



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

United Arab Emirates



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Middle East.

Time: GMT + 4.

Ministry of Information and Culture

Tel: (2) 445 3000. **Website:** www.uaeinteract.com

Government of Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing in the UK

1st Floor, 125 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EA, UK **Tel:** (020) 7839 0580. **Website:** www.dubaitourism.ae

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the UK

30 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PT, UK **Tel:** (020) 7581 1281. **Website:** www.uaeembassyuk.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1500.

Consulate of the United Arab Emirates in the UK

48 Princes Gate, London SW7 2QA, UK **Tel:** (020) 7581 1281 or (0906) 550 4550 (visa information). **Website:** www.uaeembassyuk.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1300 (visa applications); 1330-1430 (Visa collection).

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the USA

3522 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA **Tel:** (202) 243 2400 or (800) 823 6911 (toll-free). **Website:** www.uae-embassy.org

2 OVERVIEW

Travel warning

The Emirates are bordered to the north by the Gulf and the Musandam Peninsula, to the east by Oman, to the south and west by Saudi Arabia and to the northwest by Qatar. The land is mountainous and mostly desert. Abu Dhabi is flat and sandy, and within its boundaries is the Buraimi Oasis. Dubai has a 16km- (10 mile-) deep-water creek, giving it the popular name of 'Pearl of the Gulf'. A predominantly modern city, Abu Dhabi nevertheless retains some of its ancient past. The Diwan Amiri (White Fort) was built in 1793 and still survives. There are many mosques, from the huge blue mosque on the corner of the Corniche to the smaller one in the centre of Khalifa Street Roundabout, surrounded by trees. Dubai has outstanding sporting and conference facilities. Bur Dubai, the original town, has old buildings, atmospheric alleyways and markets.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 77,700 sq km (30,000 sq miles).

Population: 4.3 million (official estimate 2004).



Population Density: 55.3 per sq km.

Capital: Abu Dhabi. Population: 1.7 million (2004 figure for entire Emirate).

GEOGRAPHY: The Emirates are bordered to the north by the Gulf and the Musandam Peninsula, to the east by Oman, to the south and west by Saudi Arabia and to the northwest by Qatar. They comprise a federation of seven small former sheikhdoms. Abu Dhabi is the largest Emirate, and the remainder (Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al Qaiwain) are known collectively as the Northern States. The land is mountainous and mostly desert. Abu Dhabi is flat and sandy, and within its boundaries is the Buraimi Oasis. Dubai has a 16km (10 mile) deep-water creek, giving it the popular name of 'Pearl of the Gulf'. Sharjah has a deep-water port on the Batinah coast at Khor Fakkan, facing the Indian Ocean. Ras al-Khaimah is the fourth emirate in size. Fujairah, one of the three smaller sheikhdoms located on the Batinah coast, has agricultural potential, while Ajman and Umm al Qaiwain were once small coastal fishing villages.

Government: Federation of seven autonomous Emirates. The highest federal authority is the Supreme Council of Rulers comprising the absolute rulers of the seven Emirates. Decisions reached by the Council must have the agreement of at least five members, including Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the two largest members. The council appoints a President to act as Head of State. There are no political parties. Head of State: President Sheikh Khalifa since 2004. Head of Government: Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum since January 2006. Recent history: Following the sudden death of Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who had been Prime Minister and Emir of Dubai since 1990, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, his brother, succeeded him in January 2006. Sheikh Mohammed had been the UAE Defence Minister since 1971 and heir apparent to the throne of Dubai since 1995.

Language: Arabic is the official language. English is widely spoken and used as a second language in commerce.

Religion: Mostly Muslim, of which 16 per cent are Shiite and the remainder Sunni.

Electricity: 220/240 volts AC, 50Hz. Square three-pin plugs are widespread.

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.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	No	Yes
Australian	Yes	No	Yes
Canadian	Yes	No	Yes
USA	Yes	No	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	No/1	Yes
Japanese	Yes	No	Yes



Restricted entry and transit: The Government of the United Arab Emirates refuses entry and transit to those holding transit documents issued from Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic, and travel documents issued by the Coalition Authority in Iraq, should their visas be obtained through an associate in the UAE. Note: No problems in entering the UAE occur for those travelling with an Israeli stamp endorsement.

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for a minimum of three months from date of arrival (six months for business travel) required. Often a sponsor will hold a visitor's passport. In these cases a receipt will be issued. This will generally be accepted in place of a passport where a transaction may require one.

VISAS: Required by all except the following: (a) nationals of countries referred to in the chart above (UK nationals must travel with a passport reading 'British Citizen' as national status), except 1. nationals of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia, who do need a visa for touristic or business stays of up to 30 days; (b) nationals of Andorra, Brunei, Hong Kong (SAR), Iceland, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Singapore, Switzerland, and Vatican City for stays of up to 30 days; (c) nationals of Gulf Co-operation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Saudi Arabia); (d) transit passengers, provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport for up to 12 hours.

Note: The Embassy only issues visas for diplomatic or certain business visits. For routine travel, visas for tourists, travellers (intending to visit family) and business travellers must be arranged via the sponsor (the hotel/package tour operator or UAE resident/company concerned). This includes transit visas. To obtain approval, the sponsor will require the visitor's proposed flight and passport details in advance. Business visits are made by invitation only and proof of company trading licence is required. The sponsor will then confirm to the visitor that a visa has been arranged, usually by fax, and that she/he will be met at the airport.

Types of visa and cost: Visitor and Business: £20. Price given is for UK nationals but price is dependent on nationality. Multiple-entry visas are only issued in very special circumstances. In case of visa being arranged by a sponsor, the request for multiple-entry should be marked clearly.

Validity: 30 days from date of entry and two months from date of issue. It may be possible to extend visas on request for up to a maximum of 90 days at the local immigration office.

Application to: Sponsor (as described above).

Application requirements: (a) Valid passport. (b) One passport-size photo. (c) Duplicate application form. (d) Letter from applicant's company/organisation (with extra copy) stipulating position held and purpose of visit. (e) Proof of sponsorship (often in the form of a fax). (f) Fee, payable in cash only. (g) Sponsor's name, address, telephone number and occupation (business activity if a company). Contact local sponsor for details of individual requirements.

Working days required: Between one and five when arranged through a sponsor. However, allowances should be made for possible delays in approval procedure. It is strongly advised to apply well in advance of departure date.



Passport/Visa Information: Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the UK30 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PT, UK Tel: (020) 7581 1281. Website: www.uaeembassyuk.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1500. Consulate of the United Arab Emirates in the UK48 Princes Gate, London SW7 2QA, UK Tel: (020) 7581 1281 or (0906) 550 4550. Website: www.uaeembassyuk.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1300 (visa applications); 1330-1430 (visa collection). Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the USA3522 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 243 2400 or (800) 823 6911 (toll-free). Website: www.uae-embassy.org

4 MONEY

Currency: UAE Dirham (AED) = 100 fils. Notes are in denominations of AED1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of AED1, and 50, 25, 10 and 5 fils (10 and 5 fils coins are rarely used).

Note: The Dirham is tied to the US Dollar.

Currency exchange: Most hotels will handle the exchange of foreign currency.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Traveller's cheques: These are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Currency restrictions: The import and export of both local and foreign currency are limited to AED40,000 or equivalent. Amounts over this must be declared at the Customs Counter at Dubai International Airport.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=AED6.48 \$1.00=AED3.67

Banking hours: Sat-Wed 0800-1300, Thurs 0800-1200. Some also open Sat-Wed 1630-1800.

5 DUTY FREE

The following items may be imported into the United Arab Emirates without incurring customs **duty**: 400 cigarettes and cigars up to AED3000 in value (for personal use) and 2kg of tobacco; 4l of spirits or 24 cans of beer (non-Muslims over 18 years only); a reasonable amount of perfume for personal use. Note: It is prohibited to bring alcohol into Sharjah and usually not allowed if entering the UAE by land.

Prohibited items: Firearms and dangerous weapons, religious propaganda, unstrung pearls except for personal use, raw seafood (only when visiting Dubai and/or Sharjah), fruit and vegetables from cholera-infected areas.



6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period: Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 11 Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 31 Al-Hijra (Islamic New Year). Apr 11 Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet). Aug 6 Accession of HH Sheikh Zayed. Aug 22 Leilat al-Meiraj (Ascension of the Prophet). Oct 22-24 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Dec 2 National Day. Dec 31 Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Jan 20 Al-Hijra (Islamic New Year). Mar 31 Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet).

Note: Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last anything from two to 10 days, depending on the region. For more information, see the World of Islam appendix.

7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	1	N/A
Malaria	No	N/A

1: Immunisation against polio is sometimes advised; typhoid occurs in rural areas.

Food & drink: Mains water in major cities is safe to drink, but in small villages it should be filtered, or bottled water should be used. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Other risks: Cutaneous leishmaniasis and tick-borne typhus may occur; avoid mosquito, sandfly and tick bites. Wear shoes to avoid soil-borne parasites. Take precautions against heat exhaustion and sunstroke. Immunisation against hepatitis A is recommended. Hepatitis B is endemic. Rabies is present close to the border with Oman. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Health care: Medical facilities are of a very high quality but are extremely expensive. Private health insurance is essential.

Travel - International



AIR: The national airlines are Emirates (EK) (website: www.emirates.com) and Gulf Air (GF) (website: www.gulfairco.com). Emirates operates international flights to and from Dubai; Gulf Air serves all UAE airports. Many other airlines operate scheduled services to Dubai.

Approximate flight times: From London to Abu Dhabi or Dubai is seven hours; from Frankfurt/M to Dubai is six hours; from Hong Kong to Dubai is nine hours 15 minutes and from Sydney to Dubai is 14 hours 45 minutes.

Main airports: Abu Dhabi (AUH) (website: www.dcaauh.gov.ae) is 32km (20 miles) east of the city (travel time 40 minutes). To/from the airport: Buses and taxis are available at the airport. Al Ghazal taxis operate a fixed-rate service. Facilities: Duty free shop, bank, bar, snack bar, bureau de change, post office and car hire. Al Ain International Airport (AAN) (website: www.alain-airport.gov.ae) is 13km (8 miles) northwest of Al Ain. To/from the airport: Al Ghazal taxis operate a fixed-rate service to the city centre. Public buses serve the airport. Facilities: Bank, bureau de change, ATM, restaurants, coffee shop, 24-hour cafe, duty free complex, children's playground in landscaped gardens, and medical centre. Dubai (DXB) (website: www.dubaiairport.com) is 4km (2.5 miles) southeast of the city (travel time 10 minutes). To/from the airport: Taxis and buses are available at the airport. Bus stations are opposite both Terminal 1 and 2. Facilities: Duty free shops, bank, post office, shops, car hire, restaurant, snack bar and bar. The airport consists of two terminals. Expansion plans are underway to provide a new third Terminal and two new passenger concourses, due to be completed by 2006. Sharjah (SHJ) (website: www.shj-airport.gov.ae) is 10km (6 miles) from the city. To/from the airport: Taxis are available at the airport. Facilities: Duty free shop, car hire, restaurants, snack bars, ATM and bureau de change. Ras al-Khaimah (RKT) (website: www.rakairport.com) is 15km (9 miles) from the city. To/from the airport: Taxis are available at the airport. Facilities: Duty free shop and restaurant/snack bar. There is also an airport at Fujairah with duty free facilities.

Departure tax: None.

SEA: Main ports: Jebel Ali, Rashid and Zayed (Abu Dhabi), Khalid (Sharjah), Saqr (Ras al-Khaimah) and Fujairah. Cruises call at Abu Dhabi and the cruise terminal in Dubai, and there are passenger/cargo services to the USA, the Far East, Australia and Europe. There are regular sailings between Sharjah and Bandar-é-Abbas (Iran).

ROAD: There is a good road into Oman and a good one into Saudi Arabia that connects with the Trans-Arabian Highway on the overland route to Europe. Buses run daily between Dubai or Abu Dhabi and Oman. There are also services between Dubai or Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia and between Abu Dhabi and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Daily flights link Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Flights can also be chartered and there are small landing fields throughout the United Arab Emirates.

SEA: Commercial and passenger services serve all coastal ports. A water taxi travels between Dubai and Deira across the creek.

ROAD: There are good tarmac roads running along the west coast between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah; between Sharjah and Dhaid; and linking Dubai with other Northern States and the interior. Traffic drives on the right and the speed limit in built-up areas is 60 to 80kph (37-50mph) and 100 to 120kph (62 to 74mph) elsewhere. Bus: Limited services link most towns. However, most hotels run their own scheduled bus services to the airport, city



centre and beach resorts. Taxi: Available in all towns. In Abu Dhabi and Al-Ain, urban journey fares are metered, whilst fares for longer journeys should be agreed in advance. There is a surcharge for air-conditioned taxis. Many travellers find taxis to be the quickest and most convenient method of travel from Abu Dhabi to Dubai. Car hire: Most international car hire companies have offices at airports or hotels. A passport and either a valid international or national licence are necessary. Documentation: An International Driving Permit is recommended, although it is not legally required. A local driving licence can be issued on presentation of a valid national driving licence, two photos and a passport.

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There is an excellent selection of hotel accommodation, with regular new openings competing to outdo each other. Rates tend to be cheaper in summer. Most of the major international hotel chains are represented, eg Hilton, Hyatt, Inter-Continental, Marriott, Ramada and Sheraton. There are also top-class beach resort hotels at Jebel Ali and Jumeirah Beach in Dubai and a mountain resort hotel at Hatta Fort. The stunning all-suite Burj Al Arab is probably the most deluxe. Contact the Ministry of Information and Culture (see Top Things To Do) for more information.

YOUTH HOSTELS: The United Arab Emirates Youth Hostel Association (part of the Hostelling International network) runs hostels in Dubai (two hostels), Sharjah, Kourfakkan and Fujairah. See below for contact details.

ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION: United Arab Emirates Youth Hostel Association 39 Al Nahda Road, Al Nahda 2 area, PO Box 94141, Dubai, UAETel: (971) 4298 8151. Website: www.uaeyha.com

Abu Dhabi

A predominantly modern city, Abu Dhabi nevertheless retains some of its ancient past. The Diwan Amiri (White Fort) was built in 1793 and still survives. There are many mosques, from the massive blue mosque on the corner of the Corniche to the tiny one in the centre of Khalifa Street Roundabout, surrounded by trees. There is also a museum. The oldest part of the town is the Batin area, served daily by the fishing dhows bringing their catch of Gulf prawns and other fish to the small harbours. The old building yards demonstrate craftspeople's skills that have remained unchanged for centuries. The city has ancient burial mounds at Um al Nar.

EXCURSIONS: Al Ain, 100km (60 miles) from Abu Dhabi, is an oasis and former caravan stop, built on a huge fertile plain. There is spectacular scenery along the journey from Abu Dhabi. The resort includes a camel market, zoo and museum containing old and new artefacts and Mesopotamian pottery. There is also a water spring at Ain Faidha, 14km (9 miles) from Al Ain. There are important archaeological digs at Hili, 10km (6 miles) from Al Ain. The stone tombs, including the famous Great Sepulchre, date back 5000 years. South of Al Ain is the Hafit Mountain, containing ancient tombs, pottery and swords. There are more ancient sites worth visiting at Um Al Nar and Badi'i Bent Saud. A fun park is situated at Al-Hir and majestic sand seas are to be seen at Liwa. Other areas of great scenic beauty include Qarn Island, Belghilam Island (famous for its gazelle breeding), near to Sadiyat Island, and Abul-Abyadh Island.

Dubai



The 'Pearl of the Arabian Gulf' grew up as a seafaring settlement along either side of the Creek, a natural harbour for dhow traders, pearl divers and fishermen. Deira on the northern bank and Bur Dubai to the south are connected by a tunnel and two bridges and can also be reached by abra (water taxi). Bur Dubai has substantial areas of old buildings, atmospheric alleyways and souks (markets), including the world-famous Gold Souk and colourful Spice Souk. Fascinating glimpses of the past can be gained from Al Fahidi Fort, the Dubai Museum (which houses, among other things, artefacts recovered from the ancient graves at Al-Ghusais), the traditional windtower houses of the nearby Bastakiya district and, at the mouth of the Creek, the magnificently restored Sheikh Saeed's Palace, as well as the diving and heritage villages. The Deira side of the creek is cosmopolitan and lively, with many attractive gardens and first-class shopping facilities, ranging from Western-style shops to the ancient souks where spices, perfume, clothing, antiques, handicrafts and jewels are available. Dubai's thriving tourist industry is based on guaranteed sunshine, a clean and safe environment, bargain shopping and superb sporting facilities, especially for golf and watersports. A long ribbon of development alongside the Gulf, extending south and west of Dubai city to Jebel Ali, offers an impressive range of coastal hotels and resorts. The recreation and sporting complex en route to Jebel Ali includes a golf course and an all-grass cricket pitch. Freshwater lakes can also be seen here, full of Japanese carp. The emirate has many well-qualified tour companies offering such activities as desert safaris by 4-wheel drive, sand-skiing, moonlit bedouin barbecues, camel riding and dhow cruises. The Dubai World Cup (the world's richest horse race), the PGA Desert Classic Golf Tournament, Dubai Shopping Festival and more than 80 major trade exhibitions are among the high-profile events attracting business and leisure visitors to the city each year. The **Palm Islands**: these three islands, said to be visible from the moon, form the largest manmade islands in the world. The Palm Jumeirah will feature a number of hotels as well as private residences when it opens in 2006. The Palm Jebel Ali is slated to have more leisure facilities, including an aquatic theme park, when it opens in 2008. The third of the islands, Palm Deira, will be more geared towards residential use with over 7,000 villas, and will be the largest of the trio when it opens in 2009. New bridges will connect the islands to the mainland in one of the largest construction projects ever undertaken by man. The three islands are going to be accompanied by 'The World', all very Dubai, an ambitious attempt to recreate the shape of the world on 300 offshore islands, slated to open in 2008. Watching these outlandish projects take shape has become one of Dubai's main attractions, with the view perhaps best from the Burj al Arab hotel. Opened in 2002, at Dubai Creekside Park, Children's City is proving a big hit with both local and international youngsters. The 7,700 sq-m (82,882 sq-ft) development takes young minds on a journey through the human body, science and space, with the help of different 'zones'. With plenty of hands-on action to keep even the most demanding children occupied, this is no dull old museum. All exhibits are in English as well as Arabic. Much of the long expanse of Jumeirah Beach is dominated by luxury hotels and their facilities. However, there is a stretch of public beach available, with clean white sand, crystal clear seawater and bath-temperature surf. Some of the hotels allow non-guests to use their pools and stretches of beach if they buy lunch or pay a nominal fee.

EXCURSIONS: The ancient fortified village of Hatta and Wadi Hatta is a lush and attractive valley in the foothills of the Hajar Mountains with superb desert scenery, on the journey from Dubai.

The rest of the Emirates

THE DESERT: A spectacular and varied wilderness of magnificent red dunes and stark mountains with pockets of green oases. It is possible to meet the nomadic Bedu folk, whose hospitality is famous, and to watch camel races at dawn.



EXCURSIONS: Includes visits to Bedu villages and to the stunning white sand dunes at Awir, where there is a national park. There is a selection of 'safari' holidays available.

THE EAST COAST: This impressive stretch of lush coastline makes a dramatic change after the desert, with steep mountains, unspoilt sandy bays and beaches, ancient fortresses and date palm groves sloping down to the edge of the Indian Ocean with its host of marine life. Scuba diving and snorkelling are very popular here and many forms of watersports are available at the hotels.

EXCURSIONS: Includes visits to the resorts of Dibba and Fujairah, where there is a museum, a Necropolis, an old fort and, nearby, many small mountain villages.

THE NORTHERN EMIRATES: This region has undergone a dramatic transformation since the discovery of natural gas in 1980 and there has been a considerable amount of expansion in the commercial sector. Sharjah is an excellent shopping centre, with its new souk containing hundreds of shops. There is also an ancient fort and heritage museum.

EXCURSIONS: Include visits to Ras al-Khaimah, where there is an old seaport with spectacular views over the coast and the Hajar Mountains; and also visits to the Dhaid and Khatt oases, the latter with mineral springs. There are also trips available to the natural harbour at Dibba and the beautiful Khor Kalba, one of the most famous shell beaches in the world. The archaeological site at Mileiha (in Sharjah itself) dates back to the 4th century BC; 80-million-year-old fossils are to be seen here. Other archaeological sites include Dur at Umm al-Qaiwain where Hellenic ruins can be seen (210-100 BC), the Drabhaniya ruins in Ras al-Khaimah and the Zaura ruins in Ajman. Important resort areas are Khor Fakkan, which has excellent beaches and watersports facilities and Khalid Lagoon (an aquatic park with several islands and a miniature theme park).

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Golf: Dubai has been declared the number-one golf destination worldwide, by the International Golf Tour Operators Association. The Emirates Golf Club, Dubai, which opened in 1988, was the first grass golf course in the Gulf. In addition, there is also the Abu Dhabi Golf Club (whose facilities include two 18-hole grass courses and a floodlit driving range), Dubai Creek Golf Club and the Nad Al Shiba Golf and Racing Club.

Watersports: Boats and water-skiing equipment are available for hire. Sailing and windsurfing are popular around Dubai and boats are available for hire. The waters off Dubai are considered among the best areas in the world for diving. There are sub-aqua clubs in main centres and an extensive range of equipment is available for hire. Swimming is possible in the many hotel pools or beaches. There is an abundance of game fish in the Gulf. Fully-equipped boats with crew can be hired from the Jebel Ali Hotel marina for deep-sea fishing trips.

Spectator sports: Boat racing for about 30 rowers is a traditional sport that is becoming increasingly popular. Camel and horse races are also held at various race tracks. Football has become more popular and can be seen in most large towns and there are a number of thriving rugby clubs in Dubai. Falconry is extremely popular among Arabs.

Other: Horse riding is available at several riding centres, and rides through the desert are organised regularly. Many hotels and clubs have tennis courts and there are squash courts in main centres. Bowling alleys can be found in hotels and clubs. Skiing and snowboarding are now



possible at the new Ski Dubai indoor snowsports centre (opened December 2005) which includes the world's first indoor black run.

Entertainment

Food & Drink: Local fruit and vegetables are increasingly available and there is excellent local fish. Hotels serve both Arab and European food and there is also a number of Chinese, Indian and other restaurants. National specialities: Hummus (chickpea and sesame paste). Tabbouleh (bulghur wheat with mint and parsley). Ghuzi (roast lamb with rice and nuts). Warak enab (stuffed vine leaves). Koussa mashi (stuffed courgettes). Makbous (spicy lamb with rice). Seafood with spicy rice are also popular. National drinks: Ayran (a refreshing yoghurt drink). Strong black coffee. Things to know: All the Emirates, with the exception of Sharjah, permit the consumption of alcohol by non-Muslims. It is illegal to drink alcohol in the street or to buy it for a UAE citizen. Tipping: Most hotels, restaurants and clubs add fairly high service charges to the bill, therefore tipping is not necessary. Taxi drivers are not tipped.

Nightlife: There are several nightclubs located in major centres and entertainment ranges from Arabic singers and dancers to international pop stars. Bars are found in all top hotels and range from sophisticated cocktail lounges to English-style pubs. Some hotels also have discos. Traditional dances are performed on public holidays. Most large towns have cinemas showing English-language films.

Shopping: Customs duties are low and therefore luxury goods are cheaper than in most countries. The Dubai duty-free shop is one of the cheapest in the world. Souks sell traditional Emirate leather goods, gold, brass and silverware. Shopping hours: Daily 0900-1300 and 1600-2100, but many shops are open all day. Shops close for prayers Fri 1130-1330.

Business

GDP: US\$104.2 billion (2004 estimate). Main exports: Crude oil, natural gas, reexports, dried fish and dates. Main imports: Machinery and transport equipment, chemicals and food. Main trade partners: Exports to: Japan, Korea (Rep), India and Thailand. Imports from: China, India, Japan, Germany, UK, France and USA.

Economy: Oil and gas are the Emirates' main industries, and underpin the country's considerable prosperity. Outside the oil and gas sector, which includes refining and the production of oil-derived chemicals, most economic activity is government sponsored, and designed to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on oil. This strategy has been reasonably successful and the oil sector's contribution to GDP is now down to about 45 per cent. Chemicals, aluminium and steel production are the most important of the new industries. Other newly established industries produce consumer goods for the domestic market. There is some agriculture, mostly livestock rearing, in what is an unfavourable climate; fishing is also significant. The economy has boomed in recent years. GDP growth for 2005 was estimated to be 28.5 per cent. At the end of 2005, the International Monetary Fund predicted the UAE's economy would become the third largest in East and Central Asia. By 2006, the GDP is expected to reach US\$150.9 billion. Most of the country's economic development has been concentrated in the two richest and most powerful of the seven Emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai; the remainder are relatively underdeveloped. UAE is a member of OPEC, and of the Gulf Co-operation Council which is increasingly concerning itself with regional economic collaboration. Plans to establish a customs union among the six member states are well advanced, and the GCC has sought advice from the EU on the creation of a single currency.



Business Etiquette: Business entertaining will often be lavish. Suits should be worn and prior appointments are essential. English is widely spoken in business circles, but translation services are likely to be available. Office hours: Sat-Wed 0800-1300 and 1500/1600-1800/1900 and Thurs 0800-1200. Government office hours: Sat-Wed 0730-1330, Thurs 0730-1200. All offices are closed every afternoon during the month of Ramadan.

Conferences/Conventions: The Dubai International Congress Centre can accommodate 10,000 delegates. At Port Rashid in Dubai, the cruise terminal has a wide range of facilities including a business centre with Internet access and a conference room. Dubai World Trade Centre hosts a multitude of events (including car rallies and tennis exhibitions). Many hotels in the UAE offer high-standard conference and meeting facilities.

Commercial Information: Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry PO Box 3014, Abu Dhabi, UAE Tel: (2) 621 4144. Website: www.fcci.gov.ae Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry PO Box 1457, Dubai, UAE Tel: (4) 228 0000. Website: www.dcci.gov.ae Each of the Emirates has its own Chamber of Commerce. Dubai World Trade Centre (Information on Conferences/Conventions) PO Box 9292, Dubai, UAE Tel: (4) 332 1000. Website: www.dwtc.com

10 CLIMATE

The best time to visit is between October and May. The hottest time is from June to September with little rainfall.

Required clothing: Lightweights, with mediumweights from November to March; warmer clothes for evening.

11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: This group of small sheikhdoms on the coastline of the Persian Gulf was a backwater of the Islamic civilisation that prospered in the Middle East from the seventh century onwards. The sheikhdoms then came under loose Ottoman control until the arrival of European colonists in the 1820s. After attacks on British-owned shipping by pirates operating in the Gulf region, they were brought under British suzerainty. The local Arab rulers signed a treaty with the British in 1853, under which they accepted British military protection and, in turn, promised to refrain from piracy. The sheikhdoms which became known as the Trucial States carried on largely unmolested and ignored until the 1950s when the British started to relinquish control as part of its post-imperial retrenchment. The British plan for the Trucial States was to weld its seven distinct regimes into a single administrative bloc. The discovery of oil, which gave the local economy a sudden and rapid boost to the local economy, helped to ease the process. The United Arab Emirates came into being as an independent state on 2 December 1971. Internal politics are prone to instability, because of the uncertain nature of the federation and boundary disputes. Sharjah, in particular, has been the subject of a couple of coup attempts. However, the ruling families in the two main emirates, Dubai (the al-Makhtoums) and Abu Dhabi (whose ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Sultan al-Nahayan, is the president of the UAE), have managed to stabilise the federation. The other four emirates are: Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah and Umm al-Qaiwain. After a quiet start on the international stage, the United Arab Emirates has taken an active role in Middle Eastern politics, both as a founding member of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) the principal pan-national grouping in the region and as a mediator in disputes including those



between Israel and the Palestinians, Morocco and Algeria, Iran and Iraq, and Oman and Yemen. It was also one of the first Gulf states to establish diplomatic relations with China (PR) and the nations of the former USSR. In August 1990, in common with other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the United Arab Emirates gave its firm backing to the US-led anti-Iraqi coalition. After the war, the United Arab Emirates enhanced its national security by participating in various GCC defence initiatives, as well as signing bilateral agreements with both the UK and the USA. The United Arab Emirates is essentially pro-Western but American strategy in the region has caused some difficulties for the government: most of the population were strongly opposed to the American-led assault on Iraq in 2003 and the United Arab Emirates provided cautious political backing (plus a support airbase in Abu Dhabi) for the operation. Within the region, the United Arab Emirates has a long-standing territorial dispute with Iran over ownership of three small Gulf islands Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and Abu Musa. These islands, presently occupied by Iran, are in a strategic position close to Gulf shipping lanes and sit over substantial oil and gas fields. That dispute has yet to be resolved, although several other lesser disputes with other Gulf states (principally Qatar) have been settled.

Government: The highest federal authority is the Supreme Council of Rulers comprising the absolute rulers of the seven emirates. Decisions reached by the Council must have the agreement of at least five members, including Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the two largest members. The council appoints a president to act as head of state. There are no political parties.

Travel Advice

There is a high threat from terrorism. Al Qaeda continues to issue statements threatening to carry out attacks in the Gulf region. These include references to attacks on Western interests, including residential compounds, military, oil, transport and aviation interests. Travellers should review their security arrangements carefully. They should remain vigilant, particularly in public places. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised **to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fco.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See

Abu Dhabi A predominantly modern city, Abu Dhabi nevertheless retains some of its ancient past. See the Diwan Amiri (White Fort), built in 1793, the many mosques, from the massive blue mosque on the corner of the Corniche to the tiny one in the centre of Khalifa Street Roundabout, surrounded by trees, and the museum. The oldest part of the town is the Batin area, served daily by the fishing dhows bringing their catch of Gulf prawns and other fish to the small harbours. The old building yards demonstrate craftspeople's skills that have remained unchanged for centuries. Discover the city's ancient burial mounds at Um al Nar. Al Ain, 100km (60 miles) from Abu Dhabi, is an oasis and former caravan stop, built on a huge fertile plain. There is spectacular scenery along the journey from Abu Dhabi. The resort includes a camel market, zoo and museum containing old and new artefacts and Mesopotamian pottery. There is also a water spring at Ain Faidha, 14km (9 miles) from Al Ain. Explore the important archaeological digs at Hili, 10km (6 miles) from Al Ain. The stone tombs, including the famous Great Sepulchre, date back 5000 years. Head for the Hafit Mountain, south of Al Ain, containing ancient tombs, pottery and swords. There are more ancient sites worth visiting at Um Al Nar and Badi'i Bent Saud. A fun park is situated at Al-Hir and majestic sand seas are to be seen at Liwa. Other areas of great scenic beauty include Qarn Island, Belghilam Island (famous for its gazelle breeding), near to Sadiyat Island, and Abul-Abyadh Island. **Dubai** The 'Pearl of the Arabian Gulf' grew up as a



seafaring settlement along either side of the Creek, a natural harbour for dhow traders, pearl divers and fishermen. Deira on the northern bank and Bur Dubai to the south are connected by a tunnel and two bridges and can also be reached by abra (water taxi). Bur Dubai has substantial areas of old buildings, atmospheric alleyways and souks (markets), including the world-famous Gold Souk and colourful Spice Souk. Gain fascinating glimpses of the past from Al Fahidi Fort, the Dubai Museum (which houses, among other things, artefacts recovered from the ancient graves at Al-Ghusais), the traditional windtower houses of the nearby Bastakiya district and, at the mouth of the Creek, the magnificently restored Sheikh Saeed's Palace, as well as the diving and heritage villages. The Deira side of the creek is cosmopolitan and lively, with many attractive gardens and first-class shopping facilities, ranging from Western-style shops to the ancient souks where spices, perfume, clothing, antiques, handicrafts and jewels are available. Marvel at the Palm Islands, said to be visible from the moon and forming the largest manmade islands in the world. The Palm Jumeirah will feature a number of hotels as well as private residences when it opens in 2006. The Palm Jebel Ali is slated to have more leisure facilities, including an aquatic theme park, when it opens in 2008. The third of the islands, Palm Deira, will be more geared towards residential use with over 7,000 villas, and will be the largest of the trio when it opens in 2009. New bridges will connect the islands to the mainland in one of the largest construction projects ever undertaken by man. The three islands are going to be accompanied by 'The World', all very Dubai, an ambitious attempt to recreate the shape of the world on 300 offshore islands, slated to open in 2008. Watching these outlandish projects take shape has become one of Dubai's main attractions, with the view perhaps best from the Burj al Arab hotel. Discover the ancient fortified villages of Hatta and Wadi Hatta, a lush and attractive valley in the foothills of the Hajar Mountains with superb desert scenery, on the journey from Dubai. The rest of the Emirates The desert offers a spectacular and varied wilderness of magnificent red dunes and stark mountains with pockets of green oases. Meet the nomadic Bedu folk, whose hospitality is famous, and watch camel races at dawn. Admire the stunning white sand dunes at Awir, where there is a national park. There is a selection of 'safari' holidays available. On the East Coast, visit the resorts of Dibba and Fujairah, where there is a museum, a Necropolis, an old fort and, nearby, many small mountain villages. The Northern Emirates is a region which has undergone a dramatic transformation since the discovery of natural gas in 1980 and there has been a considerable amount of expansion in the commercial sector. Sharjah is an excellent shopping centre, with its new souk containing hundreds of shops. There is also an ancient fort and heritage museum. Go on an excursion to Ras al-Khaimah, where there is an old seaport with spectacular views over the coast and the Hajar Mountains; and also to the Dhaid and Khatt oases, the latter with mineral springs. There are also trips available to the natural harbour at Dibba and the beautiful Khor Kalba, one of the most famous shell beaches in the world. The archaeological site at Mileiha (in Sharjah itself) dates back to the 4th century BC; 80-million-year-old fossils are to be seen here. Other archaeological sites include Dur at Umm al-Qaiwain where Hellenic ruins can be seen (210-100 BC), the Drabhaniya ruins in Ras al-Khaimah and the Zaura ruins in Ajman.

Tourist Information: Ministry of Information and Culture Tel: (2) 445 3000. Website: www.uaeinteract.com Government of Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing 1st Floor, 125 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EA, UK Tel: (020) 7839 0580. Website: www.dubaitourism.ae

Top Things To Do

Dubai has been declared the number-one golf destination worldwide, by the International Golf Tour Operators Association. The Emirates Golf Club, Dubai, which opened in 1988, was the first grass golf course in the Gulf. In addition, there is also the Abu Dhabi Golf Club (whose facilities include two 18-hole grass courses and a floodlit driving range), Dubai Creek **Golf Club and the Nad Al Shiba Golf and Racing Club. Watersports:** Boats and water-skiing equipment are



available for hire. Sailing and windsurfing are popular around Dubai and boats are available for hire. The waters off Dubai are considered among the best areas in the world for diving. There are sub-aqua clubs in main centres and an extensive range of equipment is available for hire. Swimming is possible in the many hotel pools or beaches. Much of the long expanse of Jumeirah Beach in Dubai is dominated by luxury hotels and their facilities. However, there is a stretch of public beach available, with clean white sand, crystal clear seawater and bath-temperature surf. Some of the hotels allow non-guests to use their pools and stretches of beach if they buy lunch or pay a nominal fee. In the Northern Emirates, important resort areas are Khor Fakkan, which has excellent beaches and watersports facilities and Khalid Lagoon (an aquatic park with several islands and a miniature theme park). The East Coast is an impressive stretch of lush coastline, with steep mountains, unspoilt sandy bays and beaches, ancient fortresses and date palm groves sloping down to the edge of the Indian Ocean with its host of marine life. Scuba diving and snorkelling are very popular here. There is an abundance of game fish in the Gulf. Fully-equipped boats with crew can be hired from the Jebel Ali Hotel marina for deep-sea fishing trips. The emirate has many well-qualified tour companies offering such activities as desert safaris by 4-wheel drive, sand-skiing, moonlit bedouin barbeques, camel riding and dhow cruises. Attend the Dubai World Cup (the world's richest horse race), the PGA Desert Classic Golf Tournament, the Dubai Shopping Festival or one of the 80 or so major trade exhibitions held in Dubai each year. Opened in 2002, at Dubai Creekside Park, Children's City is proving a big hit with both local and international youngsters. The 7,700 sq-m (82,882 sq-ft) development takes young minds on a journey through the human body, science and space, with the help of different 'zones'. With plenty of hands-on action to keep even the most demanding children occupied, this is no dull old museum. All exhibits are in English as well as Arabic. Skiing and snowboarding are now possible at the new Ski Dubai indoor snowsports centre (opened December 2005) which includes the world's first indoor black run.

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Overview II

This group of small sheikhdoms on the coastline of the Persian Gulf was a backwater of the Islamic civilisation that prospered in the Middle East from the seventh century onwards. After attacks on British-owned shipping by pirates operating in the Gulf region, they were brought under British suzerainty in the 19th Century. The sheikhdoms which became known as the Trucial States carried on largely unmolested and ignored until the 1950s when the British started to relinquish control as part of its post-imperial retrenchment. The British plan for the Trucial States was to weld its seven distinct regimes into a single administrative bloc. The discovery of oil in 1966, which gave the local economy a sudden and rapid boost to the local economy, helped to ease the process and soon transformed the emirate and its way of life. Dubai's first oil exports in 1969 were followed by a period of rapid development that laid the foundations for today's modern society. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven states - Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al Qaiwain - formed in 1971 after independence from Britain. Although internal politics are prone to instability, because of the uncertain nature of the federation and boundary disputes, the ruling families in the two main emirates, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, have managed to stabilise the federation. From the timeless tranquillity of the desert to the lively bustle of the souk, Dubai offers a kaleidoscope of attractions for visitors. The emirate embraces a wide variety of scenery in a very small area. In a single day, the tourist can experience everything from rugged mountains and awe-inspiring sand dunes to sandy beaches and lush green parks, from dusty villages and ancient houses with windtowers to luxurious residential districts and from the colourful souks to ultra-modern shopping malls.



Indeed, one of Dubai's greatest visitor attractions is its superb shopping. As an open port with low import duties, Dubai's retail prices are reasonable and the variety of products available is virtually unrivalled. Whatever the visitor's tastes - be it couture from Paris or Milan, hi-tech electronics from Japan, or a piece of silver Bedouin jewellery - he or she will find it at the right price in Dubai. Sometimes called the 'Manhattan of the Middle East', Abu Dhabi City is essentially a modern and sleek city, filled with skyscrapers. The United Arab Emirate's capital, located on an island connected to the mainland by two bridges, is often **accused of being a rather soulless place, but it does have its attractions:** the Petroleum Exhibition and the Heritage Village, the beautiful Corniche (beach), the Al Hisn Fort, the old souk (market), the Breakwater Island and Sheikh Zayed's palace. The most picturesque place is undeniably the Batin, the oldest part of the town, where the small harbours receive the daily catch brought by the fishing dhows.

Communications

Telephone: Country code: 971. Main area codes: Abu Dhabi 2; Ajman, Sharjah and Umm al Quwain 6; Al Ain 3; Dubai 4; Fujairah 9; Jebel Ali 4 and Ras al-Khaimah 7. There is a good local telephone network. Telephone calls within each state are free.

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone operators. Coverage is excellent.

Internet: There are numerous Internet cafes in the UAE.

Post: Airmail letters and parcels take about five days to reach Europe.

MEDIA: The UAE, and in particular Dubai, is trying to establish itself as a regional media hub. A number of pan-Arab broadcasters operate from the UAE and major media organisations such as Reuters and Sony have moved in, drawn by tax incentives and freedom of speech. Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, media content is controlled to some extent. There are some restrictions as to what are considered acceptable subjects of reporting. Foreign publications may be censored before distribution. Press: English-language daily newspapers include 7 Days, Gulf News and Khaleej Times. Foreign newspapers are available in hotel bookshops and supermarkets. TV: Channels include Emirates Dubai TV, Abu Dhabi TV, MBC (all pan-Arab broadcasters), Ajman TV, Sharjah TV and news channel Al-Arabiya (run by MBC). Radio: Stations include Abu Dhabi Radio, Radio Asia, Ras al Khaimah Radio, Al-Arabya FM, English-language Dubai 92 and Arabic-language Dubai 93.9.