



Etiquette Guide for tourists visiting Dubai

Welcome to Dubai

Dubai is known for its multicultural population, consisting of more than 200 nationalities. Dubai is also one of the most exciting and modern cities in the world. A big part of its beauty is the tradition and culture so deeply rooted in the community. Despite the growing presence of international visitors and expats, it's imperative to remember that we are still in a Muslim country. With a bit of research and a lot of respect towards the local customs, tourists can enjoy all the beautiful things Dubai has to offer without risking offending people or breaking the law.

With the right attitude in terms of etiquette, dress code and behaviour, tourists can enjoy all the things that wonderful things Dubai has to offer

Arabic Manners

Courtesy and hospitality are important virtues to Emiratis, and tourists will enjoy the friendliness and warm welcome provided by locals.

Although each culture in the world has a slightly different take on what good manners are, there is no doubt that manners are an essential part of most cultures. In the Arabic culture, being courteous and respectful to others is an underlying theme for their hospitality. Tourists will enjoy the friendliness and a warm welcome from the locals.

However, a few basic manners and gestures should be considered, especially when dealing with locals, or Muslims for that matter. For Muslims, the left hand is used only for bodily hygiene and is therefore regarded as dirty, thus ensure to use the right hand for things like eating, shaking hands or handing over objects. Never point to an object; instead, use full hand gestures. Do not initiate a handshake with the other gender if they are Muslim unless they offer a handshake first. Arabs like to be “in the present”, so ensure you don’t seem in a hurry or rushed, as this could be perceived as being rude. Also, never swear at someone or use rude hand gestures. It could lead to severe fines and deportation.

Most importantly, be kind to everyone – Emiratis are very hospitable people and generally happy to help.



Social media in Dubai

With social media being such a big part of our lives, we need to be cautious about what we post, especially when commenting in or about the UAE

As tempting as it is to brag to friends and family worldwide about the #DubaiLife, always remember to use social media responsibly.

Never take or post pictures of people without their permission, even when in a public space. Always ask first or try not to get them in the shot. Always crosscheck facts before sharing with friends, avoid gossiping and spreading rumours.

Sharing hate posts could lead to imprisonment as well as hefty fines. Also, don't post anything that could be perceived as offensive to Islamic morals and values, e.g. nudity or being under the influence of alcohol.

One more important thing to note when visiting Dubai is that a few online social media features aren't readily available, such as video or social media calling (FaceTime, WhatsApp Calling etc.) There are legal VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services that can be used for this.



Clothing in the UAE

Dressing “conservatively” is recommended where possible, especially in public places, government buildings, and shopping malls

When visiting Dubai, there is not only the weather to keep in mind when deciding what to wear. There is also the matter of respect that needs to be considered. Contrary to popular belief, Dubai is relatively liberal compared to other Muslim countries.

When visiting mosques, men and women should wear long trousers and cover their arms. Women must also wear a headscarf or cover their hair when entering the religious building.

When visiting clubs, bars or hotels, the accepted dress codes are more relaxed. At a pool or the beach, bikinis are allowed. However, g-string bikinis are considered inappropriate and going topless is illegal. Men should wear t-shirts as going topless or wear tank tops is not allowed, except for beaches and pools. Before enjoying a night out at a restaurant or bar, always remember to check the dress code. The general rule of thumb is to wear smart casual – most places will not allow men who wear shorts, open-toe shoes or baseball caps.

If you plan to go on a desert safari, ensure to dress comfortably and in the winter months, it is recommended to bring a jacket, as it can get quite cold out in the desert.



Couples Behaviour

Extreme public displays of affection are frowned upon and can even be illegal

Dubai has slowly but surely started to ease its restrictions to create an even more welcoming and inclusive environment for foreigners.

One of these restrictions is the law against unmarried people of the opposite sex living together. Couples and flatmates can now get an apartment together without worrying about the repercussions of being caught out. It is still, however, illegal for an unmarried woman to be pregnant.

When it comes to public display of affection, it is important to still be respectful of Islamic culture. Holding hands is acceptable in public; however, kissing or physical contact is frowned upon, even between married couples.



Drugs and Alcohol in Dubai

Even though Muslims aren't allowed to consume alcohol, it is readily available in Dubai, especially at bars and clubs.

Do remember, though, that not all restaurants serve alcohol. An easy way to determine it is generally to find out if the establishment is located in a hotel or not – most of the times, restaurants that wish to serve alcohol situate themselves in hotels, as all hotels have a liquor license.

It is illegal to be drunk in public, so make sure to drink in moderation and behave when you have had a few. Dubai has an absolute zero tolerance for drinking and driving, and should there be any trace of alcohol in your system when they test you, it could lead to imprisonment and deportation. It's better to book a taxi when you plan a night out!

If you are a non-Muslim resident in Dubai above the age of 21, you can apply for a liquor license, which is needed if you want to buy alcohol from the licensed liquor stores in the city.

Both tourists and residents can come to Dubai with 4 litres of alcoholic beverages or two cartons of beer. Alternatively, every Dubai airport has a duty free shop at the Arrivals terminal, where the same quantity rule stands.

Drugs in Dubai are strictly forbidden, with the consequence of a jail sentence of no less than two years. It is crucial to note that some drugs are not considered contraband in the rest of the world yet are illegal to possess or use in Dubai. You can read more about those [here](#).

Photography and Drones

Normal tourist photography is completely acceptable and even encouraged to capture your memorable experiences.

With many photo opportunities throughout Dubai, make sure that you bring a camera along—with lots of space!

When taking pictures in and around Dubai, there are a few things to consider.

Photographs of government buildings, mosques, military installations, or aircraft are not allowed unless you receive permission.

With drone photography becoming more popular, there are some specific regulations that operators need to be compliant with before using their drones in the UAE. For instance, the user and the drone must be registered with the GCAA (General Civil Aviation Authority) before flying. Always ensure to check on whether the area you plan on filming allow drones.

Most hotels will not allow drone photography without the necessary permissions from DCAA (Dubai Civil Aviation Authority). You can find a link to help you with this [here](#).



Crime in Dubai

Dubai has been named as one of the safest cities in the world for several consecutive years.

Crime in Dubai is heavily punished. The UAE's strict laws keeps crime to a minimum. Walking around the city at any time of the day or night will be safe for anyone.

Regardless, we always recommend taking caution – keep your money, passport and important documents safe at all times.



Tolerance of Religion

Dubai has a very tolerant outlook on other religions and welcomes everyone, no matter what their beliefs are.

Freedom of faith and practising faith is a huge part of Islam's tradition of tolerance and openness.

This has allowed other belief systems to flourish in Dubai, highlighting Dubai's respect for diversity. There are several churches and temples for several different religions. Blasphemy against any religion is considered very offensive.

However, it is still important for non-Muslims to respect the Islamic religion and beliefs. If you have not accepted Islam as your religion, ensure to get prior permission before entering a mosque. There are a few mosques in Dubai which tourists can visit.

If you see a Muslim praying, do not walk in front of them or stare at them.

Dubai's diversity is truly something to admire, and it creates an environment where everyone can feel welcomed and as they belong.



Languages Spoken in the UAE

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Arabic is the official language of the UAE, however, English is the business language and is widely spoken everywhere. Many people in the service industry come from all over the world so there are many languages spoken. If you do want to say ‘thank you’ in someone’s language you can say use this handy guide of some of the more common languages in Dubai:

LANGUAGE	THANK YOU	PRONOUNCIATION
Arabic	shukran	shoe-krahn
Chinese/Mandarin	xie xie	syeh-syeh
Hindi	dhanyavaad	dan-ya-var
Indonesian/Malayan	terima kasih	t’ree-ma kas-seh
Tagalog (Philippines)	salamat po	sah-lah-maht poh
Russian	spasibo	spah-see-boh
Sinhak (Sri Lanka)	istutiy	isst-too-tee
Turkish	tesekkür ederim	teh-sheh-kur eh-deh-rim
Urdu (Pakistan)	sukria	shoo-kree-a





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