LIVING & WORKING IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Welcome to our guide of the UAE, where will give you a basic understanding of what it is like to live and work in the most cosmopolitan country in the world. We will introduce you to Dubai, the city of iconic skyscrapers, palm-shaped islands, and city-sized malls; and the oil-rich capital Abu Dhabi, the hub of culture, sport and leisure. As well as the customs, climate, laguage and all other need to know information.

The United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is the most cosmopolitan and westernised country in the Middle East. It is situated on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.

The country comprises of seven emirates- Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain and Ras Al Khaimah. Abu Dhabi is the capital of the UAE, and is by far the largest emirate, occupying over 80% of the country.

The formation of the UAE came after the discovery of huge oil reserve in Abu Dhabi in 1958. The UAE is considered the second richest Arab country with almost 10% of the world’s proven oil reserves and the fourth largest natural gas reserves.

Located in the heart of the Middle East, the UAE is home to more than 150 nationalities. While Dubai and Abu Dhabi is the bustling centre for the Gulf, both commercially and as a holiday destination, the region as a whole has a lot to offer in terms of lifestyle and career development.

The UAE has an un-bureaucratic approach to business, with some of the best tax and financial incentives on offer anywhere in the world. The sophisticated lifestyle and safe living conditions also make it popular with ex-pats and their families.
Government
The UAE is a federal state that was established on 2nd December, 1971. It consists of seven emirates, which are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Um Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. The head of the federal government is the president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is also ruler of Abu Dhabi.
Since the establishment in 1971, the UAE has enjoyed an enviable degree of political stability.

Geography
The United Arab Emirates has a 644 kilometre long coast, and is 83,600 square kilometres, with the desert dominating most of this area. The capital, Abu Dhabi, makes up approximately 87 percent of the country’s total landmass.
UAE is bordered by the Arab Gulf from the North, Oman from the East, Saudi Arabia from the South, and Qatar from the West, it also has hundreds of islands within the Gulf, of which 200 are in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Climate
As you would expect the climate is sub-tropical and dry. During summer months (May to September) the weather is hot, typically 35 – 50 degrees C, and extremely humid. December through to March is considered the mild season with average temperatures ranging from 20–30 degrees C. Although temperature and humidity can reach extreme highs the country is well prepared to make the conditions manageable for its residents with well air conditioned cars, trams, offices, bus stops, and malls.
Rainfall is infrequent and usually occurs between November and March, with an average annual rainfall of 152mm (6 in.). There can also be occasional sandstorms from the desert and some winter mornings bring fog, although this usually dissipates fairly quickly.

Language
Arabic is the official language of government and business in the UAE, however most expats find that they can get by with virtually no Arabic, especially those working in the major expat cities (e.g. Dubai and Abu Dhabi). You will find other common languages are English, Persian, Hindi, and Urdu.
All signs (road, store, restaurant, etc.) are either in English or in both English and Arabic, so it is easy to navigate the city using English.

Demographics
The UAE’s population is about 8.3 million, Abu Dhabi is the most populated, very closely followed by Dubai.
The growth of the population is one of the highest in the world mainly due to immigration, making it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the Middle East.
Roughly 11 percent of the population is Emirati; with other major demographic groups including South Asians, other Arab nationals, East Asians, and Western expatriates.
Cost of Living

The overall cost of living in the UAE is comparable to that in the majority of European countries. The general lack of taxation has a significant impact on the cost of certain items, e.g. cars. On the other hand, the cost of accommodation is high, as is that of certain food items, particularly imported foods.

If you buy internationally recognised branded foods and household goods, you might pay higher prices than in your home country, but there are usually plenty of cheaper locally and regionally produced alternatives that are of excellent quality.

The price of wines and spirits, where these are permitted, is slightly lower than in the UK but higher than average European prices. Electronic goods, such as televisions, DVD players, photographic equipment and computer hardware and software, are generally less expensive than in Europe, mainly because of lower import duties.

Utilities, such as electricity, water and gas, are subsidised to some extent by the region's governments, which own the services (except for bottled gas supplies) in order to provide inexpensive electricity and water, mainly for the benefit of the local population. Utilities are therefore cheaper than in most European countries.

Healthcare

Dubai is widely regarded for its quality healthcare as it has some of the best facilities in the world, in turn making medical costs expensive. For this reason we recommend that you maintain proper health care at all times. In Abu Dhabi health insurance is mandatory for expats entering the country. Dubai is hoping to enforce this law in the coming years.

There are a number of international companies that specialise in private health insurance. Long waiting lists are almost unheard of, with every city and major town having at least one modern hospital.

The term ‘clinic’ is used to denote a general practitioner’s surgery. There’s a high ratio of doctors to patients. The majority of dentists are from Scandinavia, Britain and Russia - embassies keep details of nationals practising dentistry here.

If you need to get to A&E, the most reliable method is to use your own transport or go by taxi.

Accommodation

In the UAE, expats can opt to buy or rent. A variety of accommodation is available, from unfurnished apartments to fully furnished villas. Many apartment blocks include facilities such as swimming pools, gyms and covered parking.

Rental and property prices have increased a lot in recent years, but have now been capped to prevent things getting out of hand.

If renting, in most cases, you will be required to pay the full years rent either fully up front in 1 cheque or split between 2 - 4 cheques throughout the year.

It is best to take on your search for accommodation yourself, as agents can be unreliable. Use the internet and look on sites such as Just Rentals or Dubizzle.

Banking

Several of the world’s leading banks and their subsidiaries have branches in the UAE. A number of foreign banks, including ABN Amro, Barclays, Citibank, HSBC and Standard Chartered have a major presence here. Setting up an account is easy, as is transferring money home. You’ll be given a cash card to withdraw money from ATM machines and credit cards are accepted throughout the country.

Taxation

A major incentive to move to the UAE is its status as a free economic zone. You don’t pay income tax here.

Personal income is not subject to taxation in the United Arab Emirates however, note that the citizens of some countries - most notably the US - are liable to taxation on their worldwide income.

Most Emirates charge a municipal tax on the annual rental for residential properties. Entertainment (including hotels and restaurants) is also taxed.

Cost of Living

The overall cost of living in the UAE is comparable to that in the majority of European countries. The general lack of taxation has a significant impact on the cost of certain items, e.g. cars. On the other hand, the cost of accommodation is high, as is that of certain food items, particularly imported foods.

If you buy internationally recognised branded foods and household goods, you might pay higher prices than in your home country, but there are usually plenty of cheaper locally and regionally produced alternatives that are of excellent quality.

The price of wines and spirits, where these are permitted, is slightly lower than in the UK but higher than average European prices. Electronic goods, such as televisions, DVD players, photographic equipment and computer hardware and software, are generally less expensive than in Europe, mainly because of lower import duties.

Utilities, such as electricity, water and gas, are subsidised to some extent by the region’s governments, which own the services (except for bottled gas supplies) in order to provide inexpensive electricity and water, mainly for the benefit of the local population. Utilities are therefore cheaper than in most European countries.

Visas

To obtain a driving licence, bank account or health insurance you need a Residence Visa. Your employer will act as your sponsor and it will be their responsibility to organise your Residence Visa.

A person is first issued with an entry permit which allows them to move to the country while they are waiting for the relevant residency permit to be authorised. When a residence permit is issued it will normally also include the wife and dependent children of the worker, but the salary attached to the job must be able to cover the living expenses of the whole family.

Education

There are numerous private schools for expatriate children throughout the United Arab Emirates although they can be oversubscribed so it is wise to apply as soon as possible. Schooling can be expensive. There is no free state education for those who are not UAE nationals.

There is a large number of international schools, colleges and universities providing a western education.
GET IN TOUCH

If you require any information on Hays please contact us:

T: +971 (0) 4361 2882
W: hays.ae

Block 19, 1st Floor
Office F-02
Knowledge Village
Dubai
UAE 500340

GET SOCIAL

Hays is the number one followed recruitment agency on LinkedIn in the world. Join our growing network by following Hays Worldwide

Get expert advice, insights and the latest recruitment news by following us on Twitter @haysdubai and @haysworldwide