

Dubai Cars - Driving Safely

Driving in Dubai can be a challenge and may initially be intimidating. Dubai is home to approximately 180 different nationalities, all of whom come with their own driving abilities and habits. Those arriving from Western countries may find the roads chaotic, while those from Asian nations or Arab states may find the driving organized. With some experience behind the wheel in Dubai, coupled with basic knowledge of local driving regulations, expats should soon feel comfortable taking to the roads.

One must have a residency visa in order to acquire a local driving license. Many people arrive in Dubai on a visit visa and thus will rent a vehicle for the first month or so until their residency visa is completed. In order to rent a car you will need an International Driving Permit and a driving license from your home country. Many well-known car rental agencies exist in Dubai including Avis, Budget Car Rentals, Hertz and Thrifty Car Rentals. Alternatively, you may opt to obtain a Temporary Driving License if you wish to drive a private car. A temporary license is valid for six months and is issued at the Dubai Traffic Police Station.

Once you have Dubai residency you must get a local driving license - you can no longer use a temporary or international permit. Certain nationalities, including those from many European countries, US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea can get a local license by simply showing their own driving license and doing some paperwork. Others will need to take driving lessons (available at licensed centers including Belhasa Driving Center, Dubai Driving Center, Emirates Driving Institute, Galadari Motor Driving Center, and Al Ahli Driving School) and afterwards pass a test. The driving school can arrange an appointment for your driving test with the Dubai Traffic Department.

Once an expat has a residency visa they can buy a car. Most major car makes are available at dealers in the UAE, with 4x4s and Japanese models being especially popular. Second hand vehicles can be found at 4x4 Motors, Al Futtaim AutoMall, Western Auto and SunCity Motors among others. Searching the classifieds for [used cars in Dubai](#) can also yield good results.

After you rent or buy a car, understanding the local rules of the road is paramount to having a positive experience. It is often necessary to drive defensively and be vigilant behind the wheel. Cars in Dubai are left-hand drive, with traffic on the right. Slower drivers should stick to the furthest right lane. If you travel in the left-most lane at a slower speed you will most likely find another vehicle alarmingly close to your rear bumper honking its horn and flashing its high beams. It is common for drivers to change lanes abruptly without signaling, to slowly coast through stop signs instead of coming to a full stop, and to honk their horns loudly the instant the light turns green at a traffic signal. Pedestrians are often darting across the street and need to be watched for. Recently an automated toll system (known as Salik) was installed on selected major roadways in order to try and reduce traffic congestion.

There are mobile radar cameras set up around the emirate to catch those driving over the speed limit or running a red light. Zero tolerance exists for drinking and driving. Something as seemingly minor as a rude hand gesture, used in a moment of frustration at another driver, can land you in court or even jail. If you do incur a fine you will not receive a notice in the mail, rather you can check on the Dubai Police Traffic website or call them directly. Fines for an entire year can be paid when renewing your annual car registration. If you get into a minor accident it is recommended to park your vehicle so as not to obstruct traffic, get the other party's details, and then immediately visit the nearest police station to file a report. If the police are called to the scene they will often write a report on the spot. These papers are necessary for the insurance company and it is almost impossible to get repairs done without them.

Unfortunately Dubai has one of the highest road death tolls in the world. As of March 2008 the Unified Federal Traffic Law stiffened the penalties for driving offenses and also implemented a black point system for drivers in attempts to improve road safety for all who visit and live in Dubai.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

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