

TheNational



UAE ranks second in Arab countries for visa-free travel

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DUBAI // Holders of UAE passports can visit 72 countries without the need for a visa, according to a new [travel restriction index](#).

In the Arab world only Kuwaiti citizens have more freedom of movement, with visa-free access to 77 countries.

The index for 2013 places the UAE 56th worldwide, up eight places from last year, with Kuwait at 52nd.

In the Arab world Qatar is in third place, 57th globally with access to 71 countries, followed by Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman in 59th, 64th and 65th.

The UAE is expected to enter the index's top 40 when various foreign policy initiatives come to fruition. It is awaiting a European Union [decision on visa-free access](#) to the 27 Schengen states and is also being [considered by the UK for visa-free entry](#).

The UK ambassador Dominic Jermy said this year that negotiations between the two governments were "a work in progress and a very constructive debate is going on about this".

"No announcements will be made now but we surely expect so in the next few months," he said.

Worldwide, the index's top rank for 2013 is held jointly by Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, whose citizens can travel visa-free to 173 countries.

Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and the United States share second place with 172, an increase of two places for the US since 2012. Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands are joint third with access to 171 countries.

Canada has risen from sixth to fourth after the [UAE reinstated a visa-free policy](#) this year.

Citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan enjoy the least freedom of travel, with visa-free entry to only 31 and 28 countries respectively.

The index has been compiled every year since 2006 by Henley & Partners, the international residence and citizenship consultancy.

"In today's globalised world, visa restrictions are an important tool for governments to control the movement of foreign nationals across borders," the company said.

The index ranking reflects not just freedom of travel for passport holders of various nations, but also international relations and the status of individual countries relative to others.

"Visas are a standard requirement for most countries as certain non-nationals wish to enter their territory, but visa requirements or th

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lack of them are also an indication of the relationship between individual nations and the status of a country within the international community of nations," the company said.

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Top ten in ranking:

- 1 Finland, Sweden, UK
- 2 Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, US
- 3 Belgium, Italy, Netherlands
- 4 Canada, France, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Spain
- 5 Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland
- 6 Australia, Greece, Singapore
- 7 South Korea
- 8 Iceland
- 9 Iceland, Malaysia, Malta
- 10 Liechtenstein

Bottom ten in ranking:

- 84 Equatorial Guinea
 - 85 Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, North Korea
 - 86 Angola, Djibouti, Iran, Myanmar
 - 87 DR Congo, Libya, South Sudan, Syria
 - 88 Kosovo, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Sudan
 - 89 Nepal
 - 90 Eritrea, Palestine
 - 91 Pakistan, Somalia
 - 92 Iraq
 - 93 Afghanistan
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