

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Pack in an Arabian adventure

Bold and brash, Dubai has cemented its place as the UAE's tourism capital and unsurprisingly, as Paul Ewart discovers, there's no shortage of things to do



A DESERT metropolis with an insatiable appetite for all things “bigger” and “better”, on the surface Dubai is a whirlwind of towering glitzy hotels, designer dwellings, constant building projects and shopping that will leave even the most demanding of retail-hounds chomping at the bit.

However, look between the skyscrapers and gargantuan shopping malls and you'll find a world-class food scene, a burgeoning contemporary arts movement and even a spot of local culture – and with 48 hours to spare, you can see plenty of it.

Day 1

10am: Adopt Dubai's “bigger is better” mantra and check into the Atlantis resort. Covering 460,000sq m and boasting more than 1500 rooms, the property is located at the very tip of the Palm Jumeirah and has become a go-to for the world's A-listers with the likes of Kim Kardashian, the Beckhams and Kylie Minogue all checking into its plush rooms. And with good reason – this underwater-themed fantasy resort has more than enough attractions to keep a family entertained for a week. **See atlantis.com**

Noon: Get your adrenalin pumping at the adjacent Aquaventure, Dubai's newest (and largest) waterpark. Entry is inclusive for guests and rides cater to all tastes, from the terrifying vertical drop, Leap of Faith, which deposits you into a tank filled with sharks to the 45-minute lazy river and rafting experience.

2pm: Extend your adrenalin-hit and beat the heat at the same time with a trip to Ski Dubai in the Mall of the Emirates. The first indoor ski resort in the Middle East, this place is so big it even has an “alpine” cafe halfway up the slopes. **See skidubai.com**

4pm: Leave the hustle and bustle of the city behind and retreat to a Moroccan oasis for one of the most relaxing spa experiences in the UAE. The Amara spa at the Park Hyatt hotel is a collection of private courtyards, treatment rooms and swimming pool that transport you away from the hustle and bustle of the city. The signature Diamond treatment comes highly recommended and uses Middle Eastern ingredients, including a heady blend of frankincense and sandalwood. **See dubai.park.hyatt.com**

6pm: Indulge in the city's favourite pastime: shopping. As the mercury rises, the airconditioned malls are a welcome

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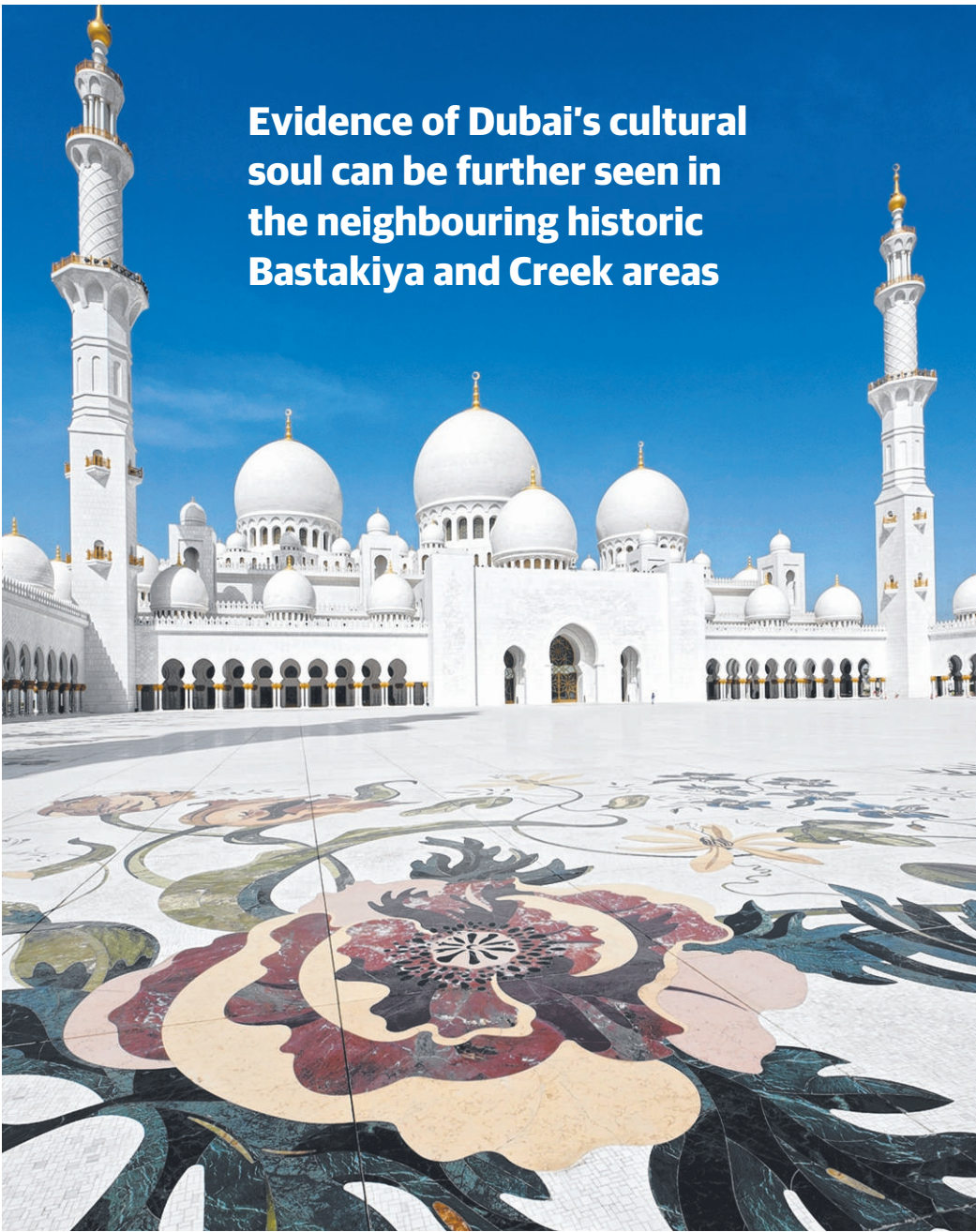
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Evidence of Dubai's cultural soul can be further seen in the neighbouring historic Bastakiya and Creek areas



BEDOUIN BEGINNINGS: (clockwise from far left) The towering Burj Khalifa and Dubai skyline; Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Mosque; a view from the 124th floor of the Burj Khalifa; and meeting a local resident in the dolphin bay at the Atlantis hotel Dubai marine and waterpark. **Pictures:** Getty Images, AAP **COVER PICTURE:** The Madinat Jumeirah resort resembles a traditional Arabian town with Burj Arab in the background. **Picture:** Getty Images



relief for eager shoppers and with more than 50 of them, there are plenty from which to choose. However, for serious retail hounds, Dubai Mall is the place to go. At 1.2 million sq m and housing 1200 shops, it's the biggest mall in the world. It's also the perfect place to observe the social and ethnic melting pot that is Dubai. Here, billionaire Emiratis mix with Western expats and impoverished Pakistani labourers in a sea of retail frenzy. It's not only the most-visited destination in Dubai but the most-visited lifestyle destination in the world. Last year, this consumer mecca welcomed more than 80 million visitors – that's more than Niagara Falls and the Eiffel Tower! And if you needed any more reasons to check it


out, then the adjacent Dubai Fountain (the largest fountain in the world) is worth a trip alone. Every 30 minutes the mesmerising display of water, lights and music pulls huge crowds. **See [thedubaimall.com](#)** **8pm:** Replace calories spent trawling the malls with a meal in Dubai's newest Chinese fine dining restaurant, Yuan. With a menu devised by former Hakkasan Mayfair executive chef, Jeff Tan, Yuan has already seen a flurry of starry guests pass through its doors. Expect classic Chinese with a gourmet twist and a menu that features barbecue specialities, including a 26-hour braised beef cheek. **See [atlantisthepalm.com](#)**

Day 2 **8am:** Skip the hotel breakfast and follow the expats to the Lime Tree Cafe, next to Jumeirah Mosque, for your brekkie. A staple for Jumeirah Janes (the "ladies who lunch" set in Dubai) and yummy mummies through the week, on weekends this place becomes a hive of activity. Get there early and indulge in their healthy and edgy creations – everything you order will be good. And you can't leave without picking up a slice of their carrot cake, which is to die for. **See [thelimetreecafe.com](#)** **Noon:** Experience brunch like you've never experienced it before. If you're lucky enough to be in Dubai on a

Friday (the first day of the Arabic weekend) then a visit to one of its many brunch hot spots is essential. An institution among Dubai's predominantly expat residents, brunch is THE social event of the week. Over the top, excessive, gluttonous and boozy, Dubai's brunch scene is not for the faint of heart. While it's the holiest day of the week for Muslims when many will worship at Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Mosque, elsewhere the city's top restaurants open their doors for four-hour champagne binges. The all-inclusive entry price includes an around-the-world buffet comprising everything from seafood and grilled foie gras to sushi and English-style

roasts. One of the best is the Australian-style, Yalumba at the Le Meridien Hotel. A favourite with expats, the eatery combines a sprawling buffet with a la carte options and of course, unlimited bubbly. **See [yalumba-dubai.com](#)** **4pm:** Dubai might not be at the top of your average hipster's hit list, but a community of budding artists and independent retailers is doing its best to shed the image of malls and Ferraris. In the industrial neighbourhood of Al Quoz, an exciting contemporary art scene has developed among its factories and warehouses.

Continued Page 6




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Glam it most definitely isn't, but the area is the most significant arts space in the UAE today. Galleries including Art Sawa, Shelter and The Third Line are worth looking out for and later this year Alserkal Avenues – the hub of the area – will double its size in an ambitious \$14 million expansion, creating four new galleries, joining the 12 that already call it home.

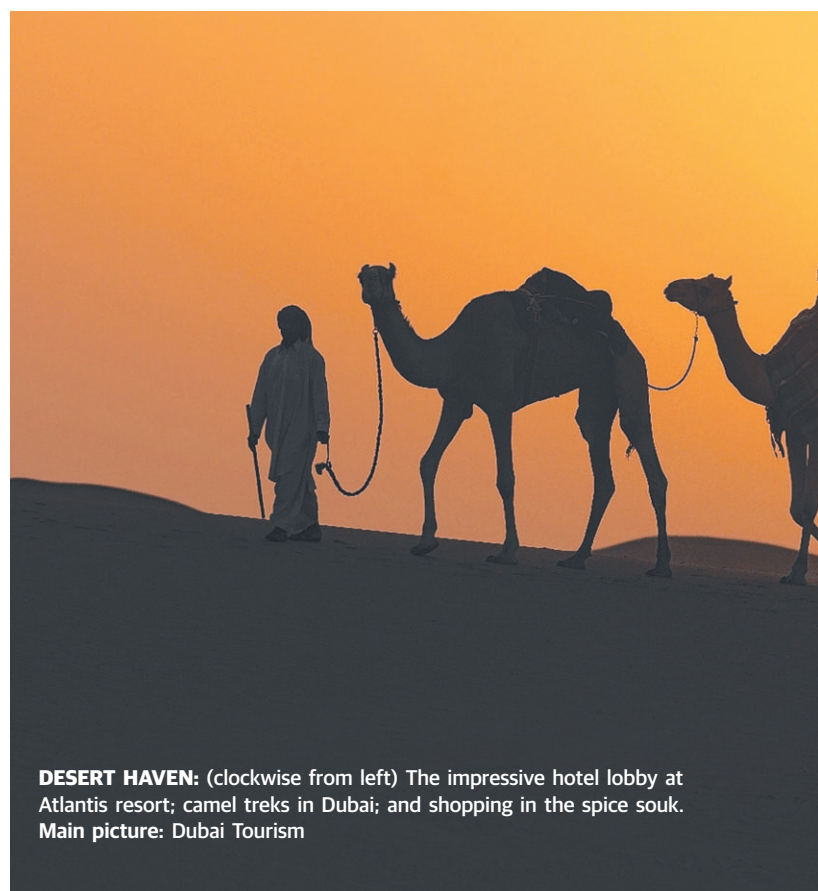
Art aside, there's plenty of other reasons to visit, including an organic food market, organic coffee roasters and even local food trucks.

If you have extra time, then book a spot on one of the ArtBus tours run by the JamJar gallery. These guided tours take in some of the city's best galleries, studios, art centres and alternative art spaces, both in Al Quoz and the surrounding areas.

See artinthecity.com

6pm: Grab a taxi with plenty of time to spare (peak-hour traffic can be a nightmare) and head to Dubai creek just in time for sunset. At the heart of old Dubai, Al Khor (The Creek) is a wide saltwater inlet that provides a scenic thoroughfare for traditional wooden dhows and the occasional ship. It's also where you can have one of the most authentic and inexpensive experiences in the Emirates: riding an abra.

These traditional wooden boats



DESERT HAVEN: (clockwise from left) The impressive hotel lobby at Atlantis resort; camel treks in Dubai; and shopping in the spice souk. Main picture: Dubai Tourism

have been used for centuries to ferry passengers from one side to the other. Passengers are locals and there's photo opportunities aplenty with the juxtaposition of traditional houses and minarets amid glassy high-rises. Boats depart every couple of minutes and the fare costs a mere one dirham (A38¢).

7pm: Get a sense of pre-oil Dubai by visiting Dubai Museum in the Al Fahidi Fort (the city's oldest structure built in the late 1700s). The museum is filled with displays depicting the city's fishing village origins and timelines showing its meteoric transformation into a business and tourism hub.

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Evidence of Dubai's cultural soul can be further seen in the neighbouring historic Bastakiya and Creek areas, where its gold and spice souks are still thriving. Soak up the scents, sights and sounds as you haggle with vendors for spices, perfumes, sweets and other delights. The gold souk is a must for

jewellery-lovers as gold is cheaper in Dubai than anywhere else in the world. See dubaiculture.gov.ae

8pm: While in this part of town, take advantage of the delicious Pakistani and Middle Eastern street food. A foil to the pricey five-star restaurants that



dot the city, in the bustling streets surrounding Bur Dubai and Satwa you can eat like a king for peanuts.

Head to Al Dhiyafah Road (Dubai's cheap-eats street) where the city's less affluent residents feast on food from Lebanon, Iran and the Indian subcontinent. Here, the most well-known "secret" eatery is undoubtedly Ravi's restaurant.

This Pakistani hot spot has reached cult status among expats in the city and is bursting at the seams every night with a mix of Pakistani and Indian migrants and Westerners getting their curry fix. Try to nab a table outside for great people-watching and make sure to order the famous heart-stopping butter chicken.

10pm: End your last day on a high –

literally! A visit to the Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest building – is an essential on any trip to Dubai, but avoid queuing (and forking out cash) to jostle for viewing space on the observation deck, instead take in the magnificent cityscape in style.

At 122 floors up, At.mosphere is the coolest cocktail venue in town. It takes a mere 56 ear-popping seconds to ascend 442m to the mahogany-clad restaurant and lounge.

While drinks are on the pricey side, the 360-degree city panoramic vista and the decadent signature cocktails make it worthwhile. Be daring and opt for a drink with unusual ingredients such as truffle and frankincense. To guarantee a table, it's best to book in advance.

See atmosphereburjkhalifa.com

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