

United Arab Emirates

Business Travel Guide

Compiled by:

Swiss Business Hub Middle East - Dubai

Dubai, August 2025

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The UAE Government issues several types of visas and entry permits based on the purpose of the visit. Swiss nationals are eligible to obtain a free UAE visa on arrival and can stay up to 90 days, within a 180-day period, upon which they will need to leave the UAE for a period of 90 days before being able to re-enter again. Passports must have a minimum validity of 6 months at the time of entry. Proof of a return ticket may be requested upon arrival. Swiss passport holders are also eligible to register for and use the Smart Gates upon entering or exiting the country across applicable airports.

For more information e.g. concerning work visas please visit <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visa-and-emirates-id/types-of-visa> and <http://www.m-hq.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MHQ-Residency-in-the-UAE-05.10.22.pdf>

Each traveler is permitted to bring the following amounts into the United Arab Emirates with them:

- 4 liters of alcohol or one carton / 24 cans of beer
- AED 2,000 worth of cigarettes or 400 sticks of cigarettes
- AED 3,000 worth of cigars
- 2 kilograms of tobacco
- AED 3,000 worth of gifts, including perfume

Restrictions:

- It is prohibited to bring in any illegal drugs into the UAE
- A doctor's prescription may be requested for some medications
- Firearms and dangerous weapons are restricted

- Religious propaganda and potentially offensive printed materials, CDs, videos or films are not permitted
- There is no restriction on the amount of cash that you may carry, but any amount above AED 100,000 must be declared.

Transfer from the airport to the city center:

- Transferring from Dubai International Airport to the city center can be done using the metro or taxis. The Dubai Metro's Red Line connects the airport to various locations in the city, with trains running approximately every 10 minutes. Taxis are available outside the terminals and provide direct transportation to destinations in the city. Both options offer different conveniences based on individual preferences. E-hail service, like Uber, are also available.
- Taxi: 15-20min for 60 AED (14 CHF)
- Metro: 30 min for 5 AED (1.2 CHF)

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory and recommended vaccinations: Traveller Health Insurance is mandatory and may be requested upon arrival. No vaccinations required for Swiss citizens.

Mandatory medical insurance: It is mandatory for travelers to the UAE to have travel insurance. Travelers must have travel insurance that covers health and medical expenses for the duration of their stay in the UAE. This requirement ensures that travelers are adequately covered in case of medical emergencies or accidents during their visit. Especially in a country such as the UAE, where the cost of healthcare can be high. Hospitals may sometimes refuse to offer medical treatment if you do not have health insurance or if you are not able to prove that you can afford the medical expenses.

Other mandatory health requirements: Foreigners applying for jobs and residence have to undergo a Medical Checkup including a physical examination, chest X-ray, blood investigations (HIC, HBsAg, HCV, VDRL/RPR). Any positive HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C expatriates will not receive a Visa.

PUBLIC SECURITY / RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS

Swiss nationals traveling to the UAE should stay informed about local laws and customs, and adhere to regulations on alcohol consumption and dress codes. Violations can lead to severe penalties. Travelers should stay updated on current travel advisories and local news, and avoid areas with known security issues. Additionally, keeping emergency contact information handy, including the Swiss Embassy in the UAE, is recommended. By taking these precautions, Swiss travelers can help ensure a safe and enjoyable stay in the UAE.

Legislation is based on an Islamic interpretation of the law (Sharia law) and rigid moral concepts. Offences are systematically prosecuted and punished much more severely than in Switzerland. The following offences, among others, are **punishable**:

- **Drinking and Driving** (Alcohol level > 0 per mille).
- Eating, drinking or smoking in public before sunset during Ramadan. (However, many cafes and restaurants are allowed to serve food & drink during fasting hours)
- Offending and criticising the political and religious leadership of the United Arab Emirates. Insulting befriended countries is also prohibited. Generally, avoid political and religious discussions and critical statements - especially on social media.
- Indecent behaviour in public.
- **Taking photographs** of government and military buildings and facilities, industrial plants (e.g., oil fields and refineries) and generally installations of strategic importance such as airports, etc.

There is some confusion as to what falls under these categories. If in doubt, ask the local security forces for permission or refrain from taking pictures.

The death penalty can be imposed for serious drug offences, murder and certain other criminal offences.

https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/eda/en/home/laender-reise-information/vereinigte_arabischeemirate/reisehinweise-vereinigte-arabische-emirate.html

TIME ZONE

Time difference between Switzerland and

Abu Dhabi Central European Time +3 (+2 during summer)

Time zone abbreviation: GST - Gulf Standard Time. GMT +4 (+2 & +3 hours respectively from Switzerland). No Daylight-Saving Time (DST) adjustments in the UAE.

BUSINESS HOURS

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays and Nationals Holidays
Government Offices	7.30 – 14.30	closed	closed
Banks	8.00 – 14.00	Only selected branches are open	closed
Shops	10.00 – 22.00	10.00 – 00.00	10.00 – 00.00

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/working-in-uae-government-sector/working-hours-in-the-public-sector>

<https://www.khaleejuae.com/bank-working-days-in-uae/#:~:text=Understanding%20Bank%20Operating%20Hours%20in%20the%20UAE,-For%20individuals%20intending&text=Banks%20within%20the%20UAE%20typically,conclude%20at%203%3A00%20pm.>

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Birthday of the Prophet*	4 September 2025
Commemoration Day	1 December 2025
UAE National Day	2 December 2025
New Year's Day	1 January 2026
Al Israa wal Miraj (The Prophet's Ascension) *	16 January 2026
Eid Al Fitr*	20 – 21 March 2026
Eid Al Adha*	27 – 30 May 2026

*This calendar being based on the moon, variation can be observed, travelers are advised to check in advance.

It is important to note that business can slow down in July and August along with the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic Calendar. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan. During Ramadan, government offices and most businesses have shortened hours, though many shopping malls and restaurants operate well past midnight.

NATIONAL TRADE FAIR CALENDAR

The dates of the main trade fairs can be obtained from: <https://www.dwtc.com/en/events/> , <https://www.adnec.ae/en/organise/exhibitions> , <https://www.expo-centre.ae/>

COMMUNICATION: TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

The United Arab Emirates' country code is: +971

Local SIM card can be bought at: Du, Etisalat or Virgin Mobile

Important phone numbers:

Police	999
Fire department	997
Medical emergency	998

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Electricity plug and socket:



The voltage in the United Arab Emirates is 220 V with a frequency of 50 Hz.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

National currency in the United Arab Emirates is the Dirham Emirati AED and it is freely convertible. It is pegged to the American Dollar (US\$).

Exchange rate as of August 11, 2025: CHF 1 = AED 4,54

There are no restrictions on imports of local or foreign currency in the United Arab Emirates.

Tipping is not necessary but generally customary. The average tipping is around 10 %.

Acceptance of methods of payment:

	everywhere	almost everywhere	limited	not accepted
Cash (national currency)	☒	☐	☐	☐
Cash (US Dollar)	☐	☒	☐	☐
MasterCard	☒	☐	☐	☐
Visa	☒	☐	☐	☐
American Express	☐	☐	☒	☐
Diner	☐	☐	☒	☐
Apple Pay	☐	☒	☐	☐
Google/Samsung Pay	☐	☒	☐	☐

DOMESTIC TRAVEL, LOCAL TRANSPORT

The most commonly used kind of public transport is metro or taxi. The quality of the services is excellent. There is also Bus and Tram service.

Taxi fare for a 15 minutes journey: 30 AED < 7 CHF

Main ride hailing apps: Uber, Careem, Hala taxi, Taxi

Main method of payment for taxi and subways: Cash or Card

Car rental with/without a driver can be arranged at numerous companies:

- [Hertz](#), self-drive
- [Thrifty](#), self-drive
- [udrive](#), self-drive
- [Sixt](#), self-drive
- [Europcar](#), self-drive
- [Blacklane](#), car with driver
- [OneClickDrive](#), car with driver

Expats with a UAE ID have to convert their driver's licence to a local driving licence to rent or buy a car.

ACCOMMODATION, TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE

A large number of high standard international and local 4 and 5 star hotels are available across all of the Emirates, as well as serviced furnished apartments. In spite of the increasing number of available hotels, the occupancy levels are debatably high, therefore booking in advance is highly recommended, especially during the high seasons i.e., October - March and during major events and exhibitions. A number of 2 and 3 star hotels are now becoming more available as well. Short term accommodation rentals are also widely available.

Temporary office spaces are readily available, providing flexible, short-term rental options with modern amenities in convenient locations. These spaces range from coworking areas to private offices, accommodating various business needs.

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

The official language is Arabic, but English is widely spoken and is generally used in business and commerce. Swiss businesspersons visiting UAE are well advised to bring along English-language catalogues or any other printed promotion material.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Tips for initiating business contacts

When entering a meeting, general introductions will begin with a handshake. You should greet each of your Emirati counterparts individually; it is important that you shake hands and greet the most senior person first. In line with Muslim customs, avoid shaking hands with a woman unless they extend their hand first and vice versa with a man.

Scheduling Meetings:

Always be on time for meetings; however, be prepared for delays or postponements of meetings at short notice. Patience is a virtue and everybody is expected to wait no matter how important they are. This is purely a question of local custom and a much slower lifestyle. Business meetings generally tend to be less formal than in the West. At an initial meeting there may be others in the room and the host may often be interrupted by staff, other visitors or phone calls. It should be noted that the purpose of such a meeting is to arrange a further private meeting. A period of small talk is expected before the actual topic of the meeting is discussed. Use restraint when talking about religion or local politics. Don't assume that the person who asks the most questions in meetings holds the most responsibility. The decision maker could be a silent observer and will only speak when discussions come to a close.

Business attire:

While the UAE is more Westernized than many other Middle Eastern countries, and is therefore the home for many Western style clothes, it is still important to dress modestly & conservative.

Men: Most UAE nationals wear the national dress "Kandoora", and foreign business partners are, in spite of the extreme climatic conditions, expected to wear suit and tie.

Women: Western Women are expected to dress conservatively during business meetings. If wearing a skirt, it should not be shorter than knee length. All UAE national women wear the black national dress "Abaya".

Introducing yourself:

When introduced, give your name, title and your relationship with the person who is introducing you. Always try to find out titles and statuses of the people you are meeting beforehand so as to show the right amount of respect. Address your Emirati counterparts with the appropriate titles followed by his or her first name. Always address UAE nationals by their titles such as: “Your Highness” for members of the ruling/royal families, and “Your Excellency” for high-ranking government officials, if applicable. Otherwise, Emiratis and Expatriates are addressed as “Mr./Ms.”. In line with customs in the Anglo-Saxon world, some business partners - especially the younger ones - are sometimes addressed by their first names. As the UAE is home to over 200 nationalities, it is also not unusual that you may have the meeting with a non-Emirati.

The greeting stage is extremely important; never ask as to the well-being of your partners' wife, rather use the phrase “How is the family?”. It is polite to enquire about a person's family or health, but never ask specifically about any female members. Family life involving female members is kept extremely private.

Your partner will appreciate it if you are able to greet in Arabic. The customary greeting is “As-salam alaikum,” (peace be upon you) to which the reply is “Wa alaikum as-salam,” (and upon you be peace).

Building trust and personal relationships:

Avoid staring and prolonged eye contact as this can be considered rude and uncomfortable. Do not sit with your ankle crossed over your knee. Always use your right hand when giving or receiving anything (gift, business card etc.). Do be aware that the personal space of interaction in the UAE is much smaller than in the west.

Offering and accepting gifts and invitations:

Typical Swiss souvenirs are appreciated when offered as gifts to your local counterparts. Avoid giving gifts that contain alcohol or pork.

Always accept coffee or tea when it is offered to you by your business partner. When offered Arabic coffee, once you have had enough, indicate this to the servant by shaking the cup between your finger and thumb.

Accept invitations to a meal or social event. It cannot be stressed enough that relationships are an integral part of doing business in the Emirates. Spending time with your Emirati counterparts is the best way to build trust and mutual understanding.

Sensitive topics:

When doing business in the UAE, it's important to avoid discussing sensitive topics that could offend cultural norms or legal standards. Key subjects to avoid include:

1. **Politics:** Avoid criticism of the UAE government, its leaders, and its policies.
2. **Religion:** Refrain from discussing or criticizing Islam, which is the state religion, or proselytizing other religions.
3. **Social Issues:** Topics such as LGBTQ+ rights, gender equality issues, and personal freedoms should be approached with caution.
4. **Legal Matters:** Avoid discussing the judicial system critically, including the laws on alcohol, drugs, and public behavior.
5. **Cultural Norms:** Be respectful of local customs regarding dress codes, especially concerning modesty for both men and women.

Being mindful of these topics can help ensure respectful and productive business interactions in the UAE.

BUSINESS RISKS

The UAE is considered a stable business environment, but certain economic factors warrant caution. Despite significant efforts to diversify its economy, hydrocarbons still play a crucial role, contributing around 30% to the UAE's GDP. This reliance makes the UAE vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. Additionally, the UAE has a relatively high external debt-to-GDP ratio. Nonetheless, the overall business environment is generally favorable and stable. The UAE is classified with a CRC risk rating of 2, indicating a relatively low-risk level compared to other regional markets.

Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV insures political and *del credere* risks involved in exporting goods and services.

[Products for exporters](#)

[Product for service providers](#)

[Products for financial institutions](#)

The full range of services and products offered by SERV can be obtained at www.serv-ch.com.

IMPORT OF SAMPLES AND CATALOGUES

In the UAE, businesses can utilize the ATA Carnet system for temporary importation of goods, including samples and catalogues, without paying customs duties or taxes. The ATA Carnet simplifies customs procedures and serves as a passport for goods, facilitating temporary imports and re-exports. This arrangement is beneficial for businesses participating in exhibitions, trade shows, or conducting market research in the UAE, as it eliminates the need for posting a customs bond or paying duties and taxes upon entry.

For official and detailed information regarding the ATA Carnet system in the UAE, it's advisable to consult with the UAE Customs authorities or refer to their official website for the most accurate guidelines and procedures.

<https://www.dubaichamber.com/en/service/issuance-of-ata-carnet/>

<https://www.dubaicustoms.gov.ae/en/mobile/Pages/faq.aspx>

USEFUL LOCAL WEBSITES, ADDRESSES, EMAIL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Business news	Emirates News Agency		
Customs hotline	Customs clearance The Official Portal of the UAE		
	Abu Dhabi Customs	+971 2 810 2000	up@adcustoms.gov.ae
	Dubai Customs	+971 4 4177777	Customs.Contact@dubaicustoms.ae
	Sharjah Customs	+971 6 558 8000	jumruki@sharjahcustoms.gov.ae
	Ras Al Khaimah Customs	+971 7 233 3733	info@customs.rak.ae

ADDRESSES OF EMBASSY AND CONSULATES OF SWITZERLAND

Embassy of Switzerland in Abu Dhabi

Centro Capital Centre Building
17th Floor
P.O. Box 95199
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Phone: +971 2 627 46 36
Fax: +971 2 626 96 27
abudhabi@eda.admin.ch

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Thu: 09.00 – 12.00
Fri: 09.00 – 11.00
(On appointment only)

Consulate General of Switzerland in Dubai / Swiss Business Hub Middle East

Dubai World Trade Centre
22nd floor
P.O. Box 9300
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Phone: +971 4 329 09 99
Fax: +971 4 331 36 79
dubai@eda.admin.ch

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Thu: 09.00 – 16.00
Fri: 09.00 – 12.00
(Trade section and on appointment only)

ADDRESSES BILATERAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Swiss Business Council UAE (SBC UAE)

Swiss Tower, Office 202

Cluster Y – JLT

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Phone: +971 4 368 77 02

dubai@swissbcuae.com

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Fri: 09.00 – 17.00

Dubai Chamber of Commerce

Baniyas Road

Deira

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Phone: +971 4 228 00 00

customercare@dubaichamber.com

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Thu: 08.00 – 17.00

Fri: 08.00 – 12.00

The Arab-Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CASCI)

Chem. Des Mines 2

1202

Geneva, Switzerland

Phone: +41 22 506 42 21

arabswisscham@caschi.ch

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Fri: 09.00 – 16.00

ADDRESSES OF THE EMBASSY AND CONSULATES OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES IN OR FOR SWITZERLAND

Embassy of THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Schwarztorstr. 31
CH-3007 Bern
Switzerland
Phone: +41 31 312 17 10
Fax: +41 31 311 80 92
bernemb@mofaic.gov.ae

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Fri: 09.00 – 16.00

Consulate General in Geneva

Rue de Moillebeau 56
1209 Genève
Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 918 00 00
Fax: +41 22 734 55 62, +41 22 918 00 18
genevaunprm@mofaic.gov.ae
legalization.geneva@mofa.gov.ae

Opening times:

Office Hours: Mon – Fri: 09.00 – 16.00

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