

DRINKING IN DUBAI - IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?



Dubai, the epicenter of the United Arab Emirates, continues to establish itself as a major tourist destination year after year. Visitors are increasingly drawn to explore the city, particularly its vibrant party scene, making it a true El Dorado of nightlife. However, as a megacity where Islam is the official religion, alcohol consumption is regulated by specific rules. It is completely banned in the neighboring emirate of Sharjah.

The first important rule for drinking in Dubai is that you must be at least 21. Until reaching this age, individuals must remain sober at parties. **Once you meet this age requirement, obtaining the proper licensing is the next consideration.** To enjoy outdoor parties, you must find a licensed establishment selling alcohol. However, if you're looking for a more private setting, such as a vacation rental, you will need to obtain what is known as an "alcohol license." This temporary 30-day license can be obtained from government authorities or qualified businesses upon presenting your passport, allowing tourists to maintain their drinking habits, as the name suggests.

Once you're all set, it's time to toast. However, be cautious about the place where you choose to drink. For instance, sipping a beer while watching the sunset on the beach is not possible, as consuming alcohol in public areas is prohibited (strictly). On the other hand, various establishments, such as certain hotels, bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, are licensed to sell alcohol. Fortunately, there is no shortage of places to enjoy a drink in the emirate, and many travel sites and blogs offer recommendations for bars and clubs suitable for festive consumption.

Additionally, there are specialized shops like "Maritime and Mercantile International" (MMI) and African + Eastern, which you can find listed online. You can also purchase alcohol directly from the duty-free shop at Dubai Airport upon arrival. This is the only location where you can buy bottles without an alcohol permit, making it one of the most economical options available, as prices in the various bars and clubs can quickly increase.

When considering the combination of licensing fees, import duties, and taxes, the average price for a pint of beer is around €12, while a glass of wine typically costs between €10 and €15. Although alcohol taxes were lowered to attract tourists at the end of 2022, the government is contemplating reintroducing these taxes in 2025. As a result, a significant increase in prices can be expected.

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