

# DUBAI SECURITY

*In recent years Dubai has burst onto the scene as a bustling global city, a haven for superyachts, supercars and the super-rich. Ranked as the most expensive city in the Middle East, Dubai is also the business hub of the Middle East. Dubai's thriving economic model is driven by tourism, real estate, aviation and financial services. Security expert Ed Hill looks at the rules and regulations that Westerners should observe when travelling to Dubai.*

WITH AN IMPRESSIVE SKYLINE OF ULTRA-MODERN skyscrapers, Dubai's ambition and footprint on the world economic stage is reflected in the world's tallest building, the spectacular Burj Khalifa.

Famed for its glamour with an attractive climate, luxury shopping, spectacular architecture and lively nightlife, the Emirate has become an increasingly popular destination for western visitors. With an extremely low crime rate, Dubai sounds like heaven on earth right? Well, not exactly.

A browse through recent media reports will reveal a number of somewhat implausible headlines involving westerners. In 2017 alone, more than 200 UK citizens were detained in the UAE.

One of the most high profile cases was that of 27 year-old James Harron from Stirling, Scotland who received a three month jail sentence for 'public indecency' after he accidentally touched a man's hip as he brushed past him in bar. To add further insult, his family was unable to visit him as they faced prison themselves for being critical of the UAE's government.

Another particularly alarming case was highlighted in 2016 when a British woman was arrested after reporting that she'd been raped. The woman alleged that she'd been attacked by two men from Birmingham while on holiday. Bizarrely, the woman was charged with having extra-marital sex and had her passport confiscated while the two accused attackers were allowed to return to the UK with no charges filed against them.

Before booking your visit to Dubai it must be stressed that Dubai is a Muslim country with strict rules that for most westerners will be unfamiliar with. To avoid falling foul of the law, visitors to Dubai are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with the local laws and customs. Here are some facts to be aware of.

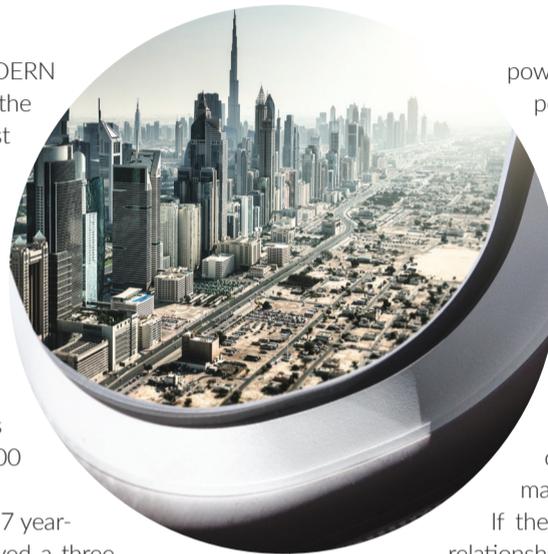
## Drugs & Alcohol

Alcoholic drinks are served in licensed hotels and clubs, the legal age to consume alcohol is 18 in Abu Dhabi and 21 in Dubai. It is illegal to drink or to be under the influence in public, passengers transiting through the airport under the influence could still be arrested.

The Emirati authorities have a zero-tolerance policy towards drugs with severe penalties for trafficking, smuggling and possession. Drugs trafficking can lead to the death penalty while being in possession leads to a four year sentence. Even drugs found in the blood stream counts as possession as a 24 year old Liverpool man discovered last year. Connor Clements was arrested after undertaking an employment medical and traces of cannabis showed up in the results. Mr Clements vehemently denied these charges, claiming that the traces had remained in his system from his time in the UK.

## Illegal Items

The importation of certain goods require authorisation prior to arrival, these items include satellite phones, listening or recording devices, radio transmitters,



powerful cameras and binoculars. All food products containing pork are illegal and so is pornography.

## Dress Code

Women are to dress moderately in public areas, skirts and shorts are fine and swimwear is only to be worn at pools or at the beach. Cross-dressing is illegal.

## Offensive Behaviour

Public displays of affection is frowned upon, you can be arrested for kissing in public and even holding hands. All sex outside of marriage is illegal, regardless of the relationship you may have in the UK. Same sex marriages are not recognised and homosexuality is illegal.

If the authorities become aware of you conducting a sexual relationship outside of marriage, you can be imprisoned, fined and deported. Swearing and making obscene gestures can get you jailed or deported. Tourists are strongly advised not to offend, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if they intend to visit religious areas.

## Photography / Social Media

Do not photograph local people without their permission. Photographing certain government buildings or military installations is forbidden. Men can be arrested for photographing women on the beaches or at the swimming pool. Any posting on social media that undermines the UAE is punishable by law.

## Terrorism

Some countries in the Middle East can be potentially dangerous and violent. Media reports of civil unrest, car bombings, kidnappings and barbaric televised executions make unpleasant headlines. According to the website of the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, a terrorism threat exists across all Gulf States adding that terrorists are likely to carry out attacks in the UAE and warns British nationals to be vigilant. However, the reality is that Dubai is no less safe than say Paris or London. Dubai also has an efficient police and military intelligence network and compared to most western cities, Dubai has an extremely low crime rate.

## Conclusion

Dubai's economic and tourist boom is showing no signs of decelerating. With over eight million international overnight visitors during the first six months of 2017, Dubai's popularity is unrelenting. Nevertheless, it has rules and regulations that to most westerners may seem somewhat outlandish. If in doubt, advice can be sought from the UAE Embassy before travelling. Dubai is a safe place to visit, be both mindful and respectful of the local culture and you'll undoubtedly fall in love with this very unique city.

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