What to check before you book a buggy tour in Dubai

Understanding the desert terrain and your own comfort level

Dubai’s desert landscape is vast and varied. Before you commit to a buggy ride, it helps to know what kind of dunes you will be crossing. Some operators run tours on relatively flat, open stretches of sand that are forgiving for beginners. Others take you into the deep dunes, where the gradients are steeper and the sand softer. Your own driving experience and tolerance for bumpy, fast-moving rides should guide your choice. If you are new to off-road driving, look for a tour that includes a short orientation session and a pace that matches your confidence. More experienced drivers might prefer a route that allows for higher speeds and sharper turns.

The vehicles themselves differ too. Some buggies are designed for two passengers, others for four. Check the seating arrangement and whether you will be driving or riding as a passenger. If you have a preference, state it clearly when you book. The Dune Buggy Adventure official site, for example, lists the type of buggy used on each tour, so you can see what to expect before you arrive. This kind of detail helps you avoid surprises on the day.

What safety equipment is provided and what you should bring

A reputable operator will supply helmets, goggles, and sometimes gloves. These items are not optional; they protect you from flying sand and the risk of a rollover. Ask whether the helmets are cleaned between uses and whether you can bring your own if you prefer. Goggles are especially important in Dubai’s desert because the fine dust can reduce visibility quickly. You should also bring a scarf or a bandana to cover your mouth and nose when the wind picks up.

Sun protection is another consideration. The desert sun is intense even in winter. Wear long sleeves, a hat that fits under the helmet, and apply sunscreen to exposed skin. Sunglasses are not enough on their own; they can slip off or get scratched by sand. Water is essential too. Many tours include a stop for refreshments, but you should carry a bottle with you during the ride. Dehydration can set in faster than you realise when you are active and the air is dry.



Insurance and liability coverage

Before you book, find out what insurance the operator carries. In Dubai, buggy tours are regulated, but the level of coverage varies. Some operators include basic third-party liability in the tour price, while others expect you to have your own travel insurance that covers off-road activities. Read the terms carefully. If you cause damage to the buggy, will you be charged? What happens if the vehicle breaks down through no fault of yours? A clear policy protects both you and the operator.

If you are driving, check whether the operator requires a valid driving licence. Some tours accept a standard car licence from your home country; others insist on an international driving permit. The rules can differ depending on your nationality and the operator's own policy. Clarify this before you travel to avoid being turned away at the departure point.

Duration and itinerary of the tour

Buggy tours in Dubai range from one-hour quick sessions to half-day or full-day excursions. The advertised duration often includes the time spent briefing, fitting equipment, and travelling to and from the dunes. The actual driving time may be shorter than the total tour length. Ask for a breakdown: how long will you be on the buggy, and how many kilometres will you cover? A tour that promises four hours but involves a long bus ride to the desert might not give you as much driving time as a shorter, more focused trip.

Also consider the timing. Morning tours start early but offer cooler temperatures and softer light for photos. Sunset tours are popular for the colours, but they can be busier and the light fades quickly. Evening tours that include dinner or a cultural show add another dimension, but they may cut into the driving time. Decide what matters most to you and choose accordingly.

Vehicle condition and maintenance

The condition of the buggies matters for both safety and enjoyment. A well-maintained vehicle handles better and is less likely to break down mid-tour. Before you book, look for reviews that mention the state of the equipment. Do they sound like they are running smoothly? Are the tyres in good shape? Some operators post photos or videos of their fleet on their website or social media. The Dune Buggy Adventure official site shows pictures of their buggies, which gives you an idea of the level of upkeep.



If you have mechanical knowledge, you can ask specific questions: are the buggies serviced after each tour? What type of engine do they use? Are there spare vehicles on standby? Most operators will be happy to answer these questions. If they dodge them, that is a warning sign.

Group size and atmosphere

Group size affects the experience. A small group means less dust from other buggies and a more personal guide. A large group can feel like a convoy, with each buggy following the one in front and little room to vary your speed. Ask how many vehicles will be in your group and whether you can book a private tour if you prefer solitude. Some operators also offer mixed

groups where solo travellers can join, while others only take bookings from pairs or families. Check the policy if you are travelling alone.

The guide's attitude also shapes the atmosphere. Some guides are strict about the route and speed; others let you explore more freely. Read recent reviews to gauge the guide's style. If you want a relaxed, scenic ride, look for comments that mention a calm guide. If you want adrenaline, look for mentions of fast-paced driving and dune bashing.

Environmental and cultural awareness

Dubai's desert is a fragile ecosystem. Responsible operators follow designated trails to avoid damaging the vegetation and disturbing wildlife. They also respect the local culture by not driving near residential areas or during prayer times if the noise would be disruptive. Ask whether the tour follows a set route or whether the guide can deviate based on conditions. A good operator will explain their environmental policy. If they do not mention it, you can ask.

Some tours include a stop at a camel farm or a heritage village. These are optional extras that can enrich the experience, but they are not the main event. If you prefer to spend more time driving, choose a tour that focuses on the dunes and minimises cultural stops.



Booking terms and cancellation policy

Finally, read the fine print. What happens if you need to cancel or change your booking? Is there a deposit required, and is it refundable? Many operators in Dubai require full payment at the time of booking, especially during peak season. Others accept a partial deposit and the balance on the day. Understand the cancellation window and any fees that apply. If the weather is bad and the tour is cancelled, do you get a full refund or a rescheduled date?

Also check what happens if you arrive late. Some tours depart on a fixed schedule and will not wait for latecomers. Others have a grace period. Knowing these details in advance saves you stress on the day.