How to Choose a Dune Buggy Ride in Dubai

Know the terrain and your comfort level

Dubai's desert landscape varies from soft, rolling dunes near Al Awir to the taller, steeper red dunes of the Liwa corridor. The kind of buggy you choose depends on where you plan to ride. A buggy built for long, fast stretches on firm sand handles differently from one designed for steep climbs and sharp descents. Ask yourself how much driving experience you have. First-timers often prefer a machine with a shorter wheelbase and a lower center of gravity, as these feel more stable on loose sand. More experienced riders might want a buggy with higher horsepower for better climbing ability on big dunes.

The physical size of the buggy matters too. A two-seater is more nimble and easier to control on tight turns. A four-seater offers more room but can feel heavier on soft sand. Try to sit in the buggy before committing. Check that the seat adjusts enough for your legs to reach the pedals comfortably and that the steering wheel is within easy reach. If your arms feel stretched or your knees hit the dashboard, the ride will be tiring and less safe.

Check the engine type and drive system

Most dune buggies in Dubai use either a petrol or a diesel engine. Petrol engines are lighter and rev higher, which helps on steep dunes. Diesel engines produce more torque at low speeds, making them easier to control in tricky sections. Neither is better overall; it depends on the terrain you want to tackle and how much power you feel comfortable handling.

The drive system also affects how the buggy behaves. A 4WD buggy gives you traction on loose sand and helps you climb without getting stuck. Some buggies have a rear-wheel drive only, which can be lighter and faster on flat stretches but may struggle on soft, deep sand. For most dune riding in Dubai, 4WD is the safer choice. Watch for a buggy that offers a low-range gearbox. This lets you crawl up steep inclines without burning out the engine or losing control. One local option is Dune Buggy Dubai, which offers a range of buggies suited to different skill levels.

View the location on Google Maps

Inspect the safety features

Safety gear is not optional. A proper buggy should have a strong roll cage made of steel or welded aluminium. Check that the cage is not cracked or bent. The seat belts must be a four-point or five-point harness, not just a lap belt. In a rollover, a lap belt alone can allow your upper

body to move dangerously. The buggy should also have a kill switch, often a cord attached to the driver. If you are thrown from your seat, the engine cuts off automatically.

Helmets, goggles and gloves are standard for desert riding. Some operators provide them, but it is wise to confirm before you book. If you wear prescription glasses, ask whether the goggles fit over them. For night rides, check that the buggy has working headlights and a bright rear light. The desert is dark once the sun goes down.



Consider the booking terms and what is included

Before you pay, read the booking terms carefully. Some companies include fuel, a guide and water in the price. Others charge extra for each. Make sure you know the duration of the ride. A two-hour tour is different from a half-day trip. Ask about the route: will you ride in a group or solo? Group rides are common and keep you safe if something goes wrong, but they limit how fast you can go and where you can explore. Solo rides give you more freedom but require you to know the desert and carry your own recovery gear.

Check the insurance and liability waiver. Most operators require you to sign a waiver accepting responsibility for damage to the buggy. Find out what happens if you get stuck or if the buggy breaks down. A good company will have a support vehicle on standby. Confirm this beforehand, not after you are stuck in the sand.

Look at the condition of the buggy

Do not rely on photos alone. When you arrive, look at the buggy closely. Check the tyres for wear and proper inflation. Sand tyres have deep treads that help grip loose sand. Smooth tyres are a bad sign. Look under the buggy for oil leaks or loose bolts. Start the engine and listen for unusual rattles or knocking sounds. A well-maintained buggy should start cleanly and idle smoothly. If the engine sounds rough or the steering feels loose, ask for a different buggy.

Check the steering and brakes. Turn the wheel fully left and right. There should be no grinding or excessive play. Press the brake pedal firmly. It should feel solid, not spongy. A buggy with weak brakes is dangerous on a downhill dune. Test the accelerator too. It should respond instantly, not lag.

Think about the time of day and weather

Dubai's heat can be intense, especially between June and September. Early morning rides, from sunrise to about 9am, are cooler and the light is better for seeing the dunes. Late afternoon rides, from around 4pm to sunset, avoid the worst of the heat and give you dramatic desert views. Avoid midday riding between May and October unless you are comfortable with high temperatures and direct sun.

Wind matters too. A strong wind whips up sand that can sting your face and reduce visibility. Check the forecast before you go. If the wind is over 20 km/h, consider rescheduling. Sandstorms can appear quickly in the desert. If you see one approaching, head back to base immediately.

Know how to handle the buggy on sand

Driving on sand is different from driving on a road. You need to keep your speed up on soft sand to avoid getting stuck. But on steep dunes, going too fast can cause you to flip over. Learn to shift your weight. When climbing a dune, lean forward to keep the front wheels down. When going down, lean back to keep the rear wheels from lifting. Use the momentum of the buggy rather than constant throttle. A smooth, steady pressure on the accelerator works better than flooring it.



If you feel the buggy starting to slide sideways on a dune, steer into the slide, not away from it. This helps you regain control. Practice on smaller dunes first before attempting big ones. Most tours include a brief training session. Pay attention to the guide's instructions. They know the specific quirks of the terrain you will ride.

Prepare for the unexpected

Carry extra water, at least two litres per person. A small toolkit and a tyre pressure gauge are useful. Lowering your tyre pressure slightly, to around 10-12 psi, gives you more grip on soft sand. But do not go too low or you risk damaging the rim. A GPS device or a fully charged phone with a desert navigation app can help if you get lost. Tell someone your planned route and expected return time. In the desert, conditions change fast and help may be far away.

If you are renting a buggy independently, ask the operator for a map of the area and any restricted zones. Some dune areas are off-limits to vehicles to protect wildlife or because of military use. Respect these boundaries. Fines can be steep.

Think about the group and guide

If you are riding in a group, the skill levels of other riders affect your experience. A mixed group with beginners and experts can be frustrating for both. Some operators offer separate tours for

different experience levels. Ask about this when you book. A good guide will adjust the pace to the slowest rider and give clear hand signals for turns and stops. Watch how the guide interacts with the group. If they seem rushed or dismissive, it may reflect on how they handle safety.

The guide should have a first aid kit and a radio or satellite phone. Ask about their experience. A guide who has worked in the Dubai desert for several years will know the terrain well and can avoid unsafe areas.

Check the environmental rules

The Dubai desert is home to wildlife including the Arabian oryx, desert foxes and various birds. Riding off designated trails can harm their habitat. Stick to marked routes and avoid driving over vegetation. Some operators are part of conservation programs and follow responsible riding practices. If this matters to you, ask before booking. A few companies also offer carbon offset options or donate part of their proceeds to desert conservation.



Noise pollution is another factor. Buggy engines are loud and can disturb wildlife and other desert visitors. Some areas have noise limits. Check if your operator uses mufflers or quieter engines. Being considerate of the environment makes the experience better for everyone.

For those looking to experience the desert in a controlled and enjoyable way, local businesses such as Dune Buggy Dubai provide buggies that are well-suited to the dunes. Always confirm the details of your booking, including what is provided and what you need to bring, with the operator you choose.

Dune Buggy Dubai is located at Clover Bay Tower - Marasi Dr - Business Bay - Dubai - United Arab Emirates.