How to Pick the Right Dhow Cruise in Dubai

Start with the Setting: Creek or Marina

The first big choice is where you want to sail. Dubai Creek offers a historic route past old trading ports, traditional souks, and low-rise buildings that have changed little over the decades. The waters are calmer here, and the views at dusk show the city in a quieter, more intimate light. A cruise on the marina side, by contrast, puts you among glittering skyscrapers, modern yachts, and the bright lights of the Dubai skyline. Each setting gives a very different atmosphere, so think about whether you prefer heritage or contemporary glamour before you book.

Check the Boat Itself: Traditional Wooden Dhow or Modern Version

Not every dhow is built the same way. Many cruises operate on a traditional wooden dhow, a handcrafted vessel that reflects the region's maritime history. These boats often have carved details and a classic silhouette that looks beautiful against the water. Others use more modern replicas that mimic the shape but include updated features like better lighting or larger windows. If the authentic feel matters to you, look for a cruise that specifically mentions a traditional wooden dhow. The material and craftsmanship affect both the look and the feel of the ride.

Consider Deck Choices: Open Air or Air-Conditioned Lower Deck

Dubai's climate can be warm even in the evening, so deck selection matters. Most dhows have two levels. The open-air upper deck gives you unobstructed views and a direct breeze, which is wonderful on a mild night. The air-conditioned lower deck offers a cooler, more sheltered environment with large windows that still let you see the skyline. Some people prefer to start on the lower deck for dinner and then move up after the meal. Check whether the cruise allows moving between decks during the trip. If you are sensitive to heat or travelling with young children, the lower deck might be the more comfortable option.

Look at the Dining Format: Buffet or Set Menu

Most evening cruises include an evening buffet dinner, but the quality and variety vary widely. A buffet allows you to choose what and how much you eat, which is useful if you have dietary preferences or want to sample several dishes. Some cruises offer a set menu, which can be more curated but less flexible. Ask about the cuisine style, some focus on Emirati dishes, others on international fare. If you have specific allergies or requirements, confirm with the

operator before booking. A cruise that prides itself on its food will usually describe the menu in detail on its website.

View the location on Google Maps

Entertainment: Live Entertainment and Atmosphere

Many dhows feature live entertainment on board, typically traditional music, a tanoura dance, or a short cultural show. The timing and volume vary. Some cruises keep the performance subtle so you can chat and enjoy the view. Others make it the centrepiece of the evening. Think about your group's preference. If you want a quiet romantic evening, a cruise with minimal entertainment might suit you better. If you are celebrating or travelling with children, a lively show adds fun. Read recent reviews to get a sense of the entertainment style and whether it matches what you are after.



Duration and Timing: How Long Do You Want to Be on the Water?

Cruise duration typically ranges from two to three hours. A shorter cruise can feel rushed if you want to relax over dinner, while a longer one might drag if the entertainment does not hold your interest. Check the departure time as well. Sunset departures are popular because you see the

city transition from day to night, but they also mean the boat is busiest. Later departures offer a darker sky with more dramatic lighting on the buildings. Decide what matters more: the golden hour glow or a quieter, later sail.

Read Between the Lines in Descriptions

When you look at cruise listings, pay attention to the language used. Phrases like “sightseeing tour” suggest the focus is on the views, with dining as a secondary feature. Others emphasise the buffet or the live entertainment first. If a listing is vague about what is included, that is a red flag. Look for specific details: how many dishes, what type of music, whether drinks are included or extra. The more transparent the description, the more likely the experience matches what you expect.

One Local Option

One local option is Dhow Cruise Dubai Marina. It operates on the marina side and offers an evening cruise with dining and entertainment. As with any operator, it is worth confirming the exact menu, deck access, and entertainment schedule with them before booking, as these details can change.

Book Directly and Confirm the Details

Once you have narrowed down your choice, book directly through the cruise operator’s official website or a reputable booking platform. Avoid third-party resellers that add fees or provide outdated information. After booking, confirm the meeting point, boarding time, and what to bring. Some cruises include a hotel pickup, others require you to make your own way to the dock. Knowing these logistics in advance prevents stress on the day.



What to Bring and What to Leave Behind

Bring a light jacket or scarf, as the breeze on the upper deck can feel cool even in warm months. A camera or phone for photos is essential, but avoid bringing bulky bags because space on deck is limited. Most cruises do not allow outside food or drinks, so check that policy before you pack. Leave valuables at home; while dhows are generally safe, it is better not to carry more than you need.

Be Mindful of the Weather

Dubai's weather is mostly predictable, but summer evenings can still be hot and humid, especially on the open deck. Winter evenings are pleasant and often the best time for an upper-deck seat. If you book during summer, consider a cruise that has a well-functioning air-conditioned lower deck. Check the forecast a day ahead and plan accordingly. In rare cases of high wind or rough sea conditions, the operator might cancel or reschedule, so have a backup plan.

Watch for Hidden Costs

Some cruises advertise a low base price but add charges for drinks, upgraded seating, or photography. Read the fine print before you pay. If the price seems too good compared to others, it likely excludes extras that you will want. A mid-range price that includes a buffet and soft drinks often offers the best value. Avoid cruises that do not list what is included, as they may spring surprises later.

Trust Your Instincts

A dhow cruise is as much about the atmosphere as the logistics. If a listing feels impersonal or too salesy, that might reflect the experience on board. Look for operators that communicate clearly, answer questions promptly, and have a straightforward booking process. The best cruises are the ones where the details are clear and the focus is on giving you a relaxing evening on the water.



For more information, you can contact Dhow Cruise Dubai Marina at Lake Central Tower - Marasi Dr - Business Bay - Dubai - United Arab Emirates, phone +971 52 440 9525.