

# Discover the real Dubai and you won't be disappointed...

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I've been to Dubai a fair few times, and whilst yes, it is glitzy and glam, remnants of the tiny fishing and pearling village, first settled by 800 of the Bani Yas tribe in 1833 still remain. It was when oil was discovered in the 50s that the gilded Dubai, as we now know it, began to come to fruition. If, like me, you appreciate both rich trappings and tradition, learning the origin but indulging in opulence, Dubai has it all. Equally equipped for partying singles, friends, couples and families, there are a host of activities, delicious dishes and sights to satisfy your senses. Here's my guide to the best...

**Where to stay** – Reasonably priced XVA Art Hotel found within the famed arty area of Bastikiya, means you're in the heart of old Dubai, and one of the best contemporary art galleries to boot. The café serves fantastic fresh food – for a treat I recommend Mona's lemon pound cake. Ibis World Trade Centre on the renowned Sheikh Zayed road is your best bet for budget with location. To indulge, stay at Burj Al Arab Jumeirah – Dubai's tallest building and most famous hotel, or feel like royalty with a stay at the One & Only Royal Mirage, conveniently on Jumeirah Beach and close to the Mall of the Emirates. For something different but still luxurious, I'm a fan of Al Maha Resort – soak up the desert atmosphere with a backdrop of sumptuous sand dunes, you can't help but fall in love with the romance of it.

**What to see** – Learn the story of Dubai in a sensory succinct way, go to Dubai museum and watch the video guiding you through the ages. Dubai is vastly multicultural and reflected in the quirky Global Village, taste your way around global stalls found within this must-see attraction. Get in touch with your inner creative and meander around the cultural quarter of Bastikiya, hosting dozens of open artist studios. Live like a Bedouin, if only for an evening – smoke sheisha and ride a camel in the sand dunes, or opt for a fast and furious 4x4 ride. Cool down and get wet in the Wild Wadi Water Park or recently opened Nikki Beach. When in Arabia... something 'horsey' is a must- watch, a game of polo at Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club. This year, new attractions include a Safari Park and the world's largest ferris wheel.

**What to eat** – dine in the dunes at Al Maha Resort, make sure you eat their scrumptious Umm Ali pud. Don't forego a visit to Al Fanaar, fascinating hybrid of a museum and typical Emirati cuisine, try their hearty harees dish – a wheaty-meaty 'porridge'. Don't leave Dubai without eating a Khameer; Bedouin flatbreads, Mama Tani is a specialist. Camel milk is common, try variations from chocolate to a popular 'Camelcino' at The Majlis Dubai. Dubai is synonymous with Friday boozy brunches often ending in a party; Al Qasr, Bubblicious and The Ivy are at the top. Lastly, wash it all down with the drink that originated in England, now a local staple – Vimto!

