



هيئة أبو ظبي للسياحة
Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority

Head office: PO Box 94000, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates Tel: +971 2 444 0444 Fax: +971 2 444 0400 info@adta.ae

UK office: No. 1 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LY Tel: +44 207 201 6400 Fax: +44 207 201 6426 UK@adta.ae

Germany office: Goethestr. 27 60313, Frankfurt, Germany Tel: +49 692 9 925 390 Fax: +49 892 3 662 199 Germany@adta.ae

ABU DHABI

EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC



Abu Dhabi's year-round sunshine provides ideal conditions for all kinds of sports and outdoor activities. Visitors can take to the sea, beach or the golf course assured of glorious weather.

All the emirate's major hotels provide a high standard of sporting facilities, including swimming pools (often several), tennis courts, squash courts, gyms and health clubs.

Favourite activities include getting out and about on a desert safari or cruising the waters of the Gulf, exciting and memorable experiences that make an Abu Dhabi holiday special.

Golf

Abu Dhabi is rapidly making its mark as a leading international golf destination. Global television coverage of the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship, a European PGA tour event attracting some of the leading names in international golf, is dramatically raising the emirate's profile among the world's golf enthusiasts.

There are already a number of options available for the keen golfer and the future looks even brighter, as Abu Dhabi has plans to build



several new courses of championship standard in the near future.

Just 10 minutes from Abu Dhabi International Airport and 30 minutes from the city centre, the Abu Dhabi Golf Club by Sheraton (www.adgolfsheraton.com) is the emirate's flagship club and boasts world-class facilities. The club has two courses featuring undulating terrain. Its flawless fairways meander through pockets of palms and ornamental shrubs and trees and seven salt-water lakes.

The flagship par 72, 18-hole National Course, which hosts the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship, is a challenging 7,204 yards. The more forgiving par 36, 9-hole Garden Course complements the National Course, by ensuring that the club caters to players of every level of proficiency.

Located in the Al Mushrif area, just 10 minutes from the city centre, the Abu Dhabi Golf and Equestrian Club (www.adec-web.com) has beautiful, 9-hole floodlit course which allows play in the cooler conditions before sunrise and after sunset.

For a novel challenge, the Al Ghazal Golf Club (www.abudhabidutyfree.co.ae) has an 18-

hole sand course. Instead of greens the course has 'browns' created by compacting, rolled and treated sand to give a true putting surface. Al Ghazal hosts the annual World Sand Golf Championship.

All clubs are open to non-members and have driving ranges and golf academies with coaching provided by resident professionals. Their facilities include health clubs, swimming pools, tennis and snooker, as well as a range of eating and drinking options from casual sports bars to fine dining restaurants.

Desert Adventures

With some 85% of the land area of the UAE, much of it vast tracts of sand dunes, Abu Dhabi offers unlimited potential for desert adventures and exploration

The emirate's many experienced and well qualified tour operators all offer safaris in 4x4 vehicles. This is the ideal introduction to the wonders of the desert and you can expect a truly memorable experience.

The desert offers outstanding scenic beauty and a sense of timeless tranquillity. Much of it is pristine and unspoiled, with little sign of

habitation apart from the occasional Bedouin camp or camel farm. There's nothing to compare with a brilliant desert sunset over the majestic dunes.

But the desert is also a place of fun and excitement. 'Dune bashing' is an exhilarating roller coaster ride up and down the impossibly steep gradients of the dune faces. While most people rely on their tour operator's experienced drivers, desert driving courses, complete with safety training, if you want the thrill of tackling the challenging terrain yourself.

Out of the vehicle, sand-skiing and sand-boarding are popular options. Previous experience is not necessary as beginners can get the hang of it in no time. The more adventurous can hire quad bikes and dune buggies to really feel the thrill of speeding up and down the dunes with the wind in their face. .

Sunset safaris are especially popular. Setting off in mid- to late afternoon, they combine time for daylight dune bashing and other activities with evening entertainment. After witnessing the dramatic desert sunset, visitors can ride a camel, dress up in traditional clothing and have their hands adorned with henna, before settling down

for a sumptuous Arabian barbecue and belly dancing performance.

Besides the desert itself, safaris can also be arranged to the mountains and wadis. Usually dry, except after occasional rainstorms, the latter are water courses that have cut canyons into the mountains.

Most tour companies are happy to customise their service to meet client requirements. For example, safaris can be tailored to include mountain biking, hiking, canoeing in wadi pools or overnight camping under the desert stars.

Organised Tours

Sightseeing is a major aspect of most holidays and, in addition to desert safaris, Abu Dhabi's tour operators offer a full portfolio of organised tours, cruises and escorted excursions taking in the main sights and attractions of Abu Dhabi.

For visitors with limited time at their disposal, an organised city tour is probably the best way to get a taste of what Abu Dhabi offers and see the main highlights, such as the Corniche, Emirates Palace, Heritage Village etc.

Bear in mind that Abu Dhabi city is quite compact so a few hours is sufficient to cover



most of the attractions. It is best to devote a full day to get the best out of an excursion to Al Ain and at least a day, or an overnight stay, for a visit to Liwa or other emirates

Special interest tours are easily arranged - for example, focusing on shopping, culture and heritage, archaeology, camel racing, bird watching and much more.

Cruises

As an island city with a rich seafaring tradition, Abu Dhabi offers many opportunities to take to the water. Options include cruises aboard traditional Arab dhows or modern cabin cruisers or chartering boats for fishing or exploring Abu Dhabi's coast and more than 200 islands.

Cruises aboard traditional Arab dhows are popular. Those catering to the tourist market come equipped with modern amenities such as satellite navigation and bathrooms. Sailing days can be arranged through hotels and tour operators.

There are a number of companies such as Al Dhafra (www.aldhafra.net) specialising in dhow cruises and charters, and often the trip can be tailored to the wishes of the passengers. Popular

options include a cruise along the Abu Dhabi Corniche, or a visit to one or more of the many islands situated in the vicinity. A buffet or full meal can be arranged.

The Royal Meridien Hotel (www.lemeridien.com) operates a double-decker motor cruiser called The Shuja that takes evening cruises along the Corniche, or can be chartered by individuals or parties of up to 140 people. Enjoying a fine meal and friendly atmosphere before watching the sun set over the shimmering water is an experience to remember.

The Blue Dolphin Company based at the Abu Dhabi InterContinental Hotel (www.interconti.com) offers a wide variety of dhow and boat trips including dinner cruises, fishing and diving tours. The more adventurous can even arrange to be dropped off at a secluded island for an overnight stay.

Arabian Divers and Sport Fishing Charters (www.fishabudhabi.com) is another good contact, especially for smaller individualised cruises, island-hopping or dolphin watching, as well as its main focus on diving and fishing.

Water Sports & Fishing

With its warm clear waters and year-round sunshine, Abu Dhabi is the perfect destination for water sports enthusiasts. Sailing, water-skiing, jet-skiing, windsurfing, wakeboarding and kite-surfing are among the options available.

Equipment can be hired from a number of the major beachfront resort hotels, as well as some marinas and specialist clubs. Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club (www.adimsc.ae) is a good starting point for information and advice.

Canoeing and kayaking are also on offer, providing an opportunity to get up close to the emirate's varied marine life. Abu Dhabi's islands are a treasure trove of flora and fauna, particularly the mangrove covered islets to the north.

Abu Dhabi has plenty to attract the keen fisherman. The waters are rich with queenfish, sailfish, dorado, jacks, kingfish, shari and tuna. Arabian Divers and Sport Fishing Charters (www.fishabudhabi.com) can point you in the right direction.

Diving

The waters of the Gulf are rich in a variety of marine and coral life, and it's possible to dive all year round in the warm seas. In addition to exotic marine life such as clownfish and seahorses, divers may be able to spot rays, moray eels, small sharks, barracuda, sea turtles and much more.

The coastal waters and islands are a breeding ground for a number of marine species, including the increasingly rare dugong or 'sea cow', which can occasionally be seen. Most of the world's seven turtle species are indigenous to the region, and though endangered, can be found by those who know where to look.

There are numerous wreck, deep water and reef dives accessible from the coast of Abu Dhabi, and shallower dives like perennial favourite known as the Old Cement Barge.

Abu Dhabi's numerous diving companies can organise any type of trip from recreational snorkelling to serious scuba diving and provide training from beginner to instructor level. Contact Abu Dhabi Sub Aqua Club (www.abudhabisubacqua.com) or Scuba International (www.scubainternational.net). Several hotels and resorts also have their own boats and

equipment for guests to hire or borrow.

Traditional and Spectator Sports

Camel racing remains a major activity in Abu Dhabi and provides visitors with a unique opportunity to see this ancient - and highly competitive - sport at close quarters. Camel races are not staged for the benefit of tourists; they are both a passion and a serious business in Abu Dhabi. Races are held on Thursday and Friday mornings during the winter months at the Al Maqam Camel Racetrack, just 45km outside Abu Dhabi, and at Al Ain Camel Racetrack, with additional races often held on public holidays.

Besides watching camel racing, visitors to Abu Dhabi can also enjoy the memorable experience of riding the 'ship of the desert' at certain heritage sites and on the desert safaris organised by Abu Dhabi's tour companies.

Another traditional activity still practised is falconry, known as the 'sport of sheikhs'. Visitors can witness displays that illustrate the speed and precision of these regal birds of prey, and even have the chance to try the sport

themselves.

The Arab affinity for all things equine is evident in the popularity of horse racing. Nights at the Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club (www.adec-web.com) offer an atmosphere of excitement, with free entry and prizes for guessing the winners of each race. Other equestrian events include polo and show jumping.

Abu Dhabi is increasingly a magnet for world class international sporting events that attract enthusiasts from around the region and internationally.

As noted above, the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship in January is a European PGA tour ranking event attracting some of the world's leading players. On the water, Abu Dhabi hosts several races each year, including the Formula One and Formula 2000 power boating championships. The Corniche offers great vantage points as these super-charged vessels fly across the calm waters off the coast. Local events, such as the UAE Wooden Powerboat Championship and jet-ski races are also held here. See www.adimsc.ae for more information.

The emirate hosts two aerobic spectacles. The Red Bull Air Race attracts some 200,000

spectators to the Corniche to witness its breathtaking low-level aerial slalom action. The Al Ain Aerobatic Show incorporates the FAI World Grand Prix, with military and civilian pilots competing in formation and freestyle. See www.alainaerobaticshow.com for details of both.

Beach, Pool and Spa

Rest and relaxation is firmly on the agenda for most holidaymakers and Abu Dhabi, with its year-round sunshine and hotels offering luxury facilities and world class standards of service, is the ideal destination for a laid back break.

As an island, Abu Dhabi city is fringed by water, providing a range of excellent public and private beaches. Many of the major hotels have beachfront locations for the exclusive enjoyment of their guests.

One popular and accessible public beach, Ras Al Akhdar, lies at the western end of the Abu Dhabi island beyond the Emirates Palace. Nearby is the Al Dana Ladies Beach, which provides privacy and a pleasant leafy retreat exclusively for women. Although frequented mainly by Muslims it is open to women of all nationalities. Another safe and clean public

beach is Al Raha, located alongside the Abu Dhabi to Dubai road about twenty minutes drive from the city centre

Every hotel features a swimming pool and many of the larger properties have two or three. There are splash pools, children's pools, landscaped pools and pools with slides, shoots and waterfalls. The water is generally chilled to keep it cool in summer. Many have swim-up bars. Even if they don't, visitors relaxing by the poolside can look forward to attentive service, whether it's a cooling drink, a bite to eat, an extra towel or an adjustment to the parasol. It's no wonder many visitors escaping the grey skies of Europe spend much of the day soaking up the warmth and luxury!

Visitors looking forward to a little pampering will find that Abu Dhabi's spas offer all the luxury and variety they expect. The truly international flavour of the emirate ensures that the finest treatments on earth are available, from Swedish and Thai massage to Indian Ayurvedic treatments.

The Eden Spa & Health Club (www.abudhabi.lemeridien.com), offers treatments that include sessions in the aquamedic pool, various

massages, aromatherapies, facials, mineral baths, seaweed wraps, Turkish baths or lithos therapy (a type of hot stone massage) and Ayurveda.

The Hiltonia Health Club and Spa (www.hilton.com) is set in delightfully tranquil surroundings. Guests can take their pick from a menu of treatments for body, face and nails. Also on offer is Indian head massage, a choice of hydro baths and aromatherapy and reflexology treatments.

At the Paris Gallery Day Spa (www.uaeparisgallery.com), the theme is a mixture of new and ancient, which includes chocolate and grape facials and body treatments from the finest cocoa powder and essential oils.

Essential visitor information

Abu Dhabi & the United Arab Emirates
Abu Dhabi is the name of both the capital city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the largest of the seven individual emirates that make up the country. The UAE was created as a federation and became a unified independent sovereign state in 1971. Besides Abu Dhabi, the largest constituent of the UAE in both area and population, the other emirates are Dubai,

Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. The Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is also the President of the UAE. He succeeded his father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, as both Ruler and President when the latter passed away in 2004.

Business Hours

Sunday-Thursday is the working week, with the weekend on Friday (the Islamic holy day) and Saturday. Most banking, embassy and other official business is conducted in the morning/early afternoon. Shopping hours vary but many smaller outlets take a long lunchtime 'siesta', opening from around 09:30 to 13:00 then again from 16:30 to 21:30. The major shopping malls stay open throughout the day but don't open until about 14:00 on Fridays.

Climate

Abu Dhabi has a sub-tropical arid climate with year-round sunshine. Temperatures range from 10°C - 30°C in winter and can reach as high as 48°C in summer. Rainfall is infrequent, usually confined to a few winter showers.

Customs Allowances

The duty free allowance for each visitor entering the country is 2,000 cigarettes or 400 cigars or 2kg of tobacco and a 'reasonable amount' of perfume. Non-Muslim adults may also bring in two litres of spirits and two litres of wine. Visitors are not charged customs duty on personal effects they bring into Abu Dhabi.

Dress Code

Lightweight summer clothing is suitable most of the year, but some warmer garments may be needed for the winter evenings and strong air conditioning. The attitude to dress in Abu Dhabi is relaxed, but visitors (men as well as women) should show respect for local culture and customs in public places by avoiding excessively tight or revealing clothing. Context is important. Bikinis and beachwear are perfectly acceptable in the appropriate environment (but not in the city centre)

Electricity

220/240 volts AC 50Hz. Socket type is square three-pin 13 amp (as used in the UK). All hotels

are able to supply suitable adaptors as required.

Food & Drink

Every type of regional and international cuisine is available in Abu Dhabi, but pork products are prohibited by Islam. Alcohol is available in hotels and certain clubs, but not elsewhere. Tap water is safe and bottled water easily available.

Getting There

Abu Dhabi International Airport is some 7 hours from Western Europe and 10 hours from the Far East. Currently undergoing a massive expansion project, it offers a full range of services including an award-winning Duty Free operation, VIP meet and assist service, car hire desks and efficient city transfers by taxi, shuttle bus or hotel limousine. Abu Dhabi is home base to Etihad Airways, one of the world's fastest growing carriers. A total of some 50 airlines link the emirate to all quarters of the globe. Al Ain, the emirate's second city, also has a modern international airport, which mainly serves regional destinations

Getting Around

Apart from organised tours, most visitors rely on taxis in the urban areas. These are plentiful, inexpensive and can be flagged down at the roadside. Al Ghazal, NTC and Fast Cars run fleets of more upmarket vehicles that can be booked in advance. Bus services link Abu Dhabi with Al Ain and Dubai and there is a shuttle from the city centre to the airport. There are many reputable car hire companies (including well known international names) with offices around Abu Dhabi and Al Ain and/or at the airport. Car hire may also be arranged via the hotels.

Health

No health certificate or special immunisations are required, unless you have visited a country infected by cholera or yellow fever within 14 days prior to arrival. The quality of healthcare in Abu Dhabi is high and most common medications and health products are available from local pharmacies, often without a prescription.

Language

The official language is Arabic, but English is

widely spoken and understood. A wide range of European languages are spoken within the hospitality industry.

Money, Currency and Credit Cards

The UAE Dirham is linked to the US dollar at a rate of around US\$1 to Dhs.3.67. There are no exchange restrictions and the currency is freely convertible. Abu Dhabi has an extensive network of local and international banks, as well as many specialist foreign exchange outlets which offer the most competitive rates. All major credit cards are accepted, though cash may secure better bargains in the smaller shops.

Newspapers and TV

There are three daily English language newspapers: Gulf News, The Khaleej Times and Gulf Today. Some international newspapers and magazines are available in hotel bookshops and supermarkets. Most major hotels offer a range of satellite TV channels. Local channels also have English-language broadcasts.

Passport and Visa

Requirements

Citizens of most developed countries, including Western Europe, North America, Australasia, Japan etc, are granted free visit visas on arrival. Holders of passports from other countries must secure visas through a UAE-based sponsor, such as a hotel or business contact, prior to travel. Passports must be valid for a minimum of 6 month from date of arrival.

Photography

Photography of military installations, government buildings, police facilities, airports and other sensitive locations is prohibited. Photography of local women without their permission is not permitted.

Religion

The UAE is an Islamic country and Islam plays an integral role in the life of its citizens. Prayers take place five times per day. The dates of the Holy Month of Ramadan and other Islamic festivals depend on the lunar calendar and move back by about eleven days per year. During Ramadan, visitors should refrain from eating, drinking and smoking in public during daylight

hours. Hotels cater to their non-Muslim guests by opening restaurants not exposed to public view. Other religions are respected and Abu Dhabi's cosmopolitan population support many places of worship, including Christian churches.

Safety

Abu Dhabi benefits from one of the lowest crime rates in the world. It is a safe destination enjoying political stability. Normal precautions should be observed.

Telecommunications

Staying in touch is easy. Telecommunications provided by the state owned Etisalat are excellent. Mobile phone reception is generally good in the main population centres. Most major hotels offer in-room high speed internet connections in addition to well equipped business centres.

Time Difference

GMT + 4 hours.

Tipping

Hotel restaurants add a 16% service charge to

