

# UAE FREE ZONES GUIDE



“Focus on what matters.  
**We’ll handle the rest.”**”



# Foreword

Free Zones offer a thriving gateway for entrepreneurs and investors, providing 100% foreign ownership, tax benefits, and streamlined business setup. These zones are key to the UAE's economic success, offering modern infrastructure and business-friendly regulations.



The UAE's emergence as a major business hub is the result of visionary leadership, well-planned economic strategies, and a strong commitment to progress. Free Zones, in particular, play a pivotal role in this growth, offering modern infrastructure, business-friendly regulations, and sector-specific advantages. Whether you are an aspiring entrepreneur, a seasoned investor, or looking to expand your global footprint, UAE Free Zones provide the perfect launchpad.

This guide will navigate you through the process of setting up and operating a business within the UAE Free Zones. We'll explore the economic landscape, highlight key industries, and provide essential insights into legal structures, licensing requirements, and operational procedures within Free Zones. Additionally, we will shed light on cultural and business etiquette, helping you forge strong relationships in the UAE's dynamic business ecosystem.

As you explore this guide, envision the limitless possibilities that UAE Free Zones offer. The information provided will serve as your roadmap to success, helping you harness the advantages of this well-established business environment. Seize the opportunities, embrace innovation, and be part of UAE's ever-evolving success story.

Welcome to UAE Free Zones – Your Gateway to Global Business Growth!

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Founded

**1971**



### Founder/1st President

His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin  
Sultan Al Nahyan

### Political System

Constitutional Federation

(The Monarch Of Abu Dhabi Is the Head Of State)

### Geographic Area

84,000 Square KM

### Population est.

10 million (2024)

### GDP

530 bn (2024)

### Per Capita Income

USD 53,900

### Currency: UAE DIRHAM

(Officially abbreviated "AED", "DH" OR "DHS");

The Dirham is pegged to the US Dollar;

1 DIRHAM = 0.27 US DOLLARS

### Climate

Average Temp. 19°C (January) To 36°C (August)



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# UAE FREE ZONES





## What is a Free Zone?

Free zones in the UAE are special economic areas that provide customs duty benefits and tax concessions (subject to certain conditions) to investors, operating under their own unique rules and regulations. They are designed to attract foreign investment by offering 100% ownership to all nationalities and streamlined startup processes, labor and immigration procedures, and various legal services. Furthermore, establishing the Jebel Ali Free Zone in 1985 (being the first free zone) marked the inception of this transformative approach.

**40%**

Contribution to UAE's  
total exports

**50+**

Free Zones in  
United Arab Emirates

### Benefits of UAE Free Zones for Foreign Investors



100% Foreign  
Ownership



0% Corporate and  
Income Taxes



Fast and Easy Business  
Set-up Procedures



Developed Business  
Communities



Numerous Options at  
Competitive Costs



100% Repatriation of  
Capital and Profits



Easy Regional, Global  
Market Access



100% Exemption from  
Customs Duty



Modern and Sophisticated  
Infrastructure

Free zones within the UAE offer an enticing proposition for businesses, especially those with a focus on international trade and specific industries. These zones are meticulously designed to attract foreign investment, providing a host of advantages to enterprises that set up shop within them.

There are two types of Free zones for VAT purposes i.e. Designated and non-designated free zone. Generally speaking, in designated Free zone there is no VAT for intra-freezone sales of goods.

**The Designated freezones are in all emirates, examples of such freezones are:**

- **Dubai:** Jebel Ali Free Zone, Dubai Textile City, Dubai Cars and Automotive Zone, Dubai Aviation City
- **Abu Dhabi:** Free Trade Zone of Khalifa Port Khalifa Industrial Zone
- **Sharjah:** Hamriyah Free Zone
- **Ajman:** Ajman Free Zone
- **Umm Al Quwain:** Umm Al Quwain Free Trade Zone in Ahmed Bin Rashid Port, Umm Al Quwain Free Trade Zone on Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Road
- **Ras Al Khaimah:** Rak Free Trade Zone, RAK Maritime City Freezone
- **Fujairah:** Fujairah Free Zone, Fujairah Oil Industry Zone

Free zones permit 100% foreign ownership. This characteristic allows businesses to maintain complete control over their operations and corporate structure. Furthermore, free zones offer corporate tax exemptions for qualifying activities, which can lead to substantial cost savings, and they feature simplified regulatory frameworks, expediting the business setup process.

Free zones cater to a diverse range of industries, including manufacturing, logistics, E-Commerce, technology, media, and healthcare, among others. This diversity enables businesses to find an environment that aligns closely with their specific activities and objectives. Additionally, free zones often offer well-developed infrastructure, including modern office spaces, logistics facilities, and connectivity, fostering an environment conducive to growth and innovation.





# How to Start a business in Free Zone

## Step 1

### Determine the nature of Business Activity

Various Business Licences are available for Investors on the basis of Business Activity. For instance, following licences are available:

- Commercial Trade
- Consultancy/ Professional Services
- Freelance
- Offshore
- Industrial and others

## Step 2

Determine the legal structure of your business which will depend on your needs and will further determine regulatory requirements for the chosen entity structure. The entity structure generally available for business in freezone are:

- Free Zone Limited Liability company
- Free Zone Company
- Free Zone Establishment



### Step 3

Register the unique Trade Name subject to certain conditions.

### Step 4

Select a Business Location, there are more than 50 free zones in UAE, you can choose the Free zones based on your needs. There is ample land and office spaces. Some can be leased, and some can be bought as well.

### Step 5

#### Get initial approval

To open a new company, all requirements need to be completed with complete submission of documents. Additional approvals may be required depending on your business activity from relevant ministries or departments, for example health or tourism. Few of the documents are:

- Completed Application form
- Business Plan
- Passport copies
- Letter of Intent clarifying the investment idea
- 2 years audited balance sheet and Bank reference certificate (if required)

### Step 6

#### Registration and Fee payment

Depending on licence the fee is calculated and accordingly has to be paid. Few of the documents to be submitted at this stage are:

- Completed registration application form
- Board Resolutions and Power of Attorney's
- MOA and AOA
- Passport Size Photographs

**Please note that:** Documents may be required to be attested from Dubai Embassy and Ministry of external Affairs of in Home Country followed by through MoFA in UAE.

### Step 7

#### Visa and immigration

Each Freezone has its own process for Visa. Adequate investor and employee Visas are available subject to a certain fee. Certain Medical test will be conducted for issuance of Residence Permits.

### Step 8

#### Bank Account

In UAE, there are two different kinds of bank accounts: digital and traditional.

- The first step in the process is selecting an appropriate bank.
- Submission of relevant company set up related documentation, including the Authorized Signatory's KYC and trade Licence.
- Completion of Biometric (if required)
- Opening a bank account after the examination of all documents.
- Minimum balance transfers to the bank account.

**Please Note:** Each bank has its own rules and regulations.







# General Incorporation Process in UAE





C.



Finalize all  
incorporation  
Paperwork

D.



Receive your  
License  
Notification

E.



Enter UAE for  
Biometrics and  
Medical Tests

H.



Commence Your  
Business

# Major Free Zones in Dubai

## 1. Dubai Airport Free Zone (DAFZA)

**Market Specialization:** Aviation, Cosmetics, E-commerce, Agriculture, Food & beverages, Logistics, Tech and ICT, Jewellery, Mechanical engineering, Pharmaceuticals, Telecoms.

## 2. Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA)

**Market Specialization:** Agriculture, Aviation, Commodities, Energy, Food & beverages, Healthcare, Industrial, Logistics, Mechanical engineering, Packaging, Pharmaceuticals, Trade.

## 3. Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC)

**Market Specialization:** Aviation, Commodities, Construction, E-commerce, Education, Energy, Financial services, Agriculture, Food & beverages, Logistics, Healthcare, Hospitality, Media, Tech and ICT, Trade

## 4. Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO)

**Market Specialization:** Construction, Education, Energy, Industrial, Tech and ICT, Real estate, Trade

## 5. Meydan Free Zone

**Market Specialization:** Consultancy, Financial services, Trade

## 6. Dubai Internet City (DIC)

**Market Specialization:** E-commerce, Tech and ICT, Telecoms

## 7. Dubai Media City (DMC)

**Market Specialization:** E-commerce, Event management, Arts & Entertainment, Marketing, Media, Printing & publishing, Broadcasting, TV & film production

## 8. Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)

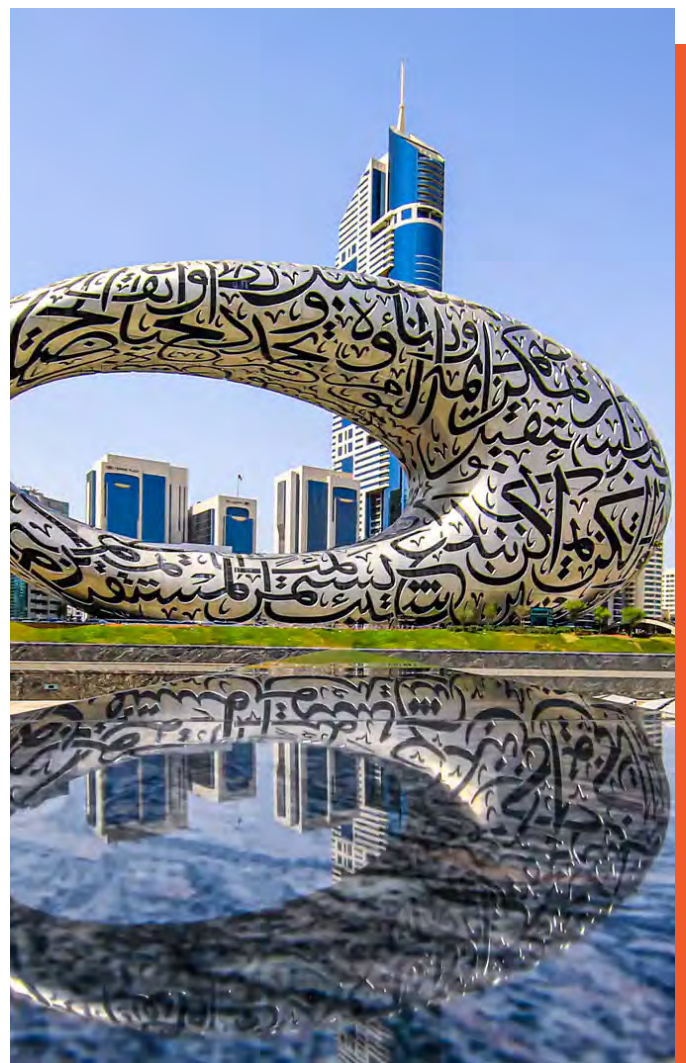
**Market Specialization:** Financial Services  
Dual Licence with DET, Operating Licence for NPIO and Foundations, Commercial Licence for Companies and Partnerships, Financial Services / Regulated Licence from Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA).

## 9. Dubai Healthcare City (DHC)

**Market Specialization:** Education, Healthcare

## 10. Dubai South

**Market Specialization:** Aviation, E-commerce, Logistics, Real estate, Trade.



### 11. Dubai Knowledge Park (DKP)

Market Specialization: Consultancy, Education, Human resource management, Training & personal development.

### 12. Dubai Design District (D3)

Market Specialization: E-commerce, Fashion & design.

### 13. Dubai International Humanitarian City (IHC)

Market Specialization: Humanitarian

### 14. Dubai Science Park (DSP)

Market Specialization: Biotechnology

### 15. Dubai CommerCity

Market Specialization: E-commerce, Construction, Food & beverages, Education, Financial services, Manufacturing, Mining & quarrying, Insurance

### 16. Dubai International Academic City (DIAC)

Market Specialization: Education

### 17. IFZA

Market Specialization: IT Services, E-Commerce, Fintech, and Technology.





# Major Free Zones in Abu Dhabi

## 1. Khalifa Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD)

**Market Specialization:** Manufacturing, logistics, Food Processing and trade

## 2. Masdar City Free Zone

**Market Specialization:** Clean technology and renewable energy

## 3. Abu Dhabi Airport Free Zone (ADAFZ)

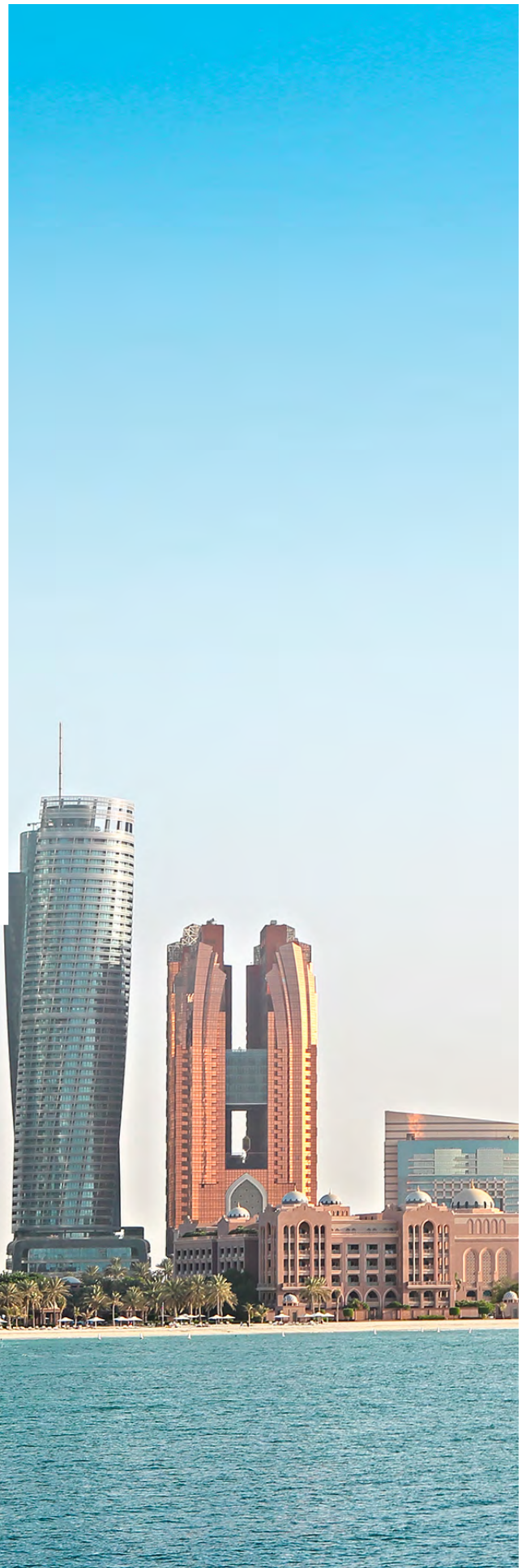
**Market Specialization:** Aviation, aerospace, logistics, and travel-related businesses

## 4. Abu Dhabi Global Market Free Zone (ADGM)

**Market Specialization:** Financial, Banking, and more

## 5. Twofour54 Abu Dhabi (Media Free Zone Authority)

**Market Specialization:** Media & Entertainment



# Major Free Zones in Sharjah

Sharjah hosts six strategically positioned free zones: Hamriyah Free Zone, SAIF Zone, SHAMS, SRTI Park, Sharjah Publishing City, and Sharjah Healthcare City. These zones are located in or near major transport hubs to efficiently meet investors' logistics needs.

## 1. Sharjah Airport International Free Zone (SAIF Zone)

**Market Specialization:** General trading, light manufacturing, industrial, and service sectors.

## 2. Hamriyah Free Zone (HFZA)

**Market Specialization:** Heavy industry, manufacturing, logistics, petrochemicals, and oil & gas.

## 3. Sharjah Media City (SHAMS)

**Market Specialization:** Media, creative industries, digital marketing, and information technology.

## 4. Sharjah Publishing City (SPC)

**Market Specialization:** Publishing & Allied Industries, and General Trading

## 5. Sharjah Healthcare City

**Market Specialization:** Healthcare and allied services





# Major Free Zones in Ras Al Khaimah

## 1. Ras Al Khaimah Economic Zone (RAKEZ)

**Market Specialization:** RAKEZ serves various sectors, including manufacturing, logistics, trading, Alcohol, Tobacco and services.

## 2. RAK Maritime City Free Zone

**Market Specialization:** Maritime services, logistics, trading, manufacturing

## 3. RAK International Corporate Centre (RAK ICC)

**Market Specialization:** Corporate services, business consultancy, financial services

## 4. RAK Digital Assets Oasis (RAK DAO)

**Market Specialization:** Digital assets, blockchain, fintech, digital economy

## 5. RAK Media Free Zone

**Market Specialization:** Media, entertainment, advertising, production





# Major Free Zones in Ajman

## 1. Ajman Free Zone (AFZ)

**Market Specialization:** Trading, industrial, services, IT, and e-commerce

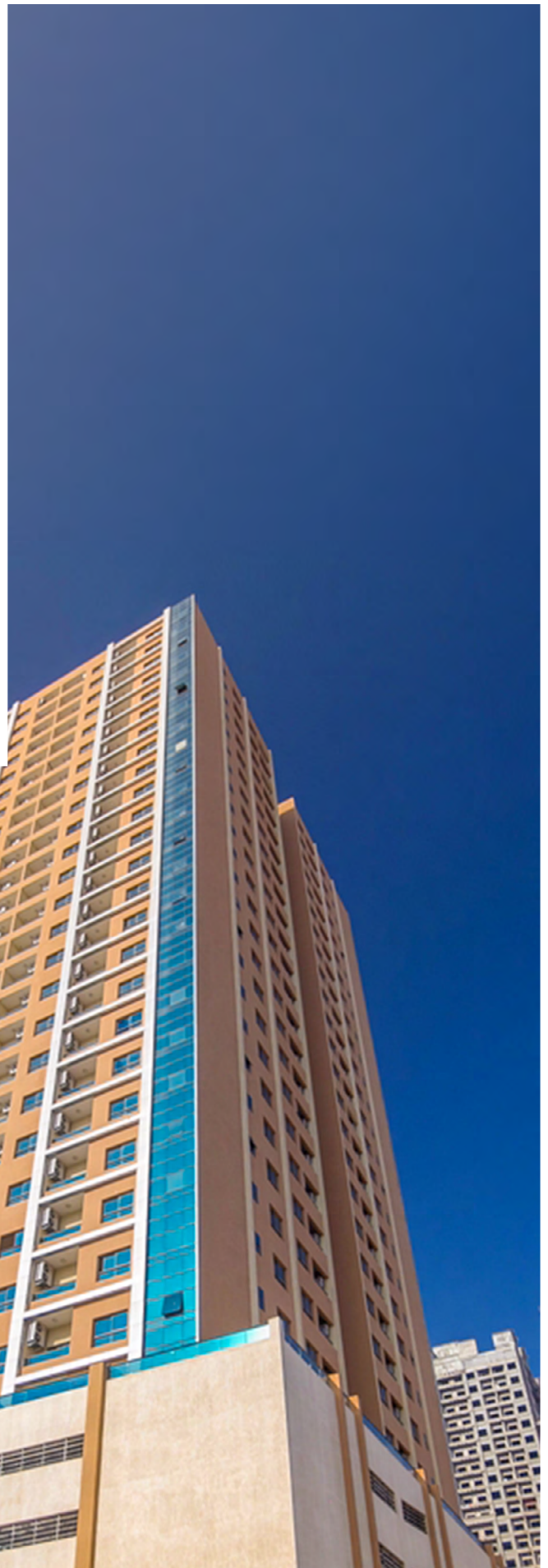
## 2. Ajman Media City Free Zone

**Market Specialization:** Media, marketing, digital, and creative industries.

## Major Free Zones in Umm Al-Quwain

### 1. Umm Al-Quwain Free Trade Zone (UAQ FTZ)

**Market Specialization:** UAQ FTZ caters to various industries, including trading, consultancy, technology, and services.





# Major Free Zones in Fujairah

## 1. Fujairah Free Zone (FFZ)

**Market Specialization:** Media, Trading, industrial, services, and e-commerce

## 2. Fujairah Creative City (FCC)

**Market Specialization:** This zone targets media, entertainment, and creative industries.

## 3. Fujairah Oil Industry Zone (FOIZ)

**Market Specialization:** Oil and gas, petrochemicals, energy





# Free Zones in Umm Al-Quwain

## 1. Umm Al-Quwain Free Trade Zone (UAQ FTZ)

**Market Specialization:** UAQ FTZ caters to various industries, including trading, consultancy, technology, and services.





# Geography of UAE

-  Area (sq km)
-  Population (Million)
-  Major Industries
-  GDP (US\$ billion est.)

## Dubai

 4,114 sq km

 3.1 mn.

 Trade & Finance, Tourism

 USD 140 bn

## Abu Dhabi

 67,340 sq km

 3.1 mn.

 Oil & Gas, Tourism

 USD 170 bn

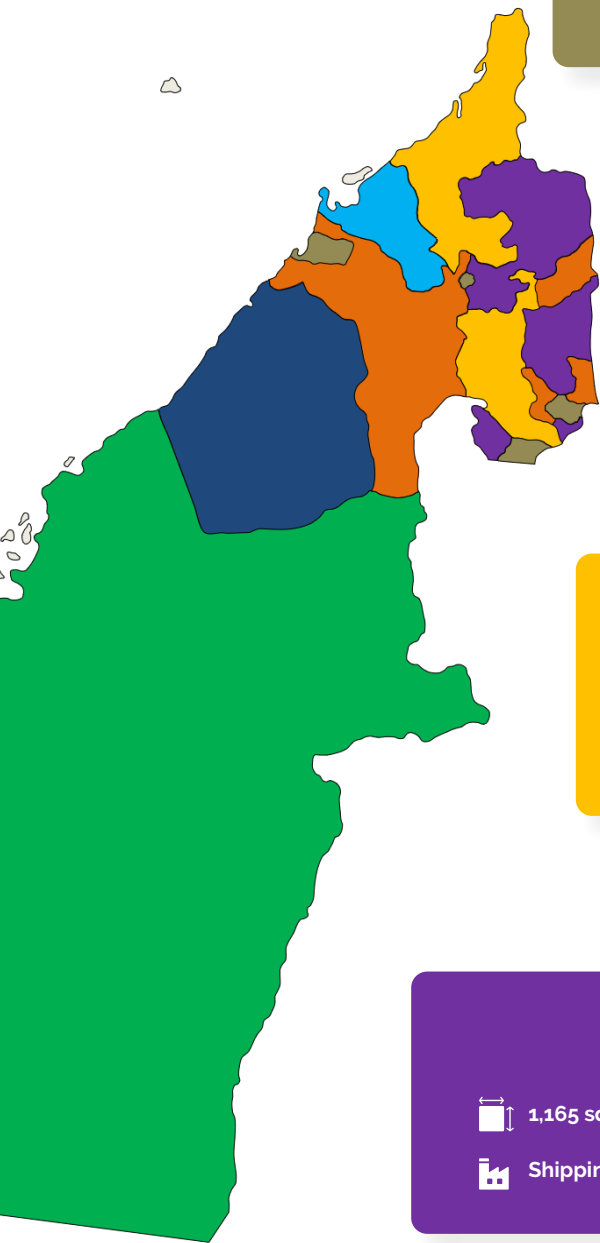
## Sharjah

 2,590 sq km


 1.4 mn.

 Manufacturing, Media

 USD 40 bn



## Ajman

 259 sq km

 0.5 mn.

 Light Manufacturing,  
Tourism

 USD 15 bn

## Umm Al Quwain

 700 sq km

 0.7 mn.

 Fishing, Manufacturing

 USD 10 bn

## Ras Al Khaimah

 1,684 sq km

 0.5 mn.


 Manufacturing, Crypto

 USD 20 bn

## Fujairah

 1,165 sq km

 0.2 mn.

 Shipping, Manufacturing

 USD 5 bn

# About **stratrich**

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Stratrich Consulting removes the complexities of entering and operating in the Indian and UAE markets. We are your one-stop shop, guiding you through every stage of your journey, from pre-incorporation planning to post-incorporation support. Our team of experts ensure a smooth transition and help you navigate the unique regulatory landscapes.

### Strategic Approach, Agile Execution

We combine a comprehensive strategy with agile execution to equip you with the tools you need to succeed.

#### Our services are designed to help you:

**Overcome challenges:** We understand the hurdles foreign businesses face in the UAE. We have the experience and knowledge to help you navigate them efficiently.

**Capture growth opportunities:** We identify and capitalize on market opportunities, ensuring your business thrives in these dynamic economies.

**Achieve sustainable growth:** Our focus goes beyond just market entry. We provide ongoing support to ensure your long-term success.

#### Tailored Solutions for Your Business

We understand that every business is unique. Our solutions are customized to fit your specific needs and goals, whether you're a startup seeking to enter the GCC market or an established company looking to expand your reach in the UAE.

#### Your Trusted Partner

Stratrich Consulting is your reliable advisor throughout your market entry and growth journey in the UAE.

*Let us help you navigate the complexities and unlock your full potential in these exciting markets.*





## Our Services

### Advisory & Regulatory



### Business Setup & Incorporation



## Tax



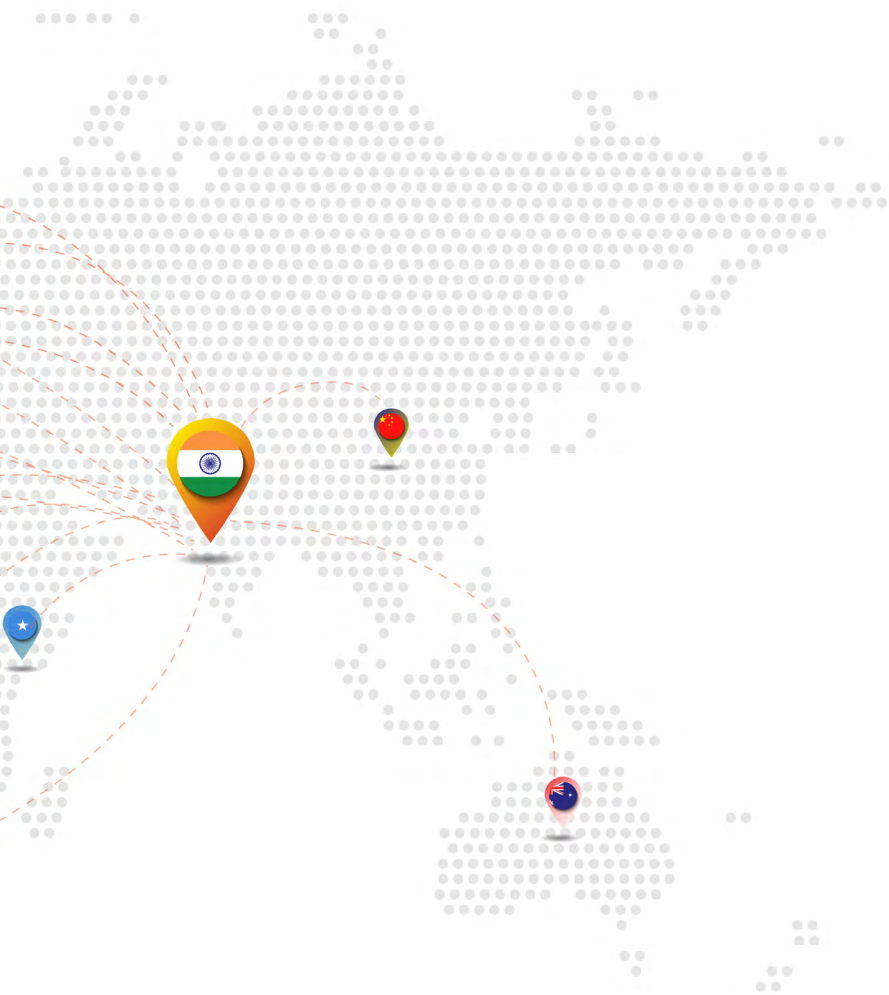
## Corporate Services





## Global Scale





**300+**  
Employees

**500+**  
Clients

**10**  
Offices

Noida | Delhi | Gurugram | Mohali | Ahmedabad | Nashik | Pune | Bengaluru | Jaipur | Dubai

# Our Services

Whether you are growing in one market or many, transforming your business, looking to operate more effectively, managing risk and compliance, or realising stakeholder value, Stratrich Consulting has the right experts to meet your needs.

## Advisory & Regulatory

Our adaptable advisory services seamlessly integrate with your team, guiding you through challenges, uncovering opportunities, and charting a course for sustainable growth.

- Business Consulting
- Business Risk Services
- Regulatory Advisory Services
- M&A and Transactions Advisory
- Market Research and Intelligence
- Market Entry Strategy & Entry Routes
- StratBridge® - Our special service focused on helping you find clients and business partners in the UAE market.
- Business Planning and Techno-economic Viability Report/Detailed Project Report
- Location Analysis and Selection, and Incentive Benchmarking/Optimization

## Business Setup & Incorporation

Let our experts handle your Business Setup & Incorporation. Our cost-effective services free you and your stakeholders to focus on what matters most – running your business.

- Mainland Company
- Offshore Company
- Freezone Company



## Tax

Our team leverages deep industry expertise, both local and global, alongside powerful tax tools to simplify compliance and identify optimal tax strategies for your business.

- Corporate Tax
- Expatriate Services
- International Tax Services
- Transfer Pricing
- VAT Services

## Corporate Services

Our comprehensive suite of corporate services streamlines essential tasks, unlocks talent potential, and provides the expertise you need to navigate challenges.

- Accounting & Bookkeeping
- Payroll Services
- Legal & Regulatory Services
- Audit Support Services
- Human Capital Consulting

## Our leaders



**Rajat Chawla**

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## Industry Expertise



Automobile



Banking & Financial  
Services



E-commerce



Education



Infrastructure



IT & AI



Real Estate



Renewable Energy



Civil Aviation



Defence



FMCG



Healthcare



Pharmaceuticals



Oil and gas



Textile



Telecom



Alcohol



Tobacco





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At Stratrich, we bring unrivalled expertise in providing top-notch Services in the UAE. As a leading business consulting firm, we understand the intricacies of your corporate needs and offer tailored solutions to optimize your business strategy.

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