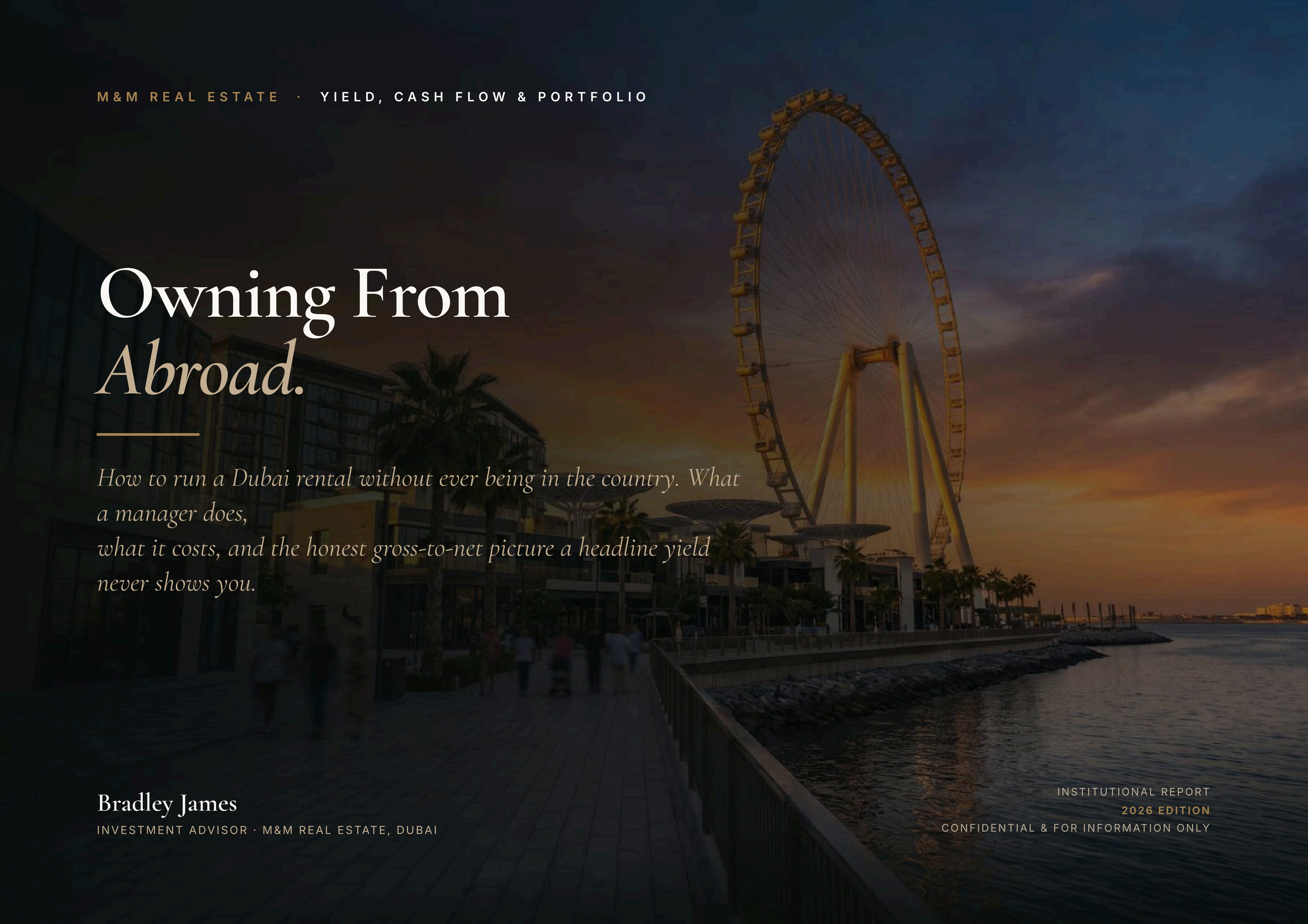


Owning From *Abroad.*

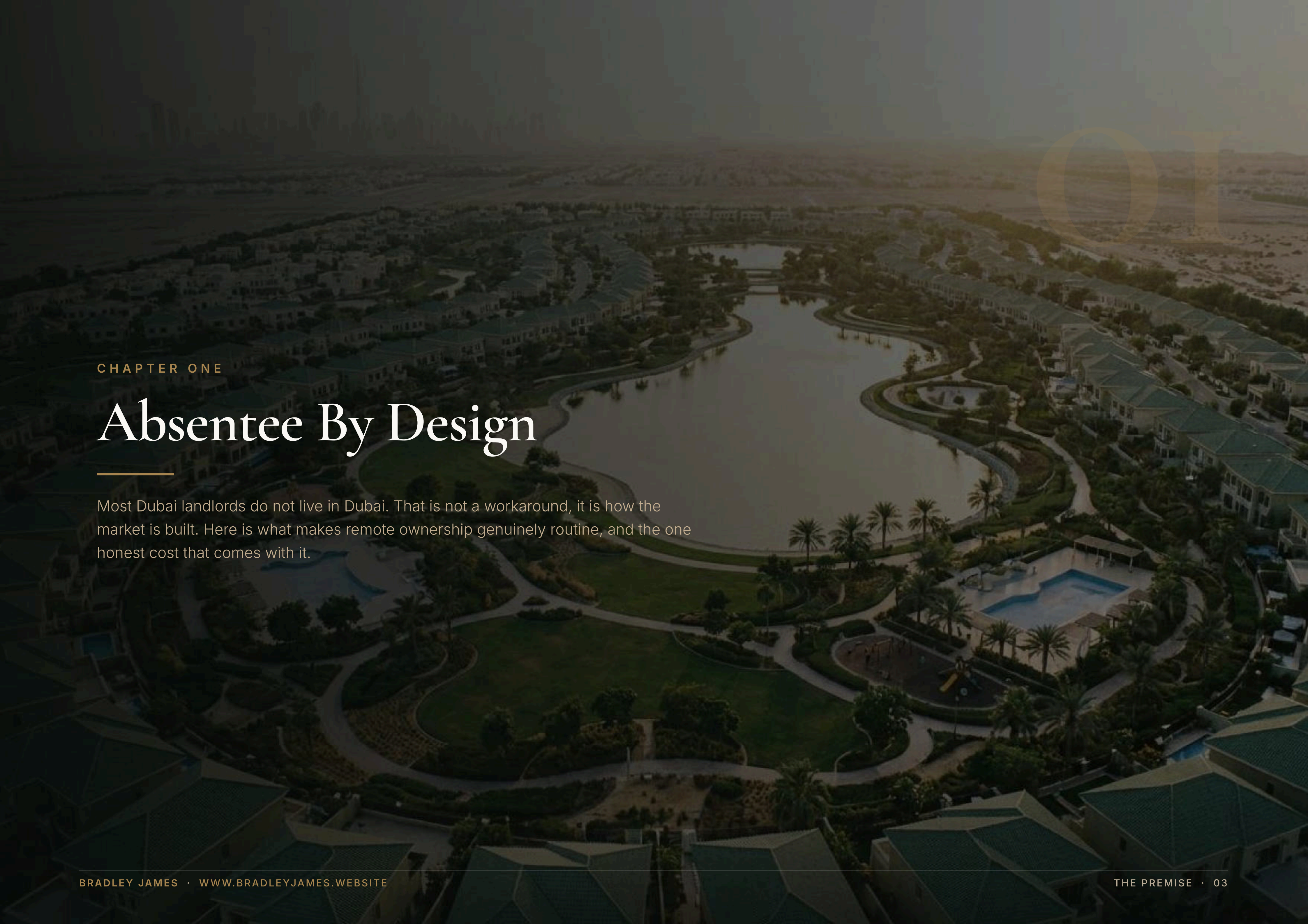
How to run a Dubai rental without ever being in the country. What a manager does, what it costs, and the honest gross-to-net picture a headline yield never shows you.

Bradley James
INVESTMENT ADVISOR · M&M REAL ESTATE, DUBAI

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT
2026 EDITION
CONFIDENTIAL & FOR INFORMATION ONLY

CONTENTS

What This Guide Covers



CHAPTER ONE

Absentee By Design

Most Dubai landlords do not live in Dubai. That is not a workaround, it is how the market is built. Here is what makes remote ownership genuinely routine, and the one honest cost that comes with it.

CHAPTER 01 · THE PREMISE

Running It From Three Time Zones Away

Here's the question behind this whole guide. Can you own a Dubai apartment, let it, collect the rent and never once fly out to deal with it? The short answer is yes, and for most overseas landlords that's exactly how it works. The longer answer is that it costs you a slice of your yield to make it happen, and this guide is about being honest on both halves.

Dubai's rental market was effectively designed for absentee owners. A large share of the buyer base is overseas, off-plan is roughly 60% of sales, and an entire layer of regulated infrastructure exists to let a landlord in London, Lagos or Mumbai run a unit here without being present. The tenancy is registered digitally through Ejari, rent is paid by cheque or bank transfer, and a licensed manager stands in for you on the ground. None of this requires your physical presence once it's set up properly.

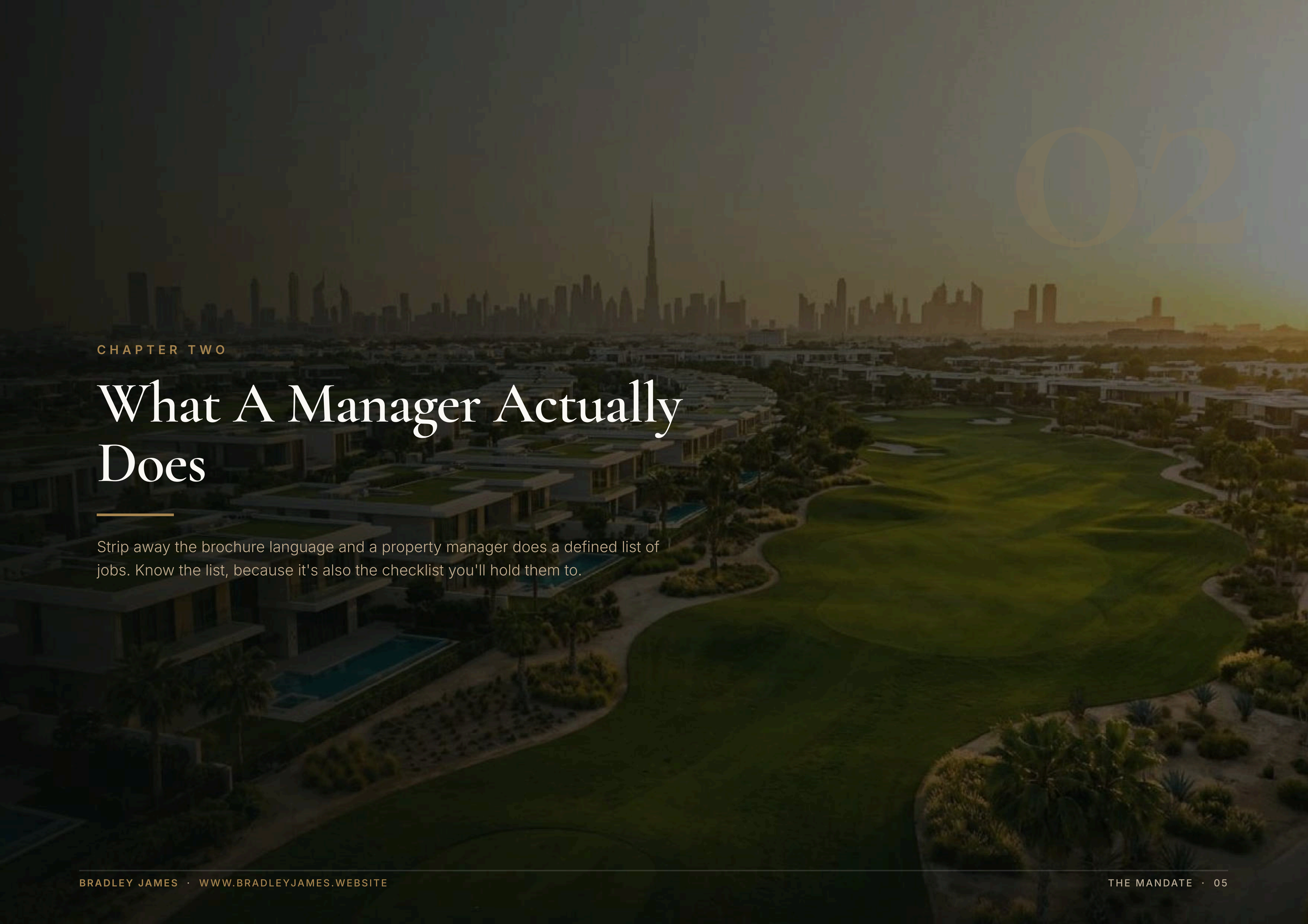
So this is not a guide about a clever hack. It's a guide about a normal, regulated way of owning, and about the trade you make to use it. A property manager is a real, recurring cost. It's typically a modest percentage of rent, but it's a percentage that comes straight off your net, and a headline gross yield never shows it. Read this as a plain account of what you're buying when you hand the keys to a manager, and what you keep when you do.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- What a Dubai property manager actually does, task by task.
- The legal backbone that makes remote ownership safe: Ejari, RERA, DLD title, POA.
- What it costs: the management fee and the leasing fee, stated plainly.
- The gross-to-net walk, so you see what a headline yield hides.
- How to choose and vet a manager, and the honest caveats.

THE HONEST FRAME

"Remote ownership in Dubai is routine, not clever. The only real question is what it costs you, and whether the manager is worth the slice they take."



02

CHAPTER TWO

What A Manager Actually Does

Strip away the brochure language and a property manager does a defined list of jobs. Know the list, because it's also the checklist you'll hold them to.

The Job, Task By Task

A good manager is not a vague point of contact. They perform a specific set of functions, and the fee you pay is meant to cover them. When you're absent, this list is your eyes and hands on the ground, so it pays to know exactly what falls inside it and what doesn't.

1. **Find and vet the tenant.**
   Market the unit, run viewings, screen applicants, negotiate the rent and cheque terms, and get the contract signed. This is usually charged separately as a leasing fee, covered in Chapter Four.
2. **Register the tenancy through Ejari.**
   Every Dubai tenancy must be registered on Ejari, the official system under RERA. Registration is what makes the contract enforceable and lets the tenant connect utilities. Your manager handles it.
3. **Handle the deposit and rent collection.**
   Hold the security deposit, bank the rent cheques on their due dates, chase late payment, and remit your share to you, ideally with a statement each time.
4. **Snagging and handover.**
   On a new unit, inspect against the developer's spec, log defects, and push the developer to fix them during the warranty window before a tenant moves in.
5. **Maintenance and repairs.**
   Field the tenant's maintenance requests, dispatch approved contractors, and authorise spend up to a limit you agree in advance.
6. **Service-charge and utility handling.**
   Keep the community service charge and any utility accounts in order so the unit doesn't fall into arrears while you're not watching.
7. **Inspections and reporting.**
   Periodic inspections to confirm the tenant is keeping the unit well, plus regular reporting back to you as the owner abroad.

◆ **WHERE MANAGERS VARY MOST**

Every manager will collect rent. Where they genuinely differ is the quiet, unglamorous work: chasing a defect through a developer's warranty desk, catching a service-charge arrear before it compounds, and reporting to you without being chased. That's the part you're really paying for, and the part to test before you sign.

◆ **THE TEST**

"Rent collection is table stakes. Judge a manager on the boring work you can't see from abroad: reporting, arrears, and defects."

CHAPTER THREE

The Legal Backbone

Remote ownership is safe because of the paperwork, not in spite of it. Ejari, the DLD title, RERA oversight, a Power of Attorney and remote banking are the rails that let you own from anywhere.

The Rails That Make It Safe

The reason you can own from abroad without losing sleep is that Dubai's system is built on recorded, regulated steps. Your ownership isn't a handshake, it's a title. Your tenancy isn't informal, it's registered. And your manager can act for you because you've formally authorised them to. Here's the backbone, piece by piece.

The DLD title. Foreign nationals may own freehold in Dubai's designated freehold zones, and ownership is recorded by the Dubai Land Department. The title deed is the legal proof the unit is yours. Nothing your manager does touches that ownership; they operate the asset, they don't hold it.

RERA and Ejari. The Real Estate Regulatory Agency is the DLD arm that regulates the sector, including the firms that manage property. Every tenancy is registered through Ejari, which is what makes a lease enforceable and lets a tenant connect utilities. A manager who registers your tenancy on Ejari is putting you on the right side of the regulator by default.

Power of Attorney. To let someone act for you while you're overseas, on tasks like signing a tenancy or dealing with a developer, you grant a Power of Attorney, notarised before a Dubai Courts notary public. It can be scoped narrowly. You're delegating specific authority, not handing over your asset, and a well-drafted POA is what makes true remote operation possible.

Remote banking. A UAE bank account lets rent land locally and service charges be paid without wiring money in and out for every transaction. Many owners operate remotely once the account is open, and residency via the AED 2 million Golden Visa route makes banking materially easier if you qualify.

Ejari

MANDATORY TENANCY REGISTRATION UNDER RERA

DLD / RERA

POA

NOTARISED AUTHORITY FOR A REPRESENTATIVE TO ACT

Dubai Courts

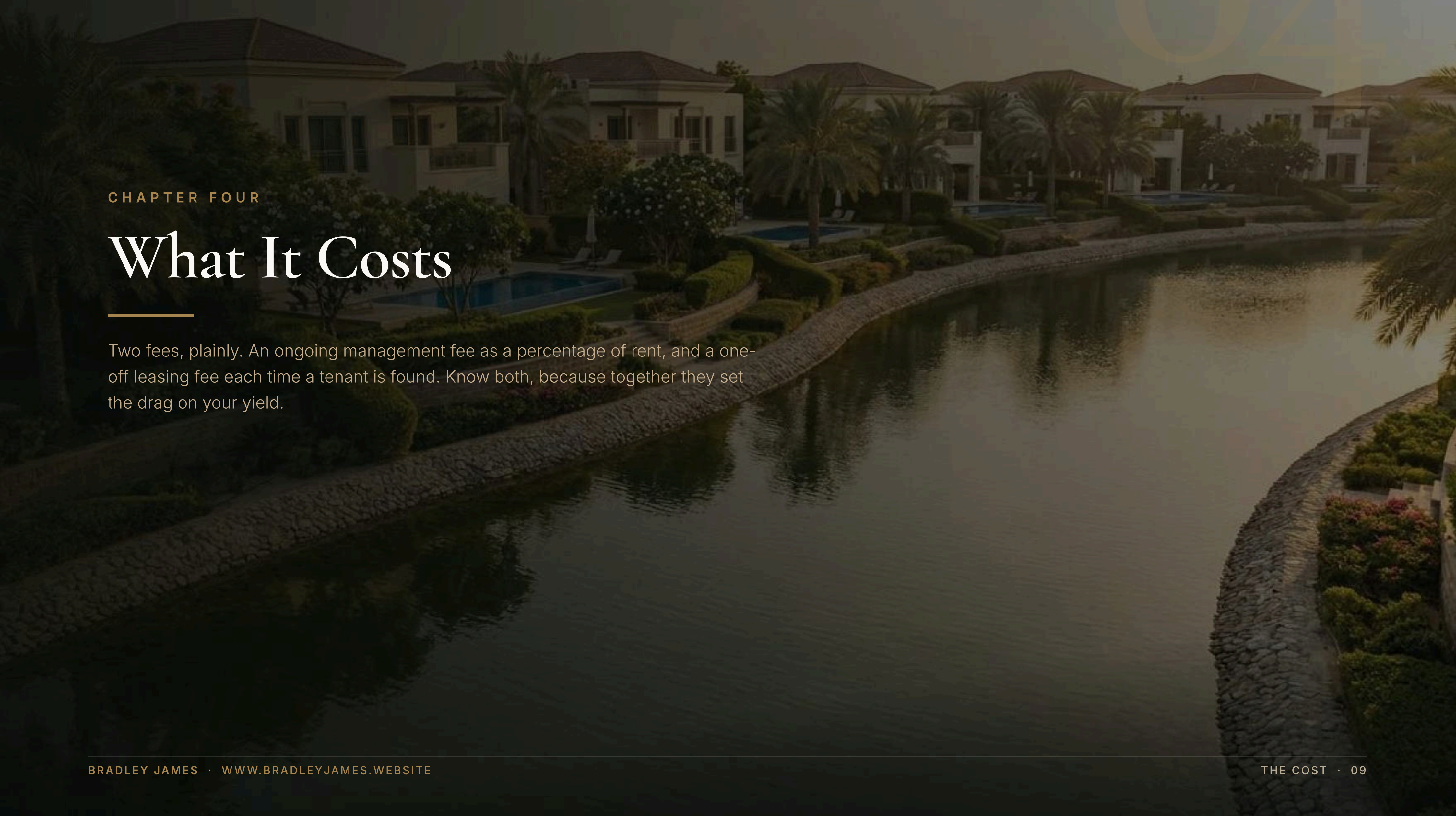
4%

ONE-OFF DLD TRANSFER FEE AT PURCHASE, NO ANNUAL PROPERTY TAX

DLD (CR.D)

◆ WHY THE PAPERWORK IS THE POINT

In a lightly regulated market, distance is a risk. In Dubai, the recorded title, the registered tenancy and the notarised POA are exactly what let you be absent safely. The bureaucracy you might resent at purchase is the same bureaucracy that protects you for the next ten years.



CHAPTER FOUR

What It Costs

Two fees, plainly. An ongoing management fee as a percentage of rent, and a one-off leasing fee each time a tenant is found. Know both, because together they set the drag on your yield.

Two Fees, Stated Plainly

There's no mystery to management pricing once you separate the two fees that make it up. Managers sometimes blur them in a pitch, so pull them apart and price each on its own.

The management fee. For a standard long-let, ongoing management in Dubai typically runs around **5% to 8% of the annual rent.** That's the recurring charge for collecting rent, handling maintenance, inspections and reporting. On the market's average apartment yield of 7.0% to 7.2% gross, a fee at the top of that range is a meaningful bite, and it comes off every year you hold, not just once.

The leasing, or tenant-find, fee. Each time the manager sources a new tenant, they usually charge a one-off leasing fee of roughly **one month's rent, or about 5%** of the annual rent. On a stable, long-staying tenant this is infrequent and cheap in the long run. On a unit that turns over every year, it recurs annually and quietly doubles the drag, which is why tenant retention matters as much as the headline fee.

FEE	WHAT YOU'RE CHARGED	ROUGHLY HOW MUCH
Ongoing management fee	~5% to 8% of annual rent, every year	
Leasing / tenant-find fee	~one month's rent, or about 5%, per new tenancy	
Ejari registration	A small fixed fee, usually passed on at cost	
Contractor / repair spend	Actual cost, authorised up to a pre-agreed limit	

Market norms for Dubai long-let management (Property Finder / Bayut guidance). Fees are negotiable and vary by manager, unit type and portfolio size. Figures are ranges, not quotes.

5% to 8%

TYPICAL ONGOING MANAGEMENT FEE, SHARE OF ANNUAL RENT

Property Finder / Bayut

~1 month

LEASING FEE PER NEW TENANCY, OR ROUGHLY 5%

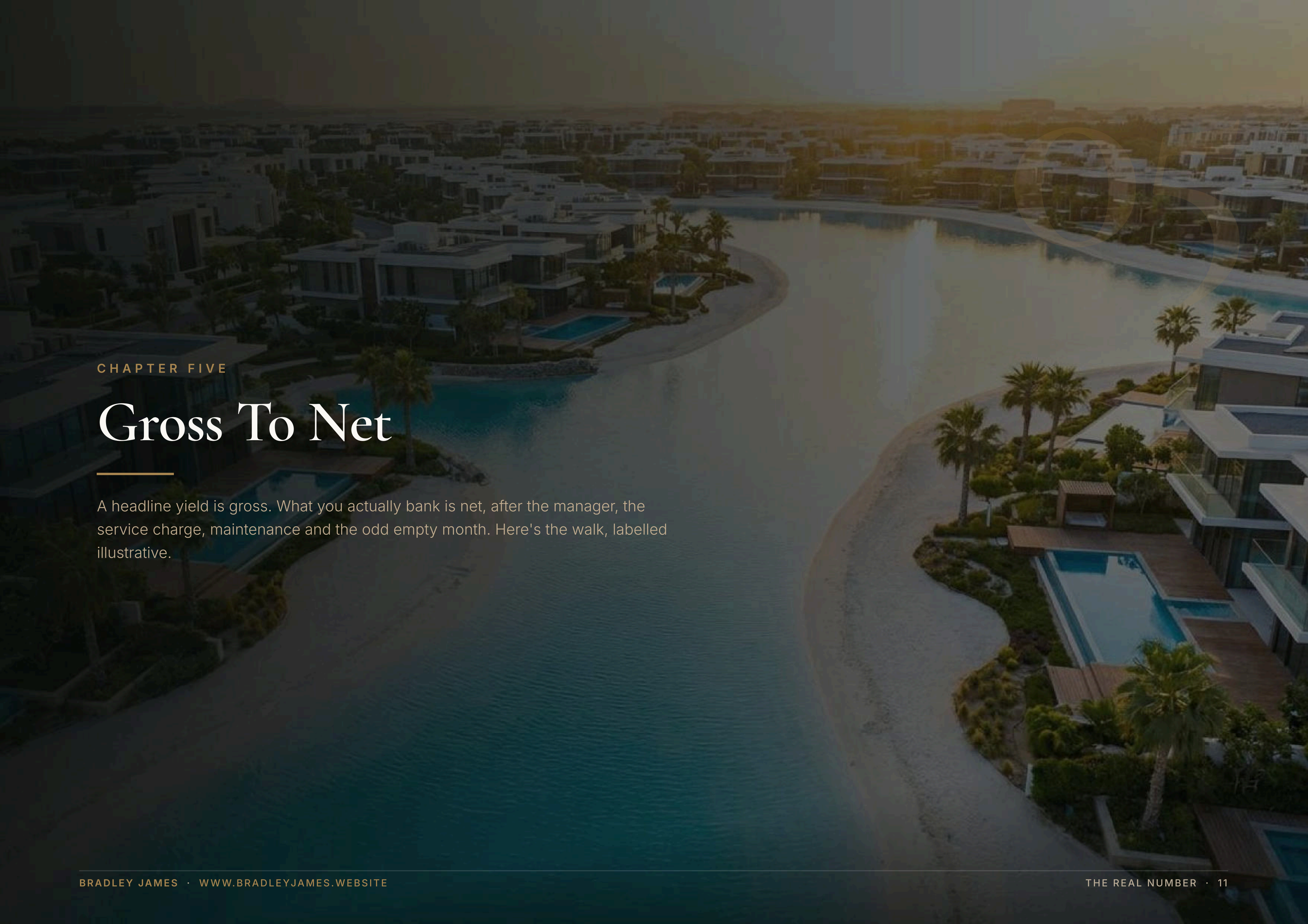
Property Finder / Bayut

◆ SHORT-LET IS A DIFFERENT DEAL

Everything here is for a standard long-let. Holiday-home or short-let management is priced completely differently, often 15% to 25% of revenue plus costs, because the operator is effectively running a small hospitality business. If that's your plan, price it as its own model, not as an extension of these numbers.

◆ THE RULE

"Price the management fee and the leasing fee separately. A low headline management rate on a unit that turns over every year isn't actually cheap."



CHAPTER FIVE

Gross To Net

A headline yield is gross. What you actually bank is net, after the manager, the service charge, maintenance and the odd empty month. Here's the walk, labelled illustrative.

CHAPTER 05 · THE REAL NUMBER

What A Headline Yield Hides

This is the chapter that matters most, so read it slowly. The yield you're quoted is almost always gross. The number you actually live on is net, and the gap between them is where a lot of overseas landlords get an unpleasant surprise in year one.

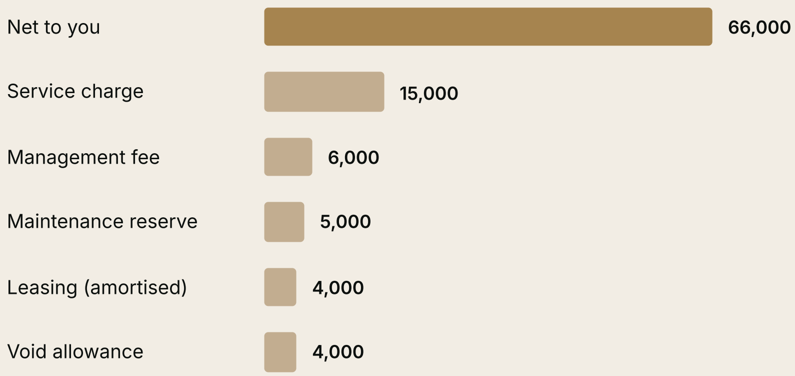
Here's a deliberately simple illustration on **AED 100,000 of annual rent**. It's illustrative, the assumptions are shown, and your own unit will differ, but the shape is the whole lesson. Take off management at 6%. Take off a leasing fee amortised across a typical tenancy. Take off the community service charge, which is set by the owners' association and not by your manager. Take off a maintenance reserve, and take off an allowance for the odd void month. What's left is what actually reaches you abroad.

GROSS-TO-NET WALK	PER YEAR	RUNNING NET
Gross annual rent	AED 100,000	AED 100,000
Less management fee (6%)	- AED 6,000	AED 94,000
Less leasing fee, amortised	- AED 4,000	AED 90,000
Less service charge (illustrative)	- AED 15,000	AED 75,000
Less maintenance reserve (5%)	- AED 5,000	AED 70,000
Less void allowance (~4%)	- AED 4,000	AED 66,000

Illustrative only. Assumes AED 100,000 annual rent, a 6% management fee, a leasing fee of one month's rent amortised over a ~2-year tenancy, an illustrative AED 15,000 service charge (these vary widely by area, size and building and are set by the owners' association, not the manager), a 5% maintenance reserve and a ~4% void allowance. Your figures will differ. Not investment advice.

In this illustration you keep about **66% of the gross rent**. Roughly a third goes to the cost of running the asset, and the single biggest line is usually the service charge, not the manager. That's the honest picture. A 7% gross yield is not a 7% net yield, and anyone who lets you believe it is isn't doing you a favour.

WHERE AED 100,000 OF GROSS RENT GOES, ILLUSTRATIVE (AED)



Illustrative split on AED 100,000 gross rent, assumptions as per the table. Service charges vary widely and dominate the deductions.

◆ THE LINE TO REMEMBER

The manager's fee is real, but on most units it's not even the biggest deduction. The service charge usually is, and it's fixed by the building, not by you. Underwrite every purchase on net, after all of it, and a soft 2026 market becomes a lot easier to sit through.

CHAPTER SIX

Choosing A Manager

The gap between a good manager and a bad one is the gap between a passive asset and a running headache. Here's how to vet one before you hand over the keys.

How To Vet Before You Hand Over The Keys

A manager is the difference between an asset you forget about and one that wakes you at 3am. You're hiring them precisely because you won't be there to check their work, so do the checking up front. Five things separate a professional from a liability.

1. **Confirm they're RERA-registered.**
Property management in Dubai is regulated. A serious manager operates under a RERA-registered firm with a valid trade licence. Ask for it, and verify. If they can't show it, walk.

2. **Demand fee transparency in writing.**
Get the management fee, the leasing fee, the maintenance mark-up if any, and the spend authorisation limit in one written schedule. Hidden mark-ups on contractor invoices are the classic way a cheap headline fee gets expensive.

3. **Test the reporting.**
Ask to see a real owner statement, redacted. You want to know what you'll receive each month and each time rent is collected. Vague reporting from abroad is how small problems become large ones.

4. **Take references from actual landlords.**
Not testimonials on a website. Two or three current overseas owners who'll tell you how the manager handled a late payment, a maintenance dispute and a vacancy.

5. **Check who holds the money.**
Understand exactly where your rent and deposit sit, how quickly your share is remitted, and what happens to the float in between. Clarity here is non-negotiable.

◆ GREEN FLAGS

- RERA-registered firm, licence shown without being chased.
- One written fee schedule, no vague extras.
- A sample owner statement you can actually read.
- References from real overseas landlords.
- Clear, fast remittance of your share of the rent.

◆ RED FLAGS

- Can't or won't show a RERA licence.
- Fees quoted verbally, never in writing.
- Marks up contractor invoices without disclosure.
- Reporting is a WhatsApp message when you chase.

07

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Honest Caveats

Management makes remote ownership possible, but it doesn't make it free or effortless. Here are the limits, stated as plainly as the benefits.

CHAPTER 07 · EYES OPEN

What Management Doesn't Solve

A manager is worth paying for. That's not the same as saying they make ownership passive, costless or risk-free. Here's the honest other side, because being oversold is how absentee landlords get hurt.

The fee is a permanent drag on net yield. As Chapter Five showed, management, leasing, service charges and voids can take roughly a third of gross rent on an ordinary unit. On the market's 7.0% to 7.2% gross apartment yield, that's the difference between the number you were sold and the number you bank. It doesn't go away; you pay it every year you hold.

Quality varies, a lot. The label 'property manager' covers everyone from a diligent regulated firm to a one-person operation that collects the fee and disappears. A weak manager can quietly cost you more than a good one who charges more: missed arrears, botched maintenance, a unit left empty too long. The fee is not the whole cost of a bad choice.

You still need oversight. Delegating is not abdicating. You should still read the statements, question an odd invoice, and know when your tenancy is up for renewal. Remote doesn't mean absent-minded. The owners who do best are the ones who stay lightly but genuinely engaged from abroad.

Voids and the soft market are real. No manager can guarantee zero empty months, and 2026 is a cooling market, not a boom. The macro backdrop is honest: Fitch sees a correction of up to 15% peak-to-trough rather than a crash, and ValuStrat's capital-growth outlook is around ~10% for 2026, down from a much hotter 2025. Underwrite for flat-to-soft capital growth and the occasional void, and hold for income and the long structural story, not for a quick flip.

up to 15%

FITCH PEAK-TO-TROUGH CORRECTION VIEW, NOT A CRASH

Fitch (CR.D)

~10%

2026 CAPITAL-GROWTH OUTLOOK, DOWN FROM 2025

ValuStrat (CR.D)

◆ THE LINE I HOLD

A manager turns a Dubai unit into a genuinely remote asset. It does not turn it into a free or effortless one. Pay the fee with your eyes open, underwrite on net, stay lightly engaged, and the arrangement is one of the best reasons Dubai works for an overseas owner at all.

◆ THE RULE

"Delegate the work, not the attention. The absentee landlords who lose money are usually the ones who stopped reading the statements."

08

CHAPTER EIGHT

Straight Answers

The questions overseas landlords actually ask about running a Dubai rental from abroad, answered straight.

CHAPTER 08 · FAQ

The Questions Overseas Landlords Ask

Q. Can I really run a Dubai rental without ever visiting?
Yes. The market is built for it. Ownership is recorded on a DLD title, tenancies are registered digitally through Ejari, rent is paid by cheque or transfer, and a RERA-registered manager acts for you on the ground under a notarised Power of Attorney. Many overseas owners never fly out to operate a unit. You pay a management fee for the convenience, which is the honest trade.

Q. What does a property manager actually cost?
Two fees. An ongoing management fee of roughly 5% to 8% of annual rent for a standard long-let, and a one-off leasing fee of about one month's rent, or around 5%, each time a new tenant is found. Short-let or holiday-home management is priced very differently, often 15% to 25% of revenue plus costs. Fees are negotiable, so get them in writing.

Q. Is a 7% yield really 7% in my pocket?
No, and this is the single most important thing to understand. A quoted yield is gross. After the management fee, an amortised leasing fee, the community service charge, a maintenance reserve and the odd void month, an ordinary unit might return roughly two-thirds of its gross rent as net. The market apartment yield of 7.0% to 7.2% gross is not a net figure. Always underwrite on net.

Q. What's the biggest deduction from my rent?
Usually the service charge, not the manager. Service charges are set by the building's owners' association and the master developer, overseen through the DLD's Mollak system, and they vary widely by area, size and building. On many units the service charge is a larger line than the management fee, which is why you check it before you buy, not after.

Q. Do I need a Power of Attorney?
For genuine hands-off remote operation, usually yes. A POA, notarised before a Dubai Courts notary public, lets your representative sign a tenancy or deal with a developer on your behalf while you're abroad. It can be scoped narrowly to specific tasks. You're delegating defined authority, not handing over ownership, which stays yours on the DLD title.

Q. How do I know a manager is legitimate?
Confirm they operate under a RERA-registered firm with a valid trade licence and verify it. Get every fee in one written schedule, ask to see a redacted owner statement so you know what reporting you'll receive, and take references from real overseas landlords, not website testimonials. If a manager won't show a licence or put fees in writing, that's your answer.

Q. Is 2026 a good time to buy and let remotely?
It's a cooling market, and that's the honest word. Fitch expects a correction of up to 15% peak-to-trough rather than a crash, and capital-growth is forecast around ~10% for 2026, down from a hotter 2025. If you're buying for a quick capital flip, this isn't the moment. If you're buying a well-chosen unit for net income and a long hold, a good manager and a conservative net underwrite make it a perfectly reasonable time.

Every Figure, Sourced

Every statistic in this guide is attributed. Where sources differ, a range is used. Links are live and clickable.

01 **Ejari: mandatory registration of every tenancy contract in Dubai, administered under RERA**. Dubai Land Department / RERA (Dubai REST and Ejari). https://dubailand.gov.ae/en/eservices/ejari/

02 **Real estate regulation, broker and property-management registration and the RERA licensing framework**. Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA), Dubai Land Department. https://dubailand.gov.ae/en/about-us/rera/

03 **Property management fee norms in Dubai (long-let management typically ~5% to 8% of annual rent; leasing / tenant-find fee about one month's rent or ~5%)**. Property Finder (market guidance). https://www.propertyfinder.ae/en/guides

04 **Landlord and property-management cost norms, leasing commission and Ejari in Dubai**. Bayut (market guidance). https://www.bayut.com/mybayut/

05 **Power of Attorney in Dubai: notarisation before a Dubai Courts notary public for a representative to act on an owner's behalf**. Dubai Courts / Dubai Government (u.ae). https://www.dc.gov.ae/PublicServices/

06 **DEWA account activation and utility connection for a leased Dubai property**. Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA). https://www.dewa.gov.ae/en/consumer/customer-services

07 **Service charges and community fees set by the owners' association / master developer and overseen by the regulator (Mollak system)**. Dubai Land Department (Mollak). https://dubailand.gov.ae/en/eservices/mollak/

08 **Dubai Real Estate Transactions 2024-2025 (volumes and values)**. Dubai Land Department / DXB Interact. https://dubailand.gov.ae/en/open-data/real-estate-data/

09 **Dubai population clock (crossed 4.0 million, August 2025)**. Dubai Statistics Center. https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/default.aspx

10 **Dubai Economic Agenda D33 (AED 32 trillion, double the economy)**. Dubai Media Office. https://mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2023/January/04-01/Dubai-Economic-Agenda-D33

11 **Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan (population target 5.8 million)**. The UAE Government Portal. https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/infrastructure-and-transport/dubai-2040-urban-master-plan

12 **UAE Article IV Consultation and World Economic Outlook (GDP, inflation)**. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/ARE

13 **ValuStrat Price Index (VPI) and 2026 capital-growth outlook**. ValuStrat. https://www.valustrat.com/valustrat-price-index/

14 **Dubai residential market review, prime price per square foot**. Knight Frank. https://www.knightfrank.ae/research

15 **Global Sovereigns and UAE / Dubai real estate outlook (supply-led moderation)**. Fitch Ratings. https://www.fitchratings.com/

16 **Private Wealth Migration Report 2025 (UAE the world's #1 net inflow)**. Henley & Partners. https://www.henleyglobal.com/publications/henley-private-wealth-migration-report-2025

17 **UAE corporate tax and 0% personal-tax framework for individuals**. PwC Middle East Tax Summaries. https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/united-arab-emirates

18 **The dirham peg to the US dollar at 3.6725 (since 1997)**. Central Bank of the UAE. https://www.centralbank.ae/en/

19 **Safety and crime indices 2025 (UAE ranked safest country)**. Numbeo Crime and Safety Index. https://www.numbeo.com/crime/rankings_by_country.jsp

WORK WITH BRADLEY JAMES

Delegate The Work. Keep The Attention.

◆ ABOUT BRADLEY

Not a broker, an advisor. I built a business in the UK and spent more than a decade advising people from all walks of life, before moving to Dubai and joining M&M Real Estate to work at a higher strategic level than the typical transactional broker. I specialise exclusively in off-plan investment for overseas and high-net-worth clients, I put my own capital into the projects I recommend, and my business is more than 80% referral-driven, because every client came through someone who trusted me first.

WHATSAPP
+971 56 500 6162

EMAIL
b.james@mandmrealestate.ae

WEBSITE
www.bradleyjames.website

Bradley James

INVESTMENT ADVISOR · M&M REAL ESTATE · DUBAI