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THE PRICING GUIDE

# UAE Setup *Cost Breakdown*

Real-world cost ranges for forming and operating a UAE company in 2026.

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## INTRODUCTION

## What it actually costs to set up in the UAE

*Most published estimates of UAE company formation costs are wrong — usually too low. They list government license fees but exclude visa costs, banking introductions, lease deposits, accounting, and the substance requirements that make the structure defensible.*

This breakdown gives you realistic 2026 numbers for the full picture: government fees, professional fees, ongoing annual costs, and the typical totals for the 5 most common setup scenarios we see. All figures in USD.

### Government and license fees

Item	Year 1	Annual renewal
RAK ICC offshore company	\$1,200 – \$2,800	\$1,000 – \$2,000
IFZA Free Zone license	\$2,500 – \$5,000	\$2,500 – \$4,500
DMCC Free Zone license	\$5,500 – \$10,000	\$5,000 – \$9,000
Mainland (DED) license	\$3,500 – \$8,000	\$3,000 – \$7,000
ADGM Foundation	\$8,000 – \$15,000	\$5,000 – \$9,000
DIFC Foundation	\$10,000 – \$18,000	\$6,000 – \$11,000
Establishment card	\$200 – \$400	\$200 – \$400
Trade name reservation	\$200 – \$500	—
Investor / partner visa (per person)	\$1,200 – \$1,800	Every 2 years
Golden Visa (per person)	\$3,000 – \$5,500	Every 10 years
Emirates ID	\$50 – \$100	Every 2 years

### Professional and advisory fees

Most international clients use a professional advisor for UAE setup. Realistic fee ranges for boutique advisory firms (like Salient Formation) in 2026:

Service	Fixed-fee range
Single-entity formation (RAK ICC, Free Zone, or Mainland)	\$3,000 – \$7,000
Multi-tier structure (RAK ICC + Free Zone combo)	\$5,000 – \$10,000
Foundation establishment (ADGM or DIFC)	\$10,000 – \$20,000

Service	Fixed-fee range
Banking introduction + KYC pack preparation	\$1,500 – \$3,500
Visa processing (investor or partner)	\$800 – \$1,500 per person
Golden Visa application	\$1,500 – \$3,000 per person
Tax Residency Certificate application	\$1,000 – \$1,800
VAT registration	\$500 – \$1,000
Annual compliance retainer (per entity)	\$3,000 – \$12,000

## SCENARIOS

## Total cost for 5 common setups

### Pattern 1: Solo SaaS founder relocating

Free Zone operating company (IFZA), investor visa, basic banking. Annual: license renewal + minimal compliance.

<b>Year 1 total</b>	<b>\$7,000 – \$12,000</b>
<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>\$5,000 – \$8,000</b>

### Pattern 2: Family office wealth migration

ADGM foundation at apex, RAK ICC sub-holdings, Free Zone for operational income, Golden Visa for principals.

<b>Year 1 total</b>	<b>\$30,000 – \$55,000</b>
<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>\$18,000 – \$30,000</b>

### Pattern 3: International trading company

RAK ICC holding + DMCC Free Zone operating company, multi-currency banking, visas.

<b>Year 1 total</b>	<b>\$13,000 – \$20,000</b>
<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>\$8,000 – \$14,000</b>

### Pattern 4: Tech founder selling globally

IFZA or DMCC Free Zone, RAK ICC holding for IP separation, tier-1 banking with WIO or Mashreq.

<b>Year 1 total</b>	<b>\$10,000 – \$16,000</b>
<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>\$6,000 – \$10,000</b>

### Pattern 5: Real estate investor

Mainland or DIFC SPV for UAE property, RAK ICC for foreign real estate, Golden Visa via real estate.

<b>Year 1 total</b>	<b>\$14,000 – \$22,000</b>
<b>Annual ongoing</b>	<b>\$8,000 – \$12,000</b>

#### WHAT'S USUALLY MISSING FROM PUBLISHED ESTIMATES

Office lease deposits (\$5K–\$50K depending on space), accounting and bookkeeping (\$2K–\$10K/year), audit fees where required (\$3K–\$8K/year), document apostille and legalization (\$200–\$800), and travel costs for in-person visa and banking appointments. Build a 10–20% buffer on top of professional-fee estimates.

## Honest pricing principles

How to evaluate UAE setup quotes from any provider:

- **Fixed-fee, not hourly.** Quoted upfront, written in the engagement letter, never varied without written notice.
- **Disbursements transparent.** Government fees, registry fees, and other third-party costs should be billed at cost, with copies of receipts available on request.
- **Scope written out.** The engagement letter should list specifically what is and isn't included. Vague scope leads to scope creep.
- **Banking included, not extra.** Reputable advisors bundle banking introduction with formation. Watch for setups that charge separately later.
- **Annual compliance separately priced.** Year 2+ retainer should be quoted upfront so you can model total cost of ownership.

#### BOOK A FREE STRATEGY CALL

30 minutes with a senior advisor. We'll discuss your specific scenario, recommend a structure, and provide a precise fixed-fee quote — no obligation.

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