



**Norland
Know-Hows**

**Living and working
in the United Arab
Emirates**

About the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a diverse and beautiful country in which to live and work. It has a high standard of living and competitive tax-free salaries, and there are opportunities to work with children of different races and cultures.

This Norland Know-How is based on my experience of living in Dubai for 22 years up until June 2020. Over that time, Dubai, which lies on the edge of the warm turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf and extends out into the red and golden sands of the desert, changed radically, growing into a giant, fast-paced city.

The UAE is made up of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Quwain, Fujairah, Ajman and Ras al-Khaimah. Each Emirate is governed by its own sheikhdom, and they are collectively ruled by a federal government.

Abu Dhabi is the seat of the federal government and the formal capital of the UAE. Dubai is considered to be the most liberal of the seven Emirates.

The expat population of the UAE is diverse and vast, far outnumbering the local Emirati population. People travel from all over the world to live and work in the UAE, hence the rich cultural experience one can gain from living there. The local Emirati people are very friendly and welcome the visitors to their country.

Visas

Only Emirati people can be permanent residents of the UAE and hold UAE passports. All other nationalities are considered guests and visitors to the country. As a result, anyone who wants to reside and/or work in the UAE must have a residency visa. This is usually obtained through one's employment. Residency visas can also be issued to dependents of expats who hold residency visas through their employment. It's not possible to go to the UAE and stay indefinitely without a residency visa.

As a nanny, you should expect to be 'sponsored' and to be provided with a residency visa by your employer. One enters UAE on a tourist visa, and then the residency visa is arranged and processed once you are there. The residency visa requires a blood test to screen for HIV and a lung X-ray to screen for TB. Generally, residency visas are issued for two to three years at a time. As part of the visa process, you're issued with an Emirates ID card, which holds your fingerprint and iris scan. Normally, one needs an Emirates ID to do basic things in the UAE, such as visit the doctor, receive medical treatment, get medical insurance, rent an apartment, and have a mobile phone and internet package in your own name.

Working as a nanny, it's likely that all these things will be provided: accommodation, mobile phone, health insurance. But for your own autonomy, it is vital to have an Emirates ID.

As a tourist, you can enter the UAE on a tourist visa (entry requirements differ for different nationalities), although tourist visas are subject to a time limit.

When you leave the UAE at the end of your post or termination of your contract, your residency visa and Emirates ID must be officially cancelled. Failure to follow the proper procedures for this will result in not being able to return to the UAE in the future.

Weather and climate

There are two seasons in the UAE: hot and very hot! The 'winter' runs from November to April and the summer from May to October. Usually, one needs air conditioning from March through to December. The winter months are mostly dry with temperatures ranging from 12°C to low 20s during the day, though in recent years the incidence of rain, heavy at times, has increased. The summer months are mostly in the high 30s and low 40s, and it can be extremely humid in August and September.

It is too hot for children to be outside without strong shade in the summer, and care must be taken even in the winter to guard against sunburn and heatstroke. In the summer, going to the beach in the late afternoons and evenings can be very pleasant, as although the heat of the sun has gone, it's still warm and a fun time to be in the sea.

Beaches are plentiful and clean. Public beaches are patrolled by lifeguards and police and it's important to adhere to the warnings and restrictions, as there can be strong currents, especially in winter. There are also many exclusive private beach clubs that some employers may be members of. Do note that not all Emirati or Muslim employers will be happy to go to the beach or for their children to go to the beach due to cultural norms and preferences, especially if the children are girls.

Rules and laws

The UAE is a Muslim country and so there are many guidelines in place to ensure that all visitors, both tourists and those living and working there, remain respectful of local traditions, culture and religion. The following are the most common guidelines, and though you will see many people disregarding them, it'll be important as a Norland Nanny to uphold these respectful codes of conduct, especially if working for a local Emirati family.

It's important to:

- cover one's shoulders, knees and midriff in public, particularly in the presence of Muslim people
- always wear respectful, modest clothing
- be very discerning regarding visiting bars and pubs and being intoxicated with alcohol in public.

It's also important that you:

- do not consume alcohol in any public place other than restaurants, hotels or bars
- do not sunbathe topless or in the nude anywhere, as this is illegal
- do not use any profanities or get into arguments with anyone in public, in particular when driving
- do not partake in any drug use, as this is illegal.

Everyday life

In the UAE, the weekend is Friday and Saturday. Friday is the Muslim day of rest and prayer. Malls and local shops are open, but this is considered the day of rest. Saturday is a working day for many people, but schools and nurseries are closed on Saturdays.

There is a strong work ethic in the UAE and it's likely that as a nanny you'd be expected to work six days a week, possibly with a day off in the week instead of Friday.

It is very common for most wealthy local and expat families to employ other members of staff, most commonly housemaids, drivers and gardeners, but also chefs, butlers and security. In many cases,

you may find that you have untrained nannies working under you to support you in your role, especially if there's more than one child in the family.

There are English supermarkets in Dubai and Abu Dhabi as well as good organic food shops and farm shops. It's possible to get most things you may want, but food can be pricey.

There are many Western doctors, dentists and hospitals, but treatments are all expensive. It's important to ensure that your employment contract includes the provision of health insurance.

The road system is modern and huge with multi-lane highways. Most wealthy expat and local families drive large 4x4 vehicles and it is common for families to have drivers. It's likely that as a nanny you won't need to drive, but if you do, make sure that you're properly insured. It's possible and relatively easy to obtain a local driver's licence. If you drive on your UK licence, you will need to check that the insurance of the vehicle you're driving covers you. Most insurance is valid only for holders of UAE driver's licences.

Things to do in your spare time

As a nanny, there are many fun and exciting activities to take part in with your charges. All sorts of classes are available for young children, including baby yoga, music classes, climbing, swimming and baby signing. The list is endless. There's also an abundance of museums, play centres, parks, theme parks and water parks, as well as the already mentioned beaches and beach clubs. Despite the hot summers, it's possible to spend much of the winter outside, and so it really is an ideal place for young children to grow up. Many families, both locals and expats, have second homes in other parts of the world that they travel to in the summer months to escape the intense heat.

As well as all sorts of classes for children, there are many classes and meet-up groups for adults to enjoy, where one can meet people and partake in an array of activities to suit all interests. It's easy to join gyms, fitness classes and relaxation activities of all types. Equally, there are numerous fun, trendy cafes, huge shopping malls and fantastic cinema complexes to visit and enjoy. The cinema culture is huge in the UAE. There is a very popular walking/running track alongside the coastline in Dubai, numerous boardwalks and, for serious cyclists, an immensely popular 80+km purpose-built cycle track that goes out into the desert. For fans of sailing, there are many yacht and sailing clubs, and for triathlon, marathon and other racing enthusiasts, plenty of organised races take place throughout the year.

For the more nature-loving person, the desert is a haven of natural peace, and the east coast in Fujairah, which borders the Indian Ocean, offers many diving opportunities. Oman is close enough for weekend visits and has a rich historical culture going back many years, as well as a stunning coastline in the far north of the country, the Musandam, known locally as the Arabian fjords.

Living and working in the UAE is an adventure that has the possibility of opening many doors.

I'm always happy to talk to anyone who is interested in working in the UAE, needs information when they're there or simply wants a friendly chat with someone who knows the lie of the land. You can contact me through the Norland Agency.

Melodie, Set 2