**Visitor Guidance - Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD)**

### **Introduction to EAD**

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is at the forefront of ensuring environmental sustainability in the emirate. Their mission is to protect and enhance Abu Dhabi’s natural environment, ensuring a balance between development and conservation while improving the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

### **Biodiversity**

EAD is dedicated to preserving Abu Dhabi’s rich biodiversity, focusing on the conservation of vital species such as Arabian oryx, houbara bustards, dugongs, and hawksbill turtles. The agency oversees protected areas like Al Wathba Wetland Reserve, Jabal Hafit National Park, and Mangrove National Park, safeguarding habitats for various flora and fauna.

### **Visitor Attractions**

EAD offers a range of protected areas and parks for visitors to explore:

* **Al Wathba Wetland Reserve**: Home to over 250 species of birds, including flamingos, and a designated Ramsar site.
* **Jabal Hafit National Park**: Renowned for its rugged terrain, caves, and archaeological sites.
* **Mangrove National Park**: A haven for kayaking, paddleboarding, and eco-tourism, showcasing mangroves and their role in coastal protection.
* **Al Wathba Fossil Dunes Protected Area**: Featuring over 1,700 fossil dunes, a unique geological formation in the region.

### **Sustainability**

EAD focuses on sustainability by monitoring environmental indicators such as air quality, beach water quality, and wildlife conservation efforts, providing sustainable solutions for communities.

### **Public Engagement**

Visitors are encouraged to engage in environmental awareness initiatives, volunteer programmes, and sustainability efforts, contributing to a cleaner and greener Abu Dhabi.

EAD is committed to preserving Abu Dhabi's natural heritage while providing visitors with opportunities to explore its protected areas and facilities. This document outlines comprehensive visitor guidance to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and environmentally responsible experience.

### **New Visitor Opportunities**

1. **Eco-Tours and Activities:**
   1. **Kayaking Adventures:** Available at Mangrove National Park. Prices start from AED 150 per person for a guided tour.
   2. **Bird-Watching Excursions:** Ideal for families and enthusiasts, with tours starting at AED 100 per group.
   3. **Stargazing Events:** Held at Jabal Hafit National Park, offering a mesmerising view of the night sky.
2. **Educational Centres:**
   1. **Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre:** Features immersive exhibits and workshops on Abu Dhabi’s environment. Entry fees are AED 50 for adults and AED 25 for children under 12.
3. **Special Events:**
   1. **Annual Flamingo Festival:** Hosted at Al Wathba Wetland Reserve every winter, celebrating the migratory flamingo population.
   2. **Environment Week:** A series of activities, workshops, and exhibitions held across EAD sites to promote sustainability.

### **General Visitor Guidelines**

**Respect Wildlife and Habitats:**

* Maintain a safe distance from animals and plants.
* Avoid feeding wildlife or disturbing their natural behaviours.
* Avoid using flash photography near wildlife.
* Refrain from picking plants or removing natural objects such as rocks or shells.

**Stay on Designated Paths:**

* Use marked trails and boardwalks to protect fragile ecosystems and prevent personal injury.
* Observe signs that indicate restricted areas to protect nesting grounds and sensitive ecosystems.
* Wear sturdy footwear when exploring natural terrains like Jabal Hafit.

**No Littering:**

* Dispose of waste in designated bins.
* Carry out any rubbish if bins are unavailable to maintain the cleanliness of the environment.

**Prohibited Activities:**

* Refrain from smoking, lighting fires, or using drones unless explicitly permitted.
* Such activities can harm wildlife and increase the risk of wildfires.
* Fireworks, loud music, and unauthorised vehicles are strictly prohibited in all protected areas.
* Avoid fishing or removing marine species unless part of an authorised activity.

**Photography:**

* Personal photography is generally allowed, but the use of professional equipment may require prior approval.
* Always respect the privacy of other visitors.
* Drone photography is only allowed with prior approval and appropriate permits from EAD.
* Wedding or event shoots in protected areas must be pre-approved and may incur additional costs.

### **Specific Site Guidelines**

**Al Wathba Fossil Dunes Protected Area:**

* Home to over 1,700 fossil dunes.
* Visitors should avoid climbing on the formations to prevent erosion and damage.
* Stay within designated viewing areas.
* Guided tours are available at AED 75 per adult and AED 40 per child. Bookings can be made via the EAD website.
* Special evening tours include eco-talks and cost AED 100 per person.

**Al Wathba Wetland Reserve:**

* A Ramsar site of international importance.
* Avoid making loud noises that could disturb bird populations, especially during breeding seasons.
* Binoculars are recommended for bird watching.
* Observation towers are equipped with telescopes for birdwatching.
* Visitors can join a ranger-led walk every Friday for AED 50.

**Jabal Hafit National Park:**

* Given the mountainous terrain, wear appropriate footwear.
* Stay hydrated and be aware of your physical limits.
* Some areas may require a guide; check in advance.
* Camping facilities are available, with designated areas costing AED 150 per tent per night.
* Guided cave exploration tours cost AED 120 per person.

**Mangrove National Park:**

* Kayaking and paddleboarding are popular activities.
* Ensure you have the necessary permits and follow all safety instructions provided by tour operators.
* Group kayaking sessions are discounted at AED 120 per person for groups of five or more.
* Seasonal mangrove clean-up events allow visitors to participate in conservation efforts free of charge.

### **Health and Safety Measures**

**COVID-19 Precautions:**

* Follow any current health advisories, including wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.
* Avoid visiting if experiencing any symptoms of illness.

**Emergency Contacts:**

* Familiarise yourself with the location of visitor centres and emergency contact numbers upon arrival.
* Always carry a mobile phone with you for safety.

**First Aid Stations:**

* Available at key locations such as visitor centres and high-traffic areas.
* Emergency kits are provided during guided tours.

**Weather Precautions:**

* Visitors are advised to check weather conditions before visiting outdoor sites, particularly during summer.
* Carry sunblock, hats, and water to stay hydrated and protected from the sun.

**Mobile App:**

* Download the official EAD mobile app for live updates, navigation, and emergency contacts.

### **New and Unique Experiences**

* **Guided Night Safaris**:
* Experience the nocturnal wildlife in reserves like Al Wathba Wetland Reserve or Jabal Hafit National Park.
* Tours cost AED 200 per person and include night-vision equipment.
* **Desert Conservation Tours**:

Learn about the region’s desert flora and fauna with expert-led tours at AED 150 per adult.

Includes insights into conservation practices for species such as Arabian gazelles.

* **Cultural Heritage and Ecology Walks**:

Explore the link between Abu Dhabi’s cultural heritage and its ecosystems in Mangrove National Park.

Costs AED 75 per person, offered fortnightly.

### **Interactive Learning for Families and Children**

* **Junior Ranger Programme**:
* A hands-on experience for children aged 7–12.
* Activities include planting mangroves, cleaning beaches, and learning about wildlife.
* Costs AED 50 per child.
* **Eco-Themed Storytelling Sessions**:

Held monthly at the Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre.

Tickets are AED 20 per child; adults may attend free of charge.

* **Virtual Reality (VR) Exhibits**:

Interactive VR tours showcasing Abu Dhabi’s ecosystems are available at visitor centres.

### **Annual Events and Festivals**

* **Dugong Awareness Week**:
* Educational events highlighting dugong conservation efforts.
* Includes kayaking tours and special talks by marine biologists.
* **Mangrove Marathon**:

An eco-marathon held annually to raise awareness about mangrove ecosystems.

Registration fees: AED 100 per participant.

* **Seasonal Clean-Up Drives**:

Open to individuals and groups, these events focus on cleaning coastal areas.

Participants receive certificates of appreciation.

### **Additional Visitor Tips**

* **Best Times to Visit**:
  + For birdwatching: October to April.
  + For outdoor activities: Early mornings and evenings during the cooler months (November to March).
* **Recommended Gear**:
  + Binoculars for wildlife observation.
  + Sunscreen, hats, and reusable water bottles to stay eco-friendly.
* **Photography Workshops**:

On-site workshops to improve wildlife and landscape photography skills.

Costs AED 250 per session, available monthly.

### **Enhanced Accessibility Options**

* **Electric Cart Rentals**:
* Available at Al Wathba Wetland Reserve and Jabal Hafit National Park for AED 100 per hour.
* **Braille Maps and Guides**:

Available at major visitor centres to assist visually impaired guests.

* **Family-Friendly Rest Stops**:

Equipped with nursing rooms, shaded seating areas, and child-friendly activities.

### **Special Offers and Discounts**

* **Group Discounts**:
* Groups of 10 or more receive a 15% discount on tours and activities.
* **Annual Membership Pass**:

Unlimited access to all EAD sites and free entry to special events.

Costs AED 500 per adult and AED 300 for students.

* **Seasonal Promotions**:

Free entry for children under 12 during the summer months (June–August).

### **Tech-Enabled Visitor Experience**

* **Augmented Reality (AR) Experiences**:
* Explore virtual depictions of species and habitats at select locations using your smartphone.
* **Online Booking System**:

Easily book tours and activities through the EAD website or mobile app.

* **Digital Souvenir Gallery**:

Access a personalised gallery of your visit, including photographs and eco-certificates.

### **Educational Programmes and Tours**

**Guided Tours:**

* Many sites offer guided tours that provide in-depth information about the area's ecology and conservation efforts.
* Booking in advance is recommended.

**Interactive Exhibits:**

* Facilities such as the Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre offer interactive exhibits suitable for all ages.
* Engage with these resources to enhance your understanding of Abu Dhabi's natural environment.

**Customised Tours:** Available for school groups and corporate teams. Prices start at AED 300 for a group of up to 15 people.

**Citizen Science Programmes:** Visitors can participate in biodiversity surveys and data collection.

**Workshops:** Hands-on activities on sustainability, starting at AED 100 per participant.

### **Accessibility**

**Facilities:**

* Some sites have provisions for visitors with disabilities, including accessible pathways and restrooms.
* Check accessibility options in advance.
* Wheelchair-accessible trails are available at Al Wathba Wetland Reserve.
* Audio-guided tours cater to visually impaired visitors.

**Transportation:**

* Ensure you have reliable transport to and from the sites, as some are in remote areas with limited public transport options.
* Shuttle services operate between popular sites during peak seasons. Tickets cost AED 25 per person for a round trip.

### **Permits and Regulations**

**Entry Permits:**

* Certain areas may require entry permits or have limited visiting hours.
* Verify requirements before your visit to avoid inconvenience.

**Research Activities:**

* If you plan to conduct research or use professional equipment, obtain the necessary approvals from EAD.
* Unauthorised activities are prohibited.

**Entry Fees:**

* Many sites offer free entry for children under 5 and discounted rates for students and senior citizens.

**Research and Media Approvals:**

* Applications for research permits must be submitted at least 30 days in advance through the EAD website.
* Professional filming permits start from AED 1,000 per day.

### **Contact and Booking Information**

* **Website:** [www.ead.gov.ae](https://www.ead.gov.ae/en)
* **Email:** [info@ead.gov.ae](mailto:info@ead.gov.ae)
* **Phone:** +971 2 445 4777
* **Social Media:** Follow EAD on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for updates on events and programmes.