

999

SECURITY AND SAFETY FOR ALL

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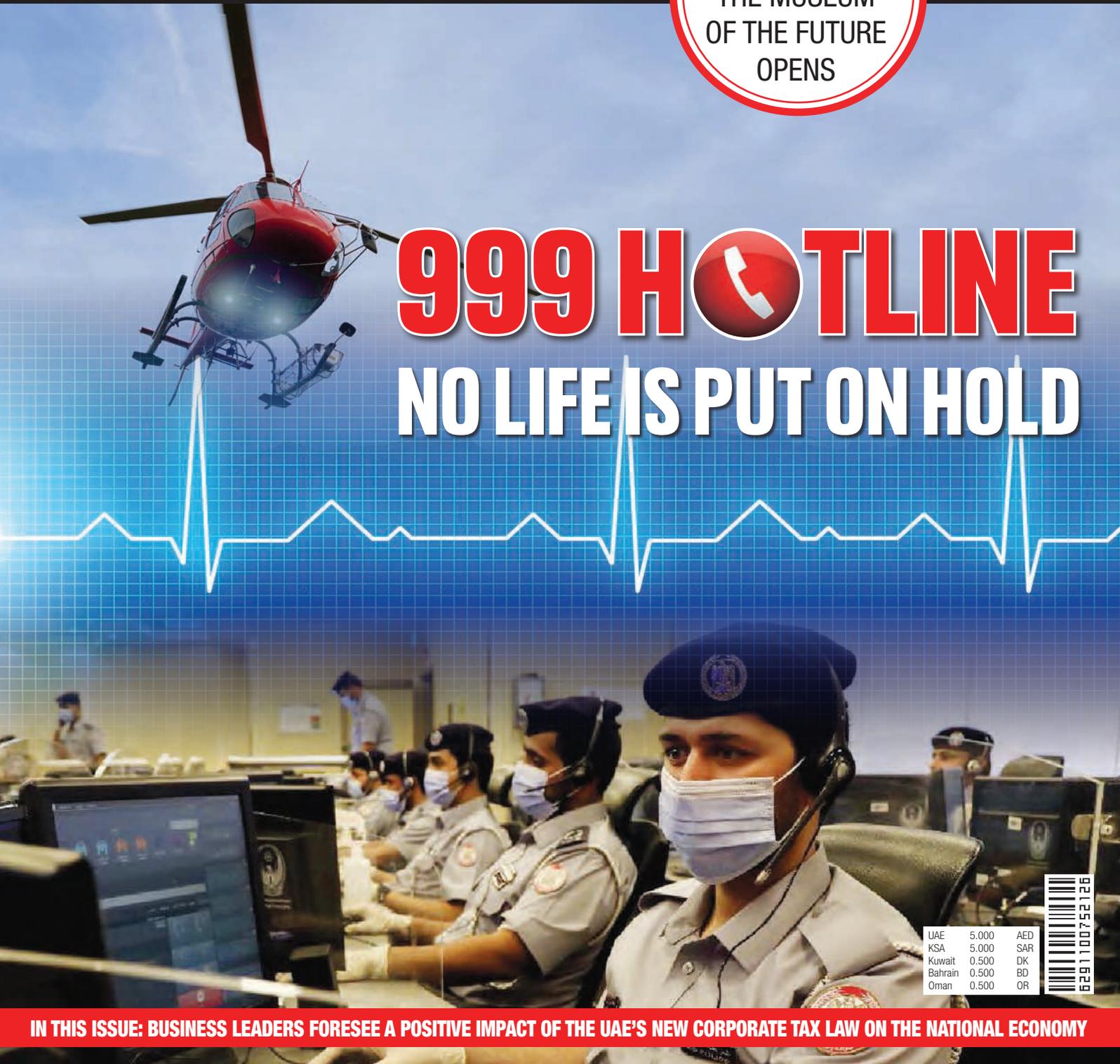
THE LEGACIES
OF EXPO 2020
DUBAI

CHILD FALL
ACCIDENTS &
SOLUTIONS

IN THE
SPOTLIGHT:
THE MUSEUM
OF THE FUTURE
OPENS

999 HOTLINE

NO LIFE IS PUT ON HOLD



UAE	5.000	AED
KSA	5.000	SAR
Kuwait	0.500	DK
Bahrain	0.500	BD
Oman	0.500	OR



IN THIS ISSUE: BUSINESS LEADERS FORESEE A POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE UAE'S NEW CORPORATE TAX LAW ON THE NATIONAL ECONOMY



EXPLORE UAE'S GREAT OUTDOORS SAFELY

THE UAE ISN'T JUST SHINY CITIES; IT'S ALSO A COUNTRY OF GLORIOUS WILDERNESS. GOING ON A WEEKEND ADVENTURE IS VERY TEMPTING, BUT THAT REQUIRES METICULOUS PLANNING TO PREVENT THE LOSS OF LIFE AND LIMB. **999** SHOWS THE WAY

BY ANDY WILSON



When most people think of the UAE, they have visions of the modern and sophisticated cities and business hubs such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah. But outside of these urban metropolises, the UAE has a wealth of stunning desert and mountain landscapes that draw locals and tourists alike who seek to explore and experience the phenomenal natural beauty of these areas.

However, as with every kind of exploration, a trip into the great outdoors of the UAE also requires caution and preparation. There have been multiple recent instances of hikers being stranded and rescued — in parts of the world ranging from Hawaii to India — that tell us how risky adventures can be. In the UAE, too, people have got stranded on several occasions when hiking in the mountainous areas of the country, especially those in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, which is famous for its Hajar mountain trekking routes.

In January 2022, a South African tourist aged 50 was rescued after losing his way in the Jabal Al Ahqab area, in Ras Al Khaimah. He was located in a remote area, and then was airlifted by a helicopter to safety and then to Saqr Hospital, where he received treatment and was discharged.

Also in January 2022, four women were rescued after they got lost while hiking in Wadi Naqab, Ras Al Khaimah. It took a search-and-rescue operation of two hours to reach the four women and put them to safety. They had been following a hiking trail, but got lost after sundown due to the darkness.

Before these incidents, in December 2021, a European hiker, aged 46, fell and broke his leg amidst the rugged terrain in Wadi Naqab. It took a search team from Ras Al Khaimah Civil Defence 45 minutes to reach the man on foot. After the search team treated his immediate injuries, he was flown by helicopter to hospital.

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These examples show that even though hiking in the deserts and mountains has many positive aspects, it also has its dangers. These hikers were fortunate as the UAE authorities are very responsive to emergency situations, but it would've been very easy for such incidents to become fatal.

That said, there are millions of people who enjoy and regularly undertake outdoor activities all around the world. There are diverse hiking opportunities in temperate, tropical, arctic, and arid

environments; each one brings its own challenges. The challenges in the wet and humid Florida Everglades will be different than the dry mountains of Ras Al Khaimah or the deserts of Rub Al Khali. But the basic principles for planning your hiking and wandering adventures are virtually the same wherever you are.

In another example of a serious hiking injury, an experienced European hiker from Dubai fractured her spine while hiking in the Ghalilah mountains of Ras Al Khaimah, in February 2021. After a very bad fall, the woman, aged 36, lost consciousness and her hiking partners raised the alarm. A search-and-rescue team located and airlifted the woman by helicopter to Sheikh Khalifa Speciality Hospital in Ras Al Khaimah, and she was later taken to Mediclinic Welcare Hospital in Dubai, where she stayed in intensive care for five days.

Dr Ahmed Allam, Consultant Neurosurgeon at Mediclinic Welcare Hospital, stated, “She had highly unstable spine fractures involving three shattered vertebral bodies and was unable to move or even turn. The rescue team did an amazing job, transferring her into the helicopter from the mountain, without causing further damage to her unstable spine.”

It had been a less fortunate end for a European man, who died when trekking with three others in the Al Manaie area of Ras Al Khaimah, bordering Oman, in June 2019. All the others in the group also had injuries, but this man’s condition was the most serious after a fatal fall. Getting a call for help, RAK Police contacted the Air Wing of the National Centre for Search and Rescue. Three of them could be taken to safety; the fourth didn’t make it.

Local media reported that European trekkers often went hiking to the range of mountains running through the emirate, with its peak at Jebel Jais (1,911 metres high above sea level).

While the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah is a magnet for adventure enthusiasts, there have also been several cases of hikers being rescued from Abu Dhabi (Arab hiker with a fractured leg airlifted from the Jebel Hafeet area, in May 2021); Fujairah (expat trio rescued by civil defence from the Al Ghub area in Dibbah, in April 2021); and Sharjah (European hiker rescued by helicopter after a 50-ft fall in the Mleiha area, in March 2021).

TIMELINE OF RECENT HIKING ACCIDENTS IN UAE

JANUARY 2022



A South African tourist airlifted after losing his way to Jabal Al Ahqab, Ras Al Khaimah

MAY 2021



Arab hiker with a fractured leg airlifted from the Jebel Hafeet area



Four women rescued from the mountains of Ras Al Khaimah after they had gotten lost while hiking in Wadi Naqab

APRIL 2021



Three expats rescued by Fujairah Civil Defence from the Al Ghub area in Dibba

DECEMBER 2021



A European hiker rescued after breaking his leg amidst the rugged terrain in Wadi Naqab

FEBRUARY 2021



A female European hiker from Dubai fractured her spine while hiking in the Ghalilah mountains of Ras Al Khaimah

KNOW WHERE YOU’RE GOING

If so many hikers keep getting stranded and injured around the UAE, there must be some common factors behind this. It may be assumed that all of them have a reasonable degree of physical fitness, without which they couldn’t attempt the trek in the first place. However, did they also have a thorough knowledge of the terrain they attempted to explore?

When someone is told, “Know where you’re going”, that might sound a bit silly, as everyone will say they know where they’re going when they start a journey. But, when they lose their way or stumble upon a place whose risks

they had underestimated, they might realise they didn’t know where they were going.

Motoring routes and walking trails for a hiking trip need to be planned in detail. You’ll need to know the roads down which you’ll drive to the point where you’ll start your walk. What will the conditions of the road be? Are they tarmac or dirt roads? Along the route, where are the nearest gas stations, shops, restaurants, and also hospitals and emergency services? These are basic considerations.

These days, when you’re planning your hiking route, there are plenty of virtual apps that can help you — a basic

You need to always anticipate an emergency and have a way to call for help. Other than the 999 helpline, remember to save the numbers of friends or relatives

app would be Google Maps. When planning your hiking route, ensure that you know the distance and the difficulty level of the routes you're choosing. Do not choose a route that's too long and strenuous for your fitness and experience level. If you're a beginner, then start slowly with short hikes to build up your fitness and confidence.

GET SMART WITH GADGETS

Almost everyone these days uses GPS for navigation and generally for finding their way around places. Most smartphones have a GPS app that can be used during the hike. However, what if you don't have mobile phone coverage in remote areas? It's better not to depend entirely on mobile reception; it's smarter to print out the map of the place where you want to hike, so that you have offline aid where online support isn't available.

Also, you need to always anticipate an emergency and have a way to call for help. Other than the 999 helpline, remember to save the numbers of friends or relatives whom you can call if you're stranded, so that someone



knows where you are. Your mobile phone needs to be charged in order to make that call, so take a power bank in case the phone battery gets drained during the trek. It'd make sense to carry an extra mobile phone, securely placed in your backpack, in case you happen to drop and break your primary device.

There are many dedicated GPS satellite navigation systems that are ideal for hikers, but you need to

understand how to use them before starting out on the hike. Again, if you're using these GPS devices when hiking, ensure they're fully charged and that you've got power backup — and take care not to drop or lose them.

ACQUIRE TRADITIONAL SKILLS

Learning how to use a map and a compass are positive skills and they can be part of your hiking activities. Compasses were first invented around 2,000 years ago and they've been used for navigation ever since. If you know how to use a compass and read a paper map, you have a very good chance of orienting yourself in the direction of safety and of getting yourself out of a tight situation.

Another traditional navigation skill — also a vital survival skill — is learning to read the night sky. The position of the stars can indicate which way to go, if it's too dark to see anything else.

There are lots of resources, videos, and books available that can help you





If there's an emergency, don't wander or take apparent shortcuts to try to reach help. Stay on known and safe tracks in order to be found quickly

the emergency services. Keeping a trusted person clued into your planned route can be a huge help for the emergency rescue team; it goes without saying that you'd need to stick to this planned route.

If there's an emergency, don't wander or take apparent shortcuts to try to reach help. Stay on known and safe tracks in order to be found quickly. If you're within the network coverage area, then send your "live location" on WhatsApp to the trusted person. If you're out of the coverage area, stay on the path, keep your phone charged, and put on the ringtone at the top volume when you sense that a rescue team is near. Sound travels far in remote areas, and any electronic sound is instantly distinguishable.

DRIVING TO THE START POINT

Your adventure starts when you drive to the location where you'll begin hiking. Always ensure that your vehicle is in a good condition for the drive there and back. Keep a breakdown kit,

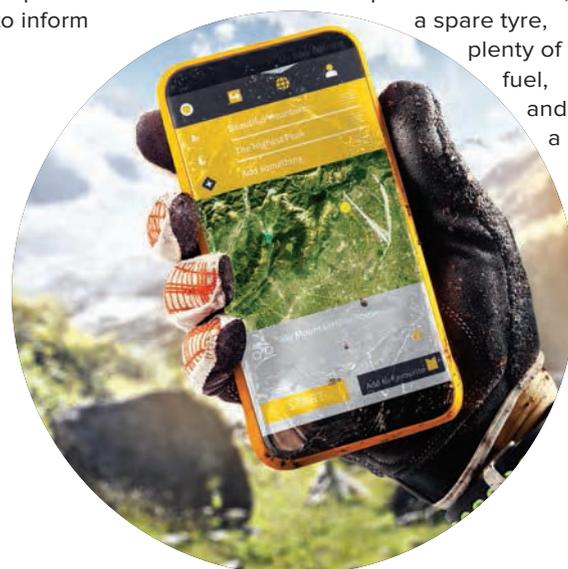
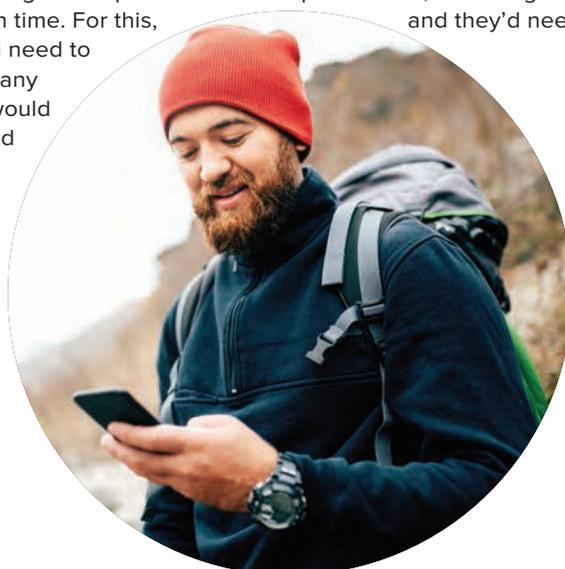
a spare tyre, plenty of fuel, and a

to develop your hiking, outdoors, and survival skills.

An absolutely traditional method of staying safe — one that we tend to forget in this era of 24x7 connectivity — is simply letting someone know that you're going hiking and expect to be back at a certain time. For this, of course, you'd need to estimate how many hours the trek would take. This trusted person would understand that something might be wrong if you haven't got back by the estimated time, even allowing for a couple of extra hours of delay.

When you've

planned your route, share it with the trusted person and let them know that you'll call them when you return or have mobile phone coverage. Also, tell this person that if you don't contact them and they can't contact you after a specific time, there might be a problem and they'd need to inform



“Getting stuck happens when people do not understand the risks they take when they go hiking. They start late in the morning, take only enough water for a few hours and underestimate the time



AMY SUBAEY

Director of UAE Trekkers

list of numbers to call if the car breaks down.

The basic rules apply when you're driving off road; know your routes, have good communications, and have plans to deal with emergencies such as breakdowns and accidents. If your car breaks down or you have an accident, stay with the vehicle, as it's easier for the emergency services to find a car in the wilderness than a person. Consider putting a GPS tracker in your vehicle, so that you can find it if you get disoriented and the emergency services can find it in case of an accident or a problem.

It's always good to keep extra water, drinks, and food in your vehicle for the return journey. It's also a motivator, when someone is tired, to know that when they finish their hike, there'll be refreshments waiting for them. A positive mindset is very important when people are tired or injured.

UAE police forces and mountain rescue teams repeat and publish safety warnings about the dangers that can occur when hiking. Amy Subaey, Director of UAE Trekkers, a hiking company in Dubai, stated, "Getting stuck happens when people do not understand the risks they take when they go hiking in the summer." She added, "They start late in the morning, take [only] enough water for a few hours and underestimate the time it will take to be safe again. They also think that help is just a phone call away and do not understand that in some remote places in the UAE, you cannot make that call."



GEAR UP FOR THE WILDERNESS

Planning for a hike includes carrying the right clothes and gear, too. Make sure you dress appropriately for the weather conditions you could encounter and carry a spare warm jacket if there's any possibility you'll be out overnight, intentionally or not. Remember, deserts and mountains can get very cold at night. Do not wear new boots, unless you've "broken them in", meaning you've walked in them enough so they'll not cause blisters.

Blisters on the feet can be extremely painful and make a person hobble; for a hiker, that means the loss of precious time and the serious risk of losing

balance on treacherous terrain. If your feet are hurting, you may not be able to get back to your starting point before darkness gathers. This, in turn, could result in further injury and losing the way.

The equipment and supplies you carry will depend on the distance and duration of the intended hike. Take what you'll actually need and not what you think you'll need. Many novice hikers carry too much unnecessary equipment, which tires them out very quickly.

The basics are: sufficient water, means of communications, means of navigation, food, warm clothing,



GPS TRACKER FOR VEHICLE SAFETY



GPS trackers available in the market come in various sizes, with specific models designed for hikers and outdoors enthusiasts. The tracker works the same as the GPS in your mobile phone and transmits the location of the tracker that can be monitored from another phone or device with Wi-Fi or Internet access.

For those going into areas where there's no Internet connection, there are trackers available that work off satellites, much the same as a satellite phone. They can track your routes and send out timed e-mail or SMS alerts of where you are and that all is OK, or they can be used to send emergency signals in case of an accident etc. With developments in technology, GPS trackers are becoming smaller with longer battery lives, so they're easy and light to carry or place in your vehicle.

There are many trackers specifically available for cars that are sold as anti-theft devices, so that the vehicle can be found if stolen. Such devices can also be used for other purposes.

emergency signalling, and first-aid equipment.

In the deserts and mountains, you and those with you must have plenty of drinking water, as dehydration is a big threat that can lead to an emergency situation and possible death. Heatstroke is also a potential medical problem, so ensure you know how to spot the signs and know the remedy. If you're serious about hiking, then undertake a first-aid course, as it could save lives.

HIRING THE RIGHT GUIDE

If you book a hiking tour in the Ras Al Khaimah mountains, ensure that the

company or guide who's taking you is licensed and has the relevant permits. In 2021, the permit system for paid hikes came into effect following a number of accidents and emergency calls.

In one major incident in December 2020, nine hikers got lost and were eventually rescued after a 13-hour search by the police. All of these incidents cost money to respond to, and put the lives of search-and-rescue team members at risk. Recreational hiking for individuals and small groups do not require a permit, as long as those taking part are not paying for the services of a guide.

TOOLS TO LET PEOPLE KNOW YOUR LOCATION



- ✓ Whistle and flare. Let's say your smartphone or GPS tracker or some other new-age gadget is lost or broken or malfunctioning. What do you do to be rescued? You can use these two to signal to the rescue team that you're at a specific spot.
- ✓ The sound of a whistle carries far and wide; a flare shot into the night sky can be seen from a mile away. They're especially useful in the dark when an individual hiker is barely visible against the landscape.
- ✓ A flare can also be used for lighting a fire that provides warmth if the weather is really chilly.
- ✓ A silver foil survival blanket can keep a stranded or injured person warm and it can also be used to signal a person's location.
- ✓ A flashlight, along with spare batteries, is essential for the emergency kit, not only so you can see at night but also for signalling to rescuers.
- ✓ A high-visibility vest is something you can put on if you're in an emergency situation and are too weak and exhausted to do anything other than just wait to be rescued.