

Who better to guide visitors to Dubai through the layers of the city than its residents? While Dubai's five-star hotels, shopping centres and beaches tend to dominate the pages of most guidebooks, visitors who are limited to these destinations would leave with a mere unsatisfactory glimpse of the city.

If you're looking to get a sense of what it's like to live in Dubai, to visit the city's distinctive corners and explore its nooks and crannies, this unconventional guidebook will serve as your perfect companion. In its pages you will find the reflections and recommendations of Emiratis and long-time residents of the city, who will introduce you to its cultural identity, its distinguishing characteristics, and its soul.

There is far more to the city than record-breaking skyscrapers and malls. The metropolis, which is home to more than 200 nationalities, has a rich history, celebrated through ongoing heritage preservation programmes, and it has rapidly evolved into a global arts hub, a multicultural culinary destination, an eco-friendly landscape, and a trendsetter in fields as diverse as business, technology and fashion.

Through focus groups and interviews with the people who know Dubai best, the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority asked the city's residents to tell its story, highlight its popular facets and share their diverse memories of life within its friendly borders. What follows is a people's introduction to Dubai, an invitation from the city's residents to potential visitors, guiding them towards its cultural enclaves, historical districts, design boutiques, homegrown eateries, parks and much more.

Put on your walking shoes, grab a bottle of water and follow this alternative trail through Dubai, thoughtfully laid out by a collective of people who happily call it home.

SOUL OF DUBAI

THE NARRATIVE GUIDE







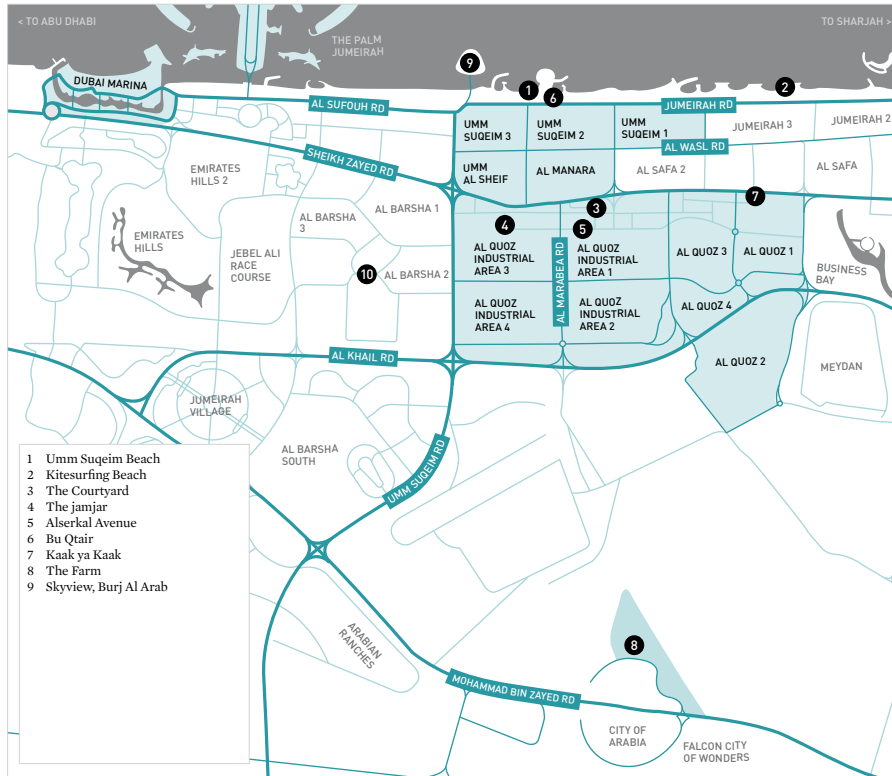


- 1 Gulf Photo Plus Gallery
- 2 The Courtyard

A

DUBAI MARINA / PALM JUMEIRAH UMM SUQEIM / AL QUOZ

From arty industrial areas to a palm shaped island built out to sea, gentle residential suburbs to architect-designed living communities, golden beaches to man made oases with tropical foliage; this area could not contain more contrasts if it tried. Pockets are worth exploring by foot, the spread of beaches is extensive and art lovers are spoilt for choice. This zone offers a glimpse of what Dubai was and what it has become.



Q&A

Abdulmonem Bin Elsa Alserkal
Developer of Alserkal Avenue
and Patron of the Arts.



What does Dubai represent to you?

I am very proud to call it my home and to have been a part of its growth. It is a force of creation within a very dynamic and positive climate that allows ideas to foster. This unique synergy of the city encourages the birth of interesting concepts across many fields. I am a strong believer in talent, ideas and pursuing projects that have never been done before. This is what Dubai is about. You can pursue and achieve anything you set your mind to here.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

Dubai has evolved to become a centre for arts and culture. From the art galleries that pioneered the way for Middle Eastern artists, to initiatives such as Art Dubai, we've attracted audiences from abroad and have become an international arts hub. The arts scene here is developing its own infrastructure. Art brings people together; it unites the community and fosters creativity. In Alserkal Avenue, we house the most dynamic and internationally acclaimed contemporary art galleries and various creative spaces that contribute to the growth and reputation of the arts scene here. We are expanding with additional spaces for 2014, in order to welcome and engage more local talent. The arts community of gallerists, artists, writers and enthusiasts all are a part of the cultural landscape of the city.

What makes Dubai different to any of the other Emirates?

It is a haven for opportunities and innovation and has a unique synergy of embracing tradition while being open to change and

modernity. It has become a global destination, a city of achievements with strong bonds to its history and a clear vision for its future. We've also become a commercial hub for arts and culture within the region and globally. Last year, for the first time in the history of GCC two art galleries were accepted at Art Basel: Green Art Gallery and Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, both from Alserkal Avenue.

How can we better promote Dubai as a city of arts, culture and heritage?

I would emphasise the importance of continuously supporting art initiatives, nourishing local talent and providing a better infrastructure for the art scene to grow and strengthen.

Where would you take a visitor to show them the heart of Dubai?

Al Ahmadiya School and Heritage House is a big part of Dubai's history. It was the first regular school in Dubai founded back in 1912. The architecture of the building itself is full of exquisite details and intricate carvings within the vast courtyard arches. Today, it functions as a museum and is definitely worth a visit.

ABDULMONEM RECOMMENDEDS

Café

Circle Café at Al Murooj Rotana
Sheikh Zayed Road 971 4 321 1111

Restaurant

Café Sushi at the Fairmont, Sheikh
Zayed Road 971 4 311 8316





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- 1 A gallery in Al Serkal Avenue
- 2 The Farm



CULTURE, HERITAGE & PLACES OF NOTE

Appreciated for its architectural evolution – the Marina, the Palm, Burj Al Arab, the grittiness of the Al Quoz industrial district in direct contrast to the manicured gated communities of Emirates Living. Walk along the coastline, enjoy the free beaches. Umm Suqeim Beach, known also as Sunset Beach, is great for surfing, whilst Kitesurfing Beach, also called Soapy Beach by those in the know, due to its soapy soccer courts is a vision of flapping surf kites at any time, but particularly on the weekends. Or, if you can't resist, gawp briefly at the concept of a ski resort within a desert. It is these marvels that represent Dubai's astonishing capabilities.

Dubai can only be described as a city that is 'ever changing, ever-evolving, never stopping, never standing still. It brims with ambition and has taken risks where others have stood and watched.' Sukaiyna Gokal, Founder, Garden of Ayden



ART & DESIGN

1-2 The Shelter and Jam Jar, both galleries and art spaces within Al Serkal Avenue

A zone for art-lovers, you'll be spoiled for choice. Dubai in March enjoys globally renowned art fair Art Dubai at the Madinat Jumeirah, but for an altogether different experience at any time of the year we suggest you make a visit to the gritty no-frills Al Quoz Industrial Area, which is fast developing into Dubai's alternative edgy arts district. There you will find art galleries housed in concrete industrial spaces, retail outlets revealing unexpected treasures, experiential art and design and healthy eateries springing up amongst the warehouses. There's even a weekly organic farmer's market for Dubai's

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Dubai in March enjoys globally renowned art fair
Art Dubai at the Madinat Jumeirah
—

trendy gastronomes; Al Quoz is, refreshingly, the antithesis of the chic glossiness that is Dubai. With a nod to New York's Meatpacking District, the newly beating pulse of Dubai's art scene has to be Alserkal Avenue.

Less an avenue, in the true sense of the word, than a block of industrial warehouses behind gates, Alserkal Avenue is at the heart of Al Quoz. A vibrant arts hub, currently with 21 creative spaces, but on track to double in size over the next year or so, its buildings have been converted into galleries, studios and workspaces. A live music and entertainment venue, the Fridge, currently completes the mix.





1 2 3 4

- 1 Bu Qtair Restaurant
- 2 The Farm
- 3 Outside sitting area at The Farm
- 4 One of the dishes from The Farm



FOOD & DRINK

A stone's throw from what has been described as the world's most luxurious hotel Burj Al Arab, is one of Dubai's most modest eateries - Bu Qtair. Located in a Portakabin it would be hard to imagine more of a contrast but when it comes to the freshest local fish, this is a consistent favourite. Choose from the catch of the day, watch it being grilled and hunker down with everyone else round a communal table by the beach. If you're after something a little more substantial, go for the ultimate Lebanese sandwich at Kaak ya Kaak. Kaak is Arabic for 'cake', or, in this case, a savoury bread topped with sesame seeds; comfort food at its best. For an altogether more surreal experience, because driving through the desert into an area of landscaped lakes, waterways and botanical gardens is slightly odd, a road trip out to The Farm for sheer novelty value is an enjoyable way to see a little bit more of Dubai and its surroundings, with some delicious food at the end of it.



Umm Suqeim Beach

At Al Thanya St/Jumeirah Beach Road interchange take small road towards the sea. Be amused by the coachloads of tourists who stop here for five minutes, dressed to the nines, for their photo in front of Burj Al Arab.

Kitesurfing Beach

Corner of 2d and 35a street, behind Saga World, Umm Suqeim 1



Al Quoz Industrial Area:

The Courtyard

www.courtyard-uae.com
between Streets 4b & 6a, Al Quoz 1

The jamjar

www.thejamjar.dubai.com
Street 17a, Al Quoz 3

All of Alserkal Avenue

www.alserkalavenue.com
Street 8, Al Quoz 1



Bu Qtair

Road 4d, near Burj Al Arab, Jumeirah, open daily 7pm -midnight

Kaak ya Kaak

Al Quoz, Sheikh Zayed Road 971 4 338 0088, open daily 8pm-late

The Farm

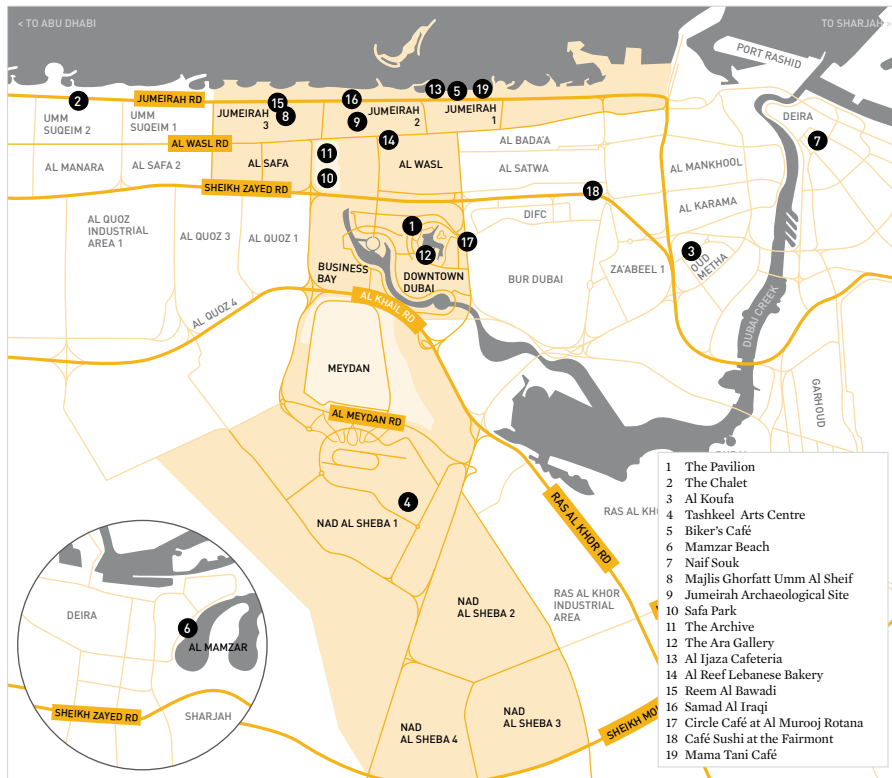
Al Barari, Opposite Falcon City - 971 4 392 5660, open daily 7.30am - 11pm

- 1 Evening prayer at Meydan Racecourse
- 2 Downtown Dubai

B

**JUMEIRAH BEACH / BUSINESS BAY / DOWNTOWN DUBAI
BURJ KHALIFA / NAD AL SHEBA / MEYDAN**

The term ‘New Dubai’ resonates in this zone. Home to the world’s largest shopping mall and tallest building as well as dancing fountains and the chic residential area of Downtown and the brand new Old Town, nevertheless, scrape the surface and you will find fascinating pockets of history and Arabic heritage. That is the joy of Dubai, the modern juxtaposes with the traditional in perfect harmony.



2

Q&A

Jill Hoyle
 Manager of Tashkeel Arts Centre



What does Dubai represent to you?

It's home. I feel that I belong now and it provides the opportunity to make a difference. I feel that there is a positive environment for innovation and for change.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to any of the other Emirates?

A very superficial reaction is that it is very international and very open-minded in its environment. But more than that it is very forward-looking.

What does 'the soul of Dubai' mean to you?

I think that Dubai is very international but at the same time it is firmly implanted in the past. I have worked for a long time with young Emirati women and it strikes me that they do an amazing job of holding onto their past, respecting their traditions and embracing the future; Dubai seems to be resolving the issue of not rejecting the past and traditions, it continues to uphold and respect them, but at the same time it recognises the fact that you can't stand still and you have to look forward. In order to provide successfully for its people, it has to relate to the international world.

Where do you take your visitors to show them Dubai's cultural identity; its heart and soul?

I'd always take them to Al Fahidi, across the Creek on the abras and into the souk areas. Three interlinking areas.

How can Dubai be promoted better as a city of culture and heritage?

Offer the local hospitality that is at the core of this culture. People will still be interested in coming if they think they will be getting

a different experience. I think it's a bit confusing for people who visit, as the values we relate to here aren't communicated to visitors and tourists.

How can visitors get to know the soul of Dubai?

It's hard to create something that is genuine without it being a plastic tourist attraction. The change has been so rapid that maybe there's a fear of this 'other community' taking away from the inherent culture, so Emirates tend to keep a distance in order to protect themselves – which doesn't show the natural Emirati openness and welcome attitude.

JILL RECOMMENDED

Café

The Pavilion, arts centre, workspace, restaurant & shisha café, Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard, Downtown Dubai www.pavilion.ae

The Chalet, Lebanese, Jumeirah Beach Road, just past Al Manara St, 971 4 348 7557

Restaurant

Al Koufa, Arabic, Oud Metha, Near Al Nasr Leisureland, 971 4 335 1511

View

Near Tashkeel in Nad Al Sheba 1, the Dubai Skyline from the other side of the trees near the gallery





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3



4

- 1 Safa Park
- 2 Downtown Dubai
- 3 Jumeirah Archaeological Site
- 4 Majlis Ghorfatt Umm Al Sheif



CULTURE, HERITAGE & PLACES OF NOTE

Described variously as ‘a city forged from tradition and culture’, and ‘a city that stands for the future, but is trying to hold onto its roots’, Zone B offers the two sides to this coin. Jumeirah, to the northwest, is the oldest expatriate residential area in Dubai and is therefore well established. It has developed around several historical gems, one of which is [Majlis Ghorfatt Umm Al Sheif](#) which was built in 1955 as the summer residence of the late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed al Maktoum. Cooled by the sea breeze, this building is comfortable even during the height of summer without modern-day air conditioning.

[Jumeirah Archaeological Site](#) is one of the most important sites in the UAE dating back to 6AD. Although there is very little to see now, it is of note because it was once a caravan station along a trade route linking Iraq to northern Oman. Artefacts excavated here are displayed at Dubai Museum and Heritage Village. Definitely worth indulging a few happy hours of leisure time to visit to [Safa Park](#), one of Dubai’s oldest parks and an oasis of serenity despite being flanked by Sheikh Zayed and Al Wasl Roads. Long term residents will tell you that park culture was really big in the 80s and that families would spend entire days there with picnics, even during the summer. They remember some of the trees from their childhood. 64 acres of beautiful landscaped gardens, it has something for everyone. Walkways, play areas, a small fairground, cafés, a maze, a mini train, a lake with boats, bikes for hire, a running track, sports courts, barbecue areas. While you’re there wander over to [The Archive](#) with an outstanding restaurant, a really comprehensive library of art and design books,

an excellent workspace with free wifi and lots of outside space for the children to run wild whilst you sit back and relax.

Whilst it does not represent Dubai’s culture and heritage Burj Khalifa typifies New Dubai perfectly and as a piece of architecture is awe-inspiring. Sheikh Zayed Road which cuts Dubai in half was originally a two-lane road traversing the desert. However, ‘if you examine the original plans you’ll see that there was a large gap left between the buildings and the road. The buildings were built far back leaving space for expansion. Even in the 80s when there were only two lanes, there was always the vision to widen it to three lanes and then six and to have space for the Metro.’

The Dubai Mall used to be known as Defence Roundabout because the Downtown District was the Dubai Army Barracks lined with guards. It presents a very different picture now. But before you reach there, exit Sheikh Zayed Road onto the Meydan Road (Meydan - home to Dubai’s horse racing) and you will come to Nad Al Sheba. You’ll feel like you’ve entered another universe, gently paced, rural, the location of the new cycle track is where the camel racetrack used to be: ‘I miss it being here. The practise pens were on one side of the road, the racetrack on the other. And if it was time for their training, you’d have to wait 20 minutes or so for them to cross the road. I used to notice their blankets – they were absolutely beautiful – with different patterns’. Jill Hoyle, Manager of Tashkeel. Camels are an intrinsic part of UAE life and were vital to the Bedouin’s existence. Racing season in Dubai is October-March at the new [Al Marmoom Camel Racetrack](#) further out of Dubai.



ART & DESIGN

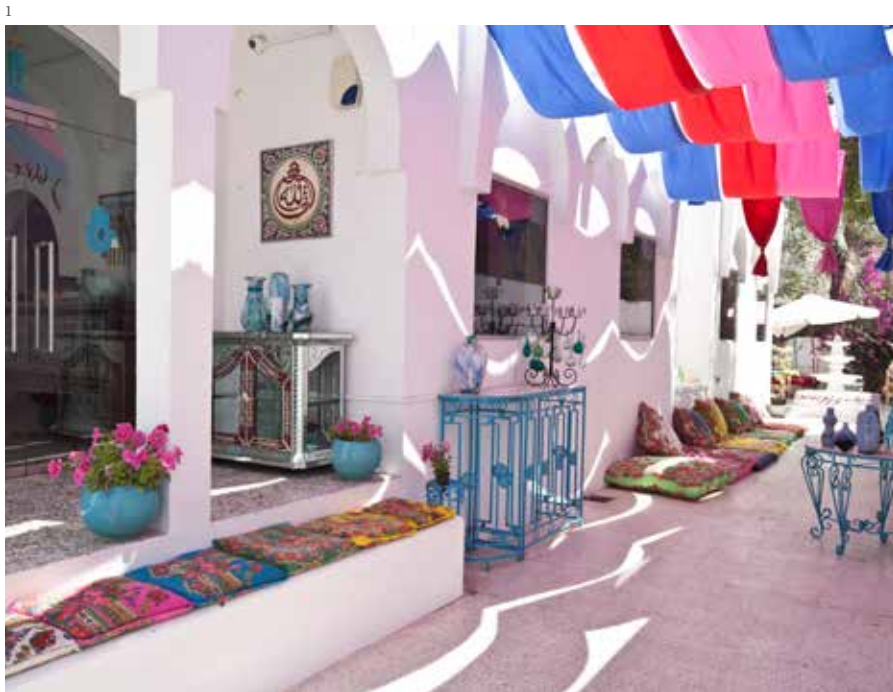
- 1 The Pavilion
- 2 Tashkeel Skate Park

There are some incredible new arts centres springing up in Dubai that typify a more holistic approach to culture and the arts in general, clearly responding to a need to make them less elitist and more accessible to everyone. Safa Park has seen the very recent addition of The Archive. Previously a facilities building, it has been developed by Brownbook into a contemporary library focusing on Middle Eastern and North African art, culture, design and literature. More than that it offers an exciting varied programme including indoor and outdoor activities to promote art, culture and sport. A modern café offering delicious contemporary dishes, a full espresso bar and a workspace with free wifi have made this venue extremely popular with Dubai's families and creatives alike.

Tashkeel even has an outdoor skate park where you can practice your tricks

In the shadow of The Dubai Mall, in the tranquil Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard, an eye catching pavement sculpture signals that you've arrived at The Pavilion, an arts centre with a difference; contemporary art galleries offer a programme of dynamic exhibitions, artist talks and workshops; the cinema shows a range of independent films with Dubai International Film Festival screening a triple bill of themed movies here every month. An extensive workspace with large communal tables and a lounge area make this an extremely popular meeting place for Dubai's young urban crowd, whilst an excellent restaurant and shisha café allow you to linger long into the night.





- 1 Zoo Concept Store in Dubai Mall
- 2 The shaded exterior at O' de Rose



A short walk from The Pavilion, in the ideal location for a perfect photo of Burj Khalifa, is The Ara Gallery, one of Dubai's newer galleries. Giving aspiring Arab artists a platform to showcase their work to the region and to provide them with the opportunity to establish themselves in the Middle Eastern market, the gallery offers a comprehensive programme of workshops and talks and its exhibitions change regularly.

Tired of the city, take a drive to Nad Al Sheba where Tashkeel Arts Centre will surprise you with its laid back art-school vibe. Boasting extensive studio space which is home to a stream of visiting artists from the UAE and abroad, the centre hosts regular exhibitions and a programme of workshops for artists of all abilities. There's even an outdoor skate park where you can practise your tricks, with new ramps being added as this is written.

This zone is set apart by its wide range of unique shopping outlets. The discerning shopper will be able to find more in The Dubai Mall than just the large international chains. Zoo Concept Store for example retails a great selection of fun accessories, clothes and gifts from across local and international niche brands. You can also find one of the world's largest MUJI stores at the mall, celebrated for its clean lines and simple Japanese designs.

Head to Jumeirah to find the independent boutiques that have been key in this development of Dubai's young fashion scene. S*uce showcases designs by emerging local creatives and DAS has a wide range of luxurious abayas. For unique home ware, O' de Rose has an array of products from across the region and French owned Comptoir 102 will not disappoint.



Q&A

Mouza Al Abbar
 Founder of the Ara Gallery



What does Dubai represent to you?

It's my home. I still see it through the eyes of my grandparents, as a very close-knit community with our family.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to any of the other Emirates?

In Dubai you feel the energy. Everything's running. That sets Dubai apart. You can find the new and modern here and if you want to you can also discover the traditional as well.

What does 'the soul of Dubai' mean to you?

Our culture, our people; they are the soul of Dubai.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

'Let's do the biggest and the best'. I think it's a good way to be thinking generally, but in application it's happened very quickly. We have accepted that we share our city and that Dubai has reached a state that means many people want to come and live here, but at the same time we feel like it's happening a bit too fast. We love our community and the mix of people here, but equally we want to ensure that the way everyone lives is in line with our culture and our traditions.

Where would you take a visitor to best show Dubai's heart and soul?

First to my mum's house. She's from Abu Dhabi and is very traditional. She will give visitors the true experience. She makes sure they have Emirati food, that they experience the perfumes and answers lots of questions. I would then take them to Al Fahidi Cultural District, including Sheikh Mohammed Centre

for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU). If I couldn't take them to Burj Khalifa then we'd go to Al Khor with the abras and dhows. That would give them a taste of Dubai.

How can Dubai be better promoted as a city of culture and heritage?

Dubai has culture and heritage but the message is not being communicated to visitors. The way the city is marketed would have to change.

How can people get to know the real Dubai?

One of the things I really enjoy doing is the SMCCU breakfast. There is a local speaker, it's very casual and you can ask any questions you want. It's important to have the chance to meet locals and I recommend everyone goes there. (SMCCU: www.cultures.ae Al Fahidi Cultural District)



MOUZA RECOMMENDED

Café

Biker's Café on Jumeirah Beach Road for a good Emirati breakfast and Klayya in Barsha Mall for a contemporary take on Emirati food.

Restaurant

Al Raslaan has the best hot Emirati breads. Al Khanaweej, past Mushrif Park

Beach

Mamzar Beach – great for a picnic and a walk



1 2 3 4

- 1 Reem Al Bawadi
- 2 Breads at Al Reef Lebanese
- 3 Mama Tani
- 4 A traditional khameer filled with saffron cream and dates



FOOD & DRINK

Al Wasl Road and Jumeirah Beach Road are home to a multitude of interesting little cafés, juice bars and restaurants. For a back-to-basics experience to tantalise the tastebuds, Al Reef Lebanese Bakery's freshly baked steaming cheese bread, crammed with a mouth-watering vegetable mix of tomatoes, onions and olives is not to be missed. If you've still room in your tummy, stock up on the Arabic style doughnuts and sticky sweets for a naughty but very nice dessert!

A bit of an institution with Dubai's 80s youth, some of whom did own up to 'skipping school to go and eat shwarma there' (names omitted to protect the guilty), Al Ijza Cafeteria had its

An insider tip at Samad Al Iraqi is to call ahead by a few hours and ask the chef to prepare Mazgouf, a traditional smoked fish dish

15 minutes of fame when the hit movie "City of Life" came out in 2009. One of the main characters stops by and orders himself a juice. It's still extremely popular today. Another similarly popular restaurant is the very lively Reem Al Bawadi, always packed out with a young Dubai crowd. The food is tasty, with generous portions. If fish is your thing, Samad Al Iraqi will definitely get your tastebuds going. Complementary starters precede a wide array of succulent grilled fish dishes. An insider tip at Samad Al Iraqi is to call ahead by a few hours and ask the chef to prepare Mazgouf for you, traditional Iraqi smoked fish dish. For a traditional Emirati offering try Mama Tani, with a menu almost completely dedicated to khameer a signature local bread.

DIRECTORY



**Majlis Ghorfatt
Umm Al Sheif**

17th Street/Jumeirah Beach
Road

**Jumeirah
Archaeological
Site**

between Jumeirah Beach
Road and Al Wasl Road,
Jumeirah 2

Safa Park

between Al Wasl Road
and Sheikh Zayed Road,
Jumeirah 3

The Archive

Safa Park, Gate 5 open daily
8am-8pm

**Al Marmoom
Camel Racetrack**

Dubai-Al Ain E66 Road, Exit
37. Free admission
971 4 832 6526



The Pavilion

www.pavilion.ae Mohammed
Bin Rashid Boulevard,
Downtown Open daily 10am-
midnight

The Ara Gallery

www.thearagallery.ae
Burj Plaza, Mohammed
Bin Rashid Boulevard,
Downtown

Tashkeel Arts Centre

www.tashkeel.org Nad Al
Sheba 1, Near Nad Al Sheba
police station. Open Sat-Thu
10am-10pm.



Al Ijaza Cafeteria

www.alijaza.com Jumeirah
Beach Road, Jumeirah 2,
open daily 9am-3am

Al Reef Lebanese Bakery

Al Wasl Road, Jumeirah 3,
971 4 394 5200, open daily 24
hours

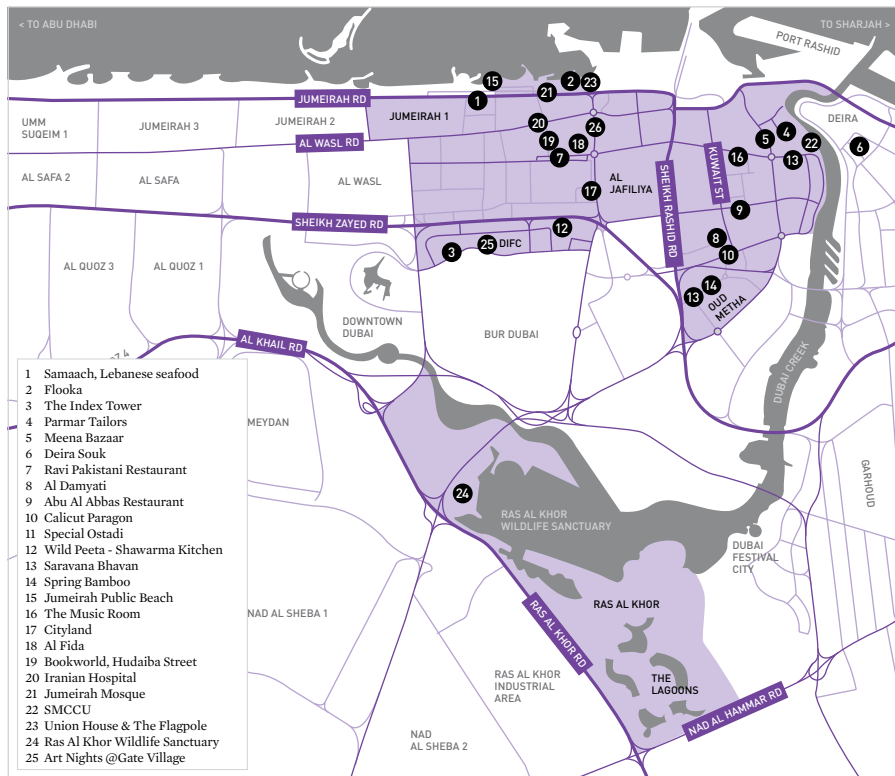
B

- 1 DIFC
- 2 Satwa

C

**JUMEIRAH CENTRE / SATWA / TRADE CENTRE/
DIFC / SHEIKH ZAYED ROAD / KARAMA / RAS AL KHOR**

A fascinating group of areas, Zone C incorporates Old and New Dubai, city and natural wetlands. Satwa and Karama are predominantly populated by Dubai's Asian community and offer small bustling streets crammed with open-fronted shops. In direct contrast, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) behind the iconic Emirates Towers is impressive in its vast proportions and world class architecture. For a refreshing fix of nature take a drive down to Ras Al Khor wildlife sanctuary and watch flamingos have their breakfast. The evolution of Dubai and its many variances in character are exemplified perfectly in this small geographical spread.



Q&A

Zayan Ghandour
Creative Director and Head Buyer at S*uce



What does Dubai represent to you?

My home. It's had a very positive effect on my life. I've been able to build a future and a career that I feel would not have been possible anywhere else. It's the vibrancy in the city that moves me.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to any of the other Emirates?

The pace at which things happen. How people go about their lives. You can be very sociable and at the same time very private. But I think it's definitely the energy, the way everyone works at the same frequency.

What does 'the soul of Dubai' mean to you?

It is the fact that it offers a home to everyone who moves here. It makes everyone welcome. It's beautiful to see all the different nationalities living alongside each other. Anywhere else in the world the home nationality dominates, here it's about diversity.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

It offers a secure future, as well as retaining its history. Go down to Al Fahidi Cultural District or the Creek, even the mall and observe the people and take in their culture.

If you were showing a visitor around the city, where would you take them to show them Dubai's cultural identity, its heart and soul?

I'd have to start with Al Fahidi Cultural District. It's the first place I discovered in the old part of the city. It's magnificent. When I found XVA [hotel] I would go there every single day, for the vegetarian food and to sit in the courtyard. Mona Hauser [XVA Owner]

invited me to design one of the rooms in her hotel. That's been a highlight for me. Al Fahidi represents Old Dubai and is one of the most beautiful areas of the city. Then we'd go to Satwa. It definitely has that old, natural feeling. You see the traders and the movers and shakers of the commercial scene. Some people might say Deira is better, but for me it's Satwa; it's like an old Bazaar. Then we'd go to Safa Park. It's my favourite place and I spend a lot of time there with my two daughters.

How can we get to know the soul of Dubai?

You have to walk around. Visit Al Fahidi and Satwa. Go down to the Creek and into the tiny shops. Talk to the shopkeepers, hear the languages being spoken. Capture the soul of diversity, the vibrancy and energy. Just witness the projects that are happening. No matter what is going on in the rest of the world, Dubai retains positivity and makes things happen.

ZAYAN RECOMMENDED

Restaurant

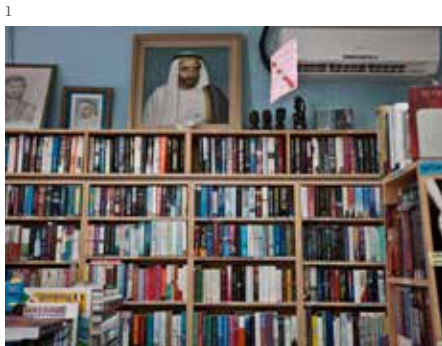
Samaach Lebanese seafood,
Beach Centre Mall, Jumeirah Beach
Road 971 4 349 4140

Flooka seafood, Dubai Marine Beach
Resort & Spa, Jumeirah Beach Road
971 4 346 1111

Tailor

Parmar Bur Dubai: men's 971 4 353
5648; ladies' +971 4 353 8313





1

Soul of Dubai

042

- 1 Jumeirah Mosque
- 2 Book World
- 3 Jumeirah Public Beach
- 4 Union House



CULTURE, HERITAGE & PLACES OF NOTE

For a slice of 'real' life, head for Satwa, one of Dubai's oldest neighbourhoods, oozing with personality and home. The area is celebrated and criticised in equal measures. Al Satwa Road, where it all starts, is a green, leafy residential avenue that morphs into a busy, bustling souk. Carpenters' workshops sit adjacent to car mechanics, electrical stores neighbour beauty salons and florist shops, car accessories are sold next door the butcher's shop with a carcass hanging in the window. Narrow, winding streets are crowded with Dubai's Asian community and well-heeled women visiting the tailors and fabric shops. Hole-in-the-wall cafés offer surprisingly good food, and the charm of this district more than makes up for its raggle-taggle appearance. Wander down [2nd December Street](#) which used to be nicknamed [Street of Love](#), in the 80s, as young men would cruise slowly down it, repeatedly, of an evening, showing off their gold-plated cars. [Deepak's](#) and [Regal Traders](#) are both safe bets for fabric in [Hudaiba Street](#) – also known as [Plant Street](#), no less Turn your fabric into the outfit of your choice at [Cityland](#) next door to [Regal](#). [Al Fida](#) is an Aladdin's store for every knick-knack imaginable. For an affordable book try second hand bookshop [Book World](#). Satwa's [Post Office](#) is one of the original government buildings and if architecture interests you, make a small detour past the [Iranian Hospital](#), built in the 70s and notable for its striking blue tiling. You should have worked up an appetite by now and no trip to Satwa is complete without a visit to the legendary [Ravi's](#) a Pakistani restaurant

servicing incredibly cheap and tasty dishes.

[Jumeirah Mosque](#) dominates the square at the top of [Jumeirah Beach Road](#) and is a beautiful piece of architecture as well being the only mosque in Dubai that non-Muslims are allowed to enter and tour. Built in the mediaeval Fatimid tradition, using modern building materials, it was completed in 1983 and is particularly lovely at night when it is illuminated. Tours are organised by [Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding \(SMCCU\)](#).

Visible for miles around is the [Flagpole](#) also at the top of [Jumeirah Beach Road](#), upon which the world's largest UAE flag was raised on [National Day](#) in 2001 to mark the 30th anniversary of the union of the emirates. At the base of the flagpole stands [Union House](#), built in 1965 and of great historical relevance. On [Thursday, December 2nd 1971](#), the rulers of [Abu Dhabi](#), [Dubai](#), [Sharjah](#), [Ajman](#), [Umm al-Quwain](#) and [Fujairah](#) met inside this house, known then as the guest palace, to sign the declaration that brought into effect a temporary constitution and established the independent state of the UAE.

Head out of the city centre for a breath of fresh air and an altogether different experience. One does not immediately think of Dubai as a bird-lover's paradise, however the UAE's geographical position makes it a major stop-off on the migration route between Asia and Africa and the breathtaking [Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary](#) with its mangroves, mudflats and lagoons is home to herons, eagles, sandpipers and more than 1000 pink flamingos.

043

Soul of Dubai



ART & DESIGN

- 1 The Empty Quarter
- 2 Cuadro Fine Art Gallery



Zone C offers an arts area a world away from rough-around-the-edges Al Quoz. Gate Village at the DIFC is sleek and shiny, sophisticated and polished and home to some really interesting galleries. All within a few metres of each other you are spoilt for choice. Art Nights @Gate Village is a lively quarterly event that brings together the galleries and retailers of Gate Village to combine elements of art, film, fashion, design and cuisine through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. If you're interested in fine art photography The Empty Quarter is particularly interesting – with photography from all continents and various points of view – documentary, fine art, photojournalism – everything is covered. Cuadro Fine Art Gallery is the largest multi-gallery space in the DIFC and focuses on four key areas – Painting, Paper, Photography and Sculpture, offering complementary lectures,

workshops and panel discussions to accompany the exhibitions. Directly across from Cuadro is the Farjam Collection, one of the most impressive privately owned collections in the world. A regular programme of exhibitions, talks and workshops focus on Islamic, pre-Islamic, contemporary Middle Eastern and international art. At The Opera Gallery next door the Farjam Collection you will not only find Picassos, Buffets and Dalis in the Black Room downstairs, but also new artistic talent from around the world.

For a slightly more modest art experience, and if you're on Jumeirah Beach Road near the Mosque, head across the road to ProArt Gallery to find an alternative range of works from street art masters such as Banksy and Mr Brainwash, plus lithographs from more than 50 artists from 15 countries.



Q&A

Mohamed Parham Al Awadhi
 Entrepreneur, Founder of Wild Peeta,
 Gourmet Shawarma and Qabeela New Media

**What does Dubai represent to you?**

My home. It's grown so fast, but I can still connect with Old Dubai, and at the same time appreciate tremendously New Dubai. To me it's a symbol that nothing is impossible. When people say things take time, I think - look at what has happened to Dubai in just three decades. It's insane. Internationally, I think countries look at Dubai and say how is that even possible? But it is possible and inspiring.

How would you describe the 'Soul of Dubai'?

Roots, history and memories. If the older places were demolished or renamed, it would be like erasing the past. That's why I like to spend a lot of time in Old Dubai and I visit New Dubai for different reasons.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to the other Emirates?

spirit. An understanding. No matter who you are, where you're from or what your race is, you can come and settle in Dubai. I don't think Dubai is perfect; we have our challenges like anywhere else, but we are pretty accepting.

How do you show visitors Dubai's cultural identity?

We start with Old Dubai - Deira and Bur Dubai, anywhere as close as possible to the Creek. If there's a vein coming out of the heart of Dubai it's the Creek. So we would start in these neighbourhoods, around the Spice Souks. Walk through the alleys; the history is beautiful over there. The people who have shops there have been here for generations.

Then walk just out of that area to the dhow wharfage. These dhows have been

transporting goods to and from Dubai, from neighbouring countries through to the Horn of Africa, Pakistan, and up the Gulf as well, for over 100 years. This is a great place to gain an understanding of the context of Dubai

I think if you visit the Creek and Karama as well as New Dubai you'll understand how Dubai started, its people and where it's going.

How can we get to know the real Dubai?

You have to connect with people like me who are from Old Dubai, who have been here through the transition and are part of new Dubai as well.

**MOHAMED RECOMMENDS****Restaurant**

Al Damyati - Egyptian: 'the best falafel in town!' Kuwait Street Next to Lulu Supermarket, Karama +971 4 396 5280

Wild Peeta - Shawarma Kitchen
 Dubai World Trade Centre Plaza
 +971 55 895 7672

Calicut Paragon Kerala: 16th Street,
 Karama +971 4 335 8700

Live music

The Music Room Ground Floor,
 Majestic Hotel, Mankhool Road,
 Bur Dubai



1

1 Ravi's Satwa

**FOOD & DRINK**

The problem isn't finding places to suggest, rather than what to leave out. You are spoilt for choice when it comes to finding authentic, fresh, cheap restaurants fizzing with atmosphere. As previously mentioned a trip to Satwa has to include a bite at Ravi's. One of Dubai's best Lebanese cafés – Al Mallah is not only popular

—
No trip to Satwa in complete without a visit to the legendary Ravi's, a Pakistani restaurant serving incredibly tasty dishes.
—

for its great Middle Eastern food at budget prices, but because of its location – sit outside on the pavement in 2nd December Street and take in the action as you stave off your hunger with mixed grills, washed down with refreshing fresh juices.

DIRECTORY



Cityland

Hudaiba Street/Plant Street,
Satwa, next door Regal

Al Fida

Al Satwa Road, next to Al
Satwa Mosque,
971 04 344 4008

Bookworld

Hudaiba Street, Satwa, 971 4
349 1914

Satwa Post Office

Al Satwa Road

Iranian Hospital

Al Wasl Road/Hudaiba
Street Interchange

Jumeirah Mosque

Jumeirah Beach Road/17B
Street Interchange, Jumeirah 1

SMCCU

www.cultures.ae

**Union House
& The Flagpole**

Jumeirah Beach Road/
Diyafah Street Interchange

**Ras Al Khor
Wildlife Sanctuary**

www.wildlife.ae
off Oud Metha Road,
971 4 606 6822



Ravi's

Al Satwa Road, Satwa
971 4 331 5353

Al Mallah

Diyafah Street, Satwa 971 4
398 4723

Wild Peeta

www.wildpeeta.com Dubai
World Trade Centre Plaza

Al Damiyati

Kuwait Street Next to Lulu
Supermarket, Karama, 971 4
396 5280

Abu Al Abbas Restaurant

Al Shumookh Building, St
6A, Karama, 971 4 396 0665



Art Nights @Gate Village

www.difc.ae/art-nights-at-
gate-village-2013

The Empty Quarter

www.theemptyquarter.com
Gate Village 2, DIFC

Cuadro Fine Art Gallery

www.cuadroart.com Gate
Village 10, DIFC

Farjam Collection

www.farjamcollection.org
Gate Village 4, DIFC

Opera Gallery

www.operagallery.com Gate
Village 3, DIFC

Pro Art Gallery

www.proartuae.com
Palm Strip Mall
Jumeirah

- 1 ALAhmadiya School
- 2 Street in Diera
- 3 Spice Souk
- 4 Dubai Creek

D

KHOR DUBAI (DUBAI CREEK) / DEIRA / BUR DUBAI / MIRDIF

The oldest part of Dubai, and very much the heart and soul of the city, both sides of the Creek reveal Dubai's true cultural identity. Trade started here and this is where the traders settled. Visit Deira, the Creek and Bur Dubai and you will taste Emirati life as it was long before the UAE was formed or Dubai became the glossy city it now is. Explore winding, shady streets, haggle in small shops, enjoy the banter in the souks, and cross the water on an abra. Be sure to stop for a bite to eat and a much needed drink; you are spoilt for choice with a plethora of restaurants and cafés embracing cuisine from all over the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Don't hurry. Watch the world go by and marvel at what Dubai has achieved in such a short space of time.



- 1 Al Ahmadiya School & Heritage House
- 2 Dhow Wharfage
- 3 Spice Souk
- 4 Gold Souk
- 5 Covered Souk
- 6 Fish Market
- 7 Women's Museum
- 8 Abra Stations along the wharf
- 9 Electronics Market
- 10 Mushrif Park
- 11 Al Bayt Al Baghdadi Restaurant
- 12 Jimma Café
- 13 Karachi Darbar
- 14 Habiba Al Nabulsi
- 15 Al Raslaan



Q&A

Dr Rafia Obaid Ghubash
 Founder of the Women's Museum, Gold Souk



What are your early memories of Dubai?

My memories of Shindagha and Deira are that they used to be the heart of Dubai. With all the different types of souks it was about trade here. The local people lived here. My first memory is my parents' beautiful house - all the area was full of houses like this. The other memory is my teacher who taught me the Quran and the school in this area - AlAhmadiya School. The seaside is another important memory. The fishermen, the boats coming from abroad. My hobby was bird hunting. We hooked small fish and caught the birds. And I'd go home at 5pm with my birds. The fish market was very important - where men and women gathered - but the women were the people who fished, not the men. This area was so active, so it is sad that the root of this area has gone and now it is only gold. It is called the Souk Al Khail - the horse souk. It didn't sell horses, but most of the men rode their horses here. Before my time - in the 60s. These are my own personal memories.

Part of my motivation to build the Women's Museum was to preserve the history of Dubai. I was born here, grew up here and enjoyed my life here. I lived in this area and watched people - everything was linked to the sea.

What does Dubai represent to you?

Something I love not a place that I live in. I have a very good feeling here - it's open, welcoming, ready to accept new thoughts - it's always been like that. That is old Dubai. Dubai today is jumping. Not developing, but jumping. Social and cultural change happens throughout the world, but in Europe it took 200 years, here it's taken no time. I

am interested in how this rapid change has affected women in particular. But Dubai is also a story of success. Who would believe that such a small geographical area would be known by the whole world. My generation, has a sort of conflict. We like the changes, the development, but there is a price we have to pay. We have this dialogue either between ourselves or with others. The very young generation, the graduates from college, they have grown up with a curriculum that has prepared them for the modern UAE, not the old. I want them to come and appreciate the history of their grandparents. But they are wanting to adapt to the new Dubai.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

From the 1960s to the 80s, although there were also many other nationalities here, you still felt the Arabic culture around you. Now it has become cosmopolitan. Local people still know where to find the Arabic feeling, but it's much harder for visitors to find this old community. It is peaceful here, with a modern community and also a traditional one. Local people are still retaining their culture and whatever is related to their heritage and traditions.

Where would you take visitors to show them the heart of Dubai?

I immediately take my visitors to the Creek. We take a boat from one side to the other. We walk through the Gold Souk and the wholesale market. I also enjoy New Dubai - the walk around Burj Khalifa. I love to take my visitors to the desert. We go for a drive to Ras Al Khaimah or Fujairah.





- 1 Dubai Creek
- 2 Heritage House
- 3 The Fish Market
- 4 The Spice Souk



CULTURE, HERITAGE & PLACES OF NOTE

Zone D is the heart of old Dubai and flowing through it is The Creek or Al Khor, unanimously described, by all we have interviewed, as the life vein of Dubai. 'We're a city of merchants, traders, pearl divers. The harbour of Dubai has associations with Iran and the subcontinent. The Creek has been tax-free since the Maktoum Dynasty. It was the creek that started everything off. Not oil. Oil expanded things more rapidly but the Creek started it. The idea for dredging the Creek first came about in 1955, so that larger ships could come in and trade could develop. But before it was first dredged in '61, when it was low tide, you could walk down to Al Ahmadiya school in Deira. If you look at the architectural style of the buildings, you can see how the Creek grew organically. This is where Dubai started.' Yousuf Al Hashimi, Entrepreneur & Managing Partner, Ahdaaf Sports Club.

Indeed, the Creek is the pulse of Dubai. It represents trade, the flow of people in and out, the hustle and bustle of life from a bygone age. There is nowhere else in Dubai where you will experience such an atmosphere, this step back into the past, the opportunity to truly understand Dubai's soul.

A little history lesson from Al Shindagha: old Dubai was divided into three main areas: Shindagha, Bur Dubai, and Deira. Dubai Creek is the demarcation line separating Bur Dubai from Deira. Shindagha, on the western bank of the Creek, is separated from Deira by a sand stretch called Ghubaiba. It is located at the southern end of the Creek overlooking its entrance; historically the city's maritime gateway to the world.

The area started to evolve around 1862 and quickly acquired historical significance during

the late 19th Century when the city's population started to increase. At that time urban planning and constructing new residential areas became a necessity. Moreover, Dubai's ruling family and most of the Bani Yas tribe used to reside in Shindagha after H.H. Sheikh Maktoum Bin Hasher relocated to live there at the end of the 19th century.

In recent years the area has been the focus of a multi-phase renovation project, with many of the significant historical buildings being restored to their former glory. The first school in the city Al Ahmadiya School was established in 1912 and is next door to Heritage House, built in 1890. Completed in 1994, rooms are traditionally furnished and offer a vital window onto the past.

Wander down the Creek on the Deira side and marvel at the blue wooden dhows, loaded with all manner of cargo en route for and from other countries. The docks are piled high with their shipments. There are few areas in Dubai that evoke such a sense of romance and adventure on the high seas as the dhow wharf, and a trip here is a necessity to obtain a sense of where Dubai has originated from. If you meander away from the Creek, you come upon the small windy streets of the old Souk, lined with open and closed-roof stores.

The Fish Market is a vision of baskets overflowing with the freshest seafood caught that morning. In the height of summer it's best to go early in the day. The Spice Souk sells an array of fragrances and spices from frankincense to the many herbs used in Arabic and South Asian food. Textiles, incense, rugs and artefacts can be found in abundance here and the only way to shop is to haggle over the prices. Since the

- 1 Heritage House
- 2 The Gold Souk



1940s, when traders and entrepreneurs from India and Iran pitched their stalls in this area, the Gold Souk has been famed the world over. More than 300 retailers trade here and window upon window is crammed with bracelets, necklaces, rings, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and more; a spectacular sight at night when the windows are illuminated.

A new addition to the Gold Souk is the Women's Museum. Situated in a beautifully restored old house, this is a heritage and educational centre that portrays the role of the women of Dubai who have contributed so importantly to the building of the nation.

to Bur Dubai. Literally translated as 'Mainland Dubai', a reference to the traditional separation of the Bur Dubai area from Deira by the Dubai Creek, Bur Dubai originally consisted of all districts between the western bank of the Creek and Jumeirah.

The Electronics Market hasn't changed since it was first established nor has the signage and if you have the opportunity to visit the area at night, note the neon boards – a throwback to the neon culture of the 80s. The pace of life in Bur Dubai is seemingly unaffected by the rapid transformations that have taken elsewhere in the city.

The Creek reveals Dubai's cultural identity. It is where trade started and where traders settled.

Do not be put off by the name, this important museum will fascinate visitors of both sexes with an interest in social history and the evolution of the city.

Whilst we have not recommended hotels in this guide, we cannot ignore the newly opened Al Ahmadiya Heritage Guest House in the heart of Al-Ras Heritage area. It is adjacent to Al Ahmadiya School, Islamic Museum and Heritage House and a stone's throw away from the Spice and Gold Souks. An impressively restored traditional mansion, with five spacious bedrooms overlooking a tranquil, shady courtyard and dining area, this boutique guesthouse offers guests a taste of hidden Dubai and the opportunity to step off the beaten track and experience the richness of Arabian hospitality.

Once you have had your fill of Deira, catch an Abra from an abra station across the Creek

Bur Dubai contains the beautiful Al Fahidi Cultural District which is written about in detail in the following chapter.

For a day out of town, head to Mushrif Park, considered by some to be Dubai's best park. Not only is it the city's largest park at 500 hectares, but also the oldest. It truly is a desert park, with long sand plains and desert flora and fauna. Barbecue areas and 1950s style swimming pools give it an old world charm. 'The road that runs between Nadd Al Hamar Road and Al Khawaneej Road behind Mushrif Park leading towards Academic City, is a fantastic location where Emiratis pitch their impromptu camps from around November to March. On Thursday and Friday nights the air is thick with the smell of barbecues and sand generated by racing quad bikes. We always take visitors their for a true taste of Dubai.' Jill Hoyle, Manager of Tashkeel Arts Centre.





ART & DESIGN

This is a zone of great historical interest and shows some interesting traditional Emirati architecture - Heritage House is a great example of late 19th century design, whilst Bin Lootah Mosque in front of Al Ahmadiya School dates from 1910 and the evolution of the Creek.

'At low tide you used to be able to walk across the Creek to Ahmadiya School'

Walk through the souks and embrace the chance to soak up the atmosphere, the fragrances and the sounds of the oldest trading district in the Emirate whilst experiencing the old world charm of a Dubai from a former era.





1 2 3

- 1 Al Bayt Al Baghdadi
- 2 A selection of fresh kebabs at Al Bayt Al Baghdadi
- 3 Jafer Birman Ali Cafeteria



FOOD & DRINK

For some really authentic Middle Eastern and Asian cooking you are spoilt for choice in Deira and the Souks. Considered by some to be the best juice bar in Dubai, Jafer Birman Ali Cafeteria in the Spice Souk has been in existence for decades and is particularly famous for its fresh juices - the lime cooler is excellent - and ice creams. Al Bayt Al Baghdadi Restaurant is a no-frills eatery amongst many others, but you will find really good Iraqi home-cooking here. All the regular mezze are on offer, but it is the open-fire grilled dishes that really make it worth a detour. Portions are generous and prices are cheap. An Ethiopian eatery full of Ethiopian and Sudanese customers is a good sign that the food is going to be authentic and this is what you'll find at Jimma Café. Ask for advice on what to eat and enjoy the informal atmosphere and tasty dishes. For some excellent, very tasty Pakistani food Karachi Darbar won't disappoint - especially the chicken or mutton biryani, whilst Habiba Al Nabulsi will impress with some of the best cheap Arabic food in Dubai. Its huge trays of piping-hot kanafa - gooey cheese, honey and pistachio nuts are just what's needed after a morning's sightseeing, but more than this, simple, well cooked traditional dishes will give you an excellent introduction to traditional, local cuisine.

DIRECTORY



Alahmadiya School & Heritage House

Al Khor Street/Al Ahmadiya Street, Deira/Al Ras Area, Behind Dubai Public Libraries
971 4 226 0286

Dhow Wharfage
Baniyas Road, Deira

Souks:
Spice Al Sabkha Street
Gold Between Deira St and Old Baladiya St
Covered Bet Al Sabkha Road and Naif Road
Fish Market near Shindagha Tunnel

Women's Museum

www.womenmuseumuae.com
Gold Souk

Ahmedia Heritage Guest House

ahmediaguesthouse.com
adjacent to Al Ahmadiya School, Deira, 971 4 225 0085

Abra Stations
along the wharf, Deira and Bur Dubai sides of Creek

Electronics Market

Nr Al Mankhool Road, Bur Dubai

Mushrif Park

Al Khawaneej Road, Mirdif, 971 4 288 3624



Bin Lootah Mosque
in front of Alahmadiya School



Jafer Birman Ali Cafeteria
in the Spice Souk

Al Bayt Al Baghdadi Restaurant

Al Muteena Street, near Sheraton Deira, 971 4 273 7064

Jimma Café

Al Khaleej Road, Deira, 971 4 271 7610

Karachi Darbar

Al Musalla Road, Deira, 971 4 272 3755

Habiba Al Nabulsi

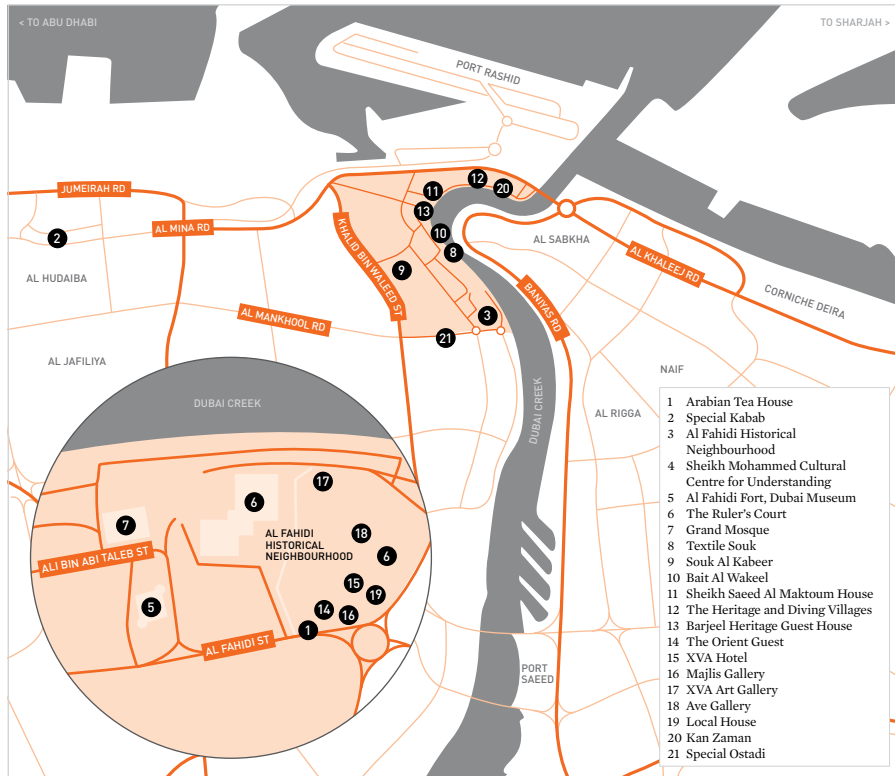
Muraqqabat Street, Deira, near Reef Mall
971 4 227 7760

- 1 Al Fahadi Historical Neighbourhood
- 2 XVA Hotel

E

**AL SHINDAGHA HISTORICAL NEIGHBOURHOOD /
AL FAHIDI HISTORICAL NEIGHBOURHOOD**

A small geographical area, Zone E in the Bur Dubai is packed to the gills with history, art, culture and beauty. Spend a few hours, a day or a even consider a few nights here to soak up Dubai’s heritage, architecture and hospitality. Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood has been restored to its former splendour; narrow streets with traditional courtyard houses and wind towers, museums, art galleries, boutique hotels and delightful restaurants make this district a restoration success story, whilst in neighbouring streets, souks and museums only add to the enjoyment of the visit.



1



2



Q&A

Isobel Abulhoul OBE
 Director and Co-founder of Magrudy's,
 Founder of Jerboa Book Publishers and
 the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature



What does Dubai represent to you?

Home – it always has been. When I stepped off the plane into the desert night all that time ago, I was at home from the beginning. I loved the sultry smell in the air. It was a completely new experience for me. The people are what make a place. I received a welcome wherever I went.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to any of the other Emirates?

Dubai has always been different. I arrived here before there were any Emirates, so I knew it before and after it became the United Arab Emirates. When we went to Abu Dhabi you went in convoy as there was no road. You went to Sharjah, when the tide was out, until a road was built. Dubai ended where the airport is. I can remember going camping in the desert just beyond there – you felt like you were in the Empty Quarter.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

You know immediately that you're in Dubai because of the road signs, the way that everything is organised, the appearance of the buildings. If you dig deeper it's different again. Dubai is a strange character. It's made up of almost complete opposites: a 21st century metropolis but with authentic Arabic roots that go back a long way and are integral to Dubai-ans who live here and who are very keen to preserve those.

Where would you take visitors to find the heart of Dubai?

I'd start with the Creek, the lifeblood of Dubai. The Creek has been a major

influence in Dubai's success as a trading and entrepreneurial post. Take a look at the dhows today and what is on them; it is endlessly fascinating. Then visit Almahdiya school Dubai's first school and the Women's Museum. Don't miss the fish market, the gold souk and the spice souk. These are not tourist destinations, they are here because people use them and need them. As a rule we take all of our authors out to the desert and make sure the experience is authentic. Belly dancers are not authentic. Make sure you ask an Emirati how it should be.

What does 'the soul of Dubai' mean to you?

Light and dark shadows. Never really getting to the bottom layer. There's always a surprise there that you least expect. Dubai's incredibly ability to somehow trailblaze in ways that no-one could have thought possible.



ISOBEL RECOMMENDS

Café

Arabian Tea House Al Fahidi Street,
 Al Fahidi Cultural District, tel: +971
 353 5071 Open daily 8am-10pm

Restaurant

Special Kabab Mina Road, Satwa,
 tel: +971 4 398 4747

SHOP

Gerry Weber Dubai Mall



1 2 3

- 1 The Heritage and Diving Village
- 2 Inside Sheikh Saeed House
- 3 Dubai Museum



CULTURE, HERITAGE & PLACES OF NOTE

There is nothing to stop you strolling around the streets of Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood at random, to discover it for yourself, but we would suggest you drop into Sheikh Mohammed Cultural Centre for Understanding (SMCCU) first. Based in an elegantly restored house, SMCCU is an organisation that focuses on breaking down barriers between people of different nationalities and of raising awareness of Emirati culture and traditions and of Islam. It organises walking tours and cultural programmes and encourages visitors to ask all sorts of questions. So, either take a guided walking tour, or wander at your leisure around one of the oldest residential areas in Dubai. Some of the original Old City Wall, built in 1800 from gypsum and coral, is still intact. Look up and you'll notice that most houses have a wind tower – the traditional way to cool houses before the advent of air conditioning. Many of the houses have been converted into small, unusual museums – just push open doors and enter. Amongst them are Calligraphy House, Philately House, the Coins Museum and The Architectural Heritage Department as well as a wealth of galleries, outlined in the following section on Art and Design.

Be sure to find Al Fahidi Fort, the oldest building in Dubai built around 1787, now housing Dubai Museum which is well worth a visit to learn the story of Dubai. Pass The Ruler's Court, or Diwan, a handsome cream building with impressive wind towers and the Grand Mosque with the city's tallest minaret. You may also notice the country's only Hindu Temple, situated between the Grand Mosque

and the Creek. Enter the Textile Souk - a riot of colour and textures and through into Souk Al Kabeer or Meena Bazaar which was established in the early 1900s by the city's Asian immigrants.

Bait Al Wakeel was built in 1935 by the late Sheikh Rashid and was a shipping office for Gray Mackenzie & Company, agents for many of the shipping lines sailing into Dubai. The first office building in Dubai it is a fine example of early 20th century Arabic architecture, made of mud and coral, with mangrove poles imported from East Africa to support the roof. Now a maritime museum there is also a very decent restaurant here from which you can look out over the water and watch the boats travelling up and down the Creek.

Another house of great historical interest is Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House, the official residence of the grandfather of the present ruler who ruled Dubai between 1912 and 1958. The building dates from 1896 and today houses a rare collection of historical photographs, coins, stamps and documents that record Dubai's history. Two minutes away by foot is The Heritage and Diving Village – a 'living' village with demonstrations of more than 30 traditional handicrafts and a great place to see traditional Arabic dancing from time to time. A welcome new boutique guesthouse is Barjeel Heritage Guest House in Al Ghubaiba. It's refreshing to find delightful hotels springing up in areas of great cultural interest and this zone has more than its fair share with the Orient Guest House, a traditional two storey villa, restored to its former glory and also XVA Hotel, a stylish and peaceful boutique hotel with an award-winning vegetarian restaurant.



ART & DESIGN

- 1 Majlis Gallery
- 2 XVA Cafe

There is a feeling of calm and creativity in the streets of Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood; it is peaceful yet imbued with a sense of productivity and it makes sense that not only are there artisans at work in small studios but galleries, full of charm and charisma, also have their homes here. Majlis Gallery has been here the longest – since the 70s in fact. Situated

Al Fahidi Fort, the oldest building in Dubai built around 1787 now houses the Dubai Museum.

in a beautiful old house, Majlis is a haven for artists and art-lovers. Traveller-painters' works are exhibited alongside sculptures, artefacts, trinkets and shabby-chic furniture made of limed mango wood from India. XVA Gallery, attached to the hotel showcases contemporary art in exhibition rooms around the shady courtyard café whilst Ave Gallery is a new space run by Iranian artist Fereydoun Ave.





Q&A

Hind Mezaina
Blogger of the Culturist and Photographer



What does Dubai represent to you?

Dubai is a cosmopolitan city, and an ever changing city with big ambitions and big dreams.

What is it about Dubai that makes it different to any of the other Emirates?

The cosmopolitan factor. A richness to the population that is not evident in the other emirates. It is more vibrant, with more ambition and a can-do attitude that you don't see anywhere else. It is changing at a rapid pace.

What does 'the soul of Dubai' mean to you?

When I think of the 'soul of Dubai', I automatically think of Dubai Creek. That is the heart and soul of Dubai. It's where the story of Dubai starts.

How would you describe Dubai's cultural identity?

Trying to find and define what its cultural identity is is a challenge. It's a city that is changing so much that I don't think it has a cultural identity just yet. There are so many different nationalities here that the identity depends where you are in the city and the time of the year. To be honest, I'm not sure it has found its cultural identity yet.

Where would you take visitors to show Dubai's cultural identity?

I'd take them for a walk along the Creek. It hasn't really changed at all. I'd show them the dhows, the random cargos. It's a great walk. Then we'd go gallery hopping and end up at BuQtair, for the local fish. It's one of my favourite places – you have the catch of the day on Jumeirah Beach.

How can we get to know the real Dubai, the soul of Dubai?

Go to Deira, the Creek and Satwa, the real downtown Dubai. Oh, and use the public spaces more.



HIND RECOMMENDS

Café

Gerard's – it's been around since the 80s and it's great to show visitors that we have some older places.

Views

Khor Dubai, the Marina by Festival City, and a boat ride so you can look inland and see the Dubai skyline from the sea.

Buildings

Wind towers in Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood and the 1980s architecture in Deira

SHOP

Kinokuniya in Dubai Mall



1 Bait Al Wakeel



FOOD & DRINK

Part of Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood's charm is its delightful courtyard cafés. Arabian Tea House is idyllic. A leafy courtyard, eclectic jewellery and art for sale, but the star of the show is most definitely the food. Wonderfully large bowls of delicious salads and hot bites too, washed down with refreshing juices. For sheer entertainment value drop into Local House for camel burgers and camel milk fried ice-cream, or enjoy more traditional Emirati dishes in the traditional setting. The food is good, but the location is stunning at Bait Al Wakeel, built on stilts over the Creek. If you're visiting Heritage Village, stop at Kan Zama by the Creek and enjoy traditional Arabic mezzes and dishes. There is a great view from the terrace of the boats and historic Deira and Bur Dubai. For a restaurant brimming with character, head for family-run Special Ostadi, with friendly service, simple but delicious kebabs and fascinating decor wherever you look – especially the bank notes from around the world displayed under the glass table tops.

 DIRECTORY



Al Fahidi Cultural District
Bur Dubai

Sheikh Mohammed Cultural Centre for Understanding
(SMCCU)
www.cultures.ae
Al Fahidi Cultural District

Al Fahidi Fort /Dubai Museum
www.dubaitourism.ae
Al Fahidi Street

The Ruler's Court
Al Fahidi Street, Al Souk Al Kabeer, opposite Dubai Museum

Grand Mosque
Al Bin Abi Talib Street

Textile Souk
Bur Dubai along the Creek

Bait Al Wakeel
By Dubai Creek, between Bur Dubai Abra Station and Old Souk Abra Station
971 4 353 0530

Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House
Al Shindagha Historical Neighbourhood

The Heritage and Diving Villages
Shindagha Rd/Al Khaleej Road
971 4 393 7151

Barjeel Heritage Guest House
www.barjeelguesthouse.com
nr Heritage & Diving Village, Al Shindagha Historical Neighbourhood

The Orient Guest House
www.orientguesthouse.com
Opp Al Musalla Post Office, Al Fahidi Street, Bur Dubai



Arabian Tea House
Al Fahidi Street, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai
971 4 353 5071

Local House
Al Fahidi Street, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai, 971 4 354 0705

Bait Al Wakeel
Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood Bur Dubai, 971 4 353 0530

Kan Zama
Al Shindagha Historical Neighbourhood Nr Heritage Village
971 4 393 9913

Special Ostadi
Behind Mussalla Tower Bur Dubai 971 4 397 1933



XVA Hotel
www.xvahotel.com
close to Basta Art Cafe and Local House, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai

Majlis Gallery
www.themajlisgallery.com
Al Musalla Roundabout, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai

XVA Art Gallery
www.xvagallery.com
next to Dubai Creek, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai

Ave Gallery
Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai 971 4 353 5383

F

GREATER DUBAI & THE DESERT

A trip to Dubai is incomplete without a trip to the desert. There are a couple of options available – hire a four by four and head out by yourself, if you know what you’re doing, or take an organised trip with a tour operator, but try to find an authentic one. Belly dancing and shisha are not Emirati culture. Fossil Rock is the UAE’s easiest desert route and is only 20 minutes outside Dubai, but trips to Hatta, Oman, Mussandam, Dibba, Ras Al Khaimah or Liwa will all satisfy your desire to explore and play in the sand.



1

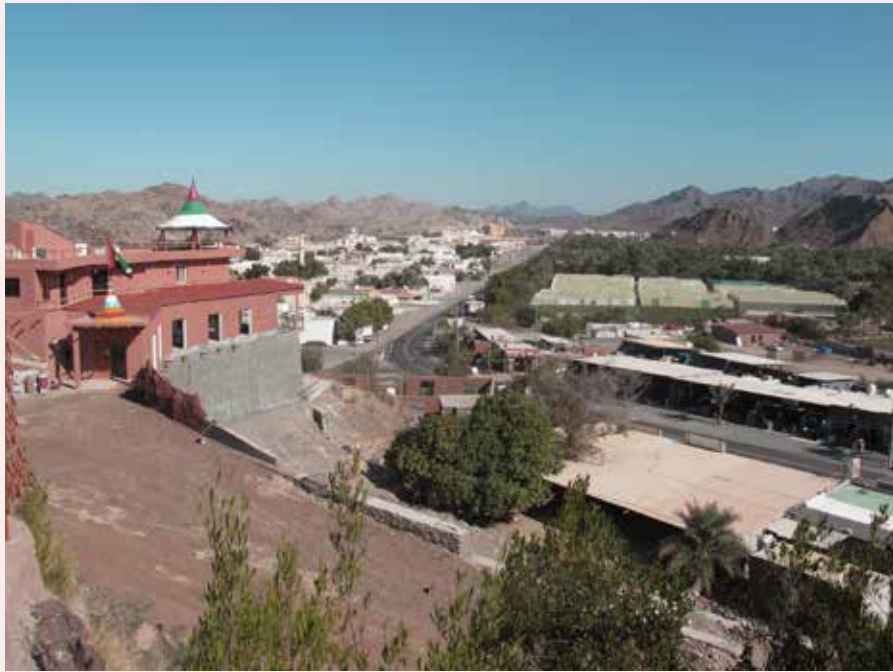


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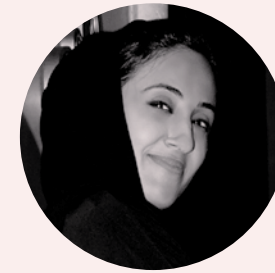
During the research of this book, our cultural ambassadors unanimously agreed that you can only discover the real Dubai by meeting Emiratis. A tour company which is in the developmental stages, but which is happy to advise and point you in the right direction is offering a distinctly new type of holiday experience in Dubai; homestays in the northern emirates. Buksha founded by Muna Harib and Nojoud Bastaki is embracing the concept of cultural tourism. Combining their love of travel with their desire to engage in volunteer work and help people, Harib and Bastaki developed the Buksha concept; to offer travellers the opportunity to interact with locals, to avoid other tourists and to learn about traditional ways. Describing Buksha as a 'cultural tour operator', it is their hope not only to introduce tourists and expatriate residents to the real culture of Dubai, but also to find solutions for low-income Emirati families in rural areas.

'The idea is that we place those interested in this experience for a few hours, overnight, or a few days with a family so that they can experience a series of cultural interactions,' explains Bastaki. 'You may go and cook with the mother of the house, or fish or farm with the man. It gives people the opportunity to see the traditional side to rural life that you don't see much of here anymore. Guests pay and the money goes partly into the running of our company, but also to the host family for the accommodation and their services rendered. The aim is that they earn an extra income from this, and our goal is to create awareness of Emirati culture. Arab values are generosity and hospitality. We want the rest of the world to know this.'

The initial pilot project met with great success, and the two women are now looking at training more host families and finding ways to prepare their homes for new visitors.

Q&A

Muna Harib and Nojoud Bastaki
Buksha Founders



Where do you take visitors to show them traditional life in the Emirates?

Masafi, in the mountains. That's where the water comes from. There is a man called Ali Al Mehrezi who lives out there at the Masafi Waterfalls. His house is incredible - he's been building it for 30 years and it's open to the public on Fridays. He has animals - monkeys, donkeys, cats and dogs. He built seven waterfalls - each one has something unique about it. He has the oldest cave in the country on his land and a mango tree that is 7 or 800 years old. He loves planting and farming and has all sorts of trees on his land. He can tell you about the different rocks and sand that we have in this country. When we were looking for families for the pilot phase of the project we were driving around and saw an open gate and decided to go in. It was Mehrezi's house. He has thousands of photos of the UAE as it used to be. In his time he's been an actor, a football referee and worked in the army. He also had the first pottery factory in the UAE. We recommend that people go and visit him and learn from him.

Favourite childhood memories?

Nojoud: In the old days a lot of families used to go camping regularly, everyone did it. There'd be my family, my aunt's family, my grandparents. We'd put up tents, cook with wood. We used to go long distances - into the mountains. When it rained we'd all go to the wadis.'

Favourite cafés?

For Emirati food Biker's Café on Beach Road. Apparently Sheikh Mohamed goes in on Saturdays sometimes. Al Fanar in Festival City, is also great for Emirati food. Wander along the Creek on HSBC side (Bur Dubai). Walk towards the water taxis and you arrive at a very narrow alley where you'll find a small restaurant on the right (Bait Al Wakeel). This is by far the best restaurant in town, we think. It's as cheap as chips, with the best view of Dubai and the best food. Then go through the market and you'll find a little shop called the Golden Boards on the right at the start of the souk. It was owned by a local man called Nasser Haji and he filled the shop with everything he'd picked up on his travels throughout his life.

For the best tea in town, Karak (introduced to the Gulf from the Indian sub-continent - a strong dark tea mellowed with full cream milk and warm spices), try Bayet Al Fatayer (Jumeirah Beach Road on the left after Al Urouba Street, Jumeirah 1).







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www.dubaiculture.ae
www.brownbook.me

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