Relocate2UAE

# UAE Visa & Immigration Guide 2026/27

Every residence route, checked against UAE government sources, with the numbers you should double-check before you rely on them.

**Last verified 2 October 2026**

Sources: u.ae, ICP, GDRFA Dubai, Dubai Land Department, MoHRE, MoFA, Dubai Health, UAE and Dubai legislation portals, national press and named law firms.

Next review: 1 December 2026, then quarterly

General information, not legal advice. The authority handling your file has the final word.

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Your visa decides almost everything else about a move to the UAE: when you can start work, whether your family can join you, whether you can open a bank account or sign a lease. It is also the subject where the internet is most confidently wrong.

This guide covers every residence route that matters to people relocating to Dubai, Abu Dhabi and the other emirates in 2026/27. Each regulated figure carries a tag showing where it comes from. Where government pages disagree with each other, and they do, we show you the disagreement instead of picking a side and hoping.

> **How to read this guide.** [OFFICIAL] means the figure is on a government page. [MARKET] means a reputable secondary source. [REPORTED] means widely reported but not confirmed officially. [VERIFY] means do not act on it until you have checked with the authority. Boxes headed "Check before you rely on this" mark the numbers most likely to move or to be applied differently at the counter.

> **Please read: what this guide is and is not.** Relocate2UAE is an independent information platform, not a law firm, an immigration adviser or a government body. This guide is general information, not legal or immigration advice, and we accept no liability for decisions made in reliance on it. Rules change with little notice and can be applied differently between emirates and between officers; the authority handling your file has the final word. Where your situation is unusual, or the answer is unclear, speak to a licensed UAE lawyer before you act. Davidson & Co., our legal partner, is the firm we suggest. The full notice is under Important information at the end of this guide.

## Quick answers

- **Most expats arrive on an employment entry permit** arranged and paid for by their employer, then complete a 2-year residence visa within 60 days of landing. [OFFICIAL]
- **You can sponsor a spouse and children on AED 4,000 a month**, or AED 3,000 plus employer accommodation. Job title no longer matters. [OFFICIAL]
- **Sons can be sponsored up to 25, unmarried daughters at any age.** [OFFICIAL]
- **The Golden Visa is 10 years and self-sponsored.** The main routes are AED 2 million in property or investment, or a skilled role paying AED 30,000 a month. [OFFICIAL]
- **The Green Visa is 5 years and self-sponsored**: a degree and AED 15,000 a month as an employee, or AED 360,000 a year as a freelancer. [OFFICIAL]
- **The remote work visa needs USD 3,500 a month** from an employer outside the UAE. [OFFICIAL]
- **Sponsoring a live-in domestic worker needs household income of AED 25,000 a month.** [REPORTED, MoHRE via WAM]
- **Health insurance is mandatory for residence in all seven emirates.** [OFFICIAL]
- **Overstay fines are AED 50 a day.** [LAW]
- **There is no published approval rate for any UAE visa.** Anyone quoting one is guessing or selling.

# What has changed in 2026

Read this first if you have researched UAE visas before. Dates are the effective dates we could confirm.

| Change | Effective | What it means | Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden Visa property route: the 50% paid-up rule is gone | February 2026 | DLD's service terms ask for a bank no-objection letter stating the amount paid and the balance. Mortgaged and off-plan units qualify on a value of AED 2 million | [OFFICIAL] DLD |
| Dubai 2-year property investor visa: AED 750,000 minimum removed | 29 April 2026 | Sole owners of a completed Dubai property can apply at any value. Joint owners need a share of at least AED 400,000 each | [REPORTED] Khaleej Times, Fragomen |
| Overstay fine unified at AED 50 a day | Reported 11 February 2026 | The old 10-day tourist grace period is gone | [LAW] rate, Cabinet Resolution No. 89 of 2022; [REPORTED] date |
| Airspace-closure overstay waiver closed | Final deadline 9 July 2026 | Visitors exempted during the regional flight disruption had 30 days to regularise or leave. Standard fines apply again | [REPORTED] Khaleej Times |
| Entry permit for holders of Western and Asian residency widened | 25 June 2026 | Nationals of Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Kenya and South Africa join Indian nationals. Qualifying residency now includes Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Canada as well as the US, UK and EU | [REPORTED] Khaleej Times citing ICP |
| New visa issuance suspended for three Ebola-affected countries | 6 June 2026 | Nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and South Sudan. May be extended | [REPORTED] Khaleej Times citing NCEMA and ICP |
| Dubai tourist visas approved within 48 hours | Mid 2026 | Single-entry 30 and 60-day visas through authorised tourism offices | [REPORTED] Khaleej Times citing GDRFA |
| Dubai residency services linked to Dubai Police | 2026 | Expect to be asked to settle outstanding traffic fines when renewing or cancelling a Dubai visa | [REPORTED] Time Out Dubai |
| Remote work visa: six months of bank statements | 27 January 2026 | Was three months. Income floor unchanged at USD 3,500 | [REPORTED] |
| Four new visit visa purposes and sponsor income tiers | 29 September 2025 | AI specialist, entertainment, events and cruise visit visas. Sponsoring a friend to visit needs AED 15,000 a month | [OFFICIAL] ICP |
| Health insurance mandatory in all seven emirates | 1 January 2025 | No residence visa is issued or renewed without a policy | [OFFICIAL] MoHRE |

Also announced but not yet a route you can apply for: Dubai's "smart medical visa" for patients travelling for treatment, under an agreement between GDRFA and the Dubai Health Authority. [REPORTED]

## Who actually runs UAE immigration

Knowing which body holds your file saves a lot of wasted calls.

- **ICP** (Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security) issues entry permits, residence visas and Emirates ID for Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah.
- **GDRFA Dubai** does the residence job for Dubai only, online or through Amer centres. Emirates ID is still an ICP product in Dubai.
- **MoHRE** (Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation) issues the work permit behind every mainland private sector job, and regulates domestic workers. Free zones issue their own equivalent.
- **MoFA** attests foreign documents once they reach the UAE.

A residence visa and a work permit are separate permissions. A Golden, Green, family or property visa lets you live here. Working for a UAE employer still needs a work permit issued for that employer.

## Which visa do I actually need?

**Try the interactive UAE Visa Route Finder** on the web version of this guide at relocate2uae.com. Answer a few questions and it shows which routes your answers clear, what each costs, how long it takes, the official place to apply and which numbers to double-check.

| Your situation | Route | Validity | Who sponsors you |
|---|---|---|---|
| You have a job offer from a UAE employer | Employment residence visa | 2 years | Employer |
| You want to interview in person first | Jobseeker visit visa | 60, 90 or 120 days | Nobody |
| Employed, degree, AED 15,000+ a month, want independence from your employer | Green Visa | 5 years | Yourself |
| Freelancer earning AED 360,000+ a year | Green Visa, freelance route | 5 years | Yourself |
| Freelancer below that level | Freelance permit plus residence through a free zone, or a MoHRE permit | 1 to 2 years | The free zone or yourself |
| Employed by a company outside the UAE, USD 3,500+ a month | Remote work residence visa | 1 year | Yourself |
| Setting up a company | Investor or partner visa on the licence | 2 years typically | Your company |
| AED 2 million in property or investment, or a AED 30,000 skilled role | Golden Visa | 10 years | Yourself |

| Your situation | Route | Validity | Who sponsors you |
|---|---|---|---|
| A completed Dubai property under AED 2 million in your sole name | Dubai 2-year property visa | 2 years | Yourself |
| Aged 55+, retired, with income or assets | Retirement visa | 5 years | Yourself |
| Joining a spouse or parent who lives here | Family residence visa | Matches the sponsor | Family member |
| Studying at a UAE university | Student residence visa | 1 year, renewable | University or parent |
| Being hired as a nanny, housekeeper or driver | Domestic worker visa | 1 to 2 years | The household or a licensed centre |

If two routes fit, the order of preference for most people is: Golden, then Green, then employment. The longer, self-sponsored visas survive a job loss. The employment visa does not.

# Employment visa

This is how most expats arrive, and the route where you do the least paperwork.

## How it works

1. **Offer and work permit.** Your employer submits your signed offer and contract to MoHRE (mainland) or the free zone authority. Under Article 6 of Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, the employer must obtain the permit and may not recover recruitment or visa costs from you. [LAW]
2. **Entry permit.** ICP or GDRFA issues an employment entry permit. Once you land, you have 60 days to finish the residence steps. If you are already in the UAE, this becomes a change of status with no exit required. [OFFICIAL]
3. **Medical fitness test and Emirates ID biometrics**, usually in your first week.
4. **Residence visa issued electronically.** Your Emirates ID is the proof. Passport visa stickers ended in 2022.
5. **Work permit activated.** You can lawfully start work at this point, not before.

## What you will be asked for

- Passport with at least six months' validity, and a photo on a white background
- Attested degree certificate if the role is classed at MoHRE skill level 1 or 2
- For regulated professions, the licence or approval first: DHA, DoH or MoHAP for healthcare; KHDA or ADEK for teachers. Our Teacher Relocation Guide covers that step
- The signed offer letter and contract generated by the MoHRE or free zone system

## Is there a minimum salary for a work visa?

No. The UAE has no general statutory minimum wage for expatriates and no salary floor to obtain a work visa. You will often see AED 4,000 quoted as a work visa minimum. That figure is the family sponsorship threshold, not a work visa requirement.

What matters is which thresholds your salary clears for other purposes: AED 4,000 to sponsor family, AED 15,000 for a Green Visa, AED 30,000 for a skilled-professional Golden Visa.

> **Check before you rely on this: basic salary versus total package.** Family sponsorship is assessed on the salary in your registered contract, and authorities commonly look at the basic line, not the total. Say your offer is AED 12,000 a month: AED 3,500 basic, AED 6,000 housing allowance, AED 2,500 transport. That can fall short of the family threshold on paper. Ask the employer's PRO how the contract will be registered before you sign, and negotiate the split, not just the total. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

## Investor and partner visa

If you set up a mainland or free zone company, the licence lets the company sponsor you as an investor or partner. This is the route most consultants and founders use.

- Validity is usually two years, depending on the authority issuing the licence. [MARKET]
- There is no single national investment minimum for this visa. Figures such as "AED 10 million for an investor visa" or "AED 5 million for a partner visa", still found online, do not correspond to any current published requirement. The cost is the licence, the establishment card and the visa itself.
- Each licence carries a visa quota tied to office space and activity. Check the quota before you pay, especially if you plan to hire.
- You still need the medical, Emirates ID and health insurance.

> **Check before you rely on this.** Licence and visa package prices are set by more than 40 free zones and change often. Any figure on a setup agent's website is a lead, not a source. Get the fee schedule from the authority itself.

Our UAE Business Setup Guide covers licence choice properly. Creative Zone, one of our partners, handles the licence and the linked investor visa as one process. We name partners where a reader is likely to need the service; it does not change what we write about the rules.

## Green Visa

A five-year, self-sponsored residence. You can change jobs, freelance or take a break without your visa being cancelled, and you can sponsor your family, including first-degree relatives. [OFFICIAL, u.ae and ICP]

Three ways in:

- **Skilled employees**: a UAE employment contract, a role at MoHRE skill level 1, 2 or 3, a bachelor's degree, and at least AED 15,000 a month.
- **Freelancers and the self-employed**: a MoHRE freelance or self-employment permit, a bachelor's degree or specialised diploma, and evidence of annual income from self-employment for the previous two years of at least AED 360,000, or proof of financial solvency.
- **Investors and partners** in a UAE commercial activity.

Indicative all-in cost is AED 3,700 to 4,900. [MARKET] If you already hold an employment visa and meet the test, ask your employer to support the switch.

> **Check before you rely on this: the freelance income test.** The official wording is "annual income from self-employment for the previous two years amounting to not less than AED 360,000". Some advisers read that as AED 360,000 in each year, others as the total across two years. [VERIFY] If your income sits between the two readings, confirm with ICP or GDRFA before you apply. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

## Freelance

"Freelance visa" is not one product. It is a permit to trade in your own name plus a residence visa, and there are three ways to get the pair.

1. **A free zone freelance permit.** Dubai's GoFreelance scheme (media, tech, education and design activities) is the best known; Abu Dhabi has twofour54 for media and a freelancer licence from the Department of Economic Development; Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Ajman and Fujairah zones offer cheaper versions. The zone then sponsors your residence.
2. **A MoHRE freelance or self-employment permit**, often used by people who already hold residence through a spouse, a Golden Visa or a Green Visa and only need the right to work.
3. **The Green Visa freelance route** above, once your income reaches AED 360,000 a year.

> **Check before you rely on this: freelance costs.** We have deliberately not printed a freelance permit price. We could not confirm one on a government or free zone authority page, and the figures on setup agents' websites contradict each other by a wide margin. [VERIFY] Ask the free zone authority for its current tariff, and remember the permit is only one line: the establishment card, residence visa, medical, Emirates ID and insurance come on top.

Two things freelancers miss. Your permit lists specific activities, and invoicing outside them is a breach. And residence gives you the right to live here, while the permit gives you the right to work; you need both in date.

## Remote work

Officially the residence visa for working outside the UAE. It is for people employed by a company abroad who want to live here for a year. [OFFICIAL, ICP and GDRFA]

- Income of at least USD 3,500 a month or equivalent, with proof of employment outside the UAE
- Six consecutive months of bank statements since 27 January 2026 [REPORTED]
- UAE health insurance for the full year
- One year, renewable by fresh application
- No work for any UAE company
- Spouse and children can be sponsored under the standard family rules

Many pages still quote USD 5,000. That figure dates from the visa's launch in 2021 and is out of date.

Budget AED 1,500 to 1,700 in Dubai for government and service fees. [MARKET]

# Golden Visa

A 10-year, self-sponsored, renewable residence. You can stay outside the UAE for more than six months without losing it, sponsor your spouse, children and parents, and change jobs freely. [OFFICIAL, u.ae, ICP and DLD]

## Who qualifies

| Category | Main requirement | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Property investor | Property valued at AED 2 million or more in your name. One or more properties can be combined. Mortgaged property qualifies with a bank no-objection letter | 10 years |
| Public investor | AED 2 million in an accredited UAE investment fund, or AED 2 million in company capital, or a company paying AED 250,000 a year in tax | 10 years |
| Entrepreneur | Project valued at AED 500,000 or more with approval from an accredited incubator | 5 years |
| Skilled professional | Employment contract at MoHRE level 1 or 2, bachelor's degree, salary of AED 30,000 a month | 10 years |
| Doctors, scientists, specialists in priority fields | Approval or nomination from the relevant ministry or council | 10 years |
| Creatives and athletes | Letter from the emirate's culture authority or sports council | 10 years |
| Outstanding students | High school top performers: 5 years. University graduates with a high GPA: 10 years | 5 or 10 years |
| Humanitarian pioneers and frontline workers | Recognition or length of service | 10 years |

Older guides list a AED 10 million bank deposit or public investment, a "5-year Golden Visa" for skilled workers, or retirees with AED 1 million as a Golden Visa category. None of those matches current published rules. The investment threshold is AED 2 million, skilled professionals receive 10 years, and retirement is a separate 5-year visa covered below.

**Check before you rely on this: the AED 30,000 test.** Official pages state a salary of AED 30,000. Secondary sources disagree on whether that means basic salary or total salary including allowances, and practice has differed between emirates. [VERIFY] If you are near the line, confirm with ICP or GDRFA before you apply. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

**Check before you rely on this: duration for property investors.** u.ae's summary table has shown "5 years" for real estate investors, while ICP and the Dubai Land Department's own service page state 10. We follow ICP and DLD.

## What the property route costs in Dubai

DLD publishes a full fee schedule for the 10-year investor permit. [OFFICIAL, checked 2 October 2026]

| Item | AED |
|---|---|
| Medical examination | 700 |
| Emirates ID (10 years) | 1,153 |
| Residency permit (10 years) | 2,856.75 |
| Dubai Land Department fees | 4,020 |
| Administrative fees | 1,155 |
| **Total, main applicant** | **9,884.75** |
| Each family member, 10 years | 5,774.50 |
| Family file opening | 318.75 |

DLD states a service time of 7 to 10 business days from a complete file. You must be inside the UAE to finish the process.

Be wary of any site quoting a single low "Golden Visa fee" or a "success rate". No authority publishes approval rates, and the real cost depends on the category and emirate.

### Nominations cannot be bought

Emirate-level bodies can nominate people in categories that have widened through 2025 and 2026: long-serving nurses and educators, digital creators, e-sports professionals, and donors to Dubai's endowments foundation among them. [REPORTED] These run through the nominating body. Treat anyone offering to sell a nomination as a scam.

For nomination-based and investor cases with a company behind them, a licensed lawyer earns their fee. Davidson & Co., our legal partner, is the firm we suggest speaking to.

**The Blue Visa** is a 10-year residence for people with a documented record in environmental protection and sustainability, applied for through ICP or by nomination. [OFFICIAL]

## Family sponsorship

This is the subject where wrong numbers do the most damage, because people turn down jobs over them.

### The salary test

**AED 4,000 a month, or AED 3,000 plus accommodation.** Any resident, employer or employee, can sponsor family at that level regardless of job title. [OFFICIAL, u.ae, checked 2 October 2026]

You will still see AED 10,000 quoted for Dubai and Abu Dhabi and AED 8,000 elsewhere. There is no such federal rule.

### Who you can sponsor

- **Spouse**, with an attested marriage certificate
- **Daughters**, unmarried, at any age
- **Sons**, up to the age of 25. Beyond 25 if they are in full-time higher education on a course of at least a year [OFFICIAL]

- **Newborns**: apply for the residence visa within 120 days of birth. Fines of AED 50 a day apply after that [OFFICIAL; LAW]
- **Stepchildren**, subject to conditions, on one-year renewable visas [OFFICIAL]
- **Parents**, on visas granted one year at a time regardless of the length of your own [OFFICIAL]

The idea that sons must leave at 18 is out of date and has not been the rule for several years.

### Process

1. Entry permit for each family member through ICP or GDRFA, or a change of status if they are already here.
2. Medical fitness test for everyone aged 18 and over.
3. Emirates ID for everyone, children included.
4. Residence visa issued. You have 60 days from their entry to complete it. [OFFICIAL]

You will need your Emirates ID, salary certificate or contract, a registered tenancy contract (Ejari in Dubai, Tawtheeq in Abu Dhabi), health insurance for each dependant, and attested, Arabic-translated marriage and birth certificates.

### If your visa is cancelled

Your dependants' visas are tied to yours. If yours is cancelled, theirs must be too, but they get a **six-month grace period** to find a new sponsor or residence route. [OFFICIAL] The common claim that a divorced spouse "must leave" is wrong on the same basis; widows and divorcees also have their own residence routes.

### Sponsoring parents

**Check before you rely on this: parents.** The federal page confirms parents can be sponsored on yearly visas but gives no salary figure. u.ae cites Dubai practice, via Amer, of AED 20,000 a month. Amer centre guidance and press reports add a discretionary humanitarian route at about AED 10,000, a refundable deposit per parent, a consulate dependency letter, and a requirement to sponsor both parents together. [MARKET] Abu Dhabi and the northern emirates process through ICP with their own practice. Ask the authority in your emirate before you promise your parents anything. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

### Women sponsoring a husband or children

**Check before you rely on this: female sponsors.** The current federal sponsorship page is gender-neutral on the AED 4,000 test, and notes that a mother can sponsor her children in special cases approved by ICP. Older official content, now archived on u.ae, describes a higher bar: AED 10,000 a month (or AED 8,000 plus accommodation), limited in Abu Dhabi to listed professions, and in Dubai subject to special permission. Counter staff still apply versions of this. [VERIFY] If you are a woman planning to sponsor your husband, get written confirmation from GDRFA or ICP before he resigns. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

For schools, housing and the rest of a family move, see Moving to Dubai With a Family and Moving to Abu Dhabi.

## Retirement

A five-year renewable residence for people aged 55 and over. This is the one route where two government sources give different numbers.

**Federal rule (u.ae).** At least 55 at retirement and at least 15 years of work inside or outside the UAE, plus one of: property worth at least AED 1 million **and** savings of at least AED 1 million; or annual income of at least AED 180,000. The same page says that to apply from Dubai, annual fixed income must be at least AED 240,000. [OFFICIAL, checked 2 October 2026]

**Dubai's own programme (Invest in Dubai).** Aged 55 or over, plus one of four options: annual income of AED 180,000 (AED 15,000 a month); AED 1 million in a three-year fixed deposit; property worth AED 1 million, unmortgaged or with at least AED 1 million paid; or a combination worth AED 1 million with at least AED 500,000 in each. [OFFICIAL, checked 2 October 2026]

> **Check before you rely on this: the Dubai income figure.** u.ae says AED 240,000 a year for Dubai applications. Dubai's own page says AED 180,000. Both are government sources. [VERIFY] Until one is corrected, confirm with GDRFA before you structure a pension drawdown around either number. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

The retirement visa does not permit salaried work. If you can put AED 2 million into property instead, the Golden Visa is longer and more flexible.

## Property investor visas

Three different visas get lumped together under this heading.

| Visa | Where | Threshold | Validity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden Visa, property route | Any emirate | AED 2 million in value | 10 years |
| Dubai property investor visa | Dubai only | No minimum for sole owners of a completed property since 29 April 2026. Joint owners AED 400,000 each | 2 years |
| Retirement visa, property option | See above | AED 1 million, with conditions | 5 years |

For the Dubai 2-year visa, apply through the Dubai Land Department. Off-plan property does not qualify for this visa, though it can for the Golden Visa. [REPORTED on the April 2026 change; the DLD platform was updated without a published decree]

> **Check before you rely on this.** The removal of the AED 750,000 minimum is confirmed by Khaleej Times and Fragomen but not, at the time of writing, by a decree we can cite. If your purchase decision depends on the visa, get DLD's confirmation in writing first. We could not confirm an equivalent low-threshold property visa in Abu Dhabi. [VERIFY] **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

A property visa is a reason to buy only if you would buy anyway. Our expat property buying guide and Dubai vs Abu Dhabi property comparison cover the purchase itself.

## Student visa

- **Who sponsors it**: an accredited UAE university or college, or a resident parent. University student affairs offices run the process. [OFFICIAL]
- **Validity**: one year at a time, renewable on proof of continued enrolment. [OFFICIAL]
- **Admission is not approval.** u.ae's guidance is explicit that a university place does not guarantee the visa.
- **Staying on a parent's sponsorship**: sons can remain sponsored to 25, and beyond that while enrolled on a higher education course of at least one year. [OFFICIAL]
- **Families of students** may also be granted residence if the student can show suitable housing. [OFFICIAL]
- **Outstanding students** can qualify for a Golden Visa of 5 or 10 years. [OFFICIAL]

> **Check before you rely on this: working while studying.** A student residence visa is not a work permit. Part-time work and internships need a separate permit from MoHRE or the free zone, and agents quote differing hour limits. [VERIFY] Ask the university's student affairs office what applies on your campus.

## Domestic worker visa

If you plan to employ a live-in nanny, housekeeper, cook or driver, you are the sponsor and the employer, with legal duties under Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 on domestic workers. [LAW]

- **Income threshold**: household income of at least AED 25,000 a month to sponsor directly. Families who need a carer for medical reasons qualify at AED 15,000. [REPORTED, MoHRE statement via WAM]
- **Below the threshold**: use a MoHRE-licensed domestic worker centre (the service many people still call Tadbeer), where the centre is the sponsor and you pay a monthly or package fee.
- **Process**: applications run through MoHRE-licensed centres, then entry permit, medical, Emirates ID and residence as for any other visa.
- **Your obligations**: a registered contract in the MoHRE standard form, wages paid on time, health insurance, a weekly rest day, annual leave and a return ticket at the end of the contract. Keeping the worker's passport is unlawful.
- **Cost**: Gulf News, quoting a licensed centre, puts a two-year domestic worker visa at AED 8,500 to 17,000 depending on the package. [MARKET] The worker's salary, insurance and flights are on top.

> **Check before you rely on this.** Press reports differ on whether expatriate sponsors receive a one-year or two-year domestic worker visa. [VERIFY] Confirm validity, total cost and refund terms with the licensed centre and on mohre.gov.ae before paying anything.

## Visiting first: jobseeker and tourist visas

Short, because these are not relocation routes, but they are how many relocations start.

- **Visa on arrival** depends on your passport. Around 60 nationalities receive 90 days; a shorter list receives 30. Check the official list or your airline before you fly.
- **Jobseeker visit visa**: 60, 90 or 120 days, no sponsor. You need a bachelor's degree and either a profession at MoHRE skill level 1 to 3 or graduation within two years from a top-500 university, plus a AED 1,000 guarantee. If you get an offer, you change status in-country. [OFFICIAL]
- **5-year multiple-entry tourist visa**: self-sponsored, up to 90 days per visit, extendable to 180 days a year, with a bank balance of USD 4,000 across the previous six months. [OFFICIAL]
- **A visit or tourist visa never permits work**, paid or unpaid.

## Visa costs

Government fees are lower than people expect. Totals climb because of the medical, Emirates ID, insurance, typing and status-change fees.

| Item | Indicative cost (AED) | Tier | Who pays on an employment visa |
|---|---|---|---|
| Entry permit, applicant outside the UAE | 1,000 to 1,150 | [MARKET] | Employer |
| Change of status, applicant inside the UAE | 650 to 700 | [MARKET] | Employer |
| Medical fitness test, Dubai standard | 250 | [LAW] Dubai Administrative Resolution No. 66 of 2021 | Employer |
| Medical fitness test, Dubai Smart Salem fast track | 700 | [LAW] same resolution | Employer |
| Emirates ID card | 100 per year of validity, plus 40 online or 70 at a typing centre | [OFFICIAL] | Employer |
| Residence visa issuance | 500 to 600 | [MARKET] | Employer |
| Health insurance, federal basic package | From 320 a year | [OFFICIAL] MoHRE | Employer for the employee |
| MoFA attestation | 150 per personal document | [OFFICIAL] MoFA | Usually you |
| Unemployment insurance (ILOE) | 60 to 120 a year | [OFFICIAL] | Employee |
| **Standard 2-year residence, all-in** | **3,000 to 7,000 per person** | [MARKET] | |
| Family member, each | 3,000 to 5,500 | [MARKET] | Sponsor |
| Green Visa | 3,700 to 4,900 | [MARKET] | You |
| Golden Visa, Dubai property route | 9,884.75 | [OFFICIAL] DLD | You |

> **Check before you rely on this: every line marked** [MARKET]. Fees differ between ICP and GDRFA, between applying inside and outside the country, and between typing centres. Each authority's portal shows the exact fee before you pay. Treat the ranges here as a budget, not a quote.

Two rules of thumb. If an employer asks you to pay for your own work visa, that breaches the Labour Law and can be reported to MoHRE. And if an agent's price is far above these ranges, ask for an itemised government-fee breakdown.

For the wider budget, see the UAE Cost of Living Guide 2026.

## Emirates ID

The Emirates ID is your residence visa in physical form. It is issued by ICP in every emirate, including Dubai, and you will use it for banking, tenancy, phone contracts, healthcare and airport e-gates. Our government services guide covers day-to-day use.

- **Validity** matches your residence visa.
- **Biometrics**: first-time applicants give fingerprints and a photo at an ICP centre. Children are registered too.
- **Fee**: AED 100 per year of validity for expatriates, plus an application fee of AED 40 online or AED 70 through a typing centre. [OFFICIAL] A three-year card applied for at a typing centre therefore comes to AED 370.
- **Lost or damaged card**: AED 300 plus the application fee. [OFFICIAL]
- **Urgent "Fawri" service**: an extra AED 150 for 24-hour issue, but for expatriates it is available only for replacements, not for first issue or renewal, because those depend on the residence process. [OFFICIAL]
- **Late renewal**: AED 20 for each day of delay, capped at AED 1,000, once 30 days have passed from expiry. [LAW, Cabinet Resolution No. 89 of 2022]
- **Digital version**: available in the UAE Pass and ICP apps once issued. See our digital services guide.

It is unlawful for an employer or landlord to hold your Emirates ID. [OFFICIAL]

## Medical fitness test

Required for every residence applicant aged 18 or over, at first issue and at renewal. [OFFICIAL]

- **What it is**: a communicable disease screening, not a health check. Expect a blood test and a chest X-ray.
- **Where**: government-approved centres only. Dubai Health medical fitness centres in Dubai, the disease prevention and screening centres in Abu Dhabi, Emirates Health Services elsewhere. A test done at home does not replace it.
- **Cost in Dubai**: AED 250 standard, AED 700 at a Smart Salem centre with results in about 30 minutes, with VIP tiers in between. [LAW] Add typing fees.
- **Outcome**: people found medically unfit are not granted residence. u.ae notes one specific exception: residents with dormant or inactive pulmonary tuberculosis are treated as fit and given a one-year certificate, subject to treatment and follow-up. [OFFICIAL]

**Check before you rely on this.** The list of conditions screened and the consequences of a positive result vary by visa category and profession, and are set out on u.ae's page on health conditions for a residence visa. If you have a relevant medical history, read that page and take advice before you apply, not after. **In doubt?** Davidson & Co., our legal partner, can advise on your specific case.

## Health insurance

- **Mandatory nationwide.** Since 1 January 2025, private sector employees and domestic workers in every emirate need health cover for a residence visa to be issued or renewed. [OFFICIAL, MoHRE]
- **Who pays for the employee**: the employer, and it cannot be deducted from salary. [OFFICIAL]
- **Who pays for dependants**: this depends on the emirate. In Dubai the sponsor, usually you, is responsible for a spouse, children and parents. In Abu Dhabi, the employer's obligation extends to a spouse and up to three children under 18. [MARKET, Gulf News citing the Department of Health]
- **The federal basic package** starts at AED 320 a year. [OFFICIAL] It is a floor. Read the network list and co-payments before assuming it is enough for a family.

**Check before you rely on this: Abu Dhabi dependants.** The employer's duty to cover a spouse and up to three children under 18 comes from Abu Dhabi's health insurance law as reported by Gulf News, but how the premium is shared for dependants is not something we could confirm on a Department of Health page. [VERIFY] Ask for the dependant cover terms in writing with your offer.

If your employer covers only you, you will be buying family cover yourself. Pacific Prime, our health insurance partner, can compare plans for dependants; the UAE Healthcare Guide explains tiers and networks.

## Document attestation

Foreign certificates only count once they have been legalised. This is the step that most often delays family visas and degree-dependent jobs.

**The chain for a document issued abroad**

1. Notarisation or certification in the issuing country
2. Legalisation by that country's foreign ministry
3. Attestation by the UAE embassy or consulate in that country
4. Attestation by MoFA in the UAE
5. Certified Arabic translation, where the receiving authority requires it

**What MoFA charges and how long it takes.** AED 150 per personal document. A degree certificate and its transcript count as two documents. Normal service is three working days, express one working day, online through mofa.gov.ae or the UAE MOFA app. MoFA attestation is still required after embassy attestation. [OFFICIAL, MoFA, checked 2 October 2026]

**Which documents.** Degree certificates for skilled roles and the Green, Golden and jobseeker visas. Marriage certificates to sponsor a spouse. Birth certificates to sponsor children.

A police clearance, English test results and home-country bank statements are often listed online as "essential documents". None is a general requirement for a UAE residence visa. Some employers and regulators ask for a police clearance; ask before you pay for one.

> **Check before you rely on this: overseas costs and time.** Fees and turnaround for steps 1 to 3 are set by your home country and the UAE mission there, and vary widely. We have seen three to six weeks per document quoted. [MARKET] Check the UAE embassy page for your country, and start before you resign.

The pre-arrival checklist sequences attestation with everything else.

## Timeline

Realistic ranges from a complete, correct file. Missing attestation is the usual reason these slip.

| Route | Typical time | From | Tier |
|---|---|---|---|
| Employment visa | 2 to 4 weeks | Entry permit issue to Emirates ID | [MARKET] |
| Family sponsorship | 2 to 3 weeks | Family member's entry to residence issue. Legal limit is 60 days | [MARKET]; limit [OFFICIAL] |
| Golden Visa, Dubai property | 7 to 10 business days | Complete file at DLD | [OFFICIAL] |
| Green Visa, remote work visa | 2 to 4 weeks | Application | [MARKET] |
| MoFA attestation in the UAE | 3 working days, or 1 express | Online submission | [OFFICIAL] |
| Attestation abroad | 3 to 6 weeks per document | Start of the chain | [MARKET] |
| Medical result, Dubai | About 30 minutes to a couple of working days | Test, depending on tier paid | [LAW] for tiers |

### A typical employment arrival

| Week | What happens | Who does it |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | Contract signed and submitted | Employer |
| 0 to 1 | Work permit approval, entry permit application | Employer's PRO |
| 1 to 2 | Entry permit issued. You fly | Employer; you |
| 2 to 3 | Medical test and Emirates ID biometrics | You |
| 3 to 4 | Residence issued, Emirates ID delivered, work permit active | ICP or GDRFA; MoHRE |
| 4 onward | Bank account, tenancy registration, family sponsorship | You |

A single headline figure such as "7 to 30 days" means little without saying which step it measures. Our first 30 days guide picks up from week 2.

## Dubai vs Abu Dhabi differences

The law is federal. The counters, portals and some practices are not.

| | Dubai | Abu Dhabi |
|---|---|---|
| Residence authority | GDRFA Dubai | ICP |
| Where you go in person | Amer centres | ICP customer happiness centres and typing centres; TAMM for emirate services |
| Emirates ID | ICP | ICP |
| Medical fitness | Dubai Health centres, Smart Salem fast track | Disease prevention and screening centres |
| Tenancy registration needed for family visas | Ejari | Tawtheeq |
| Health insurance for dependants | Sponsor's responsibility | Employer covers spouse and up to three children under 18 [MARKET] |
| Low-value property visa | Yes, 2 years, through DLD | Not confirmed [VERIFY] |
| Retirement programme | Own four-option programme | Federal rules through ICP |
| Golden Visa channels | GDRFA, DLD for property, Dubai Culture for creatives | ICP and the Abu Dhabi Residents Office |
| Freelance permit | GoFreelance and other free zones | twofour54, Department of Economic Development licence |
| Traffic fines and visa services | Linked since 2026 [REPORTED] | Not reported |

A visa issued in one emirate lets you live and work across the UAE, subject to your work permit. But your file stays with the issuing authority, so a Dubai visa is renewed through GDRFA even if you live in Abu Dhabi. If you are choosing between the two, see Which UAE Emirate Is Right for You?

## Keeping your visa valid

- **The 180-day rule.** A standard residence visa lapses if you stay outside the UAE for more than 180 consecutive days. Golden and Green Visa holders are exempt. [OFFICIAL]
- **Grace periods.** After cancellation or expiry you get a period to change status or leave. It is printed on your cancellation paper and ranges from 30 days to 180 days depending on your category; dependants get six months. [OFFICIAL]
- **Overstay.** AED 50 a day once the permitted period after expiry or cancellation ends. [LAW, Cabinet Resolution No. 89 of 2022]
- **Changing jobs.** Your new employer applies for a new work permit and the old one is cancelled. No exit is needed if it is done inside your grace period.
- **Renewal.** Repeat the medical, Emirates ID and insurance. Start a month ahead.

# Official application links

Start here, not at a search engine. Lookalike "visa service" sites pay to appear above the real ones.

| What you need | Where to go |
|---|---|
| Rules for every visa type, in plain English | u.ae: Visa and Emirates ID |
| Applications outside Dubai; Emirates ID everywhere | ICP Smart Services and the UAEICP app |
| Applications in Dubai | GDRFA Dubai and the GDRFA Dubai app, or an Amer centre |
| Work permits, contracts, domestic workers, complaints | MoHRE |
| Document attestation | MoFA and the UAE MOFA app |
| Golden Visa and 2-year visa through Dubai property | Dubai Land Department |
| Dubai retirement programme | Invest in Dubai: retirement residency |
| Federal retirement rules | u.ae: residence visa for the retired |
| Family sponsorship rules | u.ae: residence visa for family members |
| Abu Dhabi government services | TAMM |
| Medical fitness in Dubai | Dubai Health |
| Questions to ICP | Call 600 522222 |

All government portals accept UAE Pass once you have an Emirates ID.

# Common mistakes

- **Trusting a salary figure from a forum.** The family threshold is AED 4,000, not AED 10,000.
- **Starting work on a visit visa** while the permit is processed. Both you and the employer are liable.
- **Arriving with unattested certificates.**
- **Assuming residence means the right to work.**
- **Letting 180 days pass abroad.**
- **Paying an agent who guarantees approval.** Nobody outside the authorities can.
- **Buying property for the visa** without confirming the visa rule in writing first.

# If you are in doubt: who to speak to

A guide can tell you what the published rules say. It cannot tell you how those rules apply to your contract, your family or your history. For most employment visas you will not need anyone: your employer's PRO does the work. Take advice before you act if any of these apply.

| Your situation | Why it needs a professional | Who we suggest |
|---|---|---|
| Any box in this guide marked [VERIFY] decides your move | Official sources conflict or are silent, so the answer depends on current practice | Davidson & Co. |
| A woman sponsoring her husband, or anyone sponsoring parents | Practice varies by emirate and is partly discretionary | Davidson & Co. |
| Golden Visa by nomination, or through property held with others or through a company | Eligibility turns on documents and structure, not just a number | Davidson & Co. |
| A previous overstay, visa refusal, absconding report or travel ban | These can block a new application and need resolving first | Davidson & Co. |
| A dispute with an employer over visa costs, cancellation or a labour ban | Employment law and immigration status are linked | Davidson & Co. |
| A relevant medical history before the fitness test | The consequences of a result depend on category and profession | Davidson & Co. |
| Setting up a company to sponsor your own visa | The licence, visa quota and structure must line up | Creative Zone |
| Health cover for dependants your employer does not insure | Plans, networks and exclusions differ widely | Pacific Prime |

**Davidson & Co.** is a UAE law firm and Relocate2UAE's legal partner for immigration and employment questions. You can reach them through our partners page or ask us for an introduction on WhatsApp. Any advice they give you is their own, under their own terms of engagement, and is a matter between you and the firm.

Whoever you use, ask for government fees to be itemised separately from service fees, and be wary of anyone who guarantees an approval. Nobody outside the authorities can.

# FAQ

### What is the minimum salary for a UAE work visa?

There is none. Salary thresholds apply to what you want to do next: AED 4,000 to sponsor family, AED 15,000 for a Green Visa, AED 30,000 for a skilled-professional Golden Visa.

### What salary do I need to sponsor my family?

AED 4,000 a month, or AED 3,000 plus accommodation, whatever your job title. Parents are handled separately, with Dubai practice at AED 20,000.

### Can I sponsor my son after he turns 18?

Yes, up to 25, and beyond that while he is in full-time higher education. Unmarried daughters can be sponsored at any age.

### How long does a UAE employment visa take?

Typically two to four weeks from entry permit to Emirates ID, if your documents are already attested.

### How much does a UAE residence visa cost?

Budget AED 3,000 to 7,000 per person all-in for a standard two-year visa. Your employer must pay for an employment visa.

### What is the Golden Visa property threshold?

AED 2 million in value. Since February 2026 Dubai no longer requires a minimum amount to be paid off.

### Can I get residency by buying a cheaper Dubai property?

Reported since April 2026: sole owners of a completed Dubai property can apply for a two-year visa at any value. Confirm with the Dubai Land Department before relying on it.

### What income do I need for a UAE retirement visa?

The federal rule is AED 180,000 a year. For Dubai, u.ae says AED 240,000 while Dubai's own page says AED 180,000. Check with GDRFA.

### Can I work on a visit or tourist visa?

No. Not paid, not unpaid.

### Does a Golden Visa let me work for anyone?

It lets you live here without a sponsor. A job with a UAE employer still needs a work permit from that employer.

### Is health insurance mandatory?

Yes, in every emirate, for a residence visa to be issued or renewed.

### Do I need a police clearance certificate?

Not as a general visa requirement. Some employers and regulators ask for one.

### What happens if I am outside the UAE for six months?

A standard residence visa lapses after more than 180 consecutive days abroad. Golden and Green Visa holders are exempt.

### What is the success rate for UAE visa applications?

No authority publishes one. Treat any quoted percentage as marketing.

## Sources and verification log

**Fetched or searched on 1 and 2 October 2026**

- u.ae: residence visa for family members, and sponsorship requirements (AED 4,000 or 3,000 plus accommodation; 60 days; parents yearly; newborn 120 days; six-month grace)
- u.ae: residence visa for the retired (federal test; AED 240,000 for Dubai applications)
- Invest in Dubai: retirement residency (four options; AED 180,000)
- u.ae: residence visa for studying in the UAE (one year; sons to 25; families of students)
- u.ae: Emirates ID (replacement AED 300; AED 70 or 40 application fee; Fawri AED 150 and expatriate limits)

- MoFA FAQs (AED 150 per personal document; three-day and one-day service; transcript counted separately)
- Dubai Administrative Resolution No. 66 of 2021 (medical fitness charges), Dubai legislation portal
- Cabinet Resolution No. 89 of 2022 on ICP administrative fines, uaelegislation.gov.ae (AED 50 a day overstay; AED 20 a day Emirates ID delay, capped at AED 1,000)
- Khaleej Times, "6 major UAE visa rule changes in 2026", updated 30 August 2026 (entry permit expansion, property visa, overstay waiver deadline, Ebola suspension, 48-hour tourist visa, medical visa)
- Time Out Dubai, 2026 visa updates (GDRFA and Dubai Police link, endowment Golden Visa category)
- Gulf News on health insurance responsibility by emirate; MoHRE statement on domestic worker income threshold as carried by WAM
- Dubai Land Department: Golden Visa application, investor (fee schedule totalling AED 9,884.75; 7 to 10 business days)
- u.ae: residence visa for working in the UAE (Green Visa at AED 15,000 a month; freelance income wording; standard work visa of two years)

**Carried forward from the 3 to 9 September 2026 pass, not re-fetched this time**

- ICP Golden Residence and Green Residency pages; u.ae Golden, jobseeker, tourist and Blue Visa pages
- ICP press release of 29 September 2025 on visit visas
- MoHRE Basic Health Insurance Scheme page
- Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, Article 6
- Fragomen alerts on the Dubai property visa and on grace periods

**Points where official sources conflict or are silent, tagged** [VERIFY] **in the text**: Dubai retirement income figure; basic versus total salary for the Golden Visa; female-sponsor practice; Abu Dhabi dependant insurance cost share; freelance permit prices; domestic worker visa validity for expatriate sponsors; student part-time work limits; Abu Dhabi low-value property visa; the reading of the Green Visa freelance income test. On any of these, confirm with the authority or speak to a licensed UAE lawyer such as Davidson & Co. before you act.

**What we do not use as a source.** Setup agents, typing centres' marketing pages, free zone blogs and visa resellers. Where the only figures available came from those, we have left the figure out and said so.

Rules change without much notice. The official pages linked above outrank anything written here. If you spot something that has moved, tell us on WhatsApp and we will fix it.

## Related guides

- Before You Arrive: UAE Pre-Arrival Checklist
- Your First 30 Days in the UAE
- UAE Government Services Guide
- UAE Digital Services and Apps
- UAE Business Setup Guide

- UAE Healthcare Guide
- UAE Cost of Living Guide 2026
- UAE Salary Guide
- Moving to Dubai With a Family
- Moving to Abu Dhabi
- Moving From the UK to the UAE
- Teacher Relocation Guide

# Important information

**General information only.** This guide provides general information about UAE visas and residence as at 2 October 2026. It is not legal, immigration, tax, financial or investment advice, and it does not take account of your personal circumstances. Reading it, using the UAE Visa Route Finder or contacting us by WhatsApp or email does not create a client, advisory or professional relationship with Relocate2UAE or Relocate 2 FZC LLC.

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**Your responsibility.** Before you resign from a job, sign a contract or lease, buy property, transfer money, travel or submit an application, confirm the current position with the relevant authority or a qualified, licensed professional. Where this guide and an official source differ, the official source prevails. Any decision you make is your own.

**If you are in doubt.** Speak to a licensed UAE lawyer. Davidson & Co. is Relocate2UAE's legal partner and is the firm we suggest. Advice from Davidson & Co., or from any other partner, is given by that firm under its own terms, and it alone is responsible for that advice and for its services.

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