

## Overview of United Arab Emirates



The United Arab Emirates is comprised of seven emirates, which occupy the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Each emirate, unique and rich in tradition, is an essential component necessary for making up the whole. The seven emirates are DUBAI, ABU DHABI, SHARJAH, AJMAN, UMM AL QAIWAIN, RAS AL KHAIMAH, FUJAIRAH.

Dubai is one of the seven emirates and the most populous city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is located along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf on the Arabian Peninsula. Located at the cross-roads of Asia, Europe and Africa, Dubai is well positioned to attract tourists looking for somewhere new and different, a destination combining the traditions of the east with the comforts of the west.



Sunshine, shopping, seaside, sports and safety - five of the key ingredients that have earned Dubai a growing reputation as one of the world's most attractive and rapidly developing leisure destinations. Long established as the trading and commercial hub of the Middle East, the emirate combines the excitement of a bustling commercial centre with the wide open spaces of a luxurious resort. Both business travelers and tourists find that Dubai offers the highest standards of comfort and luxury. An intriguing land that combines old-world souks and modern shopping malls, rolling sand dunes and championship grass golf courses, remote Bedouin villages and an array of five-star hotels, Dubai defies easy definition.

Expatriates and foreign visitors - both male and female - enjoy a relaxed and pleasant lifestyle in Dubai. There is virtually no crime, the city is clean, apartments and villas are modern and spacious and the climate is pleasant for most of the year. There are many clubs and societies in Dubai. Freedom of worship is allowed to all religions, and Christian churches have existed in Dubai for many years. Foreign newspapers, magazines, films and videos are readily available. Alcohol may be consumed at home provide a permit is obtained, or in hotels, and on licensed club premises. Women can drive and move about unaccompanied

It is essential to have a car as Dubai is a spacious city with most residences situated some distance from shops, schools and the office. Most Japanese, European and American models are readily available and there is an active second-hand market. Vehicle third party insurance is compulsory. Dubai has an excellent road system. Driving is on the right hand side of the road. A vehicle license may be secured for first registration, then subject to annual renewal - following a road worthiness test. Taxis are easily obtainable in Dubai. The Dubai Transport Corporation's ivory coloured cabs are fitted with fare meters. Driving licences issued by some overseas governments may be exchanged for a Dubai licence. Where reciprocal arrangements do not exist, it is necessary to take a driving test to obtain a licence. Full details about obtaining and exchanging driving licences are available from the Traffic Department of the Police, telephone number +971 4 2694444 (24 hour), or by writing to PO Box 1493, Dubai. People using taxis will have to pay an applicable road toll if passing through 'Salik', the brand name for Dubai's toll system.



There is a comprehensive network of government schools throughout the emirate, providing free primary and secondary education to UAE nationals. For expatriate families, there are numerous private foreign schools offering education of a high standard to the curriculum requirements of the UK, USA and a number of others, including Italy, Japan, Iran, India and Pakistan. In neighbouring emirates there are French and German schools. English is usually the main language of instruction, but other languages are used as necessary by foreign schools.

Telecommunications in Dubai are excellent. Telephones have international direct dialling to most countries in the world. The UAE offers excellent Internet connections with high bandwidth to ensure an unmatched quality of service and a world class Internet experience to consumers in the UAE. Fax and mail facilities are widely available. There is an efficient and reliable postal service. The General Postal Authority also offers a courier service known as Mumtaz Post which delivers to almost anywhere in the world. Commercial courier services are widely used.

The Health and Medical Services Department provides medical care for all UAE nationals, visitors and resident expatriates. Dubai has many well equipped public and private hospitals offering high quality health and dental care services. There are several hospitals in Dubai and government clinics in the districts of Jumairah, Satwa, Buhail, Rashidiya, Qusais, Hatta, Al-Lusaili, Jebel Ali, and at the airport and Port Rashid. Emergency medical care in Dubai is free for anyone and there are no restrictions. For non-urgent health care, any UAE resident seeking treatment may register for a health card for which a fee is paid. New arrivals are advised to register immediately for a health card. They may otherwise have to pay full medical costs after the first two visits.

In addition to the Arabic press, there are five English language dailies published in the UAE - Gulf News, Khaleej Times, Gulf Today, Emirates News and The Nation. Several popular magazines exist for business and consumer interests. International newspapers, magazines and journals can be bought at bookshops and supermarkets. Dubai has both Arabic and English commercial radio and television stations, as well as access to international satellite TV programming. The Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing publishes a number of newsletters which are available to companies interested in doing business with Dubai.



Although a relative newcomer to the incentive travel market, Dubai has already achieved considerable success. This is because it fits neatly into the incentive travel organisers' ideal profile of somewhere new and different that combines exotic experiences and excitement with professional destination management services and top quality hotels.

One of the world's leading inter-continental transit centres, Dubai is easily accessible. More than 135 airlines operate through the Dubai International Airport linking the emirate to 210

destinations worldwide with direct connections to the main cities worldwide. Dubai airport is modern and efficient; customs and immigration procedures are simple.



Dubai offers a wide choice of luxury modern accommodation in the city, on the beach or in the mountains. All of Dubai's hotels are well equipped with modern facilities. They all offer excellent conference and meeting facilities, state-of-the-art telecommunications, fully equipped health clubs and facilities for a wide range of sports. Cuisine from around the world can be sampled at Dubai's restaurants.

Unlike many newly emerging destinations, Dubai offers incentive travel organisers a choice of internationally experienced, professional destination management companies and inbound tour operators. They employ multi-lingual guides and well-qualified drivers and have modern air-conditioned coaches for airport transfers and excursion tours.

A variety of standard or tailor-made tours are available, lasting from one or two hours to several days. There are city tours (general, shopping, heritage etc.), excursions to the desert, through the *wadis* (dried up river beds), to the starkly beautiful Hajar mountains and to the sandy beaches of the East Coast on the waters of the Indian Ocean. There are helicopter, boat and *dhow* tours also on offer; special interest tours include fishing, golf, archaeology and bird watching.

The highlight of any holiday in Dubai is the adventure of tackling the Arabian desert. Safaris, dune and *wadi* driving are popular; and sand skiing from the high dunes is the latest desert sport. A moonlit Arabian barbecue in the desert, complete with traditional

For the sporting spectator, a full calendar of top class international events - golf, horse racing, rallying, powerboat racing, rugby and snooker - makes Dubai the sports capital of the Middle East.

One of the greatest attractions of Dubai is shopping. The city's tax-free status means bargains galore. A choice of modern air-conditioned malls offer attractive prices on the widest possible range of international brand names in electronics, hi-fi, cameras, watches, textiles, perfumes, cosmetics and much more.

The ancient "*souks*" or markets offer a romantic setting for the purchase of spices, antiques, rugs, and silverware.

The city is also one of the world's great gold trading centres and streets of shops sell a dazzling array of modern machine-crafted and exquisite hand-made ornaments to suit every taste.

## Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is the capital and second most populous city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), after Dubai. It is also the seat of government of the emirate of Abu Dhabi. It lies on a T-shaped island jutting into the Persian Gulf from the central western coast. One of the world's largest producers of oil, Abu Dhabi has actively attempted to diversify its economy in recent years through investments in financial services and tourism.

The emirate of Abu Dhabi is located in the oil-rich and strategic United Arab Emirates and is an active member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It borders with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (south) and the Sultanate of Oman (east). The emirate borders the emirate of Dubai to its northeast. In the north is the Persian Gulf.

Abu Dhabi city is on an island located less than 250 metres from the mainland and is joined to the mainland by the Maqta and Mussafah Bridges. A third bridge, designed by Zaha Hadid, is currently under construction. Bridges connecting to Reem Island and Saadiyat Island are also under construction and should be completed in 2011.

Most of Abu Dhabi is located on the island itself, but it has many suburbs on the mainland for example: the Khalifa A, Khalifa B, Rhaha Beach, Between Two Bridges, Baniyas and Mussafah Residential.

The majority of the inhabitants of Abu Dhabi are expatriate workers from India, Pakistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, the United Kingdom and various countries from across the Arab world. Consequently, English, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Amharic, Bengali, and Urdu are widely spoken. Apart from Urdu and Hindi spoken by Indian workers, many Indian expatriates also contribute other South Asian languages to the cultural milieu, including Malayalam, widely spoken in Kerala.

The native-born population are Arabic-speaking Persian Gulf Arabs who are part of a clan-based society. The Al Nahyan family, part of the Al-Falah branch of the Bani Yas clan, rules the emirate and has a central place in society.

Abu Dhabi stages hundreds of conferences and exhibitions each year in its state-of-the-art venues, including the Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company (ADNEC). Another major event is the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC).

Abu Dhabi is planning to stage the biggest fireworks display in the world as part of the celebrations to mark UAE national day.

Abu Dhabi is home to several international and local private schools and universities. These schools and universities boast several languages that make up the population of Abu Dhabi.

The Abu Dhabi Education Council seeks to develop education and educational institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, implement innovative educational policies, plans and programs that aim to improve education, and support educational institutions and staff to achieve the objectives of national development in accordance with the highest international standards.

## **Role of the Abu Dhabi Education Council**

1. The council will develop education and educational institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It will provide technical assistance in this regard.
2. The council will coordinate with the Ministry of Education in planning education strategies within the framework of the UAE's general education policy.
3. The council will conduct studies and make suggestions to develop education and vocational training and enhance the capabilities of educational institutions and their employees to advance with the general progress of the country.
4. The council will provide technical and material assistance to educational institutions.
5. The council will support relations between educational institutions and the private sector.
6. The council will raise the standard of education and vocational training for graduates, providing them with training and exposing them to wider employment opportunities.
7. The council will provide assistance, counseling and technical services to educational institutions and coordinate among these institutions to enable them to implement the education plans of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
8. The council will participate in establishing an educational database for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
9. The council will encourage the private sector to provide quality education services according to existing laws.

## **Here are few popular do's and dont's**

### **Do's:**

- Make sure you have a valid passport and a visa to enter any emirate of UAE. You should have Xerox copies of your passport, visa and other important travel documents, keeping them separate from the originals.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Also keep a list of UAE emergency phone numbers always with you.
- There are no major health concerns or specific vaccinations required for visitors to UAE. However, you are advised to check the current health warnings prior to your departure.
- Change your money only from authorized moneychangers or banks in Dubai. As there are no currency restrictions in the UAE, all major world currencies can be exchanged, with several internationally renowned banks and hotels.
- Always drink bottled water that is easily available everywhere in UAE. Tap water is desalinated and safe for drinking, but drinking bottled mineral water is advisable.
- Taking of photographs can be sensitive; ask permission and avoid secure areas (airport, military camps, official buildings etc.).
- Respect local cultures and traditions of UAE, and never try to make a mockery of local traditions. Avoid commenting on dress of the local people.
- Indulge in some haggling while buying goods without price tags whenever you go shopping in UAE.
- Use sunglasses and sun cream, as sunburn is common in UAE and heat sometimes can be unbearable.
- Always be careful of the belongings you carry with you during your holiday.

### **Don'ts:**

- Don't eat in public places during Ramadan. During Ramadan all Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, and eating, drinking and smoking in public areas during daylight hours should be avoided.

- Don't carry any drugs in the UAE. It may invite a death penalty.
- UAE is an Islamic country and so avoid tight and exposing clothing. Women should particularly wear modest clothes.
- Avoid photographing Muslim women and do not photograph airports, docks, telecommunications equipment, Govt. buildings, and military and industrial installations.
- Don't behave in a manner that might insult Muslim customs or beliefs. Don't swear - as you can get fined and sent to jail
- Don't use your left hand while greeting or handing over things to people.
- Don't bring alcohol or pornography to the UAE. Videos and books are often checked and may be retained by customs officials.
- Don't touch anyone's head as it is considered offensive in UAE.
- Don't participate in local demonstrations.

**Interesting websites to visit for more information on Dubai and Abu Dhabi:**

[www.dubai.com](http://www.dubai.com)

[www.dubaitourism.ae](http://www.dubaitourism.ae)

[www.dubaicityguide.com](http://www.dubaicityguide.com)

<http://www.visitabudhabi.ae/>