

ABSTRACT

This guide is an attempt to give you everything you need to make an informed property decision in Ras Al Khaimah — without the promotional framing that passes for analysis in most of the material you will encounter. The bear case is given equal weight to the investment case. Every claim that can be sourced is sourced. Every opinion is clearly labelled as one. It draws on CBRE’s RAK Real Estate Market Review FY2025, Dean Property’s published conflict analysis, the Bayut Annual RAK Market Report 2025, Knight Frank pricing data, and a range of institutional sources including Goldman Sachs, the IEA, JPMorgan, Moody’s, and Fitch.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Author	Giles Dean · Dean Property
Published	March 2026
Format	Investor Guide
Prepared for	General release
Contact	

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this guide are the personal views of the author and do not constitute investment, financial, or legal advice. Readers should seek independent professional advice before making any property decision. Dean Property Real Estate FZ-LLC, Ras Al Khaimah · UAE · Licence No. 47030098.

GUIDE STRUCTURE

CONTENTS

01	INTRODUCTION – WHY RAK, WHY NOW	01
02	THE MARKET	02
03	THE GEOGRAPHY – COMMUNITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE	04
04	THE DEVELOPERS AND THE SUPPLY PIPELINE	07
05	OFF-PLAN MECHANICS FOR EUROPEAN BUYERS	09
06	RAK VS DUBAI – THE HONEST COMPARISON	12
07	THE WYNN EFFECT	15
08	THE CONFLICT – WHAT IT MEANS FOR RAK	17
09	QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU COMMIT	21
10	HOW DEAN PROPERTY WORKS	23

INTRODUCTION: WHY RAK, WHY NOW



WHY RAK, WHY NOW

Ras Al Khaimah is not an easy market to write about honestly in 2026. It is a market with genuinely strong long-term foundations, specific near-term complications, a geopolitical situation that has introduced real uncertainty, and a price level that requires discipline to navigate well. Most of what has been written about it ignores at least one of those four things. This guide does not.

What follows is an attempt to give you everything you need to make an informed property decision in Ras Al Khaimah — without the promotional framing that passes for analysis in most of the material you will encounter on this subject. The bear case is given equal weight to the investment case. Every claim that can be sourced is sourced. Every opinion is clearly labelled as one.

WHAT RAK ACTUALLY IS

Ras Al Khaimah is the northernmost of the UAE's seven emirates, approximately 45 minutes by road from Dubai International Airport. Its population is around 345,000. Its economy is built on manufacturing, tourism, real estate, and a freezone sector that added 19,000 new companies in 2025 alone. It has an A/A-1 credit rating from S&P Global and an A+ from Fitch, both reaffirmed in 2025. Its government debt stands at approximately 8–9% of GDP — a figure that compares favourably with virtually any European economy you might name.

It is not Dubai. It does not have Dubai's scale, its financial centre, its airport, or its density of international corporate headquarters. What it has instead is a coastline that Dubai cannot replicate, a mountain range twenty minutes from the sea, a cost base roughly 30% lower than its southern neighbour, and a planning framework that has, so far, avoided the oversupply problems that periodically correct Dubai's mid-market.

It also has the Wynn Al Marjan Island resort under construction — a USD 5.2 billion project that represents the region's first legal gaming facility and is scheduled to open in 2027. The implications of that opening for the emirate's demand profile are significant, and they are not yet fully priced in. Nor are the risks that come with an income thesis that depends on a catalyst that has not yet materialised. This guide addresses both.

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

The volume of material promoting RAK property investment has increased substantially over the past three years, in direct proportion to the market's performance. Very little of it engages seriously with the questions that matter most to an informed buyer: what the supply pipeline actually looks like community by community, why transaction volumes fell 17% in 2025 even as prices rose 32%, what the current price-to-rent ratio means for yield investors, and what the February 2026 conflict has done — and has not done — to the structural investment case.

This guide does engage with those questions. It draws on CBRE's RAK Real Estate Market Review for FY2025, published February 2026, as its primary market data source — and on our detailed analysis of what that data actually means for investors, published in March 2026. For the geopolitical assessment it draws on our full analysis of the conflict's effect on UAE real estate, also published in March 2026. Where the two sources point in different directions, both perspectives are presented. Where the evidence is genuinely uncertain, that uncertainty is stated.

If you are looking for confirmation that RAK is a straightforward opportunity with only upside, this is not the guide for you. If you are looking for the most honest, complete, and independently evidenced account of what this market is, what it is doing, and what a disciplined investor should be thinking about — read on.

THE MARKET

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

CBRE's RAK Real Estate Market Review for FY2025, published in February 2026, is the most comprehensive independent assessment of this market available. The headline figures are strong by any measure.



SOURCE : CBRE RAK REAL ESTATE MARKET REVIEW FY2025

Prime apartment prices reached their highest point in the current cycle, driven by capital appreciation across Al Hamra, Al Marjan Island, and Mina Al Arab. Overall apartment prices across the emirate averaged AED 1,128 per square foot; villas averaged AED 1,166 per square foot, with villa prices recording an 11% increase year on year, led by a 9% rise in the Al Hamra district.

The rental market moved in the same direction, though with a notable split by asset type. Apartment rents climbed 24.8% year on year. Villa rents were broadly flat, down a marginal 0.9% on average, with Mina Al Arab the exception at 7% growth. The divergence reflects both a wave of new apartment handovers commanding rental premiums over older stock, and a villa market where supply additions have kept pace with demand more closely.

The hospitality sector reinforced the residential picture. Hotel occupancy rose 4.6 percentage points to 75%, outpacing the broader UAE average increase of 3.7 points. Revenue per available room climbed 11.5%. RAKEZ added 19,000 new companies — a 44% increase — bringing its active community to over 40,000 businesses. RAK also secured 32% of the UAE’s total greenfield FDI in 2025, positioning it sixth globally for FDI inflows according to an Emirates NBD report cited by CBRE. These are independently produced figures. They are not marketing claims.

WHAT THE NUMBERS ACTUALLY MEAN

The same report contains data that sits in direct tension with those headlines. Understanding the tension is more useful to an investor than either set of figures in isolation.

OFF-PLAN RESIDENTIAL MARKET — VALUE VS VOLUME			
	FY2024	FY2025	CHANGE
Total sales value	AED 14.9bn	AED 11bn	-26%
Transaction volume	~6,750 units	~5,600 units	-17%
Average unit value	AED 2.3m	AED 2.0m	-13%

SOURCE: CBRE RAK REAL ESTATE MARKET REVIEW FY2025

A 32% rise in average prices alongside a 26% fall in total sales value is not a contradiction — but it requires explanation. The explanation is primarily compositional. The most prominent branded launches of 2025 — Mondrian Beach Residences, which secured AED 704 million in sales within two hours of launch, and Jacob & Co Residences, which cleared AED 300 million in inventory within twelve hours — involved relatively small unit counts. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of 2025 launch activity was concentrated in RAK Central, a newer development corridor priced at mid-market levels, pulling aggregate transaction values down even as prime prices

continued rising. There was strong recovery momentum into Q4, with total sales value reaching AED 2.9 billion — a 32% quarter-on-quarter increase — and transaction volumes jumping 47% from Q3.

The volume decline is real and deserves acknowledgement. In RAK's case the primary explanation is tightening prime inventory and a compositional shift in what sold, not a broad softening of demand. But the explanation matters less than the discipline it should impose: in a market reading this way, the difference between the right purchase and the wrong one is material.

The more important analytical question for a yield investor is not what happened to prices but what has happened to the relationship between prices and rental income — what CBRE's report describes directly as a "decoupling of price-to-rent ratios." When you buy a property as an investment, your return comes in two forms: rental income and capital appreciation. The price-to-rent ratio is the relationship between the price you pay and what the property currently earns in rent. Purchase prices have risen faster than rents. A property offering a 7% gross yield at 2023 purchase prices may offer meaningfully less at 2025 purchase prices, even though rents have also increased — because the price has moved further and faster than the income.

YIELD COMPRESSION — ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

	2023 PURCHASE PRICE	2025 PURCHASE PRICE
Example property (1BR, Mina Al Arab)	AED 800,000	AED 1,056,000 (+32%)
Annual rent	AED 56,000	AED 70,000 (+25%)
Gross yield	7.0%	6.6%

ILLUSTRATIVE FIGURES BASED ON CBRE RENTAL AND PRICE INDEX DATA. NOT A SPECIFIC PROPERTY.

CBRE's FY2025 report flags a direct "decoupling of price-to-rent ratios" across RAK's prime residential market. Purchase prices have risen faster than rents. The practical consequence: a property offering 7% gross yield at 2023 purchase prices may offer meaningfully less at 2025 purchase prices — not because rents have fallen, but because the price has moved further and faster than the income.

The yield compression illustrated above is the moderate case. In parts of the market where prices have moved more aggressively than rents, the gap is wider. This is not a reason to avoid the market. It is a reason to buy with precision — the right community, the right asset type, a realistic yield expectation, and a clear view of the timeline over which that yield normalises as the demand base grows. We return to this in Chapters 3 and 7.

THE SUPPLY PICTURE: WHAT THE PIPELINE DATA ACTUALLY SHOWS

The aggregate supply pipeline is the most commonly cited bear case for RAK property. At the market level it is a legitimate concern. At the community level it tells a materially different story — and that distinction is the most important analytical point in this chapter.

SCHEDULED RESIDENTIAL COMPLETIONS — RAS AL KHAIMAH

YEAR	UNITS SCHEDULED
------	-----------------

2025	~800
------	------

2026	~800
------	------

2027	~4,000
------	--------

2028	~7,700
------	--------

2029	~7,700
------	--------

2030	~7,700
------	--------

SOURCE: CBRE RAK REAL ESTATE MARKET REVIEW FY2025. 2028–2030 FIGURES REPRESENT ANNUAL AVERAGE OF ~23,000 TOTAL SCHEDULED COMPLETIONS

The delivery curve is the story. Supply arriving in 2025 and 2026 is modest. From 2027 it accelerates sharply, and by 2028–2030 the market is absorbing a volume of new stock that has no precedent in RAK's history. The risk is straightforward: if demand does not grow in line with supply, yields compress further and recovery timelines extend. This is the bear case Fitch articulated before the conflict, and it has not been resolved by subsequent events.

What the aggregate number conceals is where that supply is going.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL SUPPLY AND DEMAND PROFILE

COMMUNITY	SHARE OF 2026–2030 PIPELINE	PRIMARY DEMAND BASE
Al Marjan Island	>70% of ~27,000 units	Tourism / hospitality / short-stay
RAK Central	Significant; handovers from 2029–30	Mid-market / mixed use
Marjan Beach District	Early stage; significant planned	Residential-led; hospitality-adjacent
Al Hamra Village	Constrained	Residential / long-term rental
Mina Al Arab	Constrained	Residential / long-term rental

SOURCE: CBRE RAK REAL ESTATE MARKET REVIEW FY2025

Al Marjan Island alone accounts for over 70% of the units expected between 2026 and 2030. The established residential communities — Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab — have materially tighter supply pipelines. There is less undeveloped land, the existing infrastructure acts as a natural constraint on new entrants, and the demand base in those communities is residential and long-term rather than tourism-linked and short-stay. This is the same dynamic that insulated Palm Jumeirah and Emirates Hills from the worst of Dubai’s mid-market supply corrections: scarcity in established, amenity-rich communities behaves differently from abundance in emerging development corridors.

The conflict has reinforced this bifurcation. The Hormuz closure interrupted supply chains for construction materials overwhelmingly imported through Jebel Ali. Construction costs surged. Developer financing stress deepened — UAE corporate bonds were the worst performing emerging market debt in the period immediately following the strikes, and access to bond market capital effectively closed for smaller developers. Projects will be delayed. Some will be cancelled. The supply risk is real. It

is also concentrated — in precisely the communities and developer profiles where it was already highest. That concentration is what makes the community-level analysis in Chapter 3 the most commercially important section of this guide.

THE GEOGRAPHY: COMMUNITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE



THE SETTING

Ras Al Khaimah occupies the northeastern tip of the UAE, where the Hajar Mountains meet the Arabian Gulf. The geography is genuinely unusual for this part of the world: a coastline running for approximately 64 kilometres, a mountain range rising to over 1,900 metres, mangrove waterways, desert plains, and agricultural land all within thirty minutes of each other. The emirate sits approximately 45 minutes by road from Dubai International Airport via the E311 highway.

RAK International Airport serves a growing number of direct routes with particular strength in European connections — the UK, Germany, Poland, Romania, and Kazakhstan among the leading source markets for international visitors in 2025. Plans for a LEED Gold-rated VIP terminal opening in 2027 are in place. For international buyers, the access equation is already workable and improving.

Living costs run approximately 30% below Dubai's equivalent. Schools and healthcare are well-established, with a range of international curricula represented. The community mix — British, European, Indian, Emirati, Russian, and broader Asian — is genuinely diverse and has been for some years. This is not a market where the expat infrastructure is being built; it already exists.

THE COMMUNITIES

RAK's investable real estate market is concentrated in a small number of distinct communities, each with its own character, supply position, demand profile, and risk-reward dynamic. Understanding the differences between them is more commercially important than understanding the market at the aggregate level.

AL MARJAN ISLAND

Al Marjan Island is a cluster of four man-made coral-shaped islands extending approximately 4.5 kilometres into the Arabian Gulf, connected to the RAK mainland by a single causeway. It is the emirate's most prominent development address and the location of the majority of its branded residence pipeline.

Al Marjan Island alone accounts for over 70% of the approximately 27,000 units expected in RAK between 2026 and 2030. It is home to the Wynn Al Marjan Island resort under construction, the Mondrian Beach Residences (343 units, USD 500 million, delivery 2029), the Janu Hotel and Residences (73 residences plus 132 hotel keys, USD 400 million, delivery 2030), and the Jacob & Co Residences (223 units, USD 109 million, delivery 2030), among others. Prime apartment prices on the island have reached AED 2,428 per square foot — the cycle high for RAK — driven by the weight of branded launches and investor anticipation of the Wynn's multiplier effect.

The demand profile is predominantly tourism and hospitality-linked. The investment thesis for a significant portion of the Al Marjan pipeline rests on the short-stay visitor market — the guest profile the Wynn resort is designed to attract, and the rental income that comes with it. That is a coherent thesis. It is also a thesis that depends on a catalyst opening on schedule, in a market where construction timelines have just become more uncertain, and on a short-stay income mechanism that travel advisories can suspend at short notice.

For buyers with a long horizon, strong capital reserves, and no dependence on near-term rental income, there is a case. For a buyer who needs yield from day one, or whose investment thesis requires a rapid conflict resolution, the risk profile is materially higher than the marketing suggests.

AL HAMRA VILLAGE

Al Hamra Village is a fully integrated master-planned community on the RAK coastline, approximately 45–60 minutes from Dubai. It is the emirate's most established freehold community and, in our assessment, its most defensible investment address in the current environment.

The community spans over 77 million square feet and includes the Al Hamra Marina and Yacht Club, the Al Hamra Golf Club (18-hole), a retail mall, a marina promenade, a Waldorf Astoria hotel, and a substantial existing residential population. The demand base is long-term residential: professionals, families, and an established expat community that generates genuine, sustained rental demand. Average villa prices rose 9% year on year in 2025 — solid, unspectacular performance underpinned by genuine occupier demand rather than speculative anticipation.

The supply pipeline in Al Hamra is constrained. The community is substantially built out, the golf course and marina create natural boundaries, and new inventory is a fraction of what Al Marjan Island and RAK Central are delivering. Gross yields at current purchase prices sit in the range of 6–8% — yields supported by actual tenants paying actual rents, not projections predicated on a hospitality catalyst. The conflict's effect on Al Hamra is more limited than on Al Marjan Island: the demand base is residential and long-term, travel advisories do not suspend the income mechanism, and the community's attractions are not dependent on any single project opening.

Al Hamra Village is, in our assessment, RAK's most defensible investment address in the current environment. Constrained supply, genuine long-term residential demand, yields supported by real tenants, and a demand base that is structurally insulated from travel advisories. The conflict has made these qualities more visible, not created them.

According to the Bayut Annual RAK Market Report 2025, apartment prices in Al Hamra Village averaged AED 1,027 per sqft, while villa prices averaged AED 1,204 per sqft — up 41.9% year on year, reflecting sustained demand for waterfront and golf-adjacent properties in a supply-constrained community.

MINA AL ARAB

Mina Al Arab is RAK Properties' flagship community, situated on the RAK coastline adjacent to natural mangrove reserves. It is approximately 45 minutes from Dubai International Airport and represents the emirate's most mature waterfront residential address outside Al Hamra.

The community is built around a network of waterways, a beach, landscaped walkways, and a hotel strip that includes the InterContinental and Anantara properties. The residential mix spans apartments, townhouses, and villas across multiple phases. Apartment rents in Mina Al Arab rose 24% year on year in 2025, the strongest rental performance of any RAK sub-market. The rental premium commanded by new handover stock over existing inventory is visible and documented.

The demand profile is residential and end-user oriented, with a growing long-term tenant base drawn by the community's lifestyle infrastructure, the proximity to the mangrove nature reserve, and a price point that remains materially below equivalent Dubai coastal assets. RAK Properties, as developer and community manager, is a publicly listed company on the ADX with an established delivery record across the same site. According to the Bayut Annual RAK Market Report 2025, villa prices in

Mina Al Arab averaged AED 1,171 per sqft. Gross yields at current purchase prices average 6–8% (Colliers/CBRE), underpinned by genuine rental demand rather than hospitality projections.

RAK CENTRAL

RAK Central is Marjan's flagship urban development — a 288,000 square metre mixed-use district being built at the gateway to the emirate, designed to function as RAK's commercial and cultural heart. It combines Grade A office space, a university campus, hotels, retail, and residential neighbourhoods within a single masterplan.

The residential units within RAK Central are mid-market in positioning and priced accordingly — lower entry points than the coastal communities, reflecting both the inland location and the absence of the beachfront premium. First handovers are projected no earlier than 2029–2030. RAK Central's investment case is a long-horizon urban growth thesis: that RAK will develop a sufficient commercial economy, white-collar workforce, and institutional presence to sustain demand for urban residential property in the same way Dubai's downtown core has done. It is a credible thesis over a ten-year view. It is not a near-term yield play.

MARJAN BEACH DISTRICT

Marjan Beach District is the newest and least proven of RAK's major development geographies, launched as a masterplan in October 2025. It sits on the RAK mainland adjacent to Al Marjan Island, connected to the Wynn Resort via a purpose-built bridge and to the E311 and E611 highways. The masterplan covers approximately 8 million square metres and is planned to accommodate 22,000 residential units, 12,000 hotel keys, and a resident population of 74,000.

The first significant project within it is The Strand, launched by RAK Properties in February 2026 — 187,000 square metres with an anticipated gross sales value of AED 12 billion across the full masterplan. The first residential phase, Lunara on The Strand

(583 units, prices from AED 1.28 million), has construction scheduled to begin Q4 2026 with completion targeted Q1 2029. RAK Properties has positioned The Strand as a residential-led destination with a stated focus on community living, walkability, and long-term residency — deliberately different in character from the hospitality-heavy Al Marjan Island.

The honest assessment: Marjan Beach District is interesting, the developer is credible, the location is logical, and the price points are currently more accessible than Al Marjan Island. It is also early-stage. There is no rental track record, no established tenant base, no completed community infrastructure, and a delivery timeline running to 2029 and beyond. For a buyer who understands they are investing in a masterplan's first phase — and prices accordingly — the risk is knowable. For a buyer who needs yield certainty or a short investment horizon, it is not the right address.

COMMUNITY COMPARISON — DEAN PROPERTY ASSESSMENT, MARCH 2026

COMMUNITY	DEMAND BASE	SUPPLY PIPELINE	GROSS YIELD	INVESTMENT HORIZON	CURRENT ENVIRONMENT
Al Marjan Island	Tourism / hospitality / short-stay	Very heavy — >70% of RAK pipeline	Compressed at current prices	Long; Wynn-dependent	Higher risk; requires patience and capital reserves
Al Hamra Village	Residential / long-term rental	Constrained	6–8%	Medium to long	Most defensible in current environment
Mina Al Arab	Residential / long-term rental	Constrained	6–8%	Medium to long	Strong fundamentals; developer credible
Marjan Beach District	Residential-led; hospitality-adjacent	Early stage; significant planned	Unproven	Long	Interesting; too early for yield certainty
RAK Central	Urban / commercial / mid-market	Significant; handovers from 2029–30	Unproven	Long	Urban growth thesis only; not a near-term yield play

YIELD RANGES BASED ON COLLIERS/CBRE DATA. GROSS FIGURES BEFORE MANAGEMENT COSTS, SERVICE CHARGES, AND VACANCY. ASSESSMENT REPRESENTS DEAN PROPERTY'S INDEPENDENT VIEW.

THE DEVELOPERS AND THE SUPPLY PIPELINE



WHO IS BUILDING IN RAK

The developer landscape in Ras Al Khaimah has changed significantly in the past three years. Until 2022, the market was dominated by a small number of established local players operating within a limited geography. The combination of the Wynn announcement, sustained price growth, and international media attention drew in international hospitality brands, Abu Dhabi-based majors, and a range of smaller operators for whom RAK represented a more accessible entry point than an increasingly expensive Dubai market.

The result is a pipeline with genuine quality at one end and genuine risk at the other, and a marketing environment in which both are presented in broadly similar terms. Distinguishing between them is one of the most commercially important decisions a buyer in this market can make.

THE ESTABLISHED DEVELOPERS

RAK Properties is the emirate's most established freehold developer, publicly listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange and the master developer of Mina Al Arab. Its track record — Mina Al Arab, Julphar Towers, and a series of phased residential releases within the same community — is verifiable against actual completions. Its balance sheet

is subject to regular financial disclosure and governance compliance as a listed entity. Its current pipeline extends from the established Mina Al Arab community into the adjacent Marjan Beach District via The Strand masterplan.

Aldar Properties, Abu Dhabi's largest developer and also ADX-listed, has a growing presence in RAK. Aldar's financial scale — it reported record sales of AED 41.5 billion in 2025 — means its RAK pipeline carries the balance sheet strength of a developer that is not dependent on any single project's sales velocity to fund construction. Emaar Properties carries similar characteristics: scale, listed status, and a financing structure that does not rely on bond markets in the way smaller operators do.

The international hospitality brands entering RAK — Aman Group, Ennismore, Mondrian, Marriott, Accor, Hilton — bring brand credibility and, in most cases, structured delivery partnerships with financially capable local joint venture partners. These structures distribute delivery risk differently from a single-entity smaller developer, though they do not eliminate it.

THE BRANDED RESIDENCE PICTURE

Branded residences now account for 22% of total residential stock in RAK and 33% of stock scheduled for delivery between 2026 and 2030 — approximately 9,000 branded units in that window (CBRE FY2025). The branded residence proposition rests on several claims: premium pricing justified by brand association, stronger rental yields from guests preferring brand-managed accommodation, and capital value resilience supported by scarcity. These claims have varying degrees of empirical support depending on market and asset type.

RAK is currently in the early stage of this for most of its branded pipeline. The premiums buyers are paying are based on the brand's reputation elsewhere and the projected demand profile the brand will attract — not on a RAK-specific track record. That is not an argument against branded residences as a category. It is an argument for

pricing that reflects the difference between evidenced and projected premium, and for choosing brands with the operational and financial scale to deliver on their commitments.

SELECTED DEVELOPER COMPARISON – DEAN PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

DEVELOPER	LISTED / PRIVATE	RAK TRACK RECORD	FINANCING STRUCTURE
RAK Properties	ADX listed	Extensive — Mina Al Arab, Julphar Towers	Escrow-funded; disclosed financials
Aldar Properties	ADX listed	Growing	Strong balance sheet; not bond-reliant
Emaar Properties	DFM listed	Limited RAK; extensive UAE	Strong balance sheet; not bond-reliant
Wynn Resorts / Marjan JV	NYSE listed	None completed; under construction	JV structure; material financial resources
Ennismore / One Group	Private	None completed	Project-level structure; assess per project
Mantra Properties	Private	Limited	Assess independently
Smaller / emerging developers	Typically private	Varies; often limited	Highest risk; see below

DEAN PROPERTY'S INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT. NOT EXHAUSTIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON AS THE SOLE BASIS FOR DEVELOPER DUE DILIGENCE

WHAT THE CONFLICT HAS CHANGED ABOUT DEVELOPER RISK

Before February 2026, the standard advice on developer due diligence in RAK was sensible but largely theoretical: check the escrow account, review the RERA registration, assess the track record, read the SPA carefully. The financing environment was benign enough that the distinction between a well-capitalised developer and a stretched one was largely academic.

That has changed. In the period immediately following the conflict, UAE corporate bonds became the worst performing debt in emerging markets. Access to bond market capital — one of the primary financing mechanisms for smaller developers — effectively closed. The consequences are direct: new project launches have been postponed, projects under construction face potential funding shortfalls, and some developers are generating liquidity by selling existing inventory quickly, creating motivated sellers in specific segments of the market.

The distinction that was theoretical is now operational. A post-handover payment plan offered by RAK Properties or Aldar is a materially different product from the same plan offered by a smaller developer whose access to construction financing has just been curtailed. The escrow account matters more than it did six months ago. RERA registration matters more. For a practical guide to the language developers use and the questions that cut through it, our article [Five Things Developers Say — and What They Actually Mean](#) covers this in detail.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN ASSESSING A DEVELOPER

Regardless of market conditions, the due diligence framework for a RAK off-plan purchase should cover five areas. First: RERA registration — every off-plan project must be registered, confirming an escrow account has been established. Second: escrow compliance — ask whether the payment plan is construction-linked or time-linked, and confirm that buyer funds are released to the developer only as milestones are verified. Third: track record — visit completed projects by the same developer before committing. Fourth: financial transparency — listed developers are subject to disclosure requirements; private developers vary enormously, and in the current financing environment asking how construction is funded is a legitimate and necessary question. Fifth: the SPA — your primary legal protection, which should be reviewed professionally before signing.

OFF-PLAN MECHANICS FOR EUROPEAN BUYERS

WHY THIS CHAPTER EXISTS

Buying property off-plan in the UAE works differently from buying property in the UK, Germany, Poland, France, or most other European markets. The legal protections are different, the transaction mechanics are different, the cost structure is different, and the vocabulary used by developers and agents frequently obscures rather than clarifies how the process actually works. This chapter explains it plainly.

WHAT OFF-PLAN MEANS IN THIS MARKET

Buying off-plan means purchasing a property before it has been built — committing to a price today for a unit that will be delivered at a future date. In RAK, the majority of new residential inventory enters the market this way. The primary commercial logic for a developer is straightforward: off-plan sales generate the cash flow that partially funds construction. The primary logic for a buyer is also straightforward: entry at today's price with payments staged over the construction period rather than required in full at the point of purchase.

Both propositions are real. Neither is unconditional. The developer benefit depends on sufficient sales velocity to fund construction — a dynamic the conflict has stressed for smaller operators. The buyer benefit depends on the developer delivering on time and to the specified quality, the market performing as anticipated, and the buyer's financial position remaining stable across a payment schedule that may run two to four years.

THE TRANSACTION SEQUENCE

A typical off-plan purchase in RAK follows a defined sequence. **Reservation:** you pay 5–10% of the purchase price and sign a reservation form. This is not usually refundable if you withdraw without cause, so the reservation stage should follow your decision in principle to proceed. **Sales and Purchase Agreement:** the SPA is your primary legal protection. It sets out price, payment schedule, completion date, specifications, developer obligations, and your remedies if those obligations are not met. Have it reviewed professionally before signing. **RERA registration:** every off-plan sale must be registered with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority, establishing your legal interest and ensuring payments go into a regulated escrow account. Ask for confirmation of RERA registration before paying anything beyond a reservation deposit. **Construction-period payments:** made according to the schedule in your SPA. **Handover:** you inspect the unit, sign handover documents, pay any remaining balance, and receive your Title Deed from RAK Municipality.

PAYMENT PLAN STRUCTURES

The most common off-plan payment structure in RAK is a **time-linked plan**, where payments fall due on a fixed calendar schedule — typically quarterly — regardless of construction progress. If your payment falls due in September, it falls due in September whether the building is on schedule or six months behind. Time-linked plans are simpler to budget around and are standard across most RAK launches. Their limitation is straightforward: in a market where construction timelines have become less predictable — and the Hormuz closure has made them more so — you may find yourself paying on schedule for a project that is not progressing on schedule.

A **construction-linked plan** ties payments to verified construction milestones. Your payment obligations move with actual progress. If construction stalls, your payment schedule pauses with it. Construction-linked plans are less commonly offered in RAK than time-linked plans, but they are more buyer-protective and worth negotiating for,

particularly in the current environment. Ask explicitly whether a plan is time-linked or construction-linked — the SPA will specify this, and the difference matters considerably if delays occur.

Post-handover payment plans allow a portion of the purchase price — often 30–40% — to be paid after you receive the keys, typically over two to three years. The practical effect is to reduce the capital required during the construction period and to allow rental income to service the remaining instalments. The caveat from Chapter 4 applies: a post-handover plan from a well-capitalised listed developer is a materially different product from the same plan offered by a developer whose financing position is under stress. Post-handover plans are only as valuable as the developer standing behind them.

One further point that most buyers miss: developers sometimes embed the cost of payment flexibility into the headline unit price. A development offering generous post-handover terms will frequently price its units at a premium to a comparable development on standard terms — effectively charging an implicit financing rate that is rarely disclosed as such. In cases we have reviewed, buyers on extended payment plan structures have been paying the equivalent of 8–10% per annum for their deferred payments without realising it, because the cost was in the price rather than expressed as a rate. Before accepting a post-handover plan as a commercial concession, benchmark the price per square foot against comparable units on standard terms. Our article [Five Things Developers Say — and What They Actually Mean](#) covers this in detail.

WHAT THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT MEANS FOR BUYER NEGOTIATION

Dean Property works directly with developers across the RAK market. What we are seeing at board level — and what is not yet fully visible in public market commentary — is that developer thinking is shifting materially since the conflict. Sales velocity has slowed. Enquiry pipelines have thinned. Developers who were managing

oversubscribed launches eighteen months ago are now facing a different commercial position, and their boards are actively discussing how to stimulate their pipelines and maintain transaction momentum without publicly reducing headline prices.

That discussion has not yet fully translated into standardised new terms across the market. But it means the negotiating environment for a serious buyer right now is meaningfully different from what it was in 2025. Our advice to any buyer currently in conversation with a RAK developer is to push across all of the following levers — and to expect to achieve at least one or two of them.

The first is a **DLD fee waiver**. The 4% Dubai Land Department registration fee is normally payable by the buyer. On a AED 1.5 million purchase that is AED 60,000. Developers have the capacity to absorb this, and in the current environment, asking for it directly is a reasonable opening position. The second is a **construction-linked rather than time-linked payment schedule** — more buyer-protective and worth requesting explicitly. The third is an **extended post-handover payment plan** — standard terms run to two years; three to four years is achievable for the right buyer on the right project. The fourth is **enhanced specifications or inclusions** — a furnished package, upgraded finishes, or an extended service charge waiver — that represent effective value without touching the headline price.

One qualification that must be stated clearly: better terms are only valuable if the underlying asset is sound. Push for better terms by all means — but push harder on developer quality than on payment flexibility. The two are not interchangeable, and a generous payment plan from a developer in difficulty is not a commercial concession. It is a different category of risk entirely.

TOTAL ACQUISITION COSTS

European buyers frequently underestimate the total cost of acquiring property in RAK. One point that surprises many: when purchasing directly off-plan from a developer, there is no agent fee payable by the buyer — developer commissions to agents are

paid by the developer, not passed to the purchaser. This is a meaningful structural difference from many European property markets where buyer-side fees are standard.

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST – ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE AT AED 1,500,000

COST ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
Purchase price	AED 1,500,000	Example only
DLD registration fee	AED 60,000 (4%)	Waivable by some developers; negotiable
Agent fee	Nil	Paid by developer on off-plan purchases
Municipality registration	~AED 1,500	Approximate
Legal / SPA review	AED 3,000–8,000	Strongly recommended
Total without DLD waiver	-AED 1,564,500- 1,569,500	~4.3–4.6% above purchase price
Total with DLD waiver	-AED 1,504,500- 1,509,500	~0.3–0.6% above purchase price

FIGURES ARE ILLUSTRATIVE. ACTUAL COSTS VARY BY TRANSACTION, DEVELOPER, AND NEGOTIATED TERMS.

Ongoing costs after acquisition include an annual service charge levied by the developer or community manager, typically running between AED 10–25 per square foot annually. If renting the property, factor in property management fees of typically 5–8% of annual rental income, and the cost of any periods of vacancy. These costs are real and should be included in any yield calculation — and headline gross yield figures, which are quoted widely by agents and developers, do not include them. For a detailed examination of why gross yield is the most misunderstood number in this market, our articles [10% Net Yield — Really?](#) and [If Your Agent Mentions Gross Yield, Run As Fast As You Can](#) cover this in full.

WHAT EUROPEAN BUYERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND SPECIFICALLY

No notary system. Legal protection comes through RERA registration and the escrow regulatory framework — which is why independent SPA review matters more, not less. **The currency is fixed.** The UAE dirham is pegged to the US dollar at 3.67:1 since 1997. Your currency exposure is effectively to the USD/EUR or USD/GBP rate, not to a floating Gulf currency. The peg is not meaningfully at risk, but the dollar's movement against European currencies is a real variable in your return calculation. **No income tax or capital gains tax** on UAE property — but check how UAE property income and gains interact with your home country's tax system. Many European countries tax their residents' worldwide income. **Succession requires planning.** UAE property held in your personal name is subject to UAE inheritance law, which defaults to Sharia principles in the absence of a registered will. Register a will through the DIFC Wills Service or ADGM Wills and Probate Registry. This is standard for international buyers and can be completed quickly and inexpensively. **The Golden Visa.** A UAE property investment of at least AED 2 million qualifies for a renewable 5 or 10-year residence visa, allowing you to live, work, and sponsor dependants without employer sponsorship. The qualifying investment must be in a completed property with a registered title deed — off-plan purchases do not qualify until handover and title registration. Dean Property guides clients through the Golden Visa application process alongside the purchase.

A NOTE ON FINANCING

UAE bank mortgage financing is available to both residents and non-residents. Resident buyers can typically borrow up to 80% of the property value; non-residents up to 50%. Banks are rigorous on documentation but efficient once applications meet their requirements. For off-plan purchases, mortgage financing at the point of purchase is generally not available — banks lend against completed properties with registered title deeds. Mortgage financing becomes an option at handover, when some buyers use it to fund the completion payment. For buyers considering this approach,

UAE mortgage rates are USD-linked and have moved with the Federal Reserve's rate cycle. In a scenario where rates remain elevated, the cost of mortgage financing at handover may materially affect the net yield calculation.

RAK VS DUBAI: THE HONEST COMPARISON



The comparison between RAK and Dubai is the question most international buyers arrive with, and it is usually framed the wrong way. The question is not which market is better. It is which market is better for a specific type of buyer, with a specific investment thesis, at a specific price point, on a specific timeline. Those are four separate variables and the answer to each can point in different directions.

SCALE, LIQUIDITY, AND MARKET DEPTH

Dubai wins this comparison without serious contest and it should be stated plainly. Dubai's property market recorded AED 917 billion in total transactions in 2025 — approximately USD 250 billion — across more than 270,000 deals. RAK recorded AED 11 billion across approximately 5,600 transactions in the same period. Dubai is not a larger version of the same market. It is a categorically different market in terms of depth, liquidity, international recognition, and the breadth of buyer and tenant demand it attracts. If you need to sell a Dubai asset quickly, there is a functioning secondary market with sufficient depth to absorb it under most conditions. If you need to sell a RAK asset quickly, you are selling into a thinner market where timing, pricing, and the specific community matter considerably more. For investors who prioritise optionality and exit flexibility above yield, Dubai's liquidity premium is real and should carry weight in the decision.

PRICE AND YIELD

RAK wins this comparison clearly. Prime residential in Dubai — Palm Jumeirah, Downtown, Emirates Hills — trades at AED 2,000–4,000 per square foot for quality established coastal and prime residential, with ultra-prime well above that: Palm Jumeirah frond villas averaged approximately AED 4,090 per square foot in 2025, and trophy assets on Jumeirah Bay Island substantially exceed this (Knight Frank Q1 2025; DLD transaction data). The yield on those assets at current purchase prices has compressed to 3–5% gross in most prime sub-markets, before management costs, service charges, and vacancy.

THE CORE TRADE-OFF

Dubai offers deeper liquidity at compressed yields. RAK's established communities offer materially stronger yields at lower entry prices, within the same zero-tax environment and the same currency peg. The question is not which is better. It is which matches your specific investment thesis.

In RAK's established residential communities — Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab — quality coastal assets trade at approximately AED 1,000–1,400 per square foot for completed stock, with apartments in Al Hamra Village averaging AED 1,027/sqft and villas in both Al Hamra and Mina Al Arab averaging AED 1,150–1,200/sqft (Bayut Annual RAK Market Report 2025; CBRE FY2025). Gross yields at current purchase prices sit in the 6–8% range, supported by real tenants paying real rents. Within the same zero personal tax environment, and with the same AED/USD peg providing currency stability, the yield advantage is structural rather than cyclical.

THE SUPPLY DYNAMIC

Dubai's mid-market supply pipeline is a known and documented risk. The aggregate UAE off-plan pipeline running into 2028–2030 is concentrated heavily in Dubai's outer corridors and emerging communities, and the absorption question applies in Dubai as much as it does in RAK. In both markets, the supply risk is community-

specific rather than market-wide. Palm Jumeirah is not the same supply story as Jumeirah Village Circle. Al Hamra Village is not the same supply story as RAK Central. The conflict has reinforced this parallel — construction material supply chains have been disrupted across the UAE, not just RAK, and developer financing stress has hit smaller Dubai operators as hard as their RAK equivalents.

THE DEMAND BASE AND CONFLICT RESILIENCE

Dubai's mid-market and a significant portion of its off-plan pipeline are heavily weighted toward tourism, short-stay rental, and the hospitality ecosystem that surrounds it. That income mechanism is directly suspended by travel advisories. RAK's established communities — Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab — have a demand base that is predominantly long-term residential. The professionals, families, and expatriate residents who form the tenant base in those communities do not disappear when travel advisories are issued. They are already there. Their leases continue. Their rent payments continue. This is the structural reason why, in the scenario framework from Chapter 8, Tier 2 quality residential assets weather conflict conditions materially better than Tier 4 STR and hospitality assets.

INFRASTRUCTURE, EMPLOYMENT, AND THE PROFESSIONAL TENANT BASE

Dubai wins this comparison and the gap is significant. Dubai is the UAE's financial centre, home to the DIFC and the regional headquarters of the majority of multinational corporations operating in the Gulf. The depth of the professional tenant base in Dubai — the bankers, lawyers, consultants, and corporate executives who pay AED 150,000–250,000 in annual rents in prime communities — does not yet exist in RAK in comparable numbers. RAK's economic trajectory is strongly positive. But trajectory is not arrival. Investors who model their returns on Dubai-equivalent tenant depth and rent levels are pulling forward assumptions that the market has not yet earned. For a full discussion of this absorption dynamic, see our article [Ras Al Khaimah and the Question Most Buyers Skip](#).

SAFETY AND LIFESTYLE: THE CASE FOR RAK AS A PLACE TO LIVE

According to Numbeo's 2025 Mid-Year Safety Index, RAK ranks sixth safest city in the world, with a Safety Index score of 83.8. To contextualise that figure: London's crime index sits above 45, New York's above 48. RAK's crime index is 16.3. Five UAE cities placed in the global top six in the same ranking, with Abu Dhabi first, confirming that RAK's safety credentials are structural to the UAE rather than specific to one emirate. The UAE Ministry of Interior recorded a fall in crime of more than 20% between 2020 and 2024. Gallup found 95% of UAE residents feel safe walking alone at night.

Beyond the indices, the February 2026 conflict provided something that safety statistics alone cannot: operational evidence. The UAE's air defence intercepted 93% of ballistic missiles, 94% of drones, and all eight cruise missiles directed at Gulf targets — under live fire, for the first time, against the largest combined aerial barrage ever launched at the region. Not one civilian was killed by a direct strike. As our article [The UAE Under Pressure. And What It Has Shown Us.](#) noted at the time, the UAE's claim to be safe was, before February 28, an assertion backed by crime statistics and institutional reputation. After February 28, it is a claim backed by operational evidence.

The lifestyle proposition in RAK's established communities is genuinely different from Dubai — not inferior. It is quieter, more spacious, physically more varied, and measurably as safe as anywhere in the world. Living costs run approximately 30% below Dubai's equivalent. A family that would rent a three-bedroom apartment in Dubai Marina for AED 180,000 per year can own a comparable or larger property in Al Hamra Village or Mina Al Arab for a purchase price that would not buy a studio in the Marina. The commute to Dubai for buyers who work there is 45–60 minutes by road. For the end user or second-home purchaser, the RAK comparison with Dubai is not a compromise. It is a different choice between two distinct propositions.

RAK VS DUBAI — COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT, MARCH 2026

	DUBAI (PRIME / ESTABLISHED)	RAK (AL HAMRA / MINA AL ARAB)
Entry price (coastal, quality)	AED 2,000–4,000/sqft; ultra-prime above	AED 1,000–1,400/sqft
Gross yield (current)	3–5%	6–8%
Market liquidity / exit depth	High	Moderate
Supply risk	Community-specific; mid-market heavy	Community-specific; Al Marjan / RAK Central heavy
Conflict resilience (established)	Moderate — STR exposure in mid-market	Higher — residential demand base unaffected
Safety ranking	Dubai 4th globally (Numbeo 2025)	RAK 6th globally (Numbeo 2025)
Infrastructure depth	Extensive	Growing; Wynn-dependent at premium end
Lifestyle	High-density, global city	Lower density, coastal, 30% lower cost base
Golden Visa threshold	AED 2 million	AED 2 million
Tax environment	Zero personal / CGT	Zero personal / CGT

DEAN PROPERTY'S INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT, MARCH 2026. YIELD RANGES BASED ON COLLIERS/CBRE DATA. PRICE PER SQFT BASED ON KNIGHT FRANK Q1 2025, DLD AND BAYUT DATA. SAFETY RANKINGS: NUMBEO MID-YEAR SAFETY INDEX 2025.

The through-line of this comparison is the same one that runs through the guide: neither market is uniformly attractive and neither is uniformly risky. The question is always asset type, community, developer, price point, and investment horizon. What RAK offers that Dubai does not — at this stage of both markets' development — is entry at a price that reflects where the market is rather than where optimism suggests it should already be. Lifestyle markets reward patience. They penalise urgency disguised

as opportunity. RAK is a lifestyle market with investment characteristics — and understanding that distinction is more useful than any headline comparison between two emirate names.

THE WYNN EFFECT

WHAT IT IS

The Wynn Al Marjan Island resort is a USD 5.2 billion integrated resort under construction on Al Marjan Island, developed by Wynn Resorts in partnership with Marjan. It is scheduled to open in early 2027, having topped out in Q4 2025. It will be the first legal gaming facility in the Arab world — a distinction that carries implications well beyond the property market. The resort will include a casino, hotels, a convention centre, retail, dining, and entertainment infrastructure. Wynn holds an exclusive, renewable 15-year casino licence for RAK. The emirate is targeting 3.5 million tourists annually by 2030, up from 1.36 million in 2025. CBRE's FY2025 report describes the Wynn resort's multiplier effect on RAK's economy as "unarguable." That is an unusual word for a research document to use, and it reflects a genuine analytical consensus.

THE MULTIPLIER ARGUMENT

The economic logic behind integrated resort development is well-documented across multiple precedents. The opening of Marina Bay Sands in Singapore in 2010 produced an immediate and sustained uplift in tourist arrivals, hotel revenues, premium residential demand, and the broader services economy around it. Singapore's tourism receipts nearly doubled in the two years following the resort's opening. Macau's transformation from a regional curiosity into the world's highest-revenue gaming jurisdiction followed a similar pattern as integrated resort operators entered the market from 2004 onwards.

The RAK thesis follows the same structural logic, with several amplifying characteristics. The UAE's existing infrastructure — Dubai International Airport, the E311 highway network, the established expat professional population — creates a demand hinterland that neither Singapore nor Macau enjoyed at an equivalent stage. The zero-tax environment removes a friction that most comparable gaming jurisdictions impose. And the absence of regional competition means that RAK is not entering an established gaming market — it is creating one, with the first-mover advantages that implies.

For RAK's property market, the induced effect is the most directly relevant. The high-spending international visitor the Wynn is designed to attract — the HNWI individual, the Asian high-roller, the European leisure traveller who currently has no reason to visit RAK — is precisely the demand profile that closes the price-to-rent gap identified in Chapter 2. As that visitor base grows, the tenant pool capable of sustaining premium rents in established residential communities deepens. The yield normalisation story becomes more credible. And the capital value case strengthens as RAK's international recognition increases.

WHAT IT DOESN'T YET MEAN

The multiplier argument is real. It is also forward-dated in ways that most market commentary does not acknowledge, and the guide would not be doing its job if it did not state this plainly. The Wynn opens in early 2027. The induced demand effects will not appear in rental data or transaction data until after opening, and not in sustained form until the resort has operated through at least one full tourist cycle. History suggests that the property market effects of a major integrated resort take two to four years after opening to fully materialise. Singapore's residential market around Marina Bay did not reach its post-resort equilibrium until 2012–2013, two to three years after the resort opened.

This means that an investor buying today is buying into a thesis whose primary catalyst has not yet fired. For a buyer funding a payment plan on an Al Marjan Island property today, the income stream that will eventually justify the purchase price has not yet materialised. The conflict has compressed that timeline further: construction delays caused by Hormuz supply chain disruption mean that some projects in the pipeline will not deliver when originally scheduled. The question every Al Marjan Island buyer needs to answer honestly is whether their capital position can comfortably sustain the period between now and the point at which the Wynn effect translates into actual rental income at actual achieved rents.

THE WYNN EFFECT ON DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

WYNN EFFECT BY COMMUNITY — DEAN PROPERTY ASSESSMENT, MARCH 2026

COMMUNITY	WYNN EXPOSURE TYPE	TIMELINE DEPENDENCY	INCOME THESIS
Al Marjan Island	Direct — resort adjacent	High; opening critical	Tourism / hospitality; Wynn-dependent
Al Hamra Village	Indirect — emirate uplift	Low; demand base independent	Residential; strengthens post-Wynn
Mina Al Arab	Indirect — emirate uplift	Low; demand base independent	Residential; strengthens post-Wynn
Marjan Beach District	Secondary — economic expansion	Medium; Wynn amplifies but doesn't determine	Mixed; residential-led but Wynn-adjacent
RAK Central	Secondary — workforce and commercial	Low-medium; long-horizon	Urban / commercial; Wynn one of several drivers

THE BEAR CASE ON THE WYNN

The first risk is **delay**. The resort has topped out and is on schedule as of Q4 2025. The conflict has introduced construction supply chain disruption that affects the broader RAK pipeline but has not, as of this writing, been confirmed to affect the Wynn project's timeline directly. However, a prolonged Hormuz closure or escalation would increase the probability of delay. Each month of delay extends the period during which Al Marjan Island investors carry payment plan obligations without the income stream the thesis requires.

The second risk is **underperformance**. The thesis assumes that the resort attracts a high-spending international visitor base in volume. That assumption is reasonable given Wynn Resorts' operational track record in Las Vegas, Macau, and Boston. It is not guaranteed. A resort that opens to lower-than-projected visitor numbers would produce a materially slower induced demand effect on the surrounding residential market.

The third risk is **regional competition**. MGM Resorts is constructing a USD 2.5 billion resort on a 25-acre island near Jumeirah Beach in Dubai — The Island, developed with Wasl Group — incorporating MGM Grand, Bellagio, and Aria hotel brands across 1,400 rooms. Opening is targeted for the second half of 2028. MGM applied for a UAE casino licence in September 2024 and has not yet received approval; as of this writing, Dubai's ruler has not granted permission for gaming at the resort. Wynn holds an exclusive, renewable 15-year casino licence for RAK, and the Wynn opens in 2027 — giving it a minimum twelve-to-eighteen month monopoly window even if Dubai's ruler approves gaming at MGM's resort promptly. The two resorts also serve overlapping but not identical demographics. The more likely outcome is a complementary two-casino UAE market that grows the total visitor pool — the pattern Singapore's two integrated resorts established. The risk worth monitoring is whether Dubai's gaming approval, if and when it comes, draws the investment and property price premium back toward Dubai. For buyers whose thesis depends on RAK's sustained positioning as the UAE's premier gaming destination, the MGM situation is the single most important variable to track over the next twenty-four months.

The fourth risk is the **conflict's longer-term reputational effect**. The Wynn's visitor thesis depends substantially on international travellers feeling comfortable flying into a region that was, in February 2026, the target of the largest combined missile and drone barrage in Gulf history. The speed at which that confidence recovers — and the extent to which it recovers fully — will shape the Wynn's opening performance as much as the resort's own operational quality.

THE HONEST ASSESSMENT

In RAK's established residential communities, **the Wynn is a tailwind**. In Al Marjan Island's off-plan pipeline, **it is the engine**. Understanding which of those you are buying into is the most commercially important distinction in this market right now.

The Wynn Al Marjan Island resort is a genuine, large-scale, well-capitalised catalyst for RAK's property market. Its multiplier effects are real and will materialise. The question is not whether they will arrive but when, in which communities, and at what magnitude relative to what is already priced in. In RAK's established residential communities, the Wynn is a tailwind. In Al Marjan Island's off-plan pipeline, it is the engine. Understanding which of those you are buying into is the most commercially important distinction in this market right now.

THE CONFLICT: WHAT IT MEANS FOR RAK



WHAT HAPPENED

On February 28, 2026, following coordinated US-Israeli strikes that killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Iran launched more than 1,500 projectiles at Gulf targets: 221 ballistic missiles, 1,305 drones, and 8 cruise missiles. It was the largest combined aerial barrage ever directed at Gulf targets. The UAE's air defence systems intercepted 93% of the ballistic missiles, 94% of the drones, and all eight cruise missiles. Four people died. Every fatality, and all 112 injuries, was caused by falling interception debris — not by direct strikes. Debris landed on Palm Jumeirah, near the Burj Al Arab, and at Dubai International Airport. The Strait of Hormuz was confirmed closed by the IRGC on March 2.

The market reaction was immediate. UAE stock markets temporarily halted trading. The Dubai Financial Market Real Estate Index fell approximately 21% in under two weeks. Emaar Properties fell 17.7% on the week. Brokerage inquiry levels dropped approximately 45%. The narrative around UAE real estate had been written before the debris had cooled: five years of record growth, brought to an abrupt halt by the first direct military strike on UAE soil in the modern era. That narrative is not wrong about the shock. This chapter argues it is wrong about the conclusion — but only after giving the bear case the weight it deserves.

A NOTE ON THE DATA

In the weeks immediately following the conflict, several brokerages cited DLD weekly transaction data as evidence that the market had remained robust. The DLD's published data for March 2–9 showed 3,570 transactions totalling AED 11.93 billion, including a single transaction at Aman Residences recorded at AED 422 million. That reading is almost certainly wrong, and it matters that it is wrong.

Standard property transfers take ten to fourteen working days to complete registration from the signing of a memorandum of understanding. Complex transactions run to four to six weeks. The overwhelming majority of deals in the March 2–9 data reflect agreements made before February 28. What the data shows is the tail end of a pre-conflict pipeline working through an administrative process — not post-conflict buyer confidence. Any genuine picture of how buyers are responding to the conflict will not appear in transaction data until mid-to-late April 2026 at the earliest.

THE SECURITY PROPOSITION: SHATTERED OR STRESS-TESTED?

"The security aura has been shattered," said Jim Krane of the Rice University Baker Institute. It is a striking phrase and it captures something real: the assumption that the UAE existed outside the reach of regional conflict no longer holds. That assumption was always theoretical. What February 28 did was force the theory to be tested.

THE SECURITY PROPOSITION — REFRAMED

The aura of untested safety is gone. What has replaced it is something arguably more valuable to a risk-calibrating investor: demonstrated capability. The security proposition has not been diminished. It has been changed in character — from assumption to evidence.

The test result deserves as much attention as the test itself. The UAE's air defence intercepted 93% of ballistic missiles under live fire, for the first time, against the largest combined aerial barrage ever launched at Gulf targets. Not one civilian was killed by a

direct strike. The claim that the UAE is safe was, before February 28, an assertion backed by crime statistics and institutional reputation. After February 28, it is a claim backed by operational evidence. The security proposition has not been diminished. It has been changed in character — from assumption to evidence. Investors who update their risk model to reflect a newly dangerous UAE without also updating it to reflect a newly proven defence capability are applying their analysis inconsistently. As our article [The UAE Under Pressure. And What It Has Shown Us.](#) noted at the time, the UAE government managed an extraordinary crisis with a level of transparency, competence, and strategic restraint that most governments in the world would struggle to match.

THE MARKET IS NOT ONE STORY

The most consequential analytical error in commentary on UAE real estate is treating the market as a single undifferentiated entity. The conflict acts as a sorting mechanism between assets that absorb bullish dynamics and assets that absorb bearish ones.

Tier 1 — Prime and ultra-prime residential — characterised by end-user and HNW wealth preservation demand, severely constrained supply. The conflict has introduced a sentiment pause in transaction volumes but has not altered the structural supply-demand dynamic. Flight-to-quality inflows and access to previously locked stock at negotiable terms represent the primary near-term opportunity.

Tier 2 — Quality residential in established communities — the tier this guide has consistently identified as most defensible. Long-term resident and professional tenant base, limited supply in established communities, genuine rental yields. The income mechanism is not suspended by travel advisories. For RAK specifically, this is Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab.

Tier 3 — Mid-market, investor-led, off-plan heavy — carries the most structural risk regardless of the conflict. The supply overhang predated February 28. Construction cost surges, developer financing stress, and the Hormuz closure compound a picture

that was already complicated.

Tier 4 — STR and hospitality assets — where the conflict's bearish forces are most severe and most durable. The income mechanism has been suspended by travel advisories and will take time to recover. Insurance repricing may persist for years. For RAK specifically, this is the primary risk profile for Al Marjan Island off-plan where the rental thesis depends on hospitality-driven short-stay demand.

RAK SPECIFICALLY

RAK is not a conflict participant and has not been treated as one. The UAE's Foreign Affairs Ministry affirmed a long-standing policy of good neighbourliness and de-escalation. Iran's foreign minister explicitly stated that strikes were not targeting Gulf neighbours. On March 5, the IRGC restricted Hormuz closure to US, Israeli, and Western-allied vessels, with Chinese and Muslim-owned vessels already transiting. Investors pricing RAK as a conflict participant are mispricing the risk.

Within RAK's market, the community-level distinctions drawn throughout this guide are made sharper by the conflict. Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab's residential demand base is long-term and in situ — leases continue, rent payments continue, the income mechanism is not travel-advisory-dependent. Al Marjan Island's tourism-linked demand is more directly impaired — the conflict has suspended the short-stay visitor economy that a significant portion of its pipeline depends upon.

The supply paradox has deepened. The Hormuz closure interrupted supply chains for construction materials overwhelmingly imported through Jebel Ali. Major shipping operators suspended Arabian Gulf transits or rerouted via the Cape of Good Hope. Construction costs surged sharply. UAE corporate bonds became the worst performing emerging market debt in the immediate aftermath. Access to bond market capital effectively closed for smaller developers. Projects will be delayed. Some will be cancelled. For buyers of quality completed stock and off-plan from financially resilient developers in established communities, supply compression is a structural tailwind.

WHAT HISTORY SAYS

Only cities that were directly struck carry genuine analytical weight. The record: New York City after September 11, 2001, peak decline approximately 12% in directly affected areas; Bahrain during the 2011 Arab Spring, 15%; Beirut during the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, 25%; Kuwait following the 1990 invasion, 30%; Beirut after the 2020 port explosion and political collapse, 40%.

The September 11 comparison is the strongest structural parallel. Both are global commercial centres built on foreign investment and international talent. Both were struck physically for the first time. The data (Miller Samuel / REBNY): the market froze for approximately five weeks; Manhattan condominium prices ended 2001 up 13% year on year; most boroughs exceeded pre-attack levels within nine months. The five-year outcome was the most explosive New York real estate cycle on record. The lesson for the UAE is about asset type — assets dependent on tourism and hospitality flows are most directly impaired; assets serving the established resident population on residential yields are structurally more insulated.

The 2008–09 Dubai crash is the precedent bears will invoke. Prices fell 50–60%; recovery took six to seven years. The causes are structurally absent in 2026.

Approximately 60% of current transactions are settled in cash, eliminating the margin call as a trigger. Bank real estate lending exposure stands at 18.3% of credit risk-weighted assets against a 30% regulatory cap — “materially lower and better controlled than in previous cycles” in the words of Moody’s AVP Francesca Paolino. Non-performing loans stand at approximately 2.9%. There are no margin calls to trigger. There is no cascade mechanism.

THE BEAR CASE

Everything above carries a condition: it holds if the conflict does not escalate into something more sustained and more directly damaging. The bear case must be stated plainly and given genuine weight.

The Hormuz situation has deteriorated materially since the initial strikes. Brent crude passed \$100 per barrel. Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei explicitly declared the strait will remain closed as a tool of pressure. The IEA stated the conflict is creating the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market. Goldman Sachs economists raised US recession odds to 25% and pushed back expected Federal Reserve rate cuts. KPMG's chief economist warned the conflict could drag on for up to six more months. Kpler's lead crude analyst noted that even if fighting stopped today, it could take one to three months to get the strait operational again. The economic disruption will outlast any ceasefire by months.

The security narrative has been damaged in ways that statistics alone cannot repair. War-risk insurance reclassification does not resolve when fighting stops. It may persist for years. In RAK specifically, the Wynn does not open until 2027. The worst historical outcome available as a comparison — Beirut 2020 — involved a 40% peak decline and a multi-year recovery. That outcome is not the most likely scenario for the UAE. But it is structurally available if the conflict does not resolve swiftly, and any analysis that does not acknowledge it is not giving the bear case the weight it deserves.

THREE SCENARIOS

The single variable that most determines the outcome is conflict duration.

SCENARIO FRAMEWORK — PRICE RANGES ARE INDICATIVE ESTIMATES DERIVED FROM HISTORICAL COMPARABLE MARKET DRAWDOWNS. NOT DLD FORECASTS.

	SHORT RESOLUTION (4–6 WEEKS)	EXTENDED CONFLICT (6–14 WEEKS)	PROLONGED CONFLICT (4+ MONTHS)
Historical parallel	Manhattan post-9/11	COVID-19 recovery profile	Beirut 2020
Tier 1 (Prime)	Flat to +5% by year-end	–2% to –5%, then stable	–15% to –25%
Tier 2 (Quality residential)	–3%, then recovery	–8% to –12%	–20% to –30%
Tier 3 (Mid-market)	–10%, then rebound	–15% to –20%	–25% to –35%
Tier 4 (STR / Hospitality)	–15%, partial rebound	–20% to –30%	–35% to –50%
RAK established communities	Resilient; demand base intact	Modest correction; yields hold	Material correction; long recovery
Al Marjan Island	Sentiment discount; entry point	Significant pressure; income gap widens	Severe; Wynn thesis materially delayed
Recovery timeline	6–9 months	12–24 months	3–5+ years
Key opportunity	Inflows absorb supply; developer incentive window closes fast	Quality assets at sentiment discount; recovery into 2027	Distressed acquisition only; long hold horizon essential
Key risk	Window misidentified or missed	Confidence erosion; smaller developer failures	Sustained UAE strikes; expat exodus; global recession

OUR ASSESSMENT

The full analysis behind this chapter — drawing on more than forty named institutional sources including Goldman Sachs, the IEA, JPMorgan, Moody's, Fitch, and the Dubai Land Department — is set out in detail in our published market analysis [In the Line of Fire: Making Sense of UAE Real Estate.](#)

Five conditions supporting acquisition are present simultaneously for the first time in five years: motivated sellers across two distinct categories; developer boards under commercial pressure to improve terms; supply compression mechanically reducing the pipeline that was the biggest structural risk before the conflict; historical precedent that is consistent; and an entry window that is real but whose duration is uncertain.

The assets this argument applies to are specific. In RAK: Al Hamra Village and Mina Al Arab, where the demand base is residential, the yields are genuine, and the investment thesis does not depend on any hospitality catalyst opening on schedule. Quality off-plan from well-capitalised developers in these communities, where the current negotiating environment is creating structurally improved entry terms that will not persist. The assets this argument does not support: mid-market off-plan in untested corridors from developers whose financial resilience is unclear; STR-positioned assets on Al Marjan Island without a frank cashflow model through to a realistic tourism recovery timeline; any acquisition premised on rapid conflict resolution by a buyer who cannot withstand a prolonged one.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU COMMIT

Every chapter in this guide has been building toward a single practical outcome: equipping you to make a better decision about a specific property, in a specific community, at a specific price point, on a timeline that is honest about both the opportunity and the risks. The questions below translate that analysis into the due diligence that separates a well-advised purchase from an optimistic one. Some will make developers and agents uncomfortable. That is the point.

QUESTIONS FOR ANY RAK PURCHASE

What is the developer's completion rate on previous phases? Not reservation rate. Not sell-out velocity. Completion rate — the percentage of buyers from previous launches who reached handover without cancelling or reselling. Reservation figures are widely quoted because they are compelling and easy to obtain. Completion figures require more work and frequently tell a different story. Ask for the specific communities and phases delivered, visit them in person if you can, and speak to residents about whether the product matched what was sold.

Is the payment plan time-linked or construction-linked? Ask explicitly, confirm in the SPA, and if the plan is time-linked, understand clearly what your obligations are if the project runs behind schedule. The distinction is significant in a market where construction timelines have become less predictable.

What is the escrow account number and how do I verify it? Every RERA-registered off-plan project in RAK has a dedicated escrow account. Ask for it before you pay anything beyond a reservation deposit. If the developer hesitates or cannot provide it, do not proceed.

What are the service charges, and what have they been historically? Service charges vary by up to 300% between developments and are rarely disclosed prominently in developer presentations. Ask for the current rate in AED per square foot per year and factor it into your net yield calculation. Our articles [If Your Agent Mentions Gross Yield, Run As Fast As You Can](#) and [10% Net Yield — Really?](#) explain why this matters.

What is the basis for the projected yield figure? Ask for the assumptions behind it in writing: the gross rent figure used, the occupancy rate assumed, the vacancy allowance, the management fee deducted, and the service charge included. A 10% gross figure commonly translates to 5–6% net in the first full year of operation in an emerging community.

How does this property compare on a price per square foot basis to comparable completed stock? Before accepting a launch price as the reference point, benchmark it against actual completed transactions in the same or directly comparable community. Property Finder and Bayut carry transaction-level data that allows this comparison.

What is the realistic rental demand picture in this specific community today? Search Property Finder and Bayut for rental listings in the development and directly comparable communities. Count the active listings. Note how long they have been listed. Note the gap between asking rent and achieved rent in recent transactions. As our article [Five Things Developers Say — and What They Actually Mean](#) covers in detail, "strong rental demand" is one of the most consistently overstated claims in this market.

Who is this property actually for — and does that match who you are? A property suited to long-term personal use may not perform well as an asset to sell or re-let. The mainstream unit in the right community is almost always the more defensible choice over the distinctive or premium unit in the same building if income and eventual resale are the primary objectives. For a full discussion, see our article [Understanding Property Choices: A Guide for First-Time International Buyers](#).

Have you had the SPA reviewed by an independent lawyer? This question is directed at you rather than the developer. The cost of a professional legal review is a small fraction of the transaction value. The cost of signing without one is potentially the entire investment.

QUESTIONS SPECIFICALLY ELEVATED BY THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

How is this project's construction financed? Ask directly whether construction is funded through escrow receipts from buyer payments, bank facilities, bond issuance, or developer equity. UAE corporate bonds became the worst performing emerging market debt in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, and access to bond market capital effectively closed for smaller developers. A project financed primarily through ongoing bond issuance is in a materially different risk position from one funded through escrow and developer equity. If the developer cannot or will not answer this question clearly, treat that as a material signal.

What is your realistic cashflow position if this project is delayed by twelve months? Before committing to a payment plan, model your cashflow position in a scenario where handover is twelve months later than contracted. Can you continue meeting payment obligations without the rental income you were counting on? If the honest answer is no, the risk profile of the purchase is higher than the marketing suggests.

What are the terms available beyond the headline payment plan? The negotiating environment for a serious buyer right now is meaningfully different from 2025. Before accepting the standard payment plan terms, push explicitly for: a DLD fee waiver; a

construction-linked rather than time-linked schedule; an extended post-handover payment window; and enhanced specifications or inclusions. Expect to achieve at least one or two of these.

If this is an Al Marjan Island or hospitality-linked asset, what is your honest cashflow model to 2028? The income mechanism has been temporarily suspended by travel advisories, the Wynn does not open until 2027, and the full induced demand effect will take a further one to two years to materialise in rental income data. Map the cash outflows from your payment plan obligations against the realistic timeline for income to begin. If that model only works in the scenario where the conflict resolves quickly, the Wynn opens on schedule, and travel advisories lift promptly — three conditions that must all occur simultaneously — you are carrying more scenario concentration than most buyers recognise when they sign the reservation form.

What is your exit if the prolonged conflict scenario materialises? Not your preferred exit. Your exit if the worst case in the Chapter 8 scenario table occurs. Not every buyer needs to be able to withstand this scenario. But every buyer should have answered the question honestly before committing.

DUE DILIGENCE SUMMARY

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS	RED FLAG RESPONSE
Developer completion rate on previous phases	Track record vs sales record	Cannot provide; deflects to reservation figures
Time-linked or construction-linked plan?	Protects against delay risk	"Don't worry, we never have delays"
Escrow account number	Legal protection of payments	Hesitation; cannot provide
Service charge history	Core yield cost; widely understated	Not disclosed; "very competitive" without figures
Yield projection assumptions	Net vs gross; realistic vs optimistic	Gross figure only; no assumption breakdown
PSF vs comparable completed stock	Fair entry price assessment	No comparable data offered
Current rental listings in community	Real demand vs projected demand	"Huge demand" without evidence
Construction financing structure	Developer financial resilience	Cannot or will not answer
Cashflow if delayed 12 months	Personal risk tolerance	Not modelled
Exit under prolonged conflict scenario	Downside capacity	Not considered

How a developer or agent responds tells you as much as what they say. A developer who answers clearly, provides documentation, and engages with the harder questions is demonstrating the financial transparency the current market demands. A developer who deflects, redirects to positive data points, or expresses impatience at the line of questioning is telling you something about how they manage uncertainty.

A developer who answers clearly, provides documentation, and engages with the harder questions is demonstrating the financial transparency and confidence that the current market demands. A developer who deflects, redirects to positive data points, or expresses impatience at the line of questioning is telling you something about how they manage uncertainty.

HOW DEAN PROPERTY WORKS

You have spent nine chapters reading analysis that was designed to be genuinely useful regardless of whether you ever speak to us. That was deliberate. The guide exists because the quality of publicly available information on RAK property investment is, with some exceptions, poor — promotional where it should be analytical, optimistic where it should be precise, and silent on the questions that matter most to a serious buyer. If this guide has done its job, you are now better equipped to evaluate any property decision in this market than you were before you read it.

WHO WE ARE

Dean Property Real Estate FZ-LLC is based in Ras Al Khaimah. We are two people who moved here — not a firm that followed the market. We specialise in residential property in RAK — off-plan and completed — for international buyers, primarily from Europe.

Karolina Dean is the Managing Director of Dean Property and runs the business day to day. She has lived in Ras Al Khaimah for four years, knows the market, the community, and the developers, and manages every client relationship personally. She handles the full scope of the advisory — from development assessment and payment plan structuring to the practical questions about what life here actually looks like.

Giles Dean read law at the University of Cambridge, co-founded and exited 1Rebel, the London boutique fitness brand, and has spent his career across law, entrepreneurship, and senior commercial roles. He currently oversees sales strategy and operations for

major mixed-use and residential developments at the Dubai World Trade Centre — knowledge that sits on the other side of the table from conventional agency advice.

We live and work in RAK. The analysis in this guide is the same analysis we apply when advising clients on specific purchasing decisions.

WHAT WE DO

Independent advice. No developer relationships. No volume targets.

We are paid by the developer on whichever project we recommend, which means the only commercially rational thing for us to do is recommend the right one.

PROPERTY SELECTION

Whole-of-market access across all RAK developers. No exclusives, no preferred panel. Fifteen years of contracts and commercial negotiation from the buyer's side — applied to every transaction we advise on.

PURCHASE STRUCTURING

SPA clause review, escrow mechanics, registration process, and a clear breakdown of total acquisition costs. Giles's legal background means this is included in the advisory — not billed separately, not outsourced.

RELOCATION ADVISORY

We relocated our family to RAK in 2022. We did the work of researching schools, community, logistics, and lifestyle before moving. That experience is part of what we offer to relocating clients — not a brochure version of it.

DP CONCIERGE

Property inspections, snagging, maintenance coordination, key-holding, and pre-arrival preparation. For investors who are not resident in RAK and need confident, direct oversight of their asset between visits.

HOW TO ENGAGE US

The starting point is a conversation. Not a sales call — a conversation about what you are trying to achieve, what your timeline looks like, what your questions are, and whether RAK is the right market for your objectives. That conversation costs nothing and commits you to nothing.

If after that conversation you want to proceed, we agree on what the engagement looks like based on your specific situation. There is no standard package and no pressure toward any particular outcome. The right property decision for you may be to buy now, to wait, or to look elsewhere entirely. We will tell you which we think it is, and why.

CONTACT

WEBSITE

deanproperty.ae

DEAN PROPERTY

SPECIALISTS IN RAK REAL ESTATE

Dean Property Real Estate FZ-LLC, Ras Al Khaimah, UAE.

WEBSITE

deanproperty.ae

EMAIL

[\[email protected\]](mailto:info@deanproperty.ae)

LICENCE

RAKEZ - 47030098

© 2024 Dean Property Real Estate FZ-LLC