



Discover Dubai's Rich Culture and Heritage

Uncover history, heritage and even exciting modern attractions

Dubai Museum | Understand the city's history

You'll find Dubai Museum inside the storied Al Fahidi Fort – built in 1787, it is the oldest building still standing the emirate today. Inside the museum's walls the past and the present are brought together, as the historic building is decked out with modern exhibits featuring impressive audio and video installations, as well as life-sized dioramas that portray life in Dubai back when pearl diving and fishing were the sole trades and the area was inhabited by Bedouin tribes.

The Souks | Shop for perfumes, spices and jewellery

From the first sight of the famous souks of Bur Dubai and Deira, you will feel the very essence of Arabia. Since Dubai's early days, when merchants from neighbouring countries would sail in to pedal their wares, the souks have maintained a wide variety of shopping options. Gold, textiles, perfumes and fish are all on offer, but the greatest sensorial overload comes from the Spice Souk, which is alive with the vibrant colours and smells of some of the world's most highly prized spices. The best way to travel between the two souk areas, which are separated by Dubai Creek, is by boat, or abra. For just AED 1 for a one-way ticket, the boats are a not only quick and affordable form of transport, but also an authentic, Dubai experience.

Al Bastakiya

Established in 1859 during the rule of the late Sheikh Hasher bin Maktoum bin Butti bin Suhail Maktoum., the Al Bastakiya district is characterised by old courtyards, tall windtowers and narrow winding lanes. Some attractions worth a visit include Calligraphy in House 188, the Coins Museum, Basta Art Café, Art Connection Bastakiah Nights Restaurant.

The Creek | historic markets and culture

Dubai may be famous for the glitz and glamour of its sky-high towers, but the real heart of the city is, and always will be, the Creek. The saltwater estuary is the original site where the Bani Yas tribe settled in the 19th century, and its waters were vital for what used to be Dubai's main form of economy: pearl diving.

Today the area is awash with the history of the emirate, as it is home to the Dubai Museum, as well as the labyrinthine alleyways of the gold, spice and textile souks. While at the Creek, a ride across the water in a traditional abra is a must – and at an unbelievably cheap one dirham per person, it's easily the best-value tourist attraction in the city.

Sheikh Mohammed Centre For Cultural Understanding (SMCCU)

Gain a greater appreciation of Dubai's culture and customs at the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU). The SMCCU opened in 1998 to help visitors gain a better understanding of the culture and customs of the UAE. The institution invites guests to take part in their full schedule of activities, including a range of Arabic classes, heritage tours, and guided mosque visits.

Ever wonder why the native women of the UAE wear black while the men wear white? Or what happens inside a mosque? Or want to enjoy a traditional Emirati meal? Understanding the local traditions adds depth and meaning to any visitor experience in Dubai.

Located in a beautifully restored wind tower house in the historic Al Fahidi District in Bur Dubai, the centre offers a range of activities, from traditional cuisine to conversations with local Emiratis. With its motto 'Open Doors, Open Minds,' all questions are welcome and answered.

Experience Hatta Heritage Village

If you've ever wondered what a 16th-century Emirati village was like, a trip to Hatta Heritage Village is sure to cure your curiosity. The village is one of the oldest in the emirate.

Step back in time and discover magnificent houses and mosques, all made from palm trees, mud, reeds, and stones. A spectacular watchtower and the Hatta fort overlook the village centre, which is surrounded by the picturesque Hajar mountains.

Tour the Jumeirah Mosque

If you're a non-Muslim, you may not know much about Islam and its traditions. A visit to the stunning Jumeirah Mosque, the only mosque in Dubai that welcomes non-Muslim guests six days a week, will change that (women are asked to wear a scarf when visiting).

One of the most beautiful landmarks in Dubai, the Jumeirah Mosque, which is large enough to hold up to 1,200 worshippers, was built entirely from white stone in the medieval Fatimid tradition, with towering twin minarets framing a large central dome. When it's lit up at dusk, the intricate artistry and true beauty are highlighted.

Make the most of your visit by joining a tour hosted by the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding and learn about the Emirati culture and religion in a relaxed, casual, and open atmosphere.