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# Yas vs Saadiyat: which Abu Dhabi island fits your plan

Two investment-zone islands, side by side: character, what you can buy, how buying works on DARI, and what to check.

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## 1. Side by side

| | Yas Island | Saadiyat Island |
|---|---|---|
| Foreign ownership | Listed as an area where foreigners may own [1] | Listed as an area where foreigners may own [1] |
| Character | Leisure and events island: Yas Marina Circuit, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, Yas Waterworld, Warner Bros. World, Etihad Arena, Yas Links [2][3] | Beaches and the Saadiyat Cultural District: Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum (opened 3 Dec 2025), Guggenheim Abu Dhabi announced for 11 Dec 2026 [4][5] |
| Distance | About 20 minutes to downtown Abu Dhabi and 50 minutes to Dubai, per Yas Island's official site [2] | A short drive from central Abu Dhabi |
| Main residential developer | Aldar, plus others around Yas Bay [2] | Aldar, plus boutique developers such as Taraf |
| What you can buy | Villas and townhouses in gated communities; apartments at Yas Bay, Yas Marina and the golf course; branded residences | Beach and nature-led villas and townhouses; beachfront and cultural-district apartments |
| Things to weigh | Noise and event traffic near the circuit and arenas | Premium pricing for beach and cultural-district addresses |

## 2. Who each tends to suit

**Yas** often suits buyers who want an active, entertainment-led community and a wide choice of apartments and villas, and investors who value year-round visitor demand from the island's attractions.

**Saadiyat** often suits buyers who want beach living and a cultural address, and who are buying primarily for lifestyle or long-term holding.

These are tendencies, not rules. Compare specific communities, not islands.

## 3. How buying works in an Abu Dhabi investment zone

1. Confirm the plot is inside an investment zone and the right you will hold. DARI shows this.
2. Sign the SPA with the developer. DARI states the off-plan sale must be registered within 21 days of signing [6].
3. Pay the registration fee of 2% of the contract value, as the SPA allocates it [6].
4. Pay instalments only into the project's escrow account, as required under Abu Dhabi Law No. 3 of 2015 [7].

## 4. Fahid Island, between the two

Aldar unveiled the Fahid Island master plan in June 2025: a 2.7 million square metre island between Yas and Saadiyat, more than 6,000 homes planned, an 11 km coastline, and core infrastructure due for the first residents in the first quarter of 2029 [8]. It is a longer-horizon purchase; confirm the investment-zone designation of the plot on DARI before reserving.

## 5. Checklist

- Investment-zone status and the right you will hold, on DARI.
- SPA registration within 21 days, and who pays the 2% fee.
- Escrow account for off-plan instalments.
- Handover date in the SPA.
- On Yas: event noise and traffic for the specific address.
- On Saadiyat: what the beach or cultural premium is buying you, against a comparable home elsewhere.
- A completed community at the same budget, as a benchmark.

## Sources


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3. Miral, portfolio. miral.ae/portfolio
4. Abu Dhabi Media Office, Zayed National Museum opens in Saadiyat Cultural District.
5. Abu Dhabi Media Office, DCT Abu Dhabi announces opening of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi on 11 December 2026.
6. DARI, off-plan unit sale registration. help.dari.ae and services.dari.ae
7. ADREC, Abu Dhabi Law No. 3 of 2015 (real estate regulation). adrec.gov.ae
8. The National, 2 June 2025, Aldar Fahid Island master plan.

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General information, not legal, tax or financial advice. Prices, plans and dates change; confirm with the developer and DLD or DARI before you pay.