

# SMART TRAVEL

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## DESERT RISING

Where Dubai flashes outlandish opulence, Abu Dhabi serves a more refined sense of glamour, both equally warranting a journey to the United Arab Emirates



# DUBAI

With its man-made islands visible from space, a building almost as high as Table Mountain and a hotel reputed to offer seven-star service, Dubai is a city where 'bigger and better' is actioned daily. Despite its recent economic downturn, cranes and construction workers continue adding to the world's largest glitterball, with glass, steel and fluorescent lights covering traces of desert sand.

No other city captures excess the way this emirate does. An enormous water fountain synchronised to music puts Vegas to shame. Watch this hydraulic spectacle from the 124th-floor observation deck of the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa, and you could commemorate the occasion by purchasing a bar of gold from a machine that, had it been placed anywhere else in the world, would be selling plush toys. But this is Dubai ... and adults need playgrounds too.

## SLEEP

With interiors reminiscent of a Baroque theatre, the Burj Al Arab offers a choice of 13 pillow types and Hermès amenities. Famously shaped like the sail of a dhow, the hotel has reception areas on every floor – hardly necessary when there's an in-suite check-in service. Ideally located on the marina, Grosvenor House Dubai offers hotel suites and apartments for short-term lease. While there, try Retreat Spa's Rasul treatment for traditional Turkish mud-soaking.

- *Burj Al Arab* 📍 [www.burj-al-arab.com](http://www.burj-al-arab.com); *Grosvenor House Dubai* 📍 [www.grosvenorhouse-dubai.com](http://www.grosvenorhouse-dubai.com)

## EAT

An evening spent at the Rooftop Terrace at One&Only Royal Mirage promises mezze platters and live Arabesque music on Thursdays. Also try Jumeirah Zabeel Saray hotel's French Colonial style restaurant, Vôi, for fine-dining Vietnamese cuisine – you can't go wrong with the ginger-and-lime chicken soup with shallots and rice noodles.

- *One&Only Royal Mirage* 📍 [www.royalmirage.oneandonlyresorts.com](http://www.royalmirage.oneandonlyresorts.com); *Jumeirah Zabeel Saray* 📍 [www.jumeirah.com](http://www.jumeirah.com) ▶



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
Inside O'de Rose; Nadine Kassem Khoury, one of O'de Rose's partners; Rooftop Terrace at One&Only Royal Mirage; Embassy Dubai, a supper club at Grosvenor House Dubai, offers 360-degree views of the city; Vôi restaurant at Jumeirah Zabeel Saray  
OPPOSITE PAGE Dubai by night. This view of Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, with its synchronised musical fountain, is best enjoyed at dusk



## SEE

Dubai's souks are part and parcel of an authentic Emirati experience – wandering through the labyrinth of stores that sell gold, fish or luxurious textiles is incredibly enticing. Visit the perfume souks to custom-make your own scents, or the spice souks for a feast of flavours you'll never find back home. And remember, bargaining comes with the territory.

Art Week, an annual creative initiative taking place in March, is a platform for Art Dubai, a showcase of art galleries from various countries in the MENASA (Middle East, North Africa and South Asia) region, including performances and workshops. Design Days Dubai, a feature of Art Week, highlights collectable and limited-edition furniture and design objects produced by the region's emerging design talents. ■ *Souk information* [www.dubaisouks.net](http://www.dubaisouks.net); *Art Dubai* [www.artdubai.ae](http://www.artdubai.ae); *Design Days Dubai* [www.designdaysdubai.ae](http://www.designdaysdubai.ae)

## SHOP

Not yet six months old, Kasa is local furniture designer Khalid Shafar's showroom. Alongside his own work – an ash-wood table dressed with cotton and silk, or his ash-and-walnut wood 'fallen palm' stool upholstered in goat hair – you'll find the creations of fellow Emirati designers, all influenced by local craftsmanship. Situated in Dubai's Ras Al Khor industrial district, it hopes to be the catalyst to turning the area into the city's new design sector.

For fashion items, interiors and art with a quirky ethnic aesthetic, shop at O'de Rose, a converted villa selling anything from beautiful clutch bags with intricate Arabic calligraphy to silver rings with an evil eye. You'll be welcomed with a drink of rose-syrup water. ■ *Khalid Shafar* [www.khalidshafar.com](http://www.khalidshafar.com); *O'de Rose* [www.o-derose.com](http://www.o-derose.com)

FROM TOP The opulent Royal Suite at the Burj Al Arab is equipped with a private cinema and a rotating four-poster bed; shoes on sale at Dubai's souks; a traditionally clad Emirati



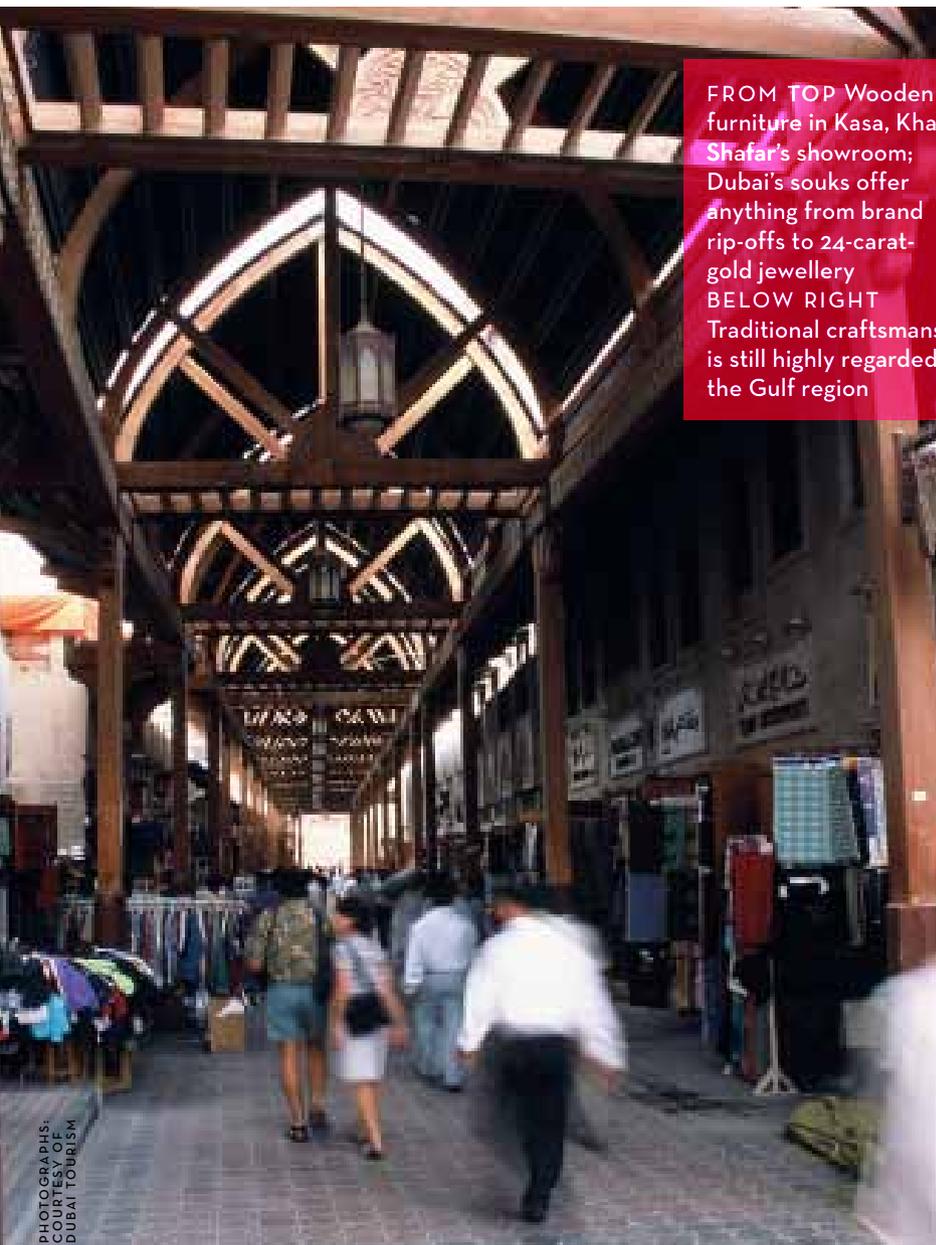
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## THE GULF'S GLOBAL HUBS

By connecting Dubai and Abu Dhabi to over 120 cities, Emirates airline has played a pivotal role in the vast multi-cultural expansion of these two cities, securing its base in Dubai International Airport as the hub of the Gulf. Lauded for its in-flight entertainment and renowned for its service excellence, Emirates flies daily from Cape Town International Airport and OR Tambo International Airport to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, from R6 500 return. ■ *Emirates* [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)



*Wandering through the labyrinth of stores selling gold, fish or luxurious textiles is incredibly enticing*



**FROM TOP** Wooden furniture in Kasa, Khalid Shafar's showroom; Dubai's souks offer anything from brand rip-offs to 24-carat-gold jewellery  
**BELOW RIGHT** Traditional craftsmanship is still highly regarded in the Gulf region



## HOT SPOT CITIES & DESTINATIONS

While in the area, visit these other Arab States of the Persian Gulf

### DOHA, Qatar

■ Stay at W Doha Hotel & Residences, a blend of casual cool and urban glam, where the W Hotels policy of Whatever/Wherever really shines. When not nibbling on tapas at the pool-side lounge, try one of Michelin-star chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's restaurants. Also visit the Museum of Islamic Art – the largest collection of Islamic art in the world and home to the finest collection of Persian rugs, Turkish mosaics and Damascene wood carvings. ■ *W Doha Hotel & Residences* 📍 [www.whotelldoha.com](http://www.whotelldoha.com); *Museum of Islamic Art* 📍 [www.mia.org.qa](http://www.mia.org.qa)

### MUSCAT, Oman

■ Stay at Chedi Muscat, where a stark mountain backdrop is contrasted with azure sea views. Set within a garden oasis, the hotel offers six dining options, a Balinese spa and a 103-metre-long swimming pool. Also visit the Royal Opera House. Opened in 2011 with a production of *Turandot* (conducted by Plácido Domingo), it's already hosted the likes of Andrea Bocelli, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Arabic star Majida El Roumi. ■ *Chedi Muscat* 📍 [www.ghmhotels.com](http://www.ghmhotels.com); *Royal Opera House* 📍 [www.rohmuscat.org.com](http://www.rohmuscat.org.com)

### RIYADH, Saudi Arabia

■ Stay at the centrally located Al Mashreq Boutique Hotel, where enjoying a Turkish coffee affords views of fountains and palm trees, while dinner at Ewaan offers the excitement of a live cooking station. Also try the hotel's Moroccan hammam. Visit the Turaif district of Diriyah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where mud-brick structures from the 15th century still stand. Originally the home of the Saudi Royal family, this area offers a peep into old palaces, a bath house and a mosque. ■ *Al Mashreq Boutique Hotel* 📍 [www.almashreqboutiquehotel.com](http://www.almashreqboutiquehotel.com) ▶





# ABU DHABI

Just a 75-minute drive from Dubai, Abu Dhabi is less gaudy than its glitzy counterpart, showcasing its wealth a little less elaborately. However, its current cultural project, Saadiyat Island, will alter this as the city establishes itself as an architectural capital – Louvre Abu Dhabi by Jean Nouvel, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi by Frank Gehry and a performing arts centre by Zaha Hadid are some of the masterpieces in the making.

## SLEEP

The pool villas at Banyan Tree Al Wadi offer respite from the heat after a day in the resort's nature reserve, which boasts gazelles, camels and oryxes. Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri's Moorish-style palace is equally enticing. While there, hop on a boat and ride through the adjoining waterways of the hotel's souk. ■ *Banyan Tree Al Wadi* ☎ [www.banyantree.com](http://www.banyantree.com); *Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri* ☎ [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

## EAT

The world-renowned restaurant, Hakkasan at Emirates Palace, headed by Chef Lee Kok Hua, serves jasmine tea-smoked wagyu beef ribs and Peking duck with royal Beluga caviar. Atayeb, sought-after for its modern take on regional cuisine, is the place to share a shisha pipe while sampling Lebanese and Moroccan wines. ■ *Hakkasan* ☎ [www.hakkasan.com](http://www.hakkasan.com); *Atayeb* ☎ [www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com](http://www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com)

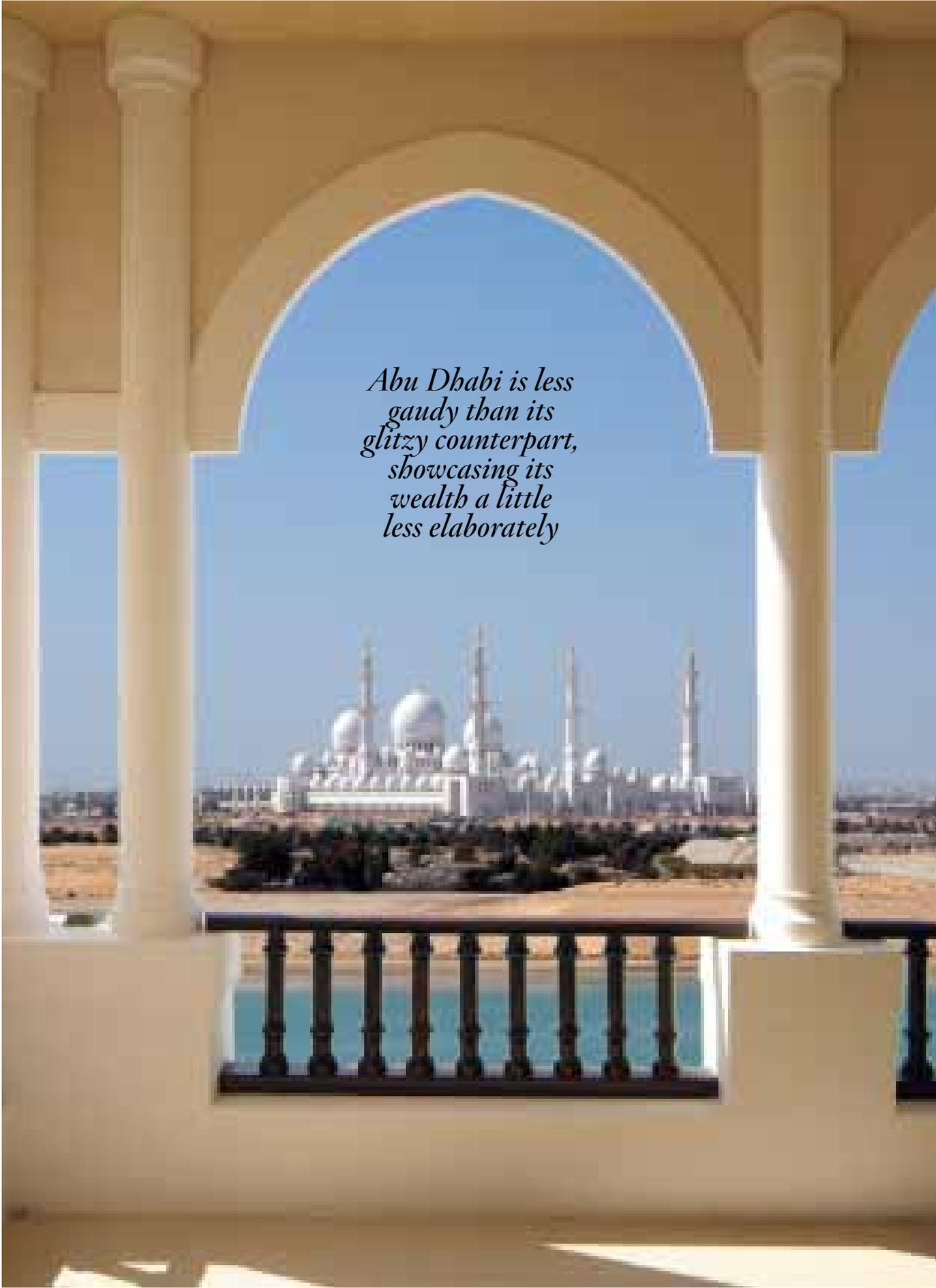
## SEE

The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, with its 24-carat-gold finishings and enormous Swarovski crystal chandeliers, is an iconic architectural landmark. Al Ain Paradise, a garden that's been awarded the *Guinness World Record for the most hanging baskets*, is a sensory wonderland ideal for picnics. ■ *Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque* ☎ [www.szgmc.ae](http://www.szgmc.ae); *Al Ain Paradise* ☎ [www.alainparadise.com](http://www.alainparadise.com)

## SHOP

For palm-frond bags and camel-harness bracelets, visit Sougha. Made by Bedouin artisans, these products are part of a community project to keep traditional crafts alive. Also try Bateel, which sells dates in an assortment of guises – in cookies, encased in chocolate or as syrup. ■ *Sougha* ☎ [www.sougha.ae](http://www.sougha.ae); *Bateel* ☎ [www.bateel.com](http://www.bateel.com)

FROM TOP In 2017 the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi is expected to open; the Yas Viceroy hotel's architectural curves mirror the adjacent Formula 1 circuit; the Banyan Tree Spa is filled with traditional woodwork and carvings; Al Ain Oasis is the largest oasis in the city known for its underground irrigation system; Abu Dhabi's marina  
OPPOSITE PAGE A view of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque from the Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri hotel



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