



**Guide to UAE entry and visa regulations**

Middle East Immigration practice

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# General Notes

## Abu Dhabi and Dubai

This guide is split into two sections: one for Dubai-related regulations, and the other for Abu Dhabi and the other emirates. Abu Dhabi, the seat of the federal government, sets the regulations that apply to all the emirates in the United Arab Emirates, however Dubai has sought exceptions to federal rules to accommodate for the nature of its economy and largely expatriate demographic.

## Changes in regulations

UAE visa and entry regulations have changed multiple times in recent months due to the government authorities responding to limit the spread of COVID-19. Factors that have been or may need to be considered in each case include the current visa status of the individual, if holding a UAE residence visa then which emirate issued said visa, their current location, what type of visa they may need, their nationality, when flights re-opened between the UAE and their current location (if not in the UAE), whether or not their visa was automatically extended, which emirate they are based in, which emirate they need to travel to, whether they have family in the UAE, the nature of the employment and their health condition. These factors affect validity of existing visas, movement into, out of and within the UAE and ability to apply for a new visa.

It is unknown as to when regulations might be streamlined to consolidate these various factors. For now, with such complexity, each case must be assessed individually based on the relevant circumstances and the most up-to-date regulations at the time, bearing in mind that the regulations are themselves evolving.

**The purpose of this guide is to help understand the regulations as at the time of print and the Deloitte immigration team in the UAE can provide further information as required by [contacting us](#).**

# Latest updates

## **Abu Dhabi: Resumption of Visa on the Arrival (VoA) facility in Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH)**

Direct flights to Abu Dhabi have resumed for those eligible to enter the UAE with a VoA. Individuals arriving at AUH must quarantine for 10 days. Issuance of pre-approved visit visas and out of country work visas for Abu Dhabi remains suspended.

## **Abu Dhabi: Changes to PCR test validity requirement for all arrivals from the UK**

Abu Dhabi will require all arrivals from the UK to present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of their flight departure time. Travelers will be required to show evidence of the date and time the test was taken at check-in, by presenting their appointment confirmation.

All PCR tests must be conducted at a government accredited medical facility in the UK.

## **Abu Dhabi: Changes to the quarantine requirements for all international travelers arriving into the Emirate**

Abu Dhabi has introduced few changes to the quarantine requirement for all international travelers arriving into the Emirate. The duration of quarantine has changed from 14 days to 10 days. The authorities have also announced the exemption of select travelers' categories from the quarantine requirement. Further details can be found on [Abu Dhabi Entry Procedures](#).

# Dubai



# Dubai residents and nationals

## Entry and exit

### Entering the UAE

For Dubai residents with an existing residence visa intending to return to Dubai, approval must first be sought from the General Directorate for Residency and Foreign Affairs – Dubai (GDRFA). This is assuming that there are flights between the country of departure and the UAE. If there are no flights available, the resident must travel to a country from which there are flights to the UAE and apply for an entry permit listing that country as the place of departure.

Once the application is approved, an electronic approval will be sent by email with an attached entry permit document containing an expiry date which will enable the booking of a flight to return to Dubai. Dubai residents will have to insert the GDRFA application number found on the re-entry permit in order to book flights to Dubai. The validity of the approval is 30 days. If travel will not be before that expiry date, a new permit will need to be applied for (which can be done 7 days prior to expiry of an existing permit).

Full details on requirements are listed on the [Dubai return procedures page](#).

Prior to re-entry, residents are encouraged to check the validity of their visas on this [government page](#).

### Exiting the UAE

For those exiting the UAE, travel is permitted subject to host country rules and the regulations below; there is no requirement obtain a prior approval from the UAE authorities.

#### Destination guidance

General guidance on destination-specific requirements is provided by Emirates [here](#), although travellers should confirm regulations directly with the destination country.

#### UAE nationals

UAE nationals travelling to Europe (except the UK and Greece) must obtain approval from the Consulate General of their European destination within the departure country.

#### Cancellations and automatic extensions

For employees and other residents whose visas have been cancelled post 1 July 2020, standard regulations to exit the country or change onto another visa type within a 30 day grace period from the date of visa cancellation still applies. If a resident cannot exit the UAE (if, for example, there are no flights to their home country), then they must change their visa status (e.g. to a tourist visa) to avoid being fined for overstaying.

For anyone whose visa was automatically extended until 30 January 2020 by the immigration authorities as part of the easing of immigration regulations due to COVID, their visas should be renewed as normal before exiting the UAE. i.e. Travel outside the UAE should not be conducted on auto-renewed visas. Without a properly renewed visa, obtaining an entry permit to re-enter the UAE is currently not possible.

# Dubai residents

## Visa expiries and renewals

### In-country renewals

In-country renewals are proceeding as normal.

The UAE authorities have announced that the automatic extensions of the UAE residence visas till the end of the year are no longer valid. For those in-country who had their visa automatically renewed, the grace period till 11 October 2020 to complete the visa renewal is now expired and fines will apply if visas have not been renewed.

For those whose visas were automatically renewed while they were outside the country when the visa expired, they must renew their visas within 30 days of re-entering the UAE.

### Out-of-country residents

#### Less than 180 days

UAE residents whose visas have been automatically extended till 30 January 2021 and have spent less than 180 consecutive days outside of the country, have a grace period of 1 month to renew their UAE residence visas upon re-entering the UAE.

#### 180 days or more

UAE residents whose visas have been automatically extended till 30 January 2021 and have spent more than 180 consecutive days outside of the country, have a grace period to re-enter the country and complete the renewal of their visas. The grace period is not specified but the authorities have announced their intentions to release a schedule of grace periods by country where residents are currently based.



# Dubai new residents

## New residence visas and entry procedures

### **New employment and residence visas**

#### **In-country applications**

In-country employment and dependent visa applications will continue to be processed in Dubai as per the standard regulations.

#### **Out-of-country applications**

Out-of-country applications are currently being processed as usual.

### **Entry procedures into Dubai**

Individuals with a residence entry permit are required to obtain a return approval from the General Directorate of Residency and Foreign Affairs (GDRFA). The procedures to follow are outlined [here](#).

# Dubai visitors and others

## Non-residence visas, expired visas and entry/exit procedures

### Tourist, visa on arrival and other non-residence visas

Tourists and visitors are permitted to travel into Dubai with tourist visas now being granted as before – i.e. depending on nationality, a visitor to Dubai can get a visa on arrival or apply for and obtain a visit visa before travel. This is subject to flight routes being open and COVID-19-specific entry procedures.

Tourist visas are also now automatically issued with health insurance that is organised by Dubai's immigration department.

### Entry and exit procedures

#### Entry

Full details of the relevant entry procedures are found on the [Dubai entry procedures page](#).

#### Exit

All passengers travelling from Dubai to UK or Europe (and other mandated destinations) will be required to take a COVID-19 PCR test no more than 96 hours before departure and present a negative test result certificate at check-in.

### Expired visa holders currently in Dubai

The grace period of 17 November for those with expired visas to do one of the following has expired:

1. Exit the country; or,
2. Renew their visa while inside the country; or,
3. Proceed with an in-country UAE residence visa application

Therefore, fines will now apply if visas have not been renewed.

# Dubai entry procedures

## Requirements for entering the UAE via Dubai International Airport (DXB)

### Rules applicable to all those entering Dubai

#### **COVID-19 test:**

Requirements in relation to the COVID-19 PCR test differ depending on whether you're entering the UAE as a Visitor or Resident, as well as the country of departure.

- **Visitors** must present a negative COVID-19 PCR test certificate issued no more than 96 hours prior to departure (except travelers from the UK or Germany). Only official printed certificates are accepted. Travelers from certain countries may also be required to take another PCR test on arrival. Children under the age of 12 and those who have a moderate or severe disability are exempt.
- **Residents:** depending on the country UAE residents are travelling from, they will either be required to present a negative COVID-19 PCR test certificate issued no more than 96 hours prior to departure or they can take the COVID-19 PCR test on arrival in Dubai. Residents re-entering the UAE, should check the relevant rules in relation to their nationality [here](#).

**Designated countries with accredited clinics:** The COVID-19 test must be undertaken at a locally accredited clinic and including any of the clinics listed [here](#). In addition, travelers from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan must take the test at an [accredited clinic](#).

**Self-quarantine:** If a COVID-19 PCR test is taken at Dubai airport, self-quarantine is required until a negative test result is issued. If the test result is positive, this extends to 14 days alongside any specific instructions from the Dubai Health Authority.

**App:** The COVID19 – DXB Smart App and PH Screening (Pure Health) must be downloaded and activated before leaving the airport (by scanning the provided QR code). The Apps will show the results of a COVID-19 PCR test taken at the airport and are normally generated within 24 hours also being sent by message to the number registered.

**Accommodation:** A private residence must be available for the duration of self-quarantine. This can include hotel/temporary rented accommodation. It should include sufficient space to allow segregation from anyone already at the residence. Non-availability of suitable accommodation may mean that the quarantine will be at a government-designated hotel (at the traveler's expense).

# Dubai entry procedures

## Requirements for entering the UAE via Dubai International Airport (DXB)

### Rules specific to the type of visa used to enter

#### **Existing residents**

**COVID entry permit:** This must be [applied](#) before travel and details of the approval must be submitted to the airline on booking a ticket into the UAE.

#### **Tourists, visitors and new residents with a residence entry permit**

**Health insurance:** All those entering Dubai must ensure that they have valid travel insurance with COVID-19 cover presenting an insurance certificate stating this at check-in. Alternatively, the traveler must declare at check-in that they will bear the costs for treatment and isolation if necessary. For all those travelling using Emirates airline, insurance will be provided by the airline as per the terms stated.

#### **Existing residents of other emirates**

**Eligibility to travel:** Residents of other emirates who are flying to Dubai from the below listed countries are required to check for their eligibility to travel to the UAE through this [government page](#).

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- India
- Iran
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka

### Rules specific to the type of visa used to enter

#### **Tourists, visitors and new residents with a residence entry permit**

**Health insurance:** All those entering Dubai must ensure that they have valid travel insurance with COVID-19 cover presenting an insurance certificate stating this at check-in. Alternatively, the traveler must declare at check-in that they will bear the costs for treatment and isolation if necessary. For all those travelling using Emirates airline, insurance will be provided by the airline as per the terms stated.

# Abu Dhabi

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# Abu Dhabi residents

## Entry and exit

### Entering the UAE

Although Abu Dhabi residents do not require an entry permit for re-entry they must abide by regulations as identified on the [Abu Dhabi return procedures](#) page. Furthermore, prior to re-entry, residents must check their entry eligibility at the relevant [government page](#) and carry a print-out for the entry eligibility confirmation.

### Exiting the UAE

For anyone whose visa was automatically extended until 31 December 2020 by the immigration authorities as part of the easing of immigration regulations due to COVID, their visas should be renewed as normal before exiting the UAE. i.e. Travel outside the UAE should not be conducted on auto-renewed visas. Without a properly renewed visa, obtaining an entry permit to re-enter the UAE is currently not possible.

If exiting the UAE, then re-entry will need to follow the same procedures on the left hand side, 'Entering the UAE'.

In addition, the following regulations apply to those departing from Abu Dhabi airport:

- It is mandatory to have a COVID-19 PCR test if travelling from Abu Dhabi to any European Union country, as well as Switzerland and the UK. The test must be carried out at an approved medical facility in the UAE within 96 hours of the flight (when flying on Etihad, a test is mandatory and it is recommended by the airline the test be taken at [Mediclinic](#)). Children under 12 and people with mild and severe disabilities are exempt from COVID-19 PCR testing, although this may vary by destination.
- If travelling from another emirate to reach Abu Dhabi airport, a negative COVID-19 test result issued within the prior 48 hours must be presented to permit entry into Abu Dhabi.
- Residents, visitors and citizens exiting Abu Dhabi to other emirates are required to provide a negative covid-19 PCR result at the border of exit taken within the last 96 hours from the time of departure. All travelers must sign an undertaking to adhere to precautionary measures and disclose a contact number and full address of accommodation in any of the other emirates. The accommodation can be a hotel or a private residence.

# Abu Dhabi residents

## Visa expiries and renewals

### In-country renewals

Employment and dependent residence visa renewals are still being processed online as the Abu Dhabi main immigration department continues remote working. The requirement for medical examinations has been re-instated, and the endorsement of residence visas continues to be processed via government authorised couriers.

The UAE authorities have announced that the automatic extensions of the UAE residence visas till the end of the year are no longer valid. Renewals must now be submitted for all those who previously had their visas automatically renewed.

### Out-of-country renewals

#### **Less than 180 days**

UAE residents whose visas have been automatically extended till the end of the year and have spent less than 180 consecutive days outside of the country have a grace period of 1 month to renew their UAE residence visas upon re-entering the UAE.

#### **180 days or more**

UAE residents whose visas have been automatically extended till the end of the year and have spent more than 180 consecutive days outside of the country, have a grace period to re-enter the country and complete the renewal of their visas. The grace period will be based on the date of the re-opening of the airspace between the current country of departure and the UAE. The authorities are intending to release a schedule of grace periods by country.

# Abu Dhabi new residents

## New residence visas and entry procedures

### **New employment and residence visas**

While issuance of out-of-country employment and residence visas are suspended, new in-country employment and residence visas are still being processed, albeit only online as the Abu Dhabi immigration department continues remote working. The endorsement of residence visas continues to be completed via the government's authorized couriers.

### **Entry procedures into Abu Dhabi for those not eligible for VoA**

While direct entry into AUH is not possible for those requiring prior immigration permission, it is possible to enter Abu Dhabi by land via Dubai. Visit visa applications for Dubai are currently being processed and issued. All travellers must enter Dubai and subsequently, Abu Dhabi, in line with the [Dubai entry procedures](#), and [Abu Dhabi entry procedures](#). Once in Abu Dhabi, an individual may switch their immigration status from a Visit visa to a long term residence visa.

Those who are eligible for a VoA may enter Abu Dhabi directly in line with the [Abu Dhabi entry procedures](#) and switch their immigration status from a VoA to a long term residence visa.

# Abu Dhabi visitors and others

## Non-residence visas, expired visas and entry procedures

### Tourist, visa on arrival and other non-residence visas

For those who are eligible, the issuance of a Visa On Arrival (VoA) has resumed. Issuance of out of country tourist visas, and other non-residence visas remains suspended.

### Expired visa holders currently in Abu Dhabi

The UAE authorities have extended the grace period for those with expired visas to do one of the following by 31 December 2020:

1. Exit the country; or,
2. Renew their visa while inside the country; or,
3. Proceed with an in-country UAE residence visa application
4. Obtain an in-country tourist visa

### Entry procedures

While entry using a tourist visa, or other non-residence visas into Abu Dhabi and other emirates is suspended, one can enter Dubai first and then travel by road. Please see [Dubai entry procedures](#) and [Abu Dhabi entry procedures](#) for further guidance.

Travelers eligible for a VOA in Abu Dhabi may arrive directly at AUH provided the [Abu Dhabi entry procedures](#) are followed.

# Abu Dhabi entry procedures

## Requirements for entering Abu Dhabi

### Rules applicable to all travelers arriving through any UAE port/entry points directly to Abu Dhabi

**Quarantine undertaking and health declaration forms:** all travelers must complete a health declaration form and [quarantine undertaking forms](#) at the Abu Dhabi entry point.

**Pre-Departure COVID-19 testing:** A negative COVID-19 PCR test result issued no more than 96 hours prior to arrival in Abu Dhabi is mandatory. This must be carried out at an approved Pure Health medical facility, or if none available, then at an alternative approved lab. Testing is also required on arrival to Abu Dhabi port of entry. Children under 12 and people with mild and severe disabilities are exempt from COVID-19 PCR testing.

Those arriving from the UK or via land are required to present a negative PCR test result issued within 72 hours from their flight departure time and land entry time.

**Quarantine:** Self-quarantine is required on arrival for ten days and is applicable to all travelers entering the Emirate from abroad (exempted categories are listed below). For arrivals from certain countries, self-quarantine mandatory and travelers must undertake quarantine at a government facility.

#### Exemptions from quarantine:

The following travelers will be exempt from quarantine requirements:

- Arrivals from 'Green' countries will be exempt – see list [here](#)
- UAE residents and nationals in Phase III of the vaccine trials or taking part in the National Vaccination Programme are exempt from quarantine on arrival to Abu Dhabi. This exemption will be valid after completion of 28 days from the date of the second vaccination dose.

**Post-entry COVID-19 tests:** Travelers subject to quarantine are required to undertake a second PCR test on day eight of their quarantine. Quarantine period ends on day ten following receipt of a negative PCR test result. The electronic wrist band will be removed by the medical authorities. Those who are exempt from the quarantine requirement and intend on staying in Abu Dhabi for more than 6 or 12 days, consecutively, must undertake a second PCR test on day six and a third test on day 12.

**App:** The Al Hosn Smart App must be downloaded and activated before entering Abu Dhabi.

**Tracking wrist-band:** Throughout the mandatory 14 day quarantine period, a tracking wrist band must be worn.

**Accommodation:** A private residence must be available for the duration of self-quarantine. This can include hotel/temporary rented accommodation. It should include sufficient space to allow segregation from anyone already at the residence. Non-availability of suitable accommodation may mean that the quarantine will be at a government-designated hotel (at the traveler's expense).

***Failure to adhere to the quarantine instructions provided by the authorities (if the violation wasn't justified) may lead to monetary fines and/or imprisonment subject to the decision of the Attorney General. In cases of non compliance, an inquiry call will be made by the Ministry of Health officials for a justification on the incident.***

# Abu Dhabi entry procedures (cont.)

## Requirements for entering Abu Dhabi

### Quarantine and COVID-19 testing rules specific to the duration spent in other emirates before arriving into Abu Dhabi by land

Upon arrival of the Abu Dhabi emirate border, travelers will be requested to provide proof of last entry into the UAE. Based on the duration of stay in the emirate where the traveler is coming from, the quarantine requirements will differ as per below:

**Less than 10 Days in the UAE (outside Abu Dhabi):** Every day a traveler spends in another emirate before arriving in Abu Dhabi will be deducted from the ten-day quarantine period requirement. A PCR test will need to be taken 72 hours prior to time of entry and on day 8 if the individual is in Abu Dhabi on that day.

**More than 10 days in the UAE (outside Abu Dhabi):** For those who have stayed more than ten days in other emirates before arriving into Abu Dhabi, the quarantine requirement will be waived, however a PCR test must be taken 72 hours prior to entry time. Those who intend on staying in Abu Dhabi for more than 6 or 12 consecutive days, they must undertake a second PCR test on day six and a third PCR test on day 12.



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