



DESTINATION INFORMATION

Dubai

Dubai is one of the world's most exhilarating destinations: a glittering city that offers swathes of golden beaches, world-class shopping, dining and nightlife, electrifying events and sporting championships. For the whole family, it's one big, adventurous playground. A visionary city where tradition meets ambition, Dubai is renowned for its futuristic architecture, yet it is also proud to display its rich heritage and culture. Welcome to Arabia and welcome to the destination that has made it its mission to become "the ultimate family destination".

Extraordinary images of Dubai's skyline have been seen around the world, but this is a city that must be experienced to be believed. Where else can you spend the morning on the beach, the afternoon snow skiing and the evening camel riding in the desert? Where else can you dive with sharks in a shopping mall and watch dancing fountains at the base of the world's tallest tower? Whatever your passion, whatever your age – Dubai will never disappoint. And with a host of mega projects, attractions and hotels in the pipeline, no one can ever truly say they've 'ticked off' Dubai. It may be on the *New York Times*' list of 'must-visit' places in 2014, but with so many new things on the horizon, there's every reason to keep coming back year after year, after year.

The pace of progress in Dubai has been, and continues to be, phenomenal, and it's truly amazing to think that just 50 years ago the city was little more than a fishing village beside the Dubai Creek. It's there that the Bani Yas tribe and the forefathers of the Maktoum dynasty settled back in 1800. Even in the 1950s, when the rest of the world was exploring space and New York's Times Square had been illuminated for a good 50 years, Dubai still sat in darkness without electricity. But it was also here that the Vision was set and the seeds of ambition were sown, driving that small fishing village to blossom into the modern, multicultural, dynamic metropolis we see today.

Dubai dares to dream big – and then turns that dream into reality.

Having welcomed 10 million visitors during the course of a year for the first time in 2012, the emirate's Tourism Vision for 2020 was declared in May 2013. Its aim is to welcome 20 million visitors a year by 2020 and to treble tourism's contribution to the economy.

One year later, having won the bid to host the World Expo in 2020 – during which His Highness Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, promises to "astonish the world" – Dubai is building on that declaration by pursuing its ambition to become the ultimate family destination.

Dubai is not just a city to be seen, it's a city to be experienced. Shopping in Dubai is not just about making purchases – it is more about amazing leisure and cultural opportunities, such as bartering for silk in a historic souk, meeting a colony of king and gentoo penguins in a shopping mall and picking up hand-crafted trinkets from a market.

Dining in Dubai is not just about eating – it is about sampling the cuisines of the 200 nationalities that live here. As a culinary capital not only regionally but increasingly globally, Dubai has long caught the attention of Michelin-starred chefs and is home to some of the best tastes in the world – be it in a five-star hotel or in a street side café.

For the sportsman and adventure seeker, Dubai is about sand boarding down a 300-foot dune, camping in the desert, deep-sea fishing, skydiving above Palm Jumeirah and playing camel polo. And for the night owl, Dubai is about enjoying some of the hottest, trendiest and most creative nightspots imaginable.

For culture vultures, Dubai is a city that's rich in heritage, and increasingly it's making its mark on the world stages for art, film, literature, comedy, theatre and music. Supporting all of these genres, the city hosts dedicated festivals and events and this all adds up to create a calendar that is literally bursting at the seams. You could be watching the likes of The Killers under a starlit sky on Atlantis' Nasimi Beach, roaring with laughter as John Cleese entertains on the stage of the Madinat Theatre, or watching Federer and Djokovic battle it out at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

Throughout the year, city-wide festivals add to the fun, ranging from the legendary Dubai Shopping Festival, which celebrates its 20th year in 2015, to the hugely successful Dubai Food Festival which was held for the first time in February 2014 and is set to return with even more delicious events in 2015.

And for families, Dubai's aim is to be the world's ultimate family destination, continually building on its portfolio of attractions and events that appeal to all ages. Few cities offer as much as Dubai. It's here that families can dash from the ski dome to the desert, from the beach to the park (be it a theme park, water park or lush green oasis), and from a multi-screen cinema where butlers serve popcorn to Olympic-sized ice-skating rinks.

It's upon these propositions – Family, Events, Art, Heritage, Gastronomy and Nightlife, Shopping, Beach and Marine, and Outdoor Adventure – coupled with Dubai's winning formula as a global business hub and its winning hotel and spas sector, that the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing is confidently able to base its tourism ambitions.

And with visitor numbers steadily growing – Dubai welcomed a record 5.8 million tourists in the first half of 2014 – the pace has been set. To accommodate all these guests, Dubai has 634 hotel establishments, offering a total of 88,680 rooms (as of August 2014). And that figure is expected to grow to well over 765 by the end of 2016, according to the planned pipeline (as of May 2014). These hotels span all categories, from three-star affordability to five-star luxury, from city-centre hotel to beach resort and desert oasis. The portfolio is impressive, with hoteliers such as local Jumeirah Group setting global standards for luxury and service – a service mentality to which all establishments adhere.

Where else in the world can you have a 24-carat-gold facial in an award-winning spa, swim with dolphins, watch a world-class act on the beach at midnight, dine on Michelin-starred cuisine and feed sharks all without leaving your hotel resort? The answer is a resounding 'only in Dubai'. Dubai is a city where the impossible is possible, where you cannot help but be impressed, awe-struck and mesmerised. It's where holiday dreams come true and where remarkable memories are made and last a lifetime.



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