

**U.S. EMBASSY
ABU DHABI**

**Ramadan
Hours:**

This year, Ramadan falls approximately from Thursday, July 19, to Saturday, August 18. Please be aware that our public hours will change as indicated. Appointments are still required for most services.

American Citizen Services: 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm

Passport return will be from 1:30 pm until 2:30 pm

Immigrant Visa: 8:00 am until 10:00 am

Non-Immigrant Visa: 8:30 am until 11:00 am

American Citizen Services

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Ramadan in Abu Dhabi

The Holy month of Ramadan is a time when Muslims participate in fasting in order to gain a better understanding of the lives of those less fortunate, self-discipline, patience, and faith to God. During this time, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking during daylight hours. Once the sun sets, the night begins with Iftar—the meal that breaks the fast and is usually celebrated among friends and family.

This celebration is highly important in Islam and therefore should be held in high regard among everyone—not just those who celebrate it. Dur-

ing this time, expatriates are normally advised not to eat or drink in public during the day out of consideration for those who participate in fasting. It can be difficult for Muslims to go for up to twelve hours without food and water, so non-Muslims should take care in being conservative in their actions. Since Ramadan is a time of cleansing and purity, non-Muslims are also expected to dress more conservatively out of respect for the surrounding culture. If local cultural norms are ignored, expatriates could get in trouble with local authorities, re-

sulting in warnings, fines, or in the most extreme cases, deportation.

With this in mind, remember that Ramadan is a celebration and a period of strong reflection and spirituality. It is an opportunity for non-Muslims to show their respect for the local culture. These efforts that will be appreciated. Official start and end dates of Ramadan are difficult to determine ahead of time since they depend on lunar sightings. Check local newspapers to confirm these dates.

Ramadan Customs

As is customary for Muslim countries, many restaurants and stores will be closed during the day. Hotels and some restaurants will be open during this time for Westerners. Once the sun sets, restaurants will reopen and serve regu-

larly. Some offices will modify opening and closing hours, so be sure to check ahead of time when scheduling appointments and meetings to avoid disappointment (see above). Grocery stores will be open at regular times.



Ramadan
Kareem!



General Dos and Don'ts During Ramadan

DO:

- Greet with a smile and say "Ramadan Kareem," meaning "Ramadan is Generous"
- Dress conservatively
- Wait for the sun to set to eat in public

DON'T:

- Eat, drink, or smoke in public during daylight hours
- Leave or display food in public places
- Engage in public displays of affection

Upcoming holiday Schedule

Embassy Closed:

- August 18-20* — Eid Al Fitr
- September 3—Labor Day
- October 8—Columbus Day
- October 25*—Arafat (Haj) Day
- October 26-28* - Eid Al Adha

* Denotes UAE religious holidays which are dependent upon the sighting of the moon and are likely to vary from the above estimated dates.



Embassy Welcomes new ACS Chief

We are pleased to welcome new American Citizen Services Chief Charles Fee and wish all the best to our departing Chief Marwa Zeini. Marwa will be remembered for her work improving our communications, including introduction of this newsletter!

Chuck has been at the Embassy for one year as a visa officer and will now turn his attention to directly assisting our U.S. citizen community. He is excited to get to know many of you and we all look forward to continuing to improve the services we provide.

Social Security: How to Apply for Benefits Online

Applying for Social Security Benefits can seem daunting at first, but now there is an online application to make applying for benefits easier than ever.

By visiting the Social Security Administration website (www.ssa.gov), you can enter all your information and complete the application in less than thirty minutes. The online application also provides the convenience of being able to save work you have done and return later. You can correct mistakes, link to helpful information, and send your application electronically so there is no need to mail it. SSA also ensures that your information is completely secure and only available to you.

Both retirement and disability benefits can be submitted online. Completing your application

online saves time and money because there is no wait for an appointment and you can complete the application at a time and place appropriate to your needs.

With the online application, if an answer is unclear or needs further information, the Social Security Administration can contact you more easily. The website also provides a step-by-step demo of the application process in case there is any confusion or if you would like a walkthrough of the application before proceeding. Once SSA begins processing your application, you will receive a notification letter in the mail.

For Retirement benefits, you are eligible if you are at least 61 years and 9 months old, are **not** currently receiving benefits on

your own Social Security record, have not already applied for benefits, **and** want your benefits to start no more than 4 months in the future.

For Disability benefits, you must be 18 years or older, not currently receiving benefits on your own Social Security record, have worked and paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify (qualifications can be found at <http://www.ssa.gov/dibplan/dqualify2.htm>), and have a medical condition that has prevented you from working or is expected to prevent you from working for at least 12 months or end in death.

For more information, you can log on to www.ssa.gov

Don't Forget to Vote!

Have a say in our country's future! One of our most treasured values is the right and the privilege to vote – to participate actively in our country's democratic process. The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi encourages all U.S. citizens to participate in this year's elections, and stands ready to help you vote. Almost all overseas U.S. citizens can vote. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia now allow adult children who have never resided in the United States to vote using their parents' state of voting residence. Details are available on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/reference/nvr-res.html>.

Note that most states now require you to complete and submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) each calendar year. The FPCA allows you to register to vote and request an absentee ballot. If you haven't yet done so, we urge you to do so now. The easiest way to complete it is online at www.FVAP.gov. Depending on

your State's rules, you then send it to your local election officials electronically or by mail.

If you are unable to submit electronically, print out the completed FPCA and the (U.S.) postage-paid envelope containing the address of your local election officials. You can drop off the postage-paid envelope (containing your FPCA) at the Embassy, and we will mail it back home for you without the need to pay international postage. If it's easier for you to use Abu Dhabi's postal system, be sure to affix sufficient international postage and allow sufficient time for international mail

delivery. You may drop off your completed forms or ballots any Sunday, Monday, Wednesday or Thursday between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm that the Embassy is open. Ramadan hours will be from 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm. If you need help completing your FPCA or FWAB, please contact us at abudhabiacs@state.gov to schedule an appointment.

Make your vote count! Follow your State's absentee voting procedures carefully. Send in your FPCA before the registration deadline. When you get your ballot, vote and mail it promptly so it reaches local election officials by your State's absentee ballot receipt deadline.

If you have any questions about registering to vote, please contact Abu Dhabi's Voting Assistance Officer at

AbuDhabiACS@state.gov



Diversity Visas:

A reminder to all Diversity Visa applicants: the deadline by which you must receive your completed visa is **September 30th**. Please hand in all necessary forms fully completed in order for the visa to be processed by that date. If the paperwork is not submitted early enough, then the visa will be unable to be produced by September 30th and you will have to start again by applying for the diversity lottery.

More information can be found at abudhabi.usembassy.gov/diversityvisas.html

Document Authentication: Start early!

The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi strongly advises American citizens to authenticate official certificates (educational, marriage, etc.) prior to entering the United Arab Emirates. The Embassy cannot authenticate U.S. local, state, and federal documents. Authenticating documents is a long process, so it is recommended to start early. If you are going to use the document in the UAE, the following steps must be completed. There are three main steps outlined on our website (abudhabi.usembassy.gov) in order to help guide you through the procedure: obtaining documents and completing the first authentication, authenticate your document with the U.S. Department of State Authentications Office, and then authenticate your document with the UAE Embassy in Washington DC.

Documents issued by an educational institution (college degrees, vocational/ educational certificates, transcripts) should be original and given directly from the institution. Educational documents must be authenticated by the

state's Secretary of State, so contact your school in order to decide how best to authenticate your certificate.

Documents issued by a State (birth, death, and marriage certificates, etc.) must also be authenticated by that state's Secretary of State. You can either contact them or send the document for authentication of the state's issuing officer.

For notarized documents (affidavits or acknowledgments), the authentication procedure varies by state. In order to find out how to authenticate them, contact the state authentication authority.

Documents issued by federal agencies do not require state level authentication.

Documents issued by federal courts need to be sent to:

Justice Management Division,
Security Program Staff
Physical Security Office, Room 6531
9th and Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20530

After completing state level authentication, the second step is to authenticate your document by the U.S. Department of State Authentications Office. A fee of \$8.00 will be charged for each document and they should be processed within five work days. You can send your documents to:

Department of State Documents Authentication Office
518 23rd ST. N.W., SA-1, Columbia Plaza
Washington, D.C. 20520
Telephone: (202) 647-5002 or 1-800-688-9889, FAX: (202) 663-3636

The final step to authentication is submitting the chain of authentications to the UAE Embassy in Washington DC. Contact the Embassy at:

The Embassy of the U.A.E.
3522 International Court, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Telephone: (202) 243-2400

<http://uae-embassy.org/>

For additional information regarding authentication, please visit www.state.gov/m/a/auth

MORE INFORMATION?

Visit our website :
abudhabi.usembassy.gov

Remember to schedule an appointment for American Citizen Services!

Ask the consul:

If you are planning on bringing your maid with you when traveling to the U.S., they may apply for a B1 visa. In order for the visa to be processed, you must be able to establish an employer-employee relationship. This can be established in one of three ways as described on our website.

You also must provide (along

with other necessary documents for a B1 visa) a copy of your visa or U.S. passport and the employee contract. To ensure that the applicant receives a fair wage, applications for visas for domestic employees must include an employment contract signed by the employer and the employee. The contract should be presented in English and in languages clearly understood by the em-

ployer and employee. There are six requirements outlined on our website that must be in the employee contract in order for the visa to be approved.

For more information related to travelling with domestic employees, please visit abudhabi.usembassy.gov/niv/domestics.html

I would like to take my maid with me when I travel, what should I do?