

# BIG FIVE

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

*Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys™*

## Regional Supplement

# Dubai

United Arab Emirates



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# Welcome to the World of Big Five!

*The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip*

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



## Dubai, UAE

Elevation: 16 feet    Latitude: 25 15N    Longitude: 055 20E

### Average Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	81	66	67	72	79	87	90	94	95	90	84	76	69

### Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	90	73	74	80	88	97	100	103	103	100	93	86	77

### Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 12

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	72	58	59	63	69	76	80	85	86	81	74	67	61

## WEATHER

Dubai lies directly within the Arabian Desert. However, the topology of Dubai is significantly different from that of the southern portion of the UAE in that much of Dubai's landscape is highlighted by sandy desert. Dubai has a 16km (10 mile) deep-water creek, giving it the popular name of 'Pearl of the Gulf'. Dubai has a hot and humid climate with many months recording temperatures of over 40° C (104° F). The best time to visit is between October and May. The hottest time is from June to September with little rainfall.

## TIMENE

Time zone: GMT + 4.

## PASSPORTS / VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for a minimum of three months from date of arrival (six months for business travel) required by all nationals. It must contain **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

**Visas:** Not required by U.S. nationals for visits lasting 30 days, as of this writing.

**Important:** Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

**Please note:** Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas. The loss or theft abroad of a passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration, customs and baggage claims. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, and escort you to your hotel as well as assist with check-in formalities.

**Taxes & Int'l Departure Tax:** None.

## CUSTOMS INTO UAE

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. 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.

## U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044. Website: [www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel).

## HEALTH

International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. If you wear prescription glasses or contact lenses, it is advisable to bring an extra pair and cleaning fluid. The same is true for any medications you take regularly; bring enough to last the length of the trip.

Currently, no official health certificates are required of travelers coming from U.S. and Canada. Immunization against polio is sometimes advised; typhoid occurs in rural areas.

**Other Risks:** Cutaneous leishmaniasis and tick-borne typhus may occur; avoid mosquito, sand-fly and tick bites. Wear shoes to avoid soil-borne parasites. Take precautions against heat exhaustion and sunstroke. Immunization 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 insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.** Medical facilities are of a very high quality but are extremely expensive. Private health insurance is essential. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAX (1-888-232-3299) or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

**PLEASE NOTE: Important information on prescription drugs.** Recent press reports concerning people entering Dubai with banned substances has highlighted the need for passengers to be aware that, in addition to controlled drugs, several medicines and complementary therapies, available both on prescription and over the counter in many other countries, *may not* be brought into the UAE without a prescription. The UAE has identified a group of drugs with the potential to lead to addiction if not controlled. These are listed in Schedules to the Federal Law No 14 of 1995. Consequently, in certain cases, the UAE takes a much stricter view of drugs than other countries might do. In some cases, such as antidepressants, this is because the UAE authorities have deemed it to be an addiction risk and have classified the drug as a narcotic, where other countries might treat it as a psychotropic.

In the case of controlled drugs, a prescription must be held. In the UAE, controlled drugs can only be dispensed upon production of a registered, health authority-approved, prescription. These include common over-the-counter medications in other countries including common cold and cough remedies, sleeping tablets, painkillers, anti-depressants and hormone replacement therapy.

**In the case of controlled medicines, possession must be accompanied by a prescription.** The UAE has a very strict, zero-tolerance anti-drugs policy and conducts extremely thorough searches through its airports, using highly sensitive equipment. How a drug will be treated and the penalties for possession depends on its classification. **It is therefore advisable that passengers check their medication with the UAE embassy or consulate, prior to travel. Similar restrictions may apply on vitamins, too,** so please make sure you get the note from the Doctor. To be on the safe side, at the very least, you should have a prescription or a letter from a doctor for all medications you will have with you.

## CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.* Lightweight clothing is called for with medium weights from November to March; warmer clothes for evening. Visitors should be decently dressed when visiting any place of worship in this predominantly Muslim country. Leave short shorts, and ragged cutoffs at home.

## LUGGAGE

*Please see general luggage and clothing sheet in your pre-departure materials.*

## MONEY

**Currency:** UAE Dirham (AED) = 100 fils. Notes are in denominations of AED1,000, 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). The Dirham is tied to the US Dollar.

**Currency Exchange:** Most hotels can exchange foreign currency. **Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs:** American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. **Traveler's Checks:** These are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler's checks in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

## COMMUNICATIONS

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

## ELECTRICITY

220 or 240 volts AC, 50Hz; square three-pin plugs are standard.

## 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, cleaning contacts and making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Milk is unpasteurized 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.

## TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to: [www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide](http://www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide)

## SHOPPING

Dubai is called the 'Shopping Capital of the Middle East,' and is a top-class shopping destination. Shopping is undoubtedly one of the city's greatest draw cards. It is largely divided into two main types – the old souks in Deira and Dubai Souk in Bur Dubai, and the glossy new shopping malls around Beniyas Square, Al-Rigga and Al-Hiyafa Road.

The souks offer an atmosphere that hints of the old bazaars. The Spice Souk, Al-Sabkha Road, is more of a tourist attraction, while the buzzing Gold Souk, Sikkat al-Khali Street, offers some great deals on gold necklaces, rings, bangles, earrings and brooches, with gold prices among the lowest in the world. The gold souks are strictly regulated, so there is little chance of customers being ripped off in terms of quality, although prices do vary greatly and bargaining is essential. The Electronics Souk, near Beniyas Square, might sound a slightly incongruous idea but this is Dubai, which means that, with shopping, anything goes. Bargaining is the norm in all of the souks.

The best-value items at the large shopping malls are mainly electrical goods and designer clothing, although interesting local products include carpets, Bedouin jewelry and Arabian souvenirs. The **Dubai Shopping Festival**, held from January to February, and Dubai Summer Surprises, held in July and August, are two massive attractions, with all the big stores and almost every shop in Dubai slashing prices in a retail orgy. Other festivals and special promotions run throughout the year, which further enhance Dubai's myriad retail opportunities.

## SOCIAL CUSTOMS

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.

## DUBAI– OVERVIEW

The major part of the Dubai emirate consists of rolling sand dunes lapping the foothills of the arid Hajar Mountains in the east. Until a decade or two ago, the dunes were inhabited by nomadic Bedouin.

Modern Dubai is the product of the past 20 years of intensive development. Prior to that, Dubai was a small trading port, clustered around the mouth of the Creek. It had grown gradually from a fishing village inhabited in the 18th century. Its origins, however, go back into the far more distant past. The town's museum displays a rich collection of objects found in graves of the first millennium BC. Dubai lacked the productive hinterland of Abu Dhabi so its inhabitants based their livelihood on fishing, pearling and sea trade.

By the turn of the 20th century Dubai was a prosperous port. The international trade which flowed from Dubai's cosmopolitan contracts was the basis of rapidly increasing prosperity. This gave the city an early start in development before oil was discovered in the late 1960s, but oil revenues in Dubai have always been a fraction of those in Abu Dhabi, so Dubai's growth has always depended partly on the inhabitants' own entrepreneurial abilities. Dubai's evolution has been dramatic and is ongoing, with sweeping skyscrapers and gleaming office blocks rising up on the banks of the Creek.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc.. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

### **Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success by Christopher M. Davidson**

Dubai has a remarkable success story. Since its origins as a small fishing and pearling community, the emirate has steadily grown in strength to become the premier trading center of the Persian Gulf. It is also the locus of an exciting and innovative architectural revolution. Despite its lack of democratization and a genuine civil society, Dubai is now a booming metropolis of more than two million people, most of whom are expatriates benefiting from the city's increasingly diversified economy.

Following a detailed history, Christopher M. Davidson presents an in-depth study of Dubai's post-oil development strategies and their implementation during a period of near-complete political stability. Davidson addresses the probability of future problems as the need for sustained foreign direct investment encourages far-reaching socioeconomic reforms, many of which may affect the ideological, religious, and cultural legitimacy of the traditional monarchy. He also analyzes Dubai's awkward relationship with its federal partners in the United Arab Emirates and highlights some of the pitfalls of being the region's most successful free port-its attractiveness to international criminal fraternities, the economy of the global black market, and terrorist networks.

### **The Treasures and Pleasures of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Oman: Best of the Best in Travel and Shopping by Ron Krannich**

Oil-rich desert sheikdoms with savvy trading skills, booming real estate, growing tourism, and large expatriate communities, the UAE and Oman are two of the world's most fascinating countries. They boast first-class infrastructures as well as terrific shopping for jewelry, designer apparel, arts, antiques, and handicrafts. Explores the many treasures and pleasures of the UAE and Oman. Includes everything from pre-trip planning to identifying the best shops, hotels, restaurants, and sightseeing.

### **Breaking Trail: From Canada's Northern Frontier to the Oil Fields of Dubai by Tom Morimoto**

When he was a boy, Tom Morimoto saved up a dollar and ordered a book called *How to Box* so he could defend himself against the kids who called him "Jap." In fact, Morimoto has always been a fighter who went from working in his father's market garden to working

with sheikhs in Dubai. If anyone should write a memoir it is Tom Morimoto, and he has done it grandly with *Breaking Trail*.

Morimoto lived through a historic period before the modern age changed the North forever. He describes his childhood growing up in Depression-era Fort McMurray and the town's characters: old-timer trappers, German barons, and bush pilots like Wop May, and R. B. Bennett's dipsomaniac brother, George.

As a young man, Morimoto worked on an Athabasca River scow and as a radio operator for Canadian Airways before travelling to Yellowknife to stake gold claims and work in the Negus gold mine. His next adventure found him serving as a signalman during the Second World War, and surviving Juno Beach on D-Day. Later, Morimoto became a chemical engineer, a pioneer in the burgeoning gas industry in Alberta. He eventually managed a gas plant in Dubai.

*Breaking Trail* is a rich memoir from a man who has experienced much of what the twentieth century offered northern and western Canada. It is not only the story of a life well-lived but also a wonderful tale with the characters and places common to the most opulent of novels.

### **New Frontiers of Architecture - Dubai by Laura Daglio**

New developments in design in Dubai have changed forever the face of world architecture. Here, the traditional Islamic culture co-exists with a radical movement towards modernity, resulting in a futuristic architecture, dominated by skyscrapers that seem to defy gravity, and constructions that embody the cutting-edge of technology. A valuable resource for architecture students and design professionals alike, this book is packed with more than 650 photographs and an authoritative text that explores the new glass and steel masterpieces of Dubai. From state-of-the-art hotels to luxury residences to the headquarters of some of the world's most important financial institutions, specially commissioned photographs showcase the innovations that make this an area of great interest to design professionals. Superb images depict the graceful sail-shaped silhouette of the opulent seven-star hotel Burj Al Arab and convey the majesty of the twin Emirates Towers. Other remarkable structures featured in this book include Dubai Sports City, Hydropolis Underwater Resort Hotel, Media-1, and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority Tower, to name just a few.