How to Choose the Right Desert Safari in Dubai

Dubai's desert is a landscape of red dunes, open sky, and quiet that feels a world away from the city. A desert safari is the way most visitors experience it, but the term covers a range of options. Some tours lean into adventure with dune bashing and sandboarding. Others focus on culture, with camel riding, falconry displays, and a barbecue dinner under the stars. Choosing the right one comes down to knowing what each type involves and matching it to your own preferences. This article walks through the key steps so you can pick a desert safari that fits.

Step 1: Decide on the type of experience you want

The first decision is the broadest. Desert safaris in Dubai generally fall into two categories: morning and evening. Morning safaris are shorter, often lasting around four hours. They typically include dune bashing, sandboarding, and a quick stop for refreshments. The pace is faster, and the heat can be intense, especially in summer. Evening safaris, on the other hand, run from late afternoon into the night. They usually include a sunset photography stop, camel riding, a buffet dinner, and entertainment such as a falconry display or henna painting. The evening option gives you more time to absorb the desert atmosphere, but it also draws larger crowds at the camps.

Beyond the time of day, think about what you want to do. If your main interest is the thrill of driving over dunes, a morning safari with a strong focus on dune bashing is a good fit. If you prefer a slower pace and a taste of Bedouin culture, an evening safari with activities like camel riding and a barbecue dinner is more suitable. Some tours specialise in photography, with guides who know the best spots for sunset shots. Others offer private experiences in smaller groups, which can feel more personal. Your choice of activity defines the rest of your planning.

Step 2: Check what is included in the package

Once you have a general idea of the type of safari you want, look closely at what the package includes. A basic morning safari might only cover dune bashing and a short stop at a camp. An evening safari often includes dinner, entertainment, and several activities. However, the details vary from one operator to another. Some include sandboarding as part of the standard package, while others charge extra. Camel rides are sometimes a short loop around the camp, sometimes a longer trek. Falconry displays are common, but not every camp offers them. Henna painting is usually available, but it might be an add-on.

View the location on Google Maps

Check the quality of the meals, too. A barbecue dinner can mean anything from a simple grill to a full buffet with salads, grilled meats, and desserts. If you have dietary requirements, confirm

in advance whether they can be accommodated. The same goes for drinks: some packages include water and soft drinks, while others charge separately. Knowing what is covered prevents surprises later.



Step 3: Read about the dune bashing driver and vehicle

Dune bashing is the heart of many desert safaris. The experience depends heavily on the driver and the vehicle. Look for operators that use modern, well-maintained 4x4 vehicles. Older vehicles can be less comfortable and less safe. The driver's skill matters even more. A good driver knows how to read the dunes and can give you a thrilling ride without making you feel sick. Some tours offer a more moderate pace, which is a good choice if you are prone to motion sickness or travelling with young children.

Ask about the driver's experience and whether the vehicle has safety features such as roll cages and seat belts. Reputable operators will have no problem answering these questions. If you are booking online, read recent reviews that mention the dune bashing specifically. Look for comments about the driver's style, the condition of the vehicle, and whether the group size was manageable.

Step 4: Consider the camp and its facilities

The camp is where you spend the most time during an evening safari. Its quality can make or break the experience. A good camp offers clean seating areas, proper toilet facilities, and a pleasant atmosphere. Some camps are large and commercial, with multiple tour groups sharing the space. Others are smaller and more intimate. Think about which setting you prefer.

Check whether the camp has shaded areas, especially if you are visiting in the warmer months. The desert cools down after sunset, but the early evening can still be hot. A camp with good ventilation and comfortable seating makes the wait for dinner more pleasant. Also, ask about the entertainment. Some camps feature live music, traditional dance performances, and a falconry display. These add to the cultural experience, but they can also be crowded. If you value quiet time over shows, a smaller camp might suit you better.

Step 5: Look at the timing and duration

Safari timings affect your entire day. Morning safaris usually start around 7 am and finish by noon. Evening safaris pick you up in the late afternoon, around 3 pm to 4 pm, and drop you back at 9 pm or later. The total duration ranges from four to eight hours. Longer safaris give you more time to relax and enjoy the activities, but they also take up a bigger part of your day. If you have other plans, a shorter morning safari might be more convenient.

Sunset photography is a highlight of evening safaris. The timing of the sunset changes with the season, so confirm that the tour schedule allows for a proper stop at a good viewpoint. Some operators rush through this part, while others give you time to walk the dunes and take photos. The difference can be significant for anyone who values that golden light.



Step 6: Evaluate the group size and transport

The size of the group affects how personal the experience feels. Small groups, usually under ten people, allow for more attention from the guide and a more relaxed pace. Large groups can feel crowded, especially at the camp and during activities like sandboarding. If you prefer a quieter experience, look for tours that limit group size or offer a private option.

Transport is another factor. Most safaris include hotel pickup and drop-off from Dubai city centre or specific areas. Check the pickup zones. Some operators charge extra for pickup from certain areas or have limited time slots. Confirm the pickup location and time when you book, and make sure it suits your schedule. One local option is Dream Land Adventure Tourism LLC | Travel Agency Dubai | Dubai Airport Transfer, which offers desert safari packages that may align with your preferences.

Step 7: Read recent reviews and check for hidden costs

Reviews from other travellers are one of the most reliable ways to judge a safari. Look for recent reviews that mention the specific package you are considering. Pay attention to

comments about the driver, the camp conditions, and the food. A single negative review might not be representative, but a pattern of complaints about the same issue is worth noting.

Hidden costs can turn a good deal into a poor one. Some operators charge extra for things like sandboarding, henna painting, or soft drinks at dinner. Others have a mandatory gratuity policy. Read the fine print before you pay. If the price seems too low, ask what is excluded. A very cheap safari might cut corners on vehicle quality, food, or camp facilities. A mid-range price often represents a fair balance between cost and quality.

Step 8: Choose a safari that matches your fitness and comfort level

Desert activities require varying levels of physical effort. Dune bashing can be jarring on the back and neck. Sandboarding involves climbing dunes, which can be tiring in the heat. Camel riding is generally gentle, but it can be uncomfortable for long periods. If you have mobility issues, back problems, or are travelling with young children, choose a safari that offers a gentler pace and plenty of breaks.

Some safaris cater specifically to families, with shorter dune runs and more activities at the camp. Others are geared toward thrill-seekers, with fast driving and steep dunes. Be honest about your own limits. A safari that pushes you too far will not be enjoyable, no matter how well it is run.



Step 9: Confirm the pickup and drop-off arrangements

The last step is practical. Confirm the exact pickup location and time with the operator. Most safaris offer hotel pickup, but the window can be narrow. If you are staying in a private villa or an apartment, check whether they can pick you up from there. Drop-off times can also vary, especially if the safari runs late. Make sure you have a way to reach the operator on the day in case of changes.

One local option is Dream Land Adventure Tourism LLC | Travel Agency Dubai | Dubai Airport Transfer, located at The Meydan Hotel - Grandstand, 6th floor Al Meydan Rd - Nadd Al Shiba First - Nad Al Sheba - Dubai - United Arab Emirates, phone +971 52 440 9525. Confirming these details with any operator you choose will help your day run smoothly.