

United Arab Emirates - Travel facts and figures

Location: Middle East

United Arab Emirates (UAE), federation of seven independent states located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered by the Persian Gulf to the north, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and west, and Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf of Oman to the east. Its seven member states are Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Al Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain formed in 1971 after independence from Britain.

National emblem:

National flag:

Government type: Federation with specified powers delegated to the UAE federal government and other powers reserved to member emirates

Geographic coordinates: 24° 00' N 54° 00' E

Area: 83,600 sq km

Highest point: Jabal Yibir 1,527 m

Population: 4.600.000 (estimate is based on the results of the 2005 census)

Population density: 52 / sq km

Capital: Abu Dhabi, geographic coordinates 24° 28' N 54° 22' E

Population: 1.500.0000

Local time: GMT + 4 hours

Life expectancy: 76 years

GDP – per capita: \$ 43,803

Value of petroleum exports: (billion \$) 74.55

Proven crude oil reserves: (billion barrels) 97.80

Proven natural gas reserves: (billion cu. m.) 6,072

Crude oil production: (1,000 b/d) 2,529

Crude oil exports: (1,000 b/d) 2,343

Natural gas exports: (billion cu. m.) 7.55

Burj Khalifa, Dubai: Tallest building in the world

At over 828 metres (2,716.5 feet) and more than 160 stories, Burj Khalifa holds the following records: Tallest building in the world; Tallest free-standing structure in the world; Highest number of stories in the world; Highest occupied floor in the world; Highest outdoor observation deck in the world; Elevator with the longest travel distance in the world; Tallest service elevator in the world

Visas: Tourist Visa This special category of visit visa is available for individual tourists from East and West Europe who are not entitled to be issued with a visa on arrival, as well as visitors from Thailand, South Africa and China. The tourist visa, which must be sponsored by hotels and tour operators, entitles its holder to a 30-day stay and is non-renewable. The fee is Dh100, with an additional Dh10 for delivery.

for more information visit: <http://www.government.ae/web/guest/visa>

Safety: The UAE is one of the safest places in the world to visit. In fact, it has been designated the world's safest holiday destination by the international travel industry.

Currency: The dirham (UAE Dh) is the official currency of the UAE. Dirham notes are in 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, and 1000 denominations. The dirham is divided into 100 fils, coins include Dh1, 50, 25, 10 and 5 fils.

Language: Arabic is the official language, but English is widely spoken.

Customs: Customs clearance in the UAE is fast and efficient. No customs duties are applied to personal belongings however, since the UAE is an Islamic country, religious propaganda, potentially offensive printed material, CD's videos or films should not be brought into the country.

The importation of firearms and dangerous weapons is also restricted.

Duty free allowances

- 2000 cigarettes

- 400 cigars

- 2 kg tobacco

- 2 litres of spirits and 2 litres of wine (non-Muslims only) and perfume.

It is prohibited to import alcohol into Sharjah and you are generally not allowed to bring alcohol into the country if you are travelling by land.

Climate: The climate in the United Arab Emirates is sub-tropical and arid. During summer (April to September) the weather is hot (around 50 °C) and extremely humid. At other times the humidity is less and the temperature generally ranges from 20-35 °C, with an average night time temperature of 15 °C. Rainfall is infrequent and usually occurs between November and March, with an average annual rainfall of 152 mm (6 in.). There can be occasional sandstorms from the desert and some winter mornings bring fog, although this usually dissipates fairly quickly.

Clothing: Lightweight summer clothing in cottons or blends is ideal for most of the year. Sweaters, a light jacket or a shawl may be needed for the cooler evenings. The dress code in UAE is comparatively relaxed, but extremely revealing and inappropriate clothing may be considered offensive.

Religion: Islam is the official religion; other religions are also respected. **Ramadan:** Ramadan is the holy month of fasting when Muslims abstain from eating, drinking and smoking during daylight hours. As a sign of respect, visitors are also required to refrain from these activities in public between sunrise and sunset.

Public holidays in 2015

1 Jan	International New Year
24 Jan	Prophet Mohammed's Birthday
6 Jun	Israa & Mi'raj Night
19 Jul	Ramadan expected to begin
19 Aug	Eid Al Fitr
24 Sep	Arafat (Haj) Day
25 Sep	Eid Al Adha
15 Oct	Hijra New Year's Day
2 Dec	National Day

Friday is the general day of worship and a public holiday. This is not the best day for cruise calls in Dubai and Abu Dhabi as it is a public holiday and also a day of prayers. Individual & groups will have to note certain sightseeing that may be closed.

Weekend: Government, schools and commercial Friday and Saturday

Electricity: The electrical system is based on 220 and 240 volts / 50 Hz. The most frequently used plugs are the square three-pin type.

Alcohol: Drinking or possession of alcohol without a United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior liquor permit is illegal and could result in arrest and imprisonment. Alcohol is served at bars in most major hotels (although not in the Emirate of Sharjah) but is intended for guests of the hotel. Travelers who are not guests of the hotel, and who consume alcohol in the restaurants and bars, are required to have their own personal liquor licenses. Liquor licenses are issued only to non-Muslims who possess United Arab Emirates residency permits. These licenses only permit the holder to purchase or consume alcohol in the Emirate which issued the license.

Drugs: Penalties for possession of illegal drugs include imprisonment. The presence of illegal drugs in the body is considered possession. Medications that are available over the counter or by prescription in Australia may be illegal in the United Arab Emirates. Travelers, including those intending only to transit the United Arab Emirates, are advised to contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate of the United Arab Emirates before travelling for further information.

Credit cards: All major credit cards are accepted, as are travellers cheques (best carried in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling) in main hotels, stores and larger shops, but in traditional souks, cash is mostly used and bargaining power is increased with the ready availability of currency. ATM machines are available. Banking hours are generally Saturday to Thursday from 8am to 1pm, but some are also open between 4pm and 8.30pm.

Business hours: The weekend has traditionally been Thursday afternoon and Friday, but some organisations now close on Friday and Saturday, working through Thursday afternoon instead. Government offices are open from 7.30am - 2.30pm (Sunday - Thursday and off on Friday and Saturday).

Private sector office hours vary, but are generally from 8am - 1pm, re-opening at either 3pm or 4pm and closing at 6.00pm or 7pm for those that work in split shifts. For most other offices regular working hours are 9am to 5pm. Shop hours are similar in their opening times, but most shops remain open until 9am–10pm. Department stores, boutiques, souks and many food shops remain open on a Friday, apart from prayer times (between 11.30am and 1.30pm), while larger shops re-open on a Friday afternoon at around 4 –5pm. Embassies and consulates are generally open from 8.45am–12.30pm and are closed on Fridays and in most cases on Saturdays.

Health: While tap water is safe for drinking, a variety of locally bottled mineral water is widely available. Most hotels have medical help available and there is a modern medical infrastructure in terms of private and government medical facilities.

Hotels: Accommodation in the UAE is of a very high standard and most of the world's top hotel chains run five-star hotels in the Emirates. There are also a number of excellent locally run properties suitable for both tourists and business travellers. Several of the hotels are outstanding examples of modern architecture. Swimming pools, tennis courts and fully equipped health centres are the norm. Most waterfront hotels have excellent beaches and extensive watersports facilities.

Facilities for the physically challenged: Most hotels and public places provide facilities and make special arrangements for physically challenged visitors.

Social conventions: Muslim religious laws should be observed. Women are expected to dress modestly and men should dress formally for most occasions. Alcohol is tolerated, with non-Muslims allowed to drink alcohol in the city's bars, restaurants, clubs and hotels. Smoking is the same as in Europe and in most cases it is obvious where not to smoke, except during Ramadan when it is illegal to eat, drink or smoke in public.

Photography: Normal tourist photography is acceptable but it is considered offensive to photograph Muslim women. It is also courteous to ask permission before photographing men. In general, photographs of government buildings or military installations should not be taken.

Mobile: telephony is widespread and of excellent quality. The system used is GSM. MMS, WEP and GSRM services are also on hand, and 3G services are available.

Traffic system: Driving in the UAE is on the right-hand side.

Taxis: Moderate bargaining is needed.

Getting around: Most tourists visiting the UAE on all-in package tours will base themselves at one or more hotels in the

UAE, using the ubiquitous and inexpensive taxis for sightseeing and shopping, and local tour companies for more extended trips. However, it is worth remembering that cars and four-wheel drives are readily available for hire, the road network is excellent and there are intriguing places to visit far from the cosmopolitan cities.

Getting there: The 2 national airlines Etihad Airways and Emirates offer a comprehensive air service to the UAE's six international airports at Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, Ra's al-Khaimah and Fujairah. Air Arabia based in Sharjah.

UAE airports:

Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)
t +971 2 5757500, flight enquiries: +971 2 5757611
w www.abudhabiairprt.ae

Dubai Airport (DXB)
t +971 4 2245555, flight enquiries: +971 4 2066666
w www.dubaiairport.com

Sharjah International Airport (SHJ)
t +971 6 5581111, flight enquiries: +971 6 5581000
w www.shj-airport.gov.ae

Ras Al Khaimah International Airport (RKT)
t +971 7 2448111
w www.rkt-airport.com

Fujairah International Airport (FJR)
t +971 9 2226222

w www.fujairah-airport.com

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