Where to live in Dubai with a family: the family areas, and what each one offers

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The areas families choose most often in Dubai are Dubai Hills, Arabian Ranches, JVC, DAMAC Hills and Mirdif. They differ mainly in the schools inside or near the area, the type of home (apartment or villa), and the price. Before you choose an area, settle on the school, because it shapes your daily journey more than anything else.

In short

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- Most of Mirdif is not a freehold area, so foreigners usually cannot buy a home there.
- A home worth at least AED 2 million also lets you apply for a Golden Visa, including for your family.

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01 The areas at a glance

This guide is part of the main moving to Dubai page.

Area	Main housing	Schools in or near the area (examples)	Sample annual rent, AED	Can foreigners buy?
Dubai Hills Estate	Apartments and villas	GEMS Wellington Academy, GEMS International School	2-bedroom apartment: about 141,000	Yes
Arabian Ranches	Villas and townhouses	JESS Arabian Ranches, Ranches Primary School	3-bedroom villa: about 359,000 on average	Yes
Jumeirah Village Circle (JVC)	Mostly apartments	JSS International School; nearby: Sunmarke, Nord Anglia	2-bedroom apartment: 98,000 to 113,000	Yes
DAMAC Hills	Villas, townhouses and apartments	Not verified, see below	3-bedroom villa: 201,000 to 211,000	Yes
DAMAC Hills 2	Villas and townhouses	Not verified	3-bedroom villa: 105,000 to 112,000	Yes
Mirdif	Mostly villas	Mirdif American School	3-bedroom villa: 111,000 to 142,000	Not in most of the area, only in some projects

The rents in the table come from Property Monitor (November 2026) and Bayut (asking prices, first half of 2026). For Dubai Hills there is only one figure, from Property Monitor. For Arabian Ranches the figure is from Property Monitor, and Khaleej Times gives a range of AED 220,000 to 450,000 for this kind of villa (August 2025).

02 Dubai Hills Estate

- **What it is:** a planned, gated community with an 18-hole golf course, parks, cycling paths, Dubai Hills Park and Dubai Hills Mall.
- **Schools:** in or near the area you will find, among others, GEMS Wellington Academy and GEMS International School. Other schools, such as Kings' School Al Barsha and Nord Anglia, are in the neighbouring districts.
- **Rent:** about AED 90,000 a year for a 1-bedroom apartment, and about AED 141,000 for a 2-bedroom.
- **Who it suits:** a family that wants schools, a park and a mall close to home, and is prepared to pay for it.

03 Arabian Ranches

- **What it is:** a community of villas and townhouses with plenty of green space, a golf course, lakes, and tennis and basketball courts. It was built in phases: Arabian Ranches, Arabian Ranches 2 and Arabian Ranches 3.
- **Schools:** Jumeirah English Speaking School (JESS) is inside the community, and Ranches Primary School, a British-curriculum primary school, is in Arabian Ranches 2.
- **Rent:** a 3-bedroom villa costs about AED 359,000 a year on average, according to Property Monitor.
- **Who it suits:** a family that wants a home with a garden, and a school the children can reach without leaving the community.

04 Jumeirah Village Circle (JVC)

- **What it is:** a freehold area with many apartment buildings, some townhouses and plenty of neighbourhood parks. It is close to Al Khail Road and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road.
- **Schools:** JSS International School is inside the area. Close by are Sunmarke School in JVT and Nord Anglia International School in Al Barsha South.
- **Rent:** AED 67,000 to 79,000 a year for a 1-bedroom apartment, and AED 98,000 to 113,000 for a 2-bedroom.
- **Who it suits:** a young family looking for a lower-priced apartment. It is also the cheapest of the areas in the costs guide: an apartment of about 65 sqm costs around AED 1 million.

05 DAMAC Hills and DAMAC Hills 2

- **DAMAC Hills:** a community of villas, townhouses and apartments around the Trump International Golf Club. A 3-bedroom villa costs AED 201,000 to 211,000 a year.
- **DAMAC Hills 2:** a separate community of villas and townhouses with much lower rents: a 3-bedroom villa costs AED 105,000 to 112,000 a year.
- **Schools:** I did not find two sources that agree on which schools are inside these communities. Before you choose, check the school and the actual drive to it.

06 DAMAC Lagoons

- **What it is:** a new DAMAC community next to DAMAC Hills, built around lagoons and pools. According to the developer, some phases have already been handed over to residents, and others are still under construction.

- **A project I work with:** Sorrento is being built in DAMAC Lagoons, with studios and 1-bedroom apartments from AED 680,000, and handover expected in Q4 2029, according to the developer. It is not a home for a large family moving now. It suits a couple or a small family planning ahead, or someone buying to rent out. The details are on the project page.

07 Mirdif

- **What it is:** an established neighbourhood of large villas, some with a garden and a pool, next to Mushrif Park, one of the biggest parks in Dubai. Mirdif City Centre mall is here. There is no metro station, so people get around mainly by car.
- **Schools:** Mirdif American School, among others.
- **Rent:** a 3-bedroom villa costs AED 111,000 to 142,000 a year, less than in Arabian Ranches or DAMAC Hills.
- **Good to know:** most of Mirdif is not a freehold area, so foreigners usually cannot buy a home there. It does have a few freehold projects, such as Mirdif Hills. Mirdif works for renting, but if you want to buy and also get a visa through the home, you would usually look at another area.

08 One more area, if you plan to buy off-plan

- **Dubailand, next to Silicon Oasis:** this is where Greenz, a project I work with, is being built: townhouses and villas with 3 to 5 bedrooms, a garden and parking. According to the developer, handover is expected in December 2029, and Dubai International Academic City is nearby. The details are on the project page.

09 How to choose

1. **Start with the school.** Find out which school has places for your children, and how Dubai's education regulator (KHDA) rates it.
2. **Then the commute.** Check the drive at rush hour, not at midday.
3. **Then the type of home.** An apartment in JVC or Dubai Hills, or a villa in Arabian Ranches, DAMAC Hills or Mirdif.
4. **Finally, rent or buy.** If you are buying, check that the area is freehold. A home worth at least AED 2 million also lets you apply for a Golden Visa, including for your family. The full comparison is in renting or buying when you move to Dubai.

Frequently asked questions

Which area of Dubai is best for families?

There is no single answer. Dubai Hills and Arabian Ranches are seen as very family-friendly, with schools inside the community, but they are also among the most expensive. JVC and DAMAC Hills 2 cost less.

Where is the cheapest place to live in Dubai with a family?

Of the areas in this guide, DAMAC Hills 2 is among the cheapest places to rent a villa, at about AED 105,000 to 112,000 a year for a 3-bedroom villa (Mirdif is close to it, according to Property Monitor). For a cheaper apartment, look at JVC.

Can I buy a home in Mirdif?

In most of Mirdif, foreigners cannot buy, because it is not a freehold area. There are a few projects where you can, such as Mirdif Hills.

How do I check a school in Dubai?

Dubai's education regulator (KHDA) rates private schools. Check the rating and the fees with KHDA and on the school's website.

Can I get a Golden Visa through the home I live in?

Yes, if the home is worth at least AED 2 million and is registered in your name. You can add your spouse and children.

Sources

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- JVC, schools, freehold status and roads: Bayut, Khaleej Times.
- Trump International Golf Club in DAMAC Hills: The National, Gulf News (2017), Engel & Völkers, DAMAC Hills guide.
- Mirdif, villas, Mushrif Park, the mall and no metro: Bayut, Pros and cons of living in Mirdif (updated 14.10.2026), Property Finder, Mirdif area guide.
- Mirdif American School: Property Finder, Bayut, Family-friendly residential areas (in its FAQ).
- Most of Mirdif is not freehold, while Mirdif Hills is: Bayut, Pros and cons of living in Mirdif, Gulf News, Vertical villas, mid-market freehold in Mirdif.
- Rents: Property Monitor via Engel & Völkers (apartments, updated 13.11.2026, and villas, updated 14.11.2026), and Bayut, asking prices in the first half of 2026.
- Arabian Ranches rent: Property Monitor via Engel & Völkers (updated 14.11.2026): 3-bedroom villa, AED 359,465. Khaleej Times (13.08.2025): AED 220,000 to 450,000.
- JVC, price of a 65 sqm apartment: the costs guide on this site.

- DAMAC Lagoons next to DAMAC Hills, and Sorrento: the project page on this site, per the developer, and the Land Department (project 4381).
- Greenz: the project page on this site, per the developer.

How I can help

I guide buyers in Dubai, from choosing the property through to getting the keys and the visa. Send me a WhatsApp message and tell me how many children you have, what your budget is, and whether you will buy in cash or with a mortgage. After the first consultation I give you a quote, which depends on the sale process and the services you need.

Send a WhatsApp message →

This is general information. The rents are examples and change over time, so check prices and schools for yourself before you decide.