



INFO SHEET

Culture in Dubai

Behind Dubai's wow factor, is a city with history and culture that is still rooted in Islam and trade. Arab culture and folklore is expressed through music and dance; vibrant souqs and rich art, as well as traditional sports such as falconry, camel racing and dhow sailing which are still popular in Dubai to this day.

It's possible to see the traditional side of life here – in the bustling souqs, from a local wooden boat on Dubai Creek, and in galleries, museums and cafes throughout the city.

Souqs

Dubai is famous for its traditional souqs (markets) – Arabian-style covered outdoor bazaars with a warren of lanes and central courtyards. Nothing compares with the atmosphere and chaos of the souqs – the colours and textures, the cacophony of sounds and the shop owners bargaining for customers. Unlike in the modern shopping malls, bargaining is the norm here. Some of the best include the **Deira Gold Souq** for gold and jewellery; the **Deira Spice Souq** for exotic herbs and spices; **Bur Dubai Souq** for textiles and trinkets; and **Madinat Jumeirah** or **Souq Al Bahar**, a modern take on the souq where you can find just about anything.

Dubai Museum

This wonderful museum should be your first stop for exploring Dubai's history, culture and traditions all under one roof – the 1799 Al-Fahidi Fort, considered the oldest building in Dubai and once the seat of government and residence of Dubai's rulers. It tells the Dubai story through displays of old-time fishing boats and traditional dwellings, instruments and hand-crafted weapons, traditional costumes and jewellery and galleries charting Dubai's exponential growth from tiny trading post to megalopolis.

Al Fahidi District

Traffic fades to a quiet hum in the labyrinthine lanes of the historic Al Fahidi District, teeming with restored wind tower houses built nearly a century ago by wealthy pearl and textile merchants from Persia. Typical houses are two storeys, with a central courtyard with rooms opening onto it, and decorative arches featuring intricate carvings.

The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding operates guided Al Fahidi walking tours, but the compact area is also easily explored on an aimless wander. They also host breakfast and lunches through the week - the perfect place to enjoy a traditional Emirati meal while chatting with an Emirati host about UAE culture, customs and religion.



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Abra cruising

Every day 15,000 people cross Dubai Creek (the Creek) on abras, traditional wooden water taxis. You can cross the creek from the Deira to Bur Dubai side for just one dirham (approx. 30 cents) or you can hire an **abra** for a personalised cruise, with the wind in your hair and seagulls in your face. If the boat captain speaks a little English you might learn a lot about the Creek and those who work on it.

Art galleries

In recent years Dubai has become a focal point for contemporary Arabic and Persian art. Dubai's small art district, in the Al-Quoz area, is home to cutting-edge galleries including **Gallery Isabelle van den Eynd**, **Third Line** and **Meem Gallery**. In the Al Fahidi District you'll find beautiful examples of traditional Arabian arts at the excellent **XVA Gallery**, with a courtyard cafe, and **Majlis Gallery** with sculptures, ceramics, glass and furniture. Head to Sheikh Zayed Rd to visit **Art Space**, with local and international exhibitions, and **B21**, a modern art centre in a converted industrial warehouse.

Al Ahmadiya School and Heritage House

This renovated 1890 courtyard house once belonged to Sheikh Ahmed bin Dalmouk, the founder of Al-Ahmadiya School (now a museum which you can also visit), and offers a rare opportunity to peek inside a wealthy pearl merchant's residence. Built from coral and gypsum, its rooms wrap around a central courtyard flanked by verandahs.

Sheesha Courtyard

Smoking sheesha is Dubai's most relaxing traditional pastime and palm-filled Sheesha Courtyard is the most enchanting place to enjoy it. Sheesha, also known as a hookah pipe, is both the act of smoking the fragrant flavoured tobacco and the long-stemmed, glass-bottom pipe you smoke from. Sit back and relax on the cushions and puff away

Jumeirah Mosque

All of Dubai's mosques are closed to non-Muslims – except this one. If you want to learn about Islamic religion and culture, this splendid, intricately detailed mosque (stunningly lit at night) is open during guided tours operated by the **Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding**.



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Heritage and Diving Village

A traditional heritage village, located near the mouth of Dubai Creek in the Shindagha district, features potters and weavers practicing traditional crafts, as well as exhibits and demonstrations of pearl diving. The area also includes the official residence of Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai (1912 - 1958). The house, which dates from 1896, houses a rare collection of historic photographs, coins, stamps and documents that record Dubai's history.

Dubai Opera

Dubai Opera is the city's first purpose built multi-format performing arts theatre and the definitive destination for quality entertainment productions and performances. Dubai Opera is designed to resemble a dhow a traditional sailing vessel, in which the 'bow' of the structure houses the opera's main stage, orchestra and seating, while the elongated 'hull' has waiting areas, taxi drop-off areas, and parking.

Etihad Museum

The Etihad Museum offers a series of interactive pavilions where visitors can explore the UAE's history – with particular emphasis on the significant period between 1968 and 1974 – through photos, films and more. At the museum, visitors can discover the UAE's rich heritage about life before the country's founding fathers signed the treaty that unified the seven emirates and the UAE's extraordinary economic development.

Museum of the Future

Launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the Museum will become a unique incubator for futuristic innovations and designs. In addition to becoming a major tourist destination, the Museum will offer advanced courses and specialized workshops, as well as public talks and events. It is intended to offer a platform to demonstrate and test the latest inventions and prototypes from up and coming start-ups and the world's technology giants.



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Platinum Heritage

Platinum Heritage brings Emirati culture to life with vibrant camps, traditional dancers, and authentic cuisine. From falcon trainers to locally sourced materials, their goal is to recreate the desert nomad lifestyle down to the finest detail. Platinum Heritage provide services such as Desert safaris, hot air ballooning and more.

Dubai Canal

The Dubai Canal is a three kilometre long manmade canal that runs through Safa park and Jumeirah from Business Bay. The canal will have a shopping centre, four hotels, 450 restaurants, luxury housing, walkways and cycle paths. There is also a mechanical waterfall, where the Canal meets the Sheikh Zayed Road bridge. Five pedestrian bridges are also available, three across the Canal, allowing visitors to cross at key points, take in the stunning vistas and observe the passage of water vessels below.

Al Serkal

Situated in Dubai's industrial quarter, the Avenue is a cluster of architect-designed warehouses. It is home to interspersed public spaces that bring together collaborators from diverse artistic disciplines; encouraging open dialogue, sharing of ideas and a collaborative work ethic that can see these creative ideas come to life.

Pearl Museum

Before the discovery of oil, pearls were the biggest cash crop in the Gulf, whose warm, shallow waters produced some of the world's finest. Thanks to the foresight and generosity of Ali Bin Abdullah Al Owais a prominent pearl trader in the 1940s and 50s and his son, Sultan Al Owais, you can see many of these exquisite natural wonders on display at the Emirates NBD Pearl Museum. In addition to examples of magnificent jewellery, the museum also celebrates the lives of the divers and sailors by displaying the instruments and tools they used to harvest and ship the precious cargo.



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Al Farooq

Al Farooq Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque & Centre is a Mecca for tourists and foreigners, a tourist landmark, and an Islamic and cultural centre where large groups of tourists race to visit and take tours therein. The cultural guides at Al Farooq Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque & Centre are keen to informing tourists and visitors during the tour about how and when the mosque was established, its history, architectural designs used in its building, Islamic decorations and paints engraved on its walls, and introducing them to the etiquette of entering the mosque and general concepts of the mosque's role in the Muslim life, in addition to lecturing on the tolerant teachings of Islam, and the deep-rooted Arab customs and traditions of the United Arab Emirates.