

United Arab Emirates

Travel Preparation Guide

Your comprehensive resource for planning a safe, smooth, and memorable journey to one of the Middle East's most dynamic destinations. From entry requirements to cultural etiquette, this guide covers everything international travelers need to know before visiting the UAE.

Entry & Documents



Passport Validity

Your passport must be valid for **at least 6 months** upon arrival in the UAE.



Visa Requirements

Visa-free entry for up to 90 days in any 180-day period for travelers from the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States.



Customs Rules

Strict enforcement: **no drugs, CBD oil, weapons, or e-cigarettes** with nicotine allowed.

Important Restrictions

- Do not import alcohol outside duty-free limits
- Respect religious restrictions on prohibited items
- Extensions available through local immigration or online portal

Safety & Registration

The UAE is generally **safe and stable**, with low crime rates but strict enforcement of local laws. Registration is recommended via your national embassy system such as BZ Informatieservice or STEP.

Health & Safety

1

Vaccinations

No compulsory vaccinations required, but Hepatitis A is recommended. Consider Typhoid and Hepatitis B for longer stays.

2

Disease Risk

No malaria risk in the UAE, but dengue can occur occasionally. Use mosquito repellent as a precaution.

3

Heat Safety

Extreme **heat between May and September**. Dehydration is common – drink water frequently and avoid midday sun.

4

Medical Care

Medical facilities are excellent but **private and expensive**. Comprehensive travel insurance is essential.



Emergency Contact Numbers

999 – Police | **998** – Ambulance | **997** – Fire Department

Legal Warnings

The UAE enforces strict penalties for drug possession, alcohol misuse, or public indecency. Be aware that homosexuality, public displays of affection, and offensive gestures can lead to arrest.

Money & Payments

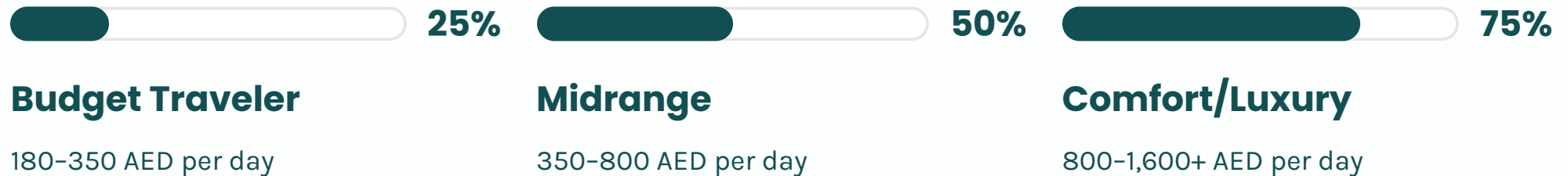


Currency Basics

The official currency is the **UAE Dirham (AED)**, which maintains a fixed exchange rate at approximately **3.67 AED = 1 USD**. This stable rate makes budgeting straightforward for American travelers.

Credit and debit cards are widely accepted throughout the country, and ATMs are common in all urban areas. Mobile payments like **Apple Pay** and **Google Pay** are accepted in cities.

Daily Budget Estimates



Pro Tip: Avoid exchanging money at airports for the best rates. Prices typically rise during major events and winter season (November to March).

Connectivity



Main Providers

The UAE has three major mobile network operators: **Etisalat (e&)**, **du**, and **Virgin Mobile UAE**. All offer excellent coverage across cities and highways.



Tourist Plans

Tourist eSIM/SIM cards are available at airports, malls, and online. They're designed for short-term visitors and include data, calls, and SMS.



Free Wi-Fi

Most hotels, shopping malls, airports, and many restaurants offer free Wi-Fi to visitors. Quality and speed are generally excellent.

Recommended Tourist Data Packages

Provider	Package	Data	Price (AED)
Etisalat Visitor SIM	7 days	5-20 GB	50-125
du Tourist SIM	7 days	10 GB	55
Virgin Mobile	7 days	21 GB	150



Important: EU/UK/US roaming is expensive in the UAE. Buy a local eSIM for cost-effective data use during your stay.

Transport & Driving

Public Transportation

Public transport in Dubai and Abu Dhabi is **modern and reliable**, featuring metro systems, trams, and extensive bus networks. The Dubai Metro is particularly convenient for tourists, connecting major attractions and business districts.

- Metro and tram services run frequently
- Intercity buses connect Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Al Ain
- Nol cards for seamless payment across all services

Taxis & Ride-Hailing

Taxis are metered, clean, and safe throughout the UAE. **Careem** and **Uber** are widely used and often more convenient for booking rides from specific locations.

Car Rental Requirements

Renting a car is easy with an international driver's permit (IDP). Most major rental agencies operate at airports and city centers.

Driving Rules

Drive on the **right-hand side**. Speed limits are strictly enforced with heavy fines and speed cameras everywhere.

Safety Warning

Avoid road rage or hand **gestures** – aggressive driving behavior can result in legal punishment and fines.

Customs & Airport Rules

1

Liquid Restrictions

Liquids over 100 ml must be placed in a clear 1-liter bag. Power banks must be carried in hand luggage only.

2

Prohibited Items

Import bans include: **vapes/e-cigarettes, drones (require permit), certain medicines, pork products, and religious materials** not approved by authorities.

3

Alcohol Limits

Alcohol is allowed only for personal use, limited to 4 liters purchased from duty-free shops upon arrival.

4

Photography Restrictions

Photography of **military installations or government sites** is strictly prohibited and can result in detention.

Always declare items at customs if uncertain. UAE authorities are strict but fair when travelers are transparent about their belongings.

Food & Water



Drinking Water

Tap water in the UAE is technically safe to drink as it meets international standards. However, **bottled water is recommended** for visitors to avoid any potential stomach sensitivity. Bottled water is inexpensive and widely available.



Dining & Hygiene

Street food culture is rare in the UAE. Most dining occurs in restaurants, food courts, or shopping malls with high hygiene standards and regular health inspections. Alcohol is served only in licensed hotels and restaurants, never in public spaces.

Traditional Emirati Dishes to Try



Shawarma

Marinated meat wrapped in flatbread with vegetables and tahini sauce.



Machboos

Fragrant spiced rice with meat, similar to biryani but with local spices.



Falafel

Crispy chickpea fritters, often served in pita with fresh vegetables.



Hummus

Creamy chickpea dip with tahini, lemon, and olive oil.



Luqaimat

Sweet dumplings drizzled with date syrup, a popular dessert.

Culture & Etiquette



Dress Code

The UAE is **Muslim-majority and conservative**. Modest clothing is required in public spaces.



Appropriate Attire

Women should cover shoulders and knees. Swimwear is only appropriate at beaches or hotel pools.



Public Behavior

No alcohol in public areas. Avoid PDA (public displays of affection) at all times.



Show Respect

Respect religion, rulers, and national symbols. Criticism can have legal consequences.

Dining & Social Etiquette

- Always use the **right hand** for eating or giving money
- **Tipping** is appreciated: ~10% in restaurants
- 5-10 AED for porters and taxi drivers
- Remove shoes when entering homes

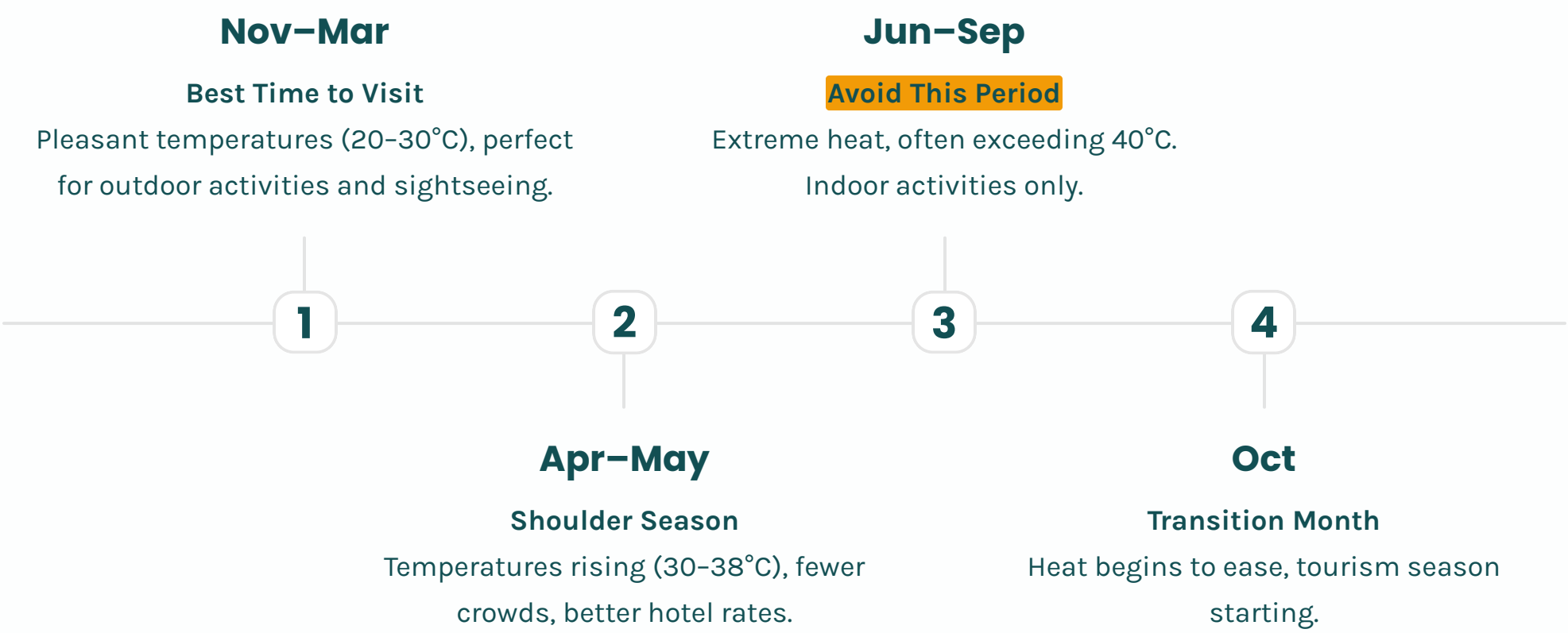
Religious Considerations

During Ramadan, avoid eating, drinking, or smoking in public during daylight hours. Non-Muslims are welcome to visit mosques like the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque with proper attire.



Key Reminder: What may be acceptable in Western countries can be illegal in the UAE. When in doubt, err on the side of conservatism and respect.

Travel Timing & Planning



Time Zone Differences

The UAE operates on **Gulf Standard Time (GST), UTC+4** year-round with no daylight saving time adjustments.

- **+3 hours** ahead of UK (GMT+4)
- **+2 hours** ahead of Netherlands
- **+8 hours** ahead of US Eastern Time
- **+11 hours** ahead of US Pacific Time



Recommended Duration

5–10 days is ideal for experiencing main highlights including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and a desert excursion.

Top 5 Highlights

01

Dubai – Burj Khalifa & The Palm Jumeirah

Experience record-breaking architecture including the world's tallest building. Visit luxury shopping malls, stunning beaches, and the iconic palm-shaped artificial island.

02

Abu Dhabi – Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque

Marvel at this iconic white-marble mosque, one of the largest in the world. Open to non-Muslim visitors with guided tours available. Dress modestly.

03

Liwa Desert

Explore dramatic sand dunes reaching heights of 300 meters. Experience authentic Bedouin desert culture, camel rides, and stunning landscapes.

04

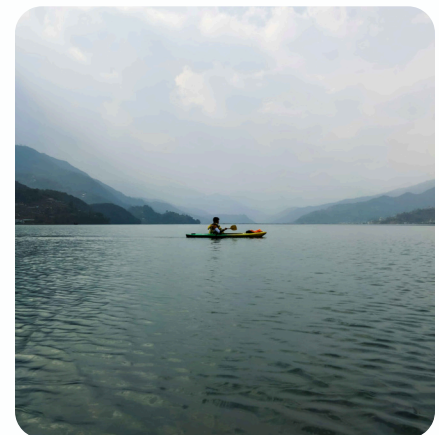
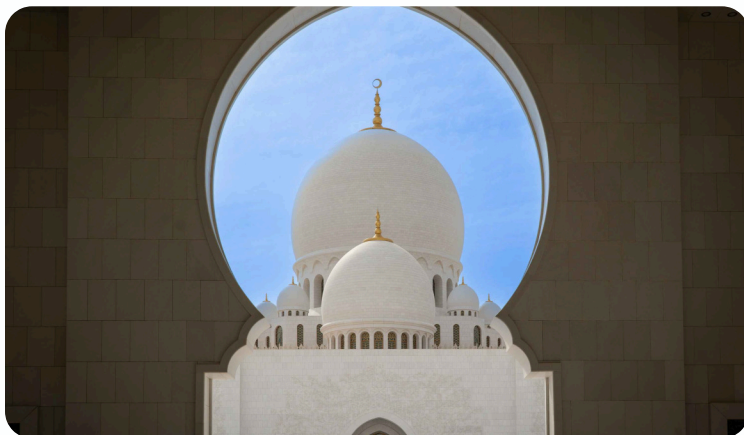
Sharjah Heritage Area

Discover this UNESCO cultural hub featuring Islamic museums, traditional souks, and beautifully restored historical districts showcasing Emirati heritage.

05

Hajar Mountains & Hatta

Escape to cooler mountain air for hiking trails, kayaking in Hatta Dam, and exploring wadis (valleys) with stunning desert landscapes.



Useful Travel Apps

Local UAE Apps

Careem

Ride-hailing service and food delivery platform, widely used alternative to Uber.

RTA Dubai

Official app for Dubai's public transport, including metro routes, bus schedules, and journey planning.

Talabat

Popular food delivery service with extensive restaurant options across all emirates.

Bayut

Platform for finding short-term apartment rentals and vacation properties.

Essential General Apps

- **Google Maps / Maps.me**

Navigation and offline maps functionality for exploring cities and highways.

- **XE Currency**

Real-time currency conversion between AED and your home currency.

- **Google Translate**

Arabic-English translation with offline mode and camera translation features.

- **NordVPN or ProtonVPN**

Secure browsing and access to services that may be restricted in the UAE.

- **AccuWeather**

Local weather forecasts and UV index alerts, essential for planning outdoor activities.

Key Takeaways



Respect Laws & Culture

The UAE enforces **Islamic laws and conservative values**. Small infractions can have serious consequences including fines, detention, or deportation.



Insurance & Hydration

Comprehensive travel insurance is **essential** due to expensive private healthcare. Stay hydrated in the extreme heat, especially May–September.



Stay Connected

Buy a local eSIM immediately upon arrival for cost-effective data. International roaming is prohibitively expensive.



Payment Options

While cards are widely accepted, **carry cash (AED)** for small payments, taxis, and traditional markets.

The UAE is one of the safest and most modern destinations in the Middle East when travelers are well-prepared and respectful of local customs.

With proper preparation, awareness of local laws, and respect for Islamic culture, your UAE journey will be safe, comfortable, and unforgettable. The country offers a unique blend of ultramodern infrastructure, traditional Arabian hospitality, and world-class attractions that few destinations can match.