerian Naira	<b>0.00</b> XPF CFP Franc	<b>0.00</b> GHS Ghanaian Cedi
<b>0.00</b> JMD Jamaican Dollar	<b>0.00</b> ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	<b>0.00</b> BND Brunei Dollar	<b>29.73</b> RSD Serbian Dinar	<b>1.98</b> CNY Chinese Yuan	<b>1.90</b> DKK Danish Krone
<b>0.95</b> TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	<b>22.77</b> INR Indian Rupee				

## Port of Call - Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi has been called the richest city in the world, and the sleek skyline beckons cruise ships like a siren. While not as popular with tourists as nearby Dubai, its slower pace and more conservative approach provides an authentic glimpse into Arab culture. Visits to landmarks like the enormous Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and the Cultural Foundation can augment this experience, and complement a holiday spent lying on the beautiful white sand beaches. Cruises to Abu Dhabi usually dock at Mina Zayed port, which lacks a dedicated cruise terminal, but is near to the city, and amenities like restaurants, shops and currency exchanges.

## Shopping in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is one of the most expensive cities in the world, so you'll find no end of luxury goods for sale. Low import duties and no sales tax means there are bargains to be found in the city's gleaming shopping malls, bustling souks, and independent shops. The three-storey Abu Dhabi Mall near the port has over two hundred stores, and there are 17 more malls if you can't find what you're after there. Popular souvenirs include perfume, spices, leather goods, and gold jewellery.

**Best Buy:** A treasured Arabian antique.

## Dining in Abu Dhabi

Al Mina - Iranian cuisine and seafood in a casual harbourfront setting  
BiCE - trendy Italian food with good views of the Gulf  
Anand Vegetarian Restaurant - North Indian restaurant with a designated family section

**Best Dish:** A delicious and traditional Shawarma.



## Port of Call - Dubai

While still a young port of call for cruise ships on around-the-world jaunts or just Gulf coast cruises, Dubai's huge port bustles as the busiest container port in the world. Now increasing numbers of tourists are drawn to its glittering shores in search of true luxury in its famous shopping malls, gleaming high rise buildings, and immense amusement parks and tourist attractions. The sleek facade is contrasted sharply by the bustling souks and expansive deserts, which hint at the rich culture and tradition in region's long history. There is much to see and do in Dubai, even for just a day or two, including designer shopping at the Dubai Mall, exploring the city's history at the Dubai Museum, tea at the iconic Burj al-Arab Hotel, or splashing around in the Wild Wadi water park. Cruise ships dock at the Dubai Cruise Terminal at Port Rashid, which has amenities like duty free shops and currency exchanges.

## Shopping in Dubai

Shopping is a major pastime in Dubai, and many tourists visit specifically to spend time in one of the over 70 gleaming high-rise shopping malls like the Dubai Mall and the Mall of the Emirates, and the bustling Gold and Spice Souks. While Dubai is no longer the bargain it once was, low import duties and no sales tax mean there are deals to be found. Popular buys include gold, textiles, designer goods and electronics.

**Best Buy:** Pashminas and Arabic perfumes.

## Dining in Dubai

Al Muntaha at The Burj Al Arab - seven star dining 200 metres up QD's - funky shisha tents at the Dubai Golf & Yacht Club Ginseng - asian tapas and cocktails at the Wafi City Mall

**Best Dish:** Ghuzi

## Overview of the Attractions in United Arab Emirates

Most tourists start their UAE adventures in Dubai. Visitors can scale the heights of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, visit the narrow lanes and preserved Arabian architecture of the Bastakia Quarter, take a sunset cruise on the traditional Dhow boats in Dubai Creek, or get lost in the storied shopping malls or the traditional souks in the Deira district. Sport fanatics will be entertained with events such as rugby sevens and horse racing.

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# Public Holidays in United Arab Emirates

	2023	2024
<b>New Year's Day</b>	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
<b>Israa &amp; Miaraj Night</b>	Sun. February 18	Thu. March 7
<b>Eid al Fitr (end of Ramadan)</b>	Sun. April 21 to Mon. April 22	Tue. April 9 to Wed. April 10
<b>Eid al Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)</b>	Fri. June 28 to Sat. June 29	Sun. June 16 to Mon. June 17
<b>UAE National Day</b>	Mon. December 2	Mon. December 2
<b>Hijiri New Year</b>	Thu. July 18 to Fri. July 19	Sat. July 6 to Sun. July 7
<b>Arafat (Haj) Day</b>	Thu. June 27	Sat. June 15
<b>The Prophet's Birthday</b>	Sun. September 29	Sun. September 15