



RAS AL KHAIMAH'S JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Nestled on the northernmost tip of the United Arab Emirates, Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) is making significant strides towards a sustainable future. This emirate, often overshadowed by its glitzy neighbors, has embarked on an inspiring journey to balance economic growth, responsible real estate development, and environmental preservation. This effort aligns with [RAK Vision 2030](#) with sustainability being one of its main objectives. RAK Vision 2030 is a comprehensive strategic framework designed to guide Ras Al Khaimah towards a sustainable, diversified, and globally competitive future.

Tourism

As a unique destination in the Middle East known for its natural beauty and diverse landscapes, RAK has set its sights on becoming a regional leader in sustainable tourism by 2025. Under the leadership of the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, the emirate has set a commitment to attract over three million visitors annually by 2030. It has recently achieved an impressive milestone by obtaining *Silver Certification* through the *EarthCheck Sustainable Destinations program*. This distinction solidifies the emirate as a pioneering force in sustainable tourism, setting a remarkable precedent as the first destination in the Middle East to attain such a high level of sustainability certification.

In a travel insights survey conducted by Censuswide and released by Safarak Travel & Tourism, an impressively large proportion of respondents emphasized the significance of sustainability in their travel decisions. The results reveal that 82 percent of participants highly prioritize sustainable destinations, while 84 percent place a premium on eco-conscious accommodations, and 78 percent actively seek out sustainable activities for their trips. This data underscores the conscientious approach of travelers when it comes to aligning their travel choices with environmentally responsible practices.

Real Estate and Hospitality Development

Launched in 2019, the [Barjeel Green Building Regulations](#) are a pivotal component of [Ras al-Khaimah's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy 2040](#), stipulating ambitious energy and water conservation objectives. The strategy is anticipated to deliver a net economic benefit exceeding AED 9 billion for Ras Al Khaimah, based on present value calculations.

Program	Brief & Objectives	Program	Brief & Objectives		
1. Green Building Regulations	Introduce and periodically upgrade green building regulations for new buildings. Introduce efficient community guidelines and a building rating scheme.	5. Efficient Street Lighting	Adopt efficient lighting technologies (such as LEDs) for 400+km of existing street lighting and for new roads. Apply dimming and switch-off measures.		
2. Building Retrofits	Execute comprehensive energy efficiency improvement projects for at least 3,000 existing buildings by 2040, starting with large government and commercial buildings with high energy consumption.	6. Water Reuse & Efficient Irrigation	Increase wastewater collection and treatment. Reuse at least 95% of the TSE produced by 2040. Implement efficient irrigation measures to allow for expansion of public green spaces.		
3. Energy Management	Promote best practices in energy management at key energy and water users, representing >30% of the total electricity consumption.	7. Solar Programs	Promote solar energy for on-site and utility-scale applications, with an ambition to reach 1,200 MWp of total capacity by 2040.		
4. Efficient Appliances	Promote adoption of energy and water efficient appliances and equipment (such as air conditioners, refrigerators and water fixtures). Implement mechanisms to enforce appliance efficiency standards.	8. Energy from Waste	Develop a range of waste to energy capacities to contribute at least 2% of the primary energy consumed in Ras Al Khaimah.		
		9. Efficient Vehicles	Promote adoption of efficient vehicles with a focus on EVs and hybrids, starting with government fleets.		
Enablers	Awareness and Capacity Building Developing efficiency-consciousness in society, and building local skills and capacities	Financing Mechanisms Facilitating investments in energy efficiency & renewables projects	Research and Innovation Supporting research and development of new energy efficient solutions and technologies	Information Systems Creating tools to support projects and monitor strategy progress	Policy and Regulation Adopting regulatory measures to promote implementation of the programs

Image Source: RAK Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy 2040



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RAK recognizes that sustainable development is essential for preserving its natural beauty while ensuring economic growth and sustainable living among its residents. The emirate is also taking a measured approach to hotel development, implementing green building codes that prioritize sustainability in areas such as food waste reduction and sustainable landscaping. The goal is to achieve 100 percent integrated sustainability in all hotels, promoting eco-conscious practices throughout the hospitality sector. Furthermore, RAK is actively cultivating collaborations with operators and developers who place a high emphasis on sustainability.

Business Practices

RAK has encouraged a diverse range of industries, from tourism to manufacturing sectors, to adopt sustainable practices. Companies are encouraged to reduce their carbon footprint, manage resources efficiently, and engage in eco-friendly practices. The Environment Protection and Development Authority (EPDA) in Ras Al Khaimah, the governmental entity responsible for overseeing environmental regulations, frequently conducts workshops, engaging local government agencies within the emirate as well as prominent industrial facilities. These workshops aim to motivate these entities to devise innovative solutions and alternatives, with the ultimate goal of achieving carbon neutrality in their respective sectors.

Other initiatives and projects of EPDA include:

- Environmental Sustainability Award - The launch of this initiative aims to establish the pillars of sustainable development, cultivate widespread environmental awareness across various sectors, promote a shared sense of community environmental responsibility, drive targeted and outstanding environmental initiatives, and acknowledge and motivate outstanding contributions in environmental conservation by institutions committed to excellence and innovation.
- Replacement of Environmental Fines with Local Trees Plantation - EPDA introduced this initiative, wherein local trees are planted as an alternative to paying environmental fines. This is part of the EPDA's approach to substituting environmental penalties for both industries and small vendors.

The ruler of RAK strongly believes that prioritizing the support of national companies is a fundamental element of the emirate's blueprint for fostering a sustainable economy. By encouraging these companies, RAK can not only fortify its resilience to economic challenges but also elevate the overall quality of life for all its residents.

Community and Livability

Community engagement plays a vital role in RAK's sustainability initiatives, with the active involvement of government authorities to enhance residents' well-being and promote efficiency. RAK Municipality has introduced initiatives like *The Efficient Appliances Program*, designed to promote the adoption of energy-efficient appliances among households. Within the UAE, the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology has established and enforced minimum energy efficiency standards and efficiency labeling schemes for key energy and water-consuming devices, including cooling systems, lighting, large household appliances, and water heaters. RAK Transportation Authority has initiated programs, including the *2023-2030 Comprehensive Mobility Plan*, with the objective of creating an inclusive infrastructure that reduces the reliance on private vehicles and promotes public transportation usage to mitigate carbon emissions. It also introduced various initiatives, including the Tesla electric taxi service, bus stops powered by solar energy, and the incorporation of e-buses. EPDA declared a ban on single-use plastic bags as part of the national sustainability initiative to come into effect starting January 2024, which also restricts the import, production, and distribution of plastics. By January 2026, this ban will expand to cover additional items, including cups, plates, cutlery, containers, and boxes. These initiatives not only urge residents to support the government's green programs but also underscore the critical role of sustainability for both the current and future generations.

Ras Al Khaimah has launched an all-encompassing mission to promote responsible environmental practices, reshaping the emirate into more than just a tourist attraction but also an investment destination where one can seamlessly live, work, and play. The emirate's ruler once said, *"I want Ras Al Khaimah to be a global emirate. I want our people to be global citizens."* This visionary statement from the leader himself is a powerful source of inspiration, driving the emirate toward global prominence.

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