What to check before booking a dune buggy ride in Dubai

Know what you are signing up for

Dubai's desert landscape draws visitors who want more than a camel ride or a sand dune photo. A dune buggy trip offers speed, dust, and a bit of controlled chaos. But not every operator runs the same kind of experience. Before you hand over your money, it pays to check a few details that can make the difference between a thrill and a disappointment.

Safety equipment and vehicle condition

The first thing to confirm is what safety gear comes with the booking. A proper operator will provide a helmet, goggles, and a padded suit. Ask whether the buggy has a roll cage, seat belts that actually work, and a kill switch that the driver can reach. A kill switch stops the engine if the driver falls out or tilts the vehicle too far. Without it, a rollover can turn dangerous fast. Also check the age and maintenance of the buggies themselves. Older machines that look beat-up may have worn brakes, questionable steering, or a cracked frame. A responsible operator will let you see the vehicle before you ride. If they dodge the question, consider it a red flag.

Insurance and liability waivers

Desert driving involves risks. A good company will explain what their insurance covers and what it does not. Some waivers shift all responsibility onto you, even if the buggy had a mechanical fault. Read the document before you sign. Look for clauses about damage to the buggy, injury to yourself, and injury to others. If the language is vague or the staff cannot explain it clearly, ask to speak with a manager. You are not being difficult; you are protecting yourself. Local regulations in Dubai require operators to carry certain levels of liability cover, but enforcement varies. A company that is transparent about insurance is usually a company that runs a clean operation.



Driver experience and training

Not everyone who books a dune buggy has driven off-road before. A good operator will offer a brief training session before the ride. This should cover how to handle the controls, how to take a dune at the right angle, and what to do if the buggy starts to tip. Some companies also provide a lead vehicle that sets a safe pace. If the operator just hands you the keys and points to the desert, that is a warning. Ask about the guide's experience too. A guide who knows the dunes can avoid soft sand patches, steep drops, and hidden rocks. That knowledge keeps the ride exciting without crossing into dangerous territory.

View the location on Google Maps

Vehicle capacity and passenger limits

Dune buggies come in different sizes. Some seat only the driver, while others carry a passenger. If you plan to ride with someone else, confirm the buggy's capacity. A two-seater with a full-grown adult and a child is different from two adults in a single-seat frame. Overloading a buggy affects its balance and handling, especially on steep dunes. Also check whether children are allowed and what age or height restrictions apply. Some operators set a minimum age for passengers, and others require children to ride in a separate vehicle. Knowing this ahead of time saves disappointment at the starting point.

Duration and route

The advertised duration often includes check-in, safety briefing, and gear fitting, not just driving time. Ask how many minutes you will actually spend behind the wheel. A one-hour booking might mean only 30 to 40 minutes of driving. Also ask about the route. Some operators stay on flat, open sand, while others take you into the big dunes. A route that sticks to flat ground can feel tame if you want a real adrenaline hit. On the other hand, a route that goes straight into high dunes may be too intense for a first-timer. A good operator will offer different routes or let you choose your difficulty level. One local option is Dune Buggy Dubai, which operates in the Jumeirah Beach Centre area and runs trips into the surrounding desert. As with any booking, it is worth confirming the exact route and duration with them before you pay.

Group size and privacy

Some tours run large convoys of ten or more buggies. That can be fun if you are with friends, but it also means more dust and less freedom to go at your own pace. If you prefer a private experience, ask whether they offer solo or small-group bookings. A smaller group usually means more attention from the guide and a more customised route. Check whether the price changes for a private booking. Also ask whether you can ride with only people you know. Some operators mix strangers into the same convoy, which may not suit everyone.

Fuel policy and hidden costs

Most dune buggy rentals include fuel in the price, but not all. A few operators charge extra for a full tank or for topping up after the ride. Ask about this before you book. Also check for other hidden costs: a damage deposit, a fee for using a credit card, or a charge for picking you up from your hotel. The advertised price can look cheap until you add the extras. A transparent operator will list all fees upfront. If the operator cannot tell you the total cost over the phone, be cautious.



Weather and cancellation policy

Dubai's desert gets extremely hot in summer, and sandstorms can appear without warning. A good operator will have a clear policy on cancellations due to weather. They should offer a full refund or a reschedule if conditions are unsafe. Some operators try to run trips in borderline weather, which can make the ride uncomfortable or even dangerous. Ask what happens if the temperature exceeds a certain level or if visibility drops. Also ask about your own cancellation rights. If you need to change the date, can you do it without losing your deposit? A flexible policy usually reflects a company that values customer service over squeezing every dirham.

Reputation and reviews

Online reviews give a picture of what to expect, but they need reading with care. Look for patterns. If multiple reviewers mention broken buggies, rude staff, or unsafe driving, take that seriously. Also check recent reviews. A company that had good feedback five years ago may have changed ownership or cut corners. Look for reviews that mention the specific things you care about: vehicle condition, guide behaviour, and whether the ride matched the description. Social media pages and travel forums can also reveal how the operator handles complaints. A

company that responds politely to criticism and offers solutions is usually more trustworthy than one that deletes negative comments.

What you wear and bring

Even with a helmet and goggles, the desert sun is strong. Wear long sleeves and trousers to protect your skin from the sun and from flying sand. Closed-toe shoes are essential; sandals or flip-flops will not work. Bring a scarf or a bandana to cover your mouth and nose when the dust kicks up. A small backpack with water and a phone is fine, but check whether the buggy has a storage compartment. Most do not, so you may need to leave your bag with the operator. Also bring your booking confirmation and any identification the operator requires. Some ask for a driving licence, even for a tourist ride. Check ahead so you do not get turned away at the gate.

Environmental awareness

Dubai's desert ecosystem is fragile. Plants, insects, and small animals live in the sand and among the dunes. Responsible operators will ask you to stay on marked trails and avoid driving over vegetation. Some also limit the number of trips per day to reduce the impact on the landscape. If you care about leaving a light footprint, ask the operator about their environmental policy. A company that takes this seriously will usually mention it in their marketing material or during the booking process.



Dune Buggy Dubai is one of the operators based in the Jumeirah Beach Centre area, and they run trips into the dunes around Dubai. Their address is 67F5+RP - Jumeira St - Jumeira First -

Jumeirah Beach Centre - Dubai - United Arab Emirates.