

A STUDIO PASE GUIDE

The Dubai Airbnb Furnishing Checklist

A practical, stage-by-stage and room-by-room guide for investors preparing a short-term rental in Dubai – written by an interior architect who designs and equips these apartments every week.

INTRODUCTION

A guide for the investor furnishing for guests, not for themselves.

You have bought, or are about to complete on, a unit in Dubai that you want to list as a short-term rental. This guide is for that moment – before the furniture orders go out, before the photographer is booked, before the listing goes live.

A short-term rental in Dubai is not a home you decorate for yourself. It is a product that has to **look distinctive in a thumbnail**, **function cleanly for a stranger** and **survive frequent turnover without looking tired**. Most furnishing mistakes come from forgetting at least one of those three things.

Use the checklist as your project spine: a way to plan the work, brief any designer or contractor, and read the quotes you receive with a clear idea of what sits behind each line. The sections that follow cover the foundations, the Dubai-specific rules, the room-by-room essentials, the indicative budget, a realistic timeline, and the mistakes we see most often on listings in Marina, Downtown, Business Bay, JVC and Palm Jumeirah.

Studio PASE has used this same framework on every Airbnb fit-out we have delivered. If after reading you would rather hand the project to a studio that designs, sources, installs and styles the whole thing as one bundled price, our contact details are on the final page.



Project SPARKLE – Dubai Marina, studio apartment furnished for short-term rental.

Before you furnish — the foundations.

These are the decisions that set everything else. Get them right and the rest of the project follows; get them wrong and no amount of furniture will fix it.

Define the positioning — value-led or premium.

A studio in JVC competing on price is a different design brief from a one-bedroom in Downtown commanding a premium nightly rate. The positioning sets the budget, the materials and the styling. Decide which side of the market you are on before specifying a single item.

Study the floor plan first.

Look at circulation (can two guests pass each other comfortably?), the maximum comfortable sleeping capacity (capacity sells, but only if the bed is real), and a flattering wide-angle photo from the doorway of each room. If those three pass, you can furnish; if not, the layout needs work first.

Decide whether the unit needs renovation before furnishing.

Painting, flooring, bathroom upgrades, joinery and any feature wall are a separate budget line and a separate timeline. Treat them that way from the start — bundling them into the furnishing budget is the most common reason projects overrun.

Set a furnishing budget based on the property and the plan.

Not a number heard from a friend, not a benchmark from a different building. The size of the unit, the standard of the address and the positioning you have chosen drive the figure. The indicative ranges on the next pages are a starting point; your specific quote depends on these three.

Confirm the holiday-home registration and permitting route.

Holiday-home permits and unit classification are issued by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET). You can hold the permit yourself or appoint a licensed operator. Decide early — the inspection and permit are the bottleneck between "furnished" and "live on Airbnb."

What Dubai requires — the regulatory baseline.

A short-term rental in Dubai is a regulated activity. The interior is yours to design, but the permit and the operational standards are set by the authorities. The points below are the baseline most projects encounter — confirm the current rules with DET or a licensed operator before listing.

Holiday-home permit (DET)

Every short-term rental unit in Dubai must be registered with the Department of Economy and Tourism. The permit is unit-specific, runs annually, and is renewed each year. Without it, the unit cannot legally accept paying guests.

Unit classification — Standard or Deluxe

DET classifies holiday homes by standard. The classification affects which guest segments your unit is shown to and the per-night Tourism Dirham. The interior specification — finishes, equipment, presentation — drives the classification, so it is worth designing toward the tier you want.

SIRA-approved smart lock

A SIRA-approved smart lock is mandatory for short-term rentals in Dubai. Plan for it from the outset — both the budget line and the door hardware. It also makes contactless guest access genuinely workable.

Guest check-in registration

Guest details are registered with the authorities for each stay. Most operators and PMS platforms handle this automatically. If you operate the unit yourself, confirm the current process before your first guest arrives.

Tourism Dirham

A small per-room, per-night fee collected from the guest and paid to the authorities. The amount depends on the classification of the unit. Build it into the listing pricing so it is transparent rather than a surprise.

Insurance and liability

Building insurance does not automatically cover short-term rental use. Confirm with your provider, and consider a dedicated short-term rental policy. Most professional operators carry their own; if you self-manage, this is on you.

Room by room — what each space needs.

Bedroom — the room that sells the listing.

A quality mattress on a proper bed frame, a substantial headboard (it carries the room in photos), hotel-grade bedding in white, blackout curtains, bedside lighting on both sides and a genuinely clear surface beside the bed. Guests judge a stay on how they slept; this is where the spend earns its return.

Living & dining — comfortable, not crowded.

A sofa scaled to the room (not always the biggest one), a coffee table at the right height, a functional dining setting (two seats for a studio is plenty), and a television placed where guests would naturally sit. Warm but uncluttered styling — every accessory should earn its place in the photograph.

Kitchen — complete, not elaborate.

Pots and pans, crockery and glassware for the maximum sleeping capacity, basic utensils, a kettle, a coffee machine. Guests should be able to cook a meal and eat it. Resist the urge to stock every appliance — five rarely-used items make the cupboards look chaotic in inspection photos.

Bathrooms — light, mirrors, hooks, towels.

Good lighting (the single overhead spot is rarely enough), a large mirror to bounce that light, plenty of hooks and rails so wet towels and clothes have somewhere to go, and a generous supply of fresh towels. Bath mats, toiletry holders and a clean liner in the bin do more for the review score than a feature wall.

Storage — so guests can genuinely unpack.

Dedicated luggage space (a low bench or a clear corner), hanging space with real hangers (not the wire kind) and a few empty drawers. Guests who unpack stay longer and review better; guests who live out of suitcases do neither.

Lighting — layered, warm, never just the ceiling.

Replace the single ceiling spot with layered light: ceiling for general illumination, wall sconces or floor lamps for atmosphere, table lamps for warmth. All on warm bulbs (2700–3000K). The photos will look like a hotel; the cool-white ceiling alone makes everything look like a clinic.

Indicative budget — what a fit-out costs in Dubai.

The figures below are Studio PASE's indicative ranges for furnishing a short-term rental in Dubai. The Standard Furniture Package covers furniture supply, delivery, installation, assembly and final styling — a turnkey furniture fit-out. The Operator Plus Kit equips the unit with appliances and operational items so it can accept its first guest.

UNIT TYPE	STANDARD FURNITURE PACKAGE	OPERATOR PLUS KIT (OPTIONAL)
Studio	AED 17,000 – 27,000	AED 4,500 – 6,000
One-bedroom apartment	AED 29,000 – 39,000	AED 6,500 – 8,000
Two-bedroom apartment	AED 45,000 – 55,000	AED 8,000 – 10,000
Three-bedroom apartment	AED 59,000 – 69,000	AED 10,000 – 12,000
Villa or larger home	Quoted individually — bespoke scope	Quoted individually

Custom curtains are measured on site and quoted separately at approximately AED 1,500 – 3,500 per window. Renovation work — painting, flooring, bathroom upgrades, carpentry — is also separate, quoted on inspection.

What moves a project within the range

A unit furnished toward the lower figure uses a tighter, well-edited selection; toward the higher figure it carries a more layered scheme — a larger sofa, a statement light, a richer set of soft furnishings. Three factors typically move a project upward: the size and ceiling height of the living space, the standard of the building and the nightly rate it targets, and the level of finish you want in the listing photography.

For an itemised estimate built around your specific unit, use the **Furnishing Budget Planner** at pase-interior-design.com/airbnb-furnishing-budget-planner-dubai, or send your floor plan, photos and target positioning for a tailored proposal.

The realistic timeline.

From the day you say yes to the day the apartment accepts its first guest, expect roughly four to six weeks. The schedule below assumes the unit is vacant and ready to furnish, with no renovation in scope.

WEEK 1

Brief, site visit and concept

Floor plan review, target positioning agreed, mood board and material direction. A clear proposal with fixed pricing is signed before any orders are placed.

WEEKS 2 - 3

Specification, sourcing and procurement

Furniture, soft furnishings and operational items are specified, ordered and scheduled for delivery. Curtains are measured on site and tailored.

WEEK 4

Delivery, installation and styling

A coordinated install – typically three working days on site for an apartment – followed by a final styling pass and the unit is ready to photograph.

WEEKS 4 - 5

Photography, listing prep and DET inspection

Professional photography while the unit is at its freshest, listing copy written, holiday-home permit application and the DET inspection.

WEEK 5 - 6

Live on Airbnb

Permit issued, listing published, first bookings open. From this point the unit operates – the design work is done.

Six mistakes we see on Dubai Airbnb listings.

The same handful of mistakes keep showing up — and each one quietly costs bookings, reviews or both. None are expensive to avoid if you catch them early.

01 Furnishing for the owner, not the guest.

Personal taste — heavy palettes, niche art, statement pieces that only one buyer would love. Guest interiors should be confident but neutral, so a wide audience can imagine themselves there.

02 Photographing too soon, or in the wrong light.

Photos taken in harsh midday sun, with cluttered surfaces and no styling pass, anchor the listing for its entire lifetime. Wait for the styling, hire a real photographer, shoot at golden hour with lamps on.

03 Oversized sofas, undersized beds.

The sofa eats the living room; the bed is a flat double instead of a real king. Guests judge a stay on how they slept and whether they could move freely — get the proportions right, even if it means smaller pieces.

04 Cool-white ceiling spots as the only light.

Makes the apartment look like an empty showroom in photos and a clinic in person. Add wall, table and floor lamps on warm bulbs; the change is dramatic for very little money.

05 Generic styling with no identity.

A unit that looks like a dozen others in the same building loses the click. A few intentional choices — one signature light, a considered art selection, a coherent palette — make the listing memorable rather than forgettable.

06 Skipping the operational details guests notice.

A clean liner in the bin, working WiFi credentials clearly displayed, a printed welcome note, enough hangers, a corkscrew in the kitchen drawer. None of these cost much; all of them appear in five-star reviews.

Before the listing goes live.

Materials specified for frequent turnover.

Durable, wipeable, robust. Fabrics that survive professional cleaning, surfaces that recover from a stain, pieces that are repairable rather than disposable.

A coherent visual identity across rooms.

Same palette, same material logic, same level of styling. A guest scrolling through twenty photos should feel one place, not five.

Wide, flattering photo angles from every doorway.

Walk into each room with the floor plan in hand. If the wide-angle shot is blocked or unflattering, rearrange now – not after the photographer arrives.

Enough towels and bed linen for a full changeover.

Two complete sets minimum, so housekeeping can turn a guest in the time the booking calendar allows.

A complete amenity set, ready for publication.

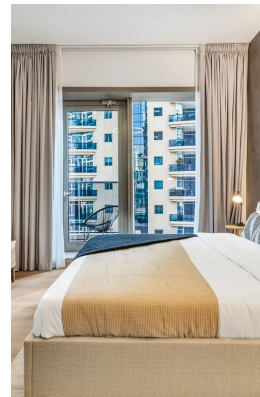
Welcome card, WiFi details, basic toiletries, coffee, a few teas, salt and pepper. The first impression of a stay is set in the first ten minutes after arrival.



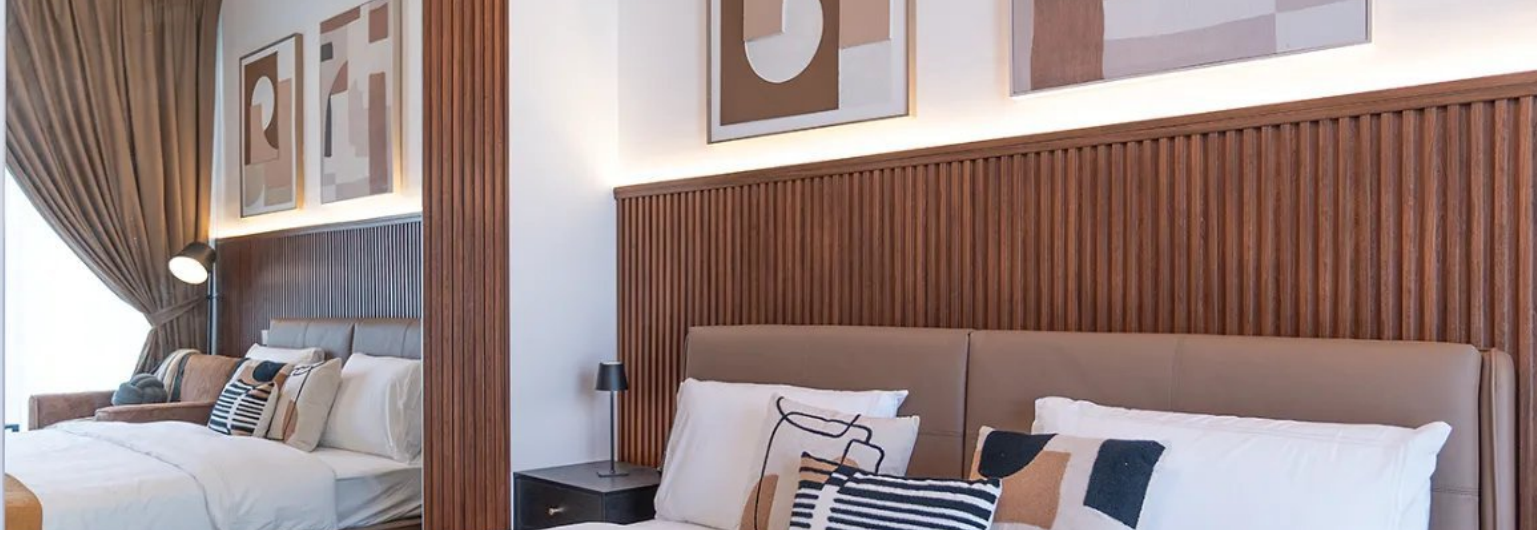
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NEXT STEP

Want this handled for you, end to end?

Studio PASE designs and equips Airbnb and short-term rental apartments in Dubai as a single bundled service — concept, specification, sourcing, delivery, installation, styling and final handover, in one price and one contract. Most of our clients are investors based abroad; we work with floor plans, photos and video walk-throughs, and complete the apartment without you needing to travel.

Send us your floor plan, a few photos of the unit, the address and the positioning you are targeting. We will reply with a tailored proposal that turns this checklist into a fixed, written quote.

Three things to send us

1. The floor plan of the apartment (the developer's PDF is fine).
2. A handful of photos of the unit as it stands today.
3. A short note on the target guest and nightly rate you are aiming for.

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STUDIO

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A note on regulation. This checklist is general guidance from an interior design studio. Permit requirements, holiday-home classification and operational rules — including the SIRA-approved smart lock, insurance and guest check-in registration — are set by the Dubai authorities and can change. Confirm the current rules with the Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) or a licensed operator. Studio PASE designs and equips interiors; it is not a rental-management or regulatory adviser.