

Freehold vs Leasehold What You Can Own

Foreigners can own property outright in Dubai, but only in designated areas. Understanding freehold, leasehold and the zones is the first thing every overseas buyer needs.

What foreign buyers can actually own, where, and why it matters. Every figure sourced and linked

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THE BASICS

What Foreigners Can Own

Since 2002, foreign nationals have been able to own property outright, freehold, in designated areas of Dubai. Freehold means you own the unit and a share of the land indefinitely, with the right to sell, lease or pass it on. Leasehold, by contrast, grants the right to use a property for a fixed term, typically up to 99 years, without owning the land. For overseas investors, the key is simple: buy freehold, in a designated freehold zone.

2002

FREEHOLD OPENED TO
FOREIGNERS

Indefinite

FREEHOLD OWNERSHIP TERM

Up to 99yr

TYPICAL LEASEHOLD TERM

Designated

FREEHOLD-ZONE REQUIREMENT

The first question is not which apartment. It is whether the area is freehold for foreigners at all. Get that right and everything else follows.

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THE DIFFERENCE

Freehold vs Leasehold, Clearly

FACTOR	FREEHOLD	LEASEHOLD
Ownership	Unit + land share	Right to use only
Term	Indefinite	Up to ~99 years
Resale	Free to sell	More restricted
Inheritance	Passes to heirs	Term-limited
Foreign buyers	Allowed in zones	Limited
Best for	Overseas investors	Specific cases

INVESTOR TAKEAWAY

For an overseas investor, freehold is almost always the answer: you own the asset outright, can sell and pass it on freely, and it sits in the deep, liquid market. Leasehold is a niche, term-limited arrangement to approach with caution.

Where Foreigners Can Buy Freehold

THE FREEHOLD AREAS

A long and growing list

Dubai's designated freehold areas include Downtown, Dubai Marina, Business Bay, Palm Jumeirah, JVC, JLT, Dubai Hills, Dubai Creek Harbour, Emaar Beachfront and many more, covering most of the areas an overseas investor would consider. The list has expanded steadily over the years.

WHY IT MATTERS

Liquidity and rights

Buying in a designated freehold zone gives you full ownership rights, a DLD title deed, and access to the deepest, most liquid resale and rental market, the foundation of a sound investment.

HOW TO VERIFY

Confirm before you commit

Always confirm a specific project or area is freehold for foreign ownership before you offer; reputable areas and developers make this clear, and the DLD title deed is the proof of your ownership.

INVESTOR TAKEAWAY

Stay within Dubai's designated freehold zones and you own outright, with a title deed and full rights, in the most liquid market. Verify freehold status before you buy, and the ownership question is settled.

VERIFY EVERY FIGURE

Sources & References

Every figure is drawn from the sources below. Links are live: tap any URL to open the original.

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|----|---|----------------------------------|
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WORK WITH BRADLEY JAMES

Own It Outright, in the Right Zone.

Foreigners can own Dubai property outright, freehold, in designated zones that cover virtually every area worth investing in. Freehold gives you a title deed, full rights and the deepest, most liquid market. Verify the zone, buy freehold, and ownership is on the firmest footing.

I can confirm the freehold status of any area or project you are weighing and ensure your purchase gives you full, registered ownership.

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