What to Check Before Booking a Dune Buggy Ride in Dubai

Understanding the Terrain and Your Experience Level

Dubai's desert is not a single flat expanse. The dunes vary in height, steepness and sand consistency. Some areas feature soft, powdery sand that shifts under weight, while others have harder-packed surfaces. Before you book, consider how the dune types around Dubai match your driving confidence. A buggy that handles gentle rolling dunes might feel underpowered on the steep, sharp-crested ridges found deeper in the desert. If you are new to off-road driving, ask the operator about the specific route and whether it suits beginners. Experienced drivers may want a more challenging track. Matching the terrain to your skill level makes the ride safer and more enjoyable.

Buggy Model and Condition

Not all dune buggies are built the same. Some are designed for stability on loose sand, while others prioritise speed. Check the buggy model offered in your booking. A wider wheelbase generally provides better balance on uneven ground, and a powerful engine helps climb steep dunes without stalling. If you can, look for recent photos or videos of the actual vehicles used. Older buggies may have worn suspension or tyres that struggle in soft sand. A well-maintained buggy with proper sand tyres, good shock absorbers and a reliable engine makes a noticeable difference in control and comfort. It is worth confirming with whichever business you choose what model you will drive and when it was last serviced.

Safety Gear and Briefing Quality

A responsible operator provides more than just a helmet. Look for a full set of safety gear: goggles or a visor, gloves, and a sturdy jumpsuit. The goggles should be anti-scratch and anti-fog, because dust and sun glare can reduce visibility quickly. Before you set off, there should be a thorough briefing on how to operate the buggy, how to handle different dune angles, and what to do in case of a rollover or separation from the group. A good briefing covers hand signals, following distances, and the correct way to approach a dune crest. If the operator rushes through this or skips it, that is a red flag. One local option is Desert Safari Dubai - Dune Buggy & Quad Biking Dubai, but you should confirm safety practices with any provider you consider.



Permits and Legal Requirements

Driving a dune buggy in Dubai's desert is not an unregulated activity. Operators need permits from the relevant authorities to run tours in specific desert conservation areas. These permits ensure that the routes avoid protected wildlife habitats and that the vehicles meet safety and emissions standards. When you book, ask whether the operator holds the necessary permits for the area you will be riding in. A legitimate operator will have no problem showing proof. Riding with an unlicensed operator might mean you are on an unsafe vehicle or in a restricted area, which could lead to fines or your tour being cut short. It also means there is no official oversight of safety procedures.

View the location on Google Maps

Insurance and Liability Coverage

Accidents can happen even on a well-organised tour. Check what insurance coverage is included in your booking. Some packages cover damage to the buggy and medical costs for the driver, while others place liability on you for any damage. Read the terms carefully. If the operator asks you to sign a waiver that holds you fully responsible for any damage, consider whether you are comfortable with that risk. Travel insurance policies sometimes exclude off-road vehicle activities, so check your own coverage too. A transparent operator will explain the insurance arrangements before you pay.

Group Size and Guide Ratio

A small group with a dedicated guide makes for a better experience. If the operator runs very large groups, the ride can become chaotic, with dust clouds reducing visibility and drivers pushing hard to keep up. Ask how many buggies are in a typical group and how many guides accompany them. Ideally, there should be a lead guide and a tail guide to keep the group together and respond to any issues. A ratio of one guide per five to six buggies is common. If the group is too large, you may spend more time waiting than driving.

Duration and Route Details

Tour durations vary widely. Some packages advertise a two-hour drive but include lengthy stops for photos and refreshments, leaving less actual driving time. Ask for a clear breakdown: how long you will be driving versus how long you will be stationary. Also ask about the route. A good route takes in a variety of dune shapes and avoids backtracking over the same ground. Some operators offer sunset or sunrise rides, which reduce heat and provide better lighting. If you are sensitive to heat, check what time of day the tour runs and whether the buggy has any sun protection, such as a canopy.



What to Bring and What to Wear

Even with safety gear provided, what you wear underneath matters. Lightweight, long-sleeved clothing protects against sun and sand. Closed-toe shoes are essential; sandals or flip-flops can slip off the pedals and cause an accident. Bring a scarf or a shemagh to cover your face if the dust is heavy. Sunglasses under the goggles can help with glare, but make sure they fit

comfortably. A small backpack with water is useful, but check if the buggy has storage. Some operators provide water, but it is safer to bring your own.

Reading the Fine Print

Before you confirm, read the cancellation policy, the weather policy, and any conditions about minimum age or height. Some operators require a minimum age of 16 or 18, and a valid driving licence. Others may accept learners under supervision. If the weather turns bad, find out whether you can reschedule or get a refund. A clear policy shows the operator is organised. Vague terms like "subject to availability" or "no refunds under any circumstances" should make you pause.



Final Checks on the Day

On the day of your ride, do a quick personal inspection. Check that the buggy's tyres are properly inflated and have visible tread. Look for any loose bolts or cracks in the frame. Ensure the seatbelt works and is not frayed. Test the steering and brakes before you move off. If anything feels off, speak up. A reputable guide will appreciate your caution. For a reliable local option, you can reach Desert Safari Dubai - Dune Buggy & Quad Biking Dubai at Cascades Tower - Al Marsa St - Marsa Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates, phone +971 52 447 2719.

Desert Safari Dubai - Dune Buggy & Quad Biking Dubai is also on YouTube.