A Dubai driving licence: how I exchanged my licence, without tests

Written by Usama Haj Yahia, founder of U810 Properties | Last updated: 18.11.2026

Many foreign driving licences, including the one I held, can be exchanged for a Dubai licence without driving tests. The exchange is done with Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), once you have a residence visa. I exchanged mine in October 2025, and I had the licence in hand within an hour of applying.

In short

- Licences from countries on the RTA list can be exchanged without tests once you have residency. Some need a legalised translation.
- It costs about AED 1,050, and the licence is issued the same day.
- Tourists drive with an international driving licence.

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01 Who can exchange

- **You must hold a licence from a country on the list** (see the next section). The exchange covers the categories listed for your country. I exchanged my own licence this way in October 2025.
- **You need a valid licence.** If your licence has expired, renew it in the issuing country first.
- **You need a residence visa.** The exchange is possible once you have residency, for example a Golden Visa (see the Golden Visa guide). According to the RTA, if your residency was issued in

another emirate, you need to show a link to Dubai, such as living or investing there.

02 It depends on the country that issued your licence

The exchange depends on the country that issued your licence. The RTA list of countries shows what each country needs. There are three situations:

- **No tests and no translation are required for** countries such as Germany and Norway.
- **No tests are required, but you need a legalised translation for** countries such as Japan. You do not need to learn to drive again. A legalised translation is enough, and the process is quick.
- **For countries not on the list,** you need to pass the tests to get a Dubai licence, and usually take lessons at an approved driving school as well. There is also a route called Golden Chance, where holders of a valid licence can go straight to the test without lessons.

For some countries on the list, such as Cyprus and Croatia, the exchange also requires you to hand in the foreign licence, and it is withdrawn. The column "The Foreign Licence Must be Withdrawn" in the list shows whether this applies to your country.

Do you hold licences from more than one country? Check the row for each one. For some countries, the exchange is only for their own citizens.

03 How much it costs

Item	AED
Opening a file	200
Issuing the licence	600
Handbook	50
Eye test	140 to 180, depending on the centre
Knowledge and innovation fee	20
Total	**About 1,050**

The new licence is valid for two years, or one year if you are under 21.

04 What you need

- A copy of both sides of your licence.
- A legalised translation, if the list says your country needs one.

- An eye test at an approved centre.
- A phone number registered in your name, to receive a verification code when you apply on the website.

05 How it went for me

1. I booked an appointment at an RTA branch and had an eye test there, for a fee.
2. I had my licence translated by a notary.
3. I filled in the licence exchange application on the RTA website, uploaded a copy of both sides of the licence and the translation, and paid.
4. Within an hour of applying, I had the licence in hand.

All in all, it is an easy process once you already have residence.

06 Driving as a tourist

According to the RTA, if you are in Dubai on a tourist visa you can drive a private car with an international driving licence. Rental companies usually ask for both your home licence and an international licence, so it is worth getting an international licence before you fly.

07 Worth knowing

- According to the RTA, if the licence has no security features, you may need a certificate from the embassy of the country that issued it.
- The list of countries and the requirements can change. Check the RTA website before you start.

All the steps of moving to Dubai, in order, are in the guide to moving to Dubai.

08 For UK licence holders

The UK is on the RTA's list of countries whose licences can be exchanged in Dubai without a driving test and without a translation. The documents and fees are the ones in the table above.

Until your residence visa is issued, you can drive in Dubai on your UK photocard licence (UK government travel advice).

Frequently asked questions

Do I need to take a driving test?

You do not need to take a test if your licence is from a country on the RTA list and is still valid. If your country is not on the list, you need to pass the tests.

How long does it take?

According to the RTA, the service is immediate. I had the licence in hand within an hour of applying.

Can I drive in Dubai without exchanging my licence?

Yes, you can drive as a tourist with an international driving licence.

Sources

- The list of countries, costs, validity, processing time, translation and residency: RTA, exchanging licences.
- The three situations: RTA, exchanging licences, Gulf News. The Golden Chance route: Gulf News, Gulf Today.
- Driving on a tourist visa and rental companies: RTA, international driving licence, Gulf News.
- The steps: my own experience in October 2025.

Moving to Dubai, or already have residence?

Tell me where you are in the process, and I will share what I did.

Send a WhatsApp message →

This information is based on my own experience in October 2025 and on RTA publications, and is correct as of the update date. The requirements can change.