

Cruise tourism in Dubai set to prosper

Recent regulatory changes to the United Arab Emirates' visa system will have a transformative effect on Dubai's cruise sector and further boost medical tourism in the emirate.



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A new ruling in the UAE (Cabinet Resolution No. 22 of 2014) which took effect on 1 August 2014, will ensure implementation of a new visa and fees system. Amendments include a new multiple entry tourism permit for cruise passengers and a range of new entry permits for medical tourists and their companions. The ruling was signed by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai.

These visa options will make travel between UAE and visiting nearby countries easier for travellers who need to make multiple stops whether by air, land or sea. The new multiple entry tourism permit for cruise passengers at just 200 dirhams (c. US\$50) will now make their travel more cost effective and logistically more convenient with particular impact on a number of key markets for which previous regulations made the cost significantly higher, including India, China, Russia & CIS, South Africa, and Brazil.

Hamad bin Mejren, executive director of Business Tourism at Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) said: "This positive announcement of the new visa system will have an encouraging impact on the attractiveness of Dubai as a destination for those overseas visitors who plan on travelling in and out of the UAE - for example on a cruise ship, or by taking a short break into neighbouring Oman and Saudi Arabia.

"The announcement will have a significant impact on cruise tourism in the Arabian Gulf, and is one which has been received very well by our partners within the cruise industry. With Dubai being the only home port for many international cruise lines operating cruises in this region, the advantage of simplifying visa procedures through granting passengers multiple entry tourist permits will reduce the costs for each passenger and further boost the sector's growth. This means that visitors can now arrive at Dubai International Airport or Dubai World Central, take a cruise from Mina Rashid out to other emirates and neighbouring countries and return to Dubai on the same visa rather than having to incur additional time and expense obtaining two or three separate visas.

"We are delighted that the tourists taking a Gulf Cruise can now enter all UAE ports in their itinerary using just one multiple entry visa. Dubai Cruise Tourism has been working closely with Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority as well as Oman's Ministry of Tourism through the Cruise Arabia initiative formed late last year. As partners, by working together we can promote the Arabian Gulf more effectively as a leading cruise destination. The new UAE multi-entry visa is a much welcomed benefit to growing this important tourism segment.

"Through our network of Dubai Tourism offices across the world we will use the ruling to further promote Dubai's attractiveness as a destination for both leisure and business."

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