

EMIRATES TOURISM

سياحة الإمارات

GERARDO LLANES:
WE BELIEVE IN MIXING
TRADITIONS WITH
MODERNITY TO
SATISFY ALL TASTES



Monthly Magazine Specialized in Tourism & Travel

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UAE FORTS
GRANDEUR
OF THE **PAST**

DUBAI
BEACHES...
FUN IN THE
Sun

REVEAL
YOUR OWN
Russia

8 **UNIQUELY STRANGE:**
OTHERWORLDLY
DESTINATIONS
FOR YOUR
BUCKET
List

RIXOS
PREMIUM DUBAI

SHINES AS THE
LATEST
LIFESTYLE
DESTINATION
IN **JBR**



DUBAI HOSTS... THE INTERNATIONAL
RAMDHA CHALLENGE 2017

DUBAI RECEIVES 8 MILLION OVERNIGHT
VISITORS DURING FIRST HALF OF 2017

SONTAYA... STUNNING INTIMATE SETTING
AT ST. REGIS SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT






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Emirates Tourism Magazine (ETM) is an international leading monthly publication devoted to all tourism related fields at the local, regional and international level, published in a bilingual (Arabic – English) format. ETM is affiliated to “Al Hesn Media Group”, located in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Our main aim is to boost UAE's image overseas by showing the world how rich our culture is and how weighty UAE is as a prominent tourist destination.

We aspire to adding value to UAE tourism by working in partnership with the industry through updating our readers with tourism latest news & articles aside from delivering inspirational marketing campaigns to provide support for both the industry and ETM readers.

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DUBAI HOSTS THE INTERNATIONAL
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2017 SAFEST CITIES IN THE WORLD ANNOUNCED: ABU DHABI TAKES TOP SPOT

Abu Dhabi has been named the safest city in the world by Numbeo, a website that curates and collates data to develop the world's largest user-contributed database about cities and countries worldwide.

With the lowest crime index of just 13.54 in the past six months, and the highest safety index of 86.46, Abu Dhabi was well ahead of second place city, Basel, Switzerland in the scores for overall safety. Respondents to the index stated that Abu Dhabi has very low crime levels and scored the capital at 94 per cent for a general feeling of safety in the city. Last month, Abu Dhabi was named the second-best city in the world to live, work and do business in, overtaking both London and Paris in the most recent Ipsos City Index.

HE Saif Saeed Ghobash, Director General, TCA Abu Dhabi, said: "Abu Dhabi has a solid reputation for safety with a virtually crime-free society. It is a priority when

choosing a city to visit or live in and provides peace of mind knowing that you can feel safe anywhere you go in Abu Dhabi. The result of this index supports Abu Dhabi's position as the leading city in the world to live, work and do business in, and highlights an aspect of life in Abu Dhabi that is a matter of great pride to all residents."

The index, which ranked 334 countries globally, is an estimation of overall level of crime in a given city or a country. Crime levels lower than 20 are considered as "very low," crime levels between 20 and 40 as being "low," crime levels between 40 and 60 as being "moderate," crime levels between 60 and 80 as being "high" and crime levels higher than 80 as being "very high." Alternatively, if the city

has a high safety index, it is considered very safe.

Ghobash continued: "The position of Abu Dhabi in this global ranking is a testament to the ongoing efforts to establish the Emirate as a destination of distinction with international standards of safety that are on par with global metropolises. Whether visiting for business or for an extended stay, we hope that our unique Emirati hospitality continues to enrich the experiences of any visitor to Abu Dhabi."

Established in 2009, Numbeo is a collaborative online database which enables users to share and compare information about the cost of living between countries and cities.

BORDER CROSSING PROMOTIONAL INITIATIVE WELCOMES GCC TRAVELLERS TO ABU DHABI



Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) has launched a 45-day promotional push at the UAE-Saudi Arabia border with a selection of hotels, resorts, attractions and the emirate's entertainment destination of Yas Island to capitalise on an unprecedented surge in tourist arrivals from Saudi Arabia and neighbouring GCC countries during the summer and the Saudi National Day period.

Targeting residents and visitors crossing the Al Ghuwaifat border crossing until 30th September under an Abu Dhabi Welcomes You! theme, Abu Dhabi's tourism stakeholders including Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC), Yas Island, Jannah Hotels & Resorts, Rotana Hotels, and Danat Hotels & Resorts will be promoting their hospitality brands at the border activation, assisting travellers with on-site bookings.

Additionally, TCA Abu Dhabi's visitor information teams will be onsite throughout the day providing useful information for visitors as well as distributing giveaways and collaterals.

Popular food trucks Pink Burger, Hot Box, Burgeritch, Casa La Tina and Ice Cream Lab will also be present to offer visitors gastronomic fayre, from appetising burgers to scrumptious tacos.

ABU DHABI NAMED OVERSEAS LUXURY MICE DESTINATION OF THE YEAR AT CHINA TRAVEL & MEETING INDUSTRY AWARDS

Abu Dhabi has been named the 'Leading Overseas Luxury MICE Destination' at the prestigious China Travel and Meeting Industry Awards held in Beijing, China. The Emirate was nominated alongside over 40 destinations including Las Vegas and France, and the award was presented to Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) representatives at a gala dinner in the presence of more than 200 elites of China's travel and tourism industry.

The award reflects TCA Abu Dhabi's recent focus on the Chinese market for incentive travel, meetings and events (MICE) with the aim of achieving 5-7 per cent growth in the sector by 2021. Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau, a division TCA Abu Dhabi, made significant strides in attracting business to the Emirate last year by leading and supporting bids to host a number of key conferences in the coming years.



CITYWIDE CELEBRATIONS ON OCCASION OF EID AL ADHA

As people come together to celebrate the joyous Eid Al Adha holiday, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishments (DFRE) an agency of Dubai Tourism, has released the line-up of exciting events and activities taking place across the city for residents and tourists to enjoy.

LIVE AND LOUD

To celebrate the Eid holiday, there will be two concerts taking place across the city by two renowned Arab music icons. On 2 September, Emirati singer

Shamma Hamdan will perform at Drag-on Mart 2 at 6.30pm whilst later in the week Mohammed Abdo will take to the stage at Dubai World Trade Centre on 6 September at 9pm to delight fans with a raft of hit songs.

SHOWS, GLORIOUS SHOWS

The highly anticipated fireworks will take place on the first day of Eid at Dubai Festival City at 9pm and 11pm, it will be a spectacular musical firework display not to be missed.



ARCHAEOLOGISTS SHED NEW LIGHT ON LIFE IN THE UAE 5,000 YEARS AGO



Archaeological work by a team of local and international experts has restarted after 30 years on a culturally and historically significant site in Al Ain which is reputed to be one of the earliest agricultural-based villages in the United Arab Emirates.

The site, Hili 8, located near Hili Archaeological Park in Al Ain, was first explored and excavated by French archaeologists in the 1970s and 1980s and provided tentative evidence for the beginnings of date, wheat and barley cultivation thousands of years ago.

SUMMER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS DIVERSITY OF DUBAI'S VALUE OFFERINGS & EXPERIENCES

In an awareness campaign launched by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) six young social media influencers from the region took part in the Dubai Summer Challenge to prove that Dubai provides great value to visitors. The project highlighted the diversity of value offerings and experiences that tourists can choose from during their stay in Dubai.

The initiative gave the six participating influencers - Ahmad Al Barqi, Rayan Khalid Alahmary, brothers Hassan Bin Mahfouz and Hussein Bin Mahfouz, Faisal Al Yammi (all from Saudi Arabia) & Kuwaiti national Hessa Al Khat-



taf - the opportunity to experience an amazing Dubai holiday with a budget of just AED 3,000 each. For participants, a key objective was to enjoy more for less with the ultimate champion being the one who was able to get the best value from the allocated budget.



HILTON GARDEN INN BOWLS INTO EMIRATES OLD TRAFFORD

The state-of-the-art hotel is on-site at the renowned Emirates Old Trafford venue - home to Lancashire County Cricket Club, which hosts domestic and international cricket, conferences and events and concerts for up to 50,000 people. Of the

Hilton Garden Inn, Hilton's (NYSE: HLT) award-winning midscale brand, today announced the opening of the 150-guestroom Hilton Garden Inn Manchester Emirates Old Trafford, the brand's first property in the city of Manchester.

KEMPINSKI HOTEL AJMAN HOSTS ETIHAD MODERN ART GALLERY EXHIBITION



Kempinski Hotel Ajman will host the Etihad Modern Art Gallery exhibition, which is scheduled to occur in the grounds of Kempinski Hotel Ajman from 4 September to 31 December. The exhibition combines a set of local artists: Petra Kaltenbach, Tala Atrouni, Anabelle Smith Bigno, Jack Lee, Anastasia Yablokova, Anabelle Smith Bigno, Yiannis Roussakis and Ahmed al Hawwary, showcasing Arabic cultural identity through modern and abstract paintings, but also local photographs.



UAE TO GET WORLD'S LONGEST & HIGHEST ZIP LINE IN DECEMBER

Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA), has announced that the world's longest and highest zip line will officially open on the UAE's highest peak, Jebel Jais, in December.

The longest zip line in the world in Ras Al Khaimah will open the first week of December and will be one of several eco-friendly products on Jebel Jais, the UAE's highest peak, which is set to become the adventure tourism hub of the Middle East.

With the exact length of the zip line remaining a closely-guarded secret until the multi-million dollar adventure tourism product's opening, the zip line will propel the UAE's most northern emirate into the major leagues of global adventure tourism and cement Jebel Jais as the region's leading active adventure tourism destination.

GUINNESS RECORD

RAKTDA has partnered with Toro Verde, the world's leading zip line operator to develop its latest active adventure tourism product, which is due to break the current Guinness world record zip line of 2,200 metres, a site also developed & operated by Toro Verde. The Ras Al Khaimah zip line will also be a case study for eco-tourism, using solar energy and locally-sourced natural materials ensuring visitors enjoy the natural experience in the emirate's mountain landscape.

COMIC AND ANIMATED ART COMES ALIVE AT "COMIC CRAZE" EXHIBITION



Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) has announced the launch of an exciting and innovative exhibition celebrating comic arts and animation. The Comic Craze exhibition will open to the public at Al Qatara Arts Centre on 14th September 2017, and will feature comic strip artworks by talented artists in the UAE. Comic Craze showcases examples of different techniques and materials

from fabricated portraits to animated films. Highlighting the flourishing community of comic artists in the UAE, the exhibition highlights the artistic expressions of established and emerging comic artists who depict scenes from society and government. Among the artists featured in the exhibition, Khalid Bin Hamad's sci-fi animation series, Empire of N, aims to generate a new form of media in the UAE.



BOLLYWOOD STARS VISIT EMIRATES PALACE AFTER SMASH-HIT SHOW FOR ABU DHABI SUMMER SEASON

Following an electrifying live performance at Emirates Palace on Friday 18th August, as part of this year's edition of Abu Dhabi Summer Season, Bollywood music stars Salim and Sulaiman Merchant made sure to sample some of the delights of the UAE capital. The world-renowned brothers, famous for having composed music for more than 100 Bollywood movies, followed their Namaste Abu Dhabi show by exploring the grandeur of the iconic Emirates Palace hotel, and then trying out one of the more traditional experiences available in Abu Dhabi – a camel ride!



ABU DHABI FESTIVAL BRINGS

LANDMARK EXHIBITION OF EMIRATI ART TO BERLIN ART WEEK

From 13 - 17 September 2017, Abu Dhabi Festival will present Portrait of a Nation, the largest ever exhibition of artworks by Emirati artists in Europe at Berlin Art Week. Held under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Portrait of a Nation brings together the UAE's leading contemporary arts practitioners to reflect upon their homeland. A groundbreaking 30 of the participating artists will travel to the official opening of the exhibition, marking the first time that Emirati artists are represented in a group this size in Europe.

Portrait of a Nation will be open to the public at the ME Collectors Room in Berlin from 13 September to 29 October 2017.





Portrait of a Nation captures the ever-changing face of the visual arts in the United Arab Emirates today

A GLIMPSE INTO THE UAE HISTORY

Portrait of a Nation originally premiered at the Abu Dhabi Festival 2016, and is now part of the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation's (ADMAF) program of international events offering platforms for homegrown creative talent to showcase their creative output. Exploring the themes that are at the heart of Emirati identity Portrait of a Nation offers a rare glimpse into the UAE's history and diversity while considering significant contemporary questions of heritage and identity.

The exhibition brings together the UAE's leading contemporary practitioners such as Ebtisam Abdul Aziz, Amna Al Dabbagh, and Mohammed Kazem, to reflect upon the nation from individual artistic perspectives. The exhibition is divided in seven themes: Nation & Unity, Geography & Nature, Architecture & Urbanism, Portraiture & Identity, Religion & Spirituality, Language & Calligraphy and Tradition & Heritage. These areas summarize the diverse topics and issues that the featured Emirati artists deal with and that continue to be of significant interest in their ongoing creative practice.

A VARIETY OF MEDIUMS

Tracing the nation's shifting identity; the exhibition includes 20 specially commissioned works by emerging and established artists. These new reflections are contextualized by seminal pieces dating back to the birth of the country. Three generations of renowned Emirati artists are presented; from Hassan Sharif and his atelier students to younger artists. The exhibition presents a variety of mediums: sculpture, photography, land art, painting, textiles, video, scenography, and new takes on traditional crafts. From large-scale indoor and outdoor sculptures to paintings, drawings, photographs, collages, videos and installations, Portrait of a Nation captures the ever-changing face of the visual arts in the United Arab Emirates today.

The exhibition is supported by a diverse series of public events that will begin with a meet and greet with the participating artists at the official opening of the exhibition. H.E. Hoda Alkhamis-Kanoo, Founder of the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF) and Artistic Director of Abu Dhabi Festival take part in a discussion on the exhibition. The discussion will be followed by Tarek Yamani performing his Abu Dhabi Festival commissioned piece, "Peninsular: Portraits in Khaleeji Rhythms and Jazz", exploring the correlation between jazz and Khaleeji traditions through complex rhythms and harmonies. The program also includes a discussion on 'Emirati Identity, Emirati Creativity' with featured artists Zeinab Al Hashemi, Amna Al Dabbagh, and the first Emirati spoken word artist Afra Atiq. Karima Al Shomely, will speak about her research into the Emirati burqa, before giving a live performance. UAE filmmakers will be represented by Ahmed Zain's 'Father's Grant' and 'Nearby Sky' by Nujoom Al Ghanem.



Gerardo Llanes: WE BELIEVE IN MIXING TRADITIONS WITH MODERNITY TO SATISFY ALL TASTES



Yas Island is throbbing with life, passion and vitality, fun never stops, dreams come true, and adventures go on and know no limits.

Yas Island is a unique destination. It is home to several landmarks and experiences that highly attract families, friends, residents and business visitors. It gives them the opportunity to spend unforgettable moments and beautiful memories by mixing landscapes with creative and sparkling designs, as well as being a wonderful family destination.

Given that marketing has become an important pillar of tourism culture, "Emirates Tourism" magazine meets one of the most important leaders of this field, Gerardo Llanes, the Executive Director

of Yas Island. He is known for his leadership character and multi-cultural presence. He has a proven track record of global success in marketing, public administration and consulting with several leading multinational companies.

Gerardo Llanes grew up in Mexico City with two diverse cultures, and he mastered two languages as well. He earned a Master's Degree in international management from "Thunderbird" Graduate School and over 25 years of professional experience in marketing and international business management.

"Emirates Tourism" met Gerardo Llanes and had this interview with him:





Would you give us a brief overview of Yas Island?

Yas Island is a world-class entertainment destination located on the North East side of Abu Dhabi's mainland. Home to a range of hospitality, leisure and top sporting facilities, Yas Island also hosts a variety of retail, commercial and residential developments. The island stretches over an area of 25 km²; approximately 7.5 km long by 6.5 km wide, with over 32 km of premium waterfront land. Conveniently located an approximate 10-minute drive from Abu Dhabi International Airport, the destination is also a 20-minute drive from the main island of Abu Dhabi and only 50 minutes from the Dubai Marina.

What are the attractions available on the island?

Yas Island is well on track to becoming among the top world-class, year-round leisure and entertainment destinations. The island appeals to both domestic and international visitors due to its wide variety of exciting attractions and entertainment offerings. It is home to Yas Marina Circuit, which hosts the Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix every year, in addition to other year-round sports and motorsports activities, making it a beloved destination for petrol heads and fitness addicts. A mere five-minute drive from the circuit is Yas Mall, the largest shopping mall in Abu Dhabi, and designated retail attraction of choice among shoppers in the country and region. The island is also home to the



“ Yas Island is well on track to becoming among the top world-class, year-round leisure and entertainment destinations ”

Middle East's first true links eighteen hole coastal golf course, Yas Links.

Families can enjoy Yas Island's two resident, first-of-their-kind theme parks: Ferrari World, which is a homage to the legacy of the Ferrari brand, and the Emirati-themed Yas Waterworld waterpark.

We're currently making great progress with our partners to bring yet another exciting theme park to Yas Island— Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi. The park is 68% complete and is on track to launch in 2018. Also set to open in 2018, CLYMB will include the world's tallest expert-level climbing wall and flight chamber. In 2022, Yas Island will become home to the first SeaWorld marine life park outside of the USA. We also look forward to welcoming visitors and guests at Yas Bay and Yas Arena— new cultural and entertainment landmarks that are already under construction with a target completion year of 2019.

What attracts you the most in the world of tourism?

Every aspect of tourism is very exciting. It is an opportunity to step out of what is known and comfortable to try interesting activities and experience something unique. For



Whether you're visiting with family or friends, there's something for everyone on Yas Island!

example, visitors to Yas Island can leave all their worries behind as everything in Yas Island – from the theme parks to the mall, from the race track to the golf course, is created for visitors to enjoy themselves in whichever way they want.

The world is getting smaller with technology and advancement. Thanks to these advancements, today within less than a day, people can step outside of their own routines and witness cultures, traditions, and experiences completely different from their own. For me, tourism is a way to learn something new and different and open up the mind to the various traditions that even tourists bring with them. It is an interaction on a global level that has been accelerated with globalisation, but has existed among civilisations for a very long time.

Tell us about the success you achieved in attracting a larger number of tourists during this summer?

We are delighted with the overwhelming success of this year's #SayYas summer campaign which as already seen a marked increase of 25% of tourists entering the competition with 15000 more entries in comparison to last year – with 2 weeks to go it the campaign. 52 lucky winners – including residents and tourists – claimed prizes that were in total over AED 2 million. During the summer, most residents of the UAE generally like to escape the heat and spend quality time with their loved ones during their time off, which is what makes the success of this campaign and the increase in the number of visitors even more exciting for us. Visitors have been enjoying the destination's many exciting activities at key attractions including Yas Mall, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi and Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, all of which have seen the highest levels of campaign participation so far.





We were also excited to host a record total of 500,000 local visitors and international tourists to the island over the 3 days of Eid -Al-Fitr. Overall island hotel occupancy rates saw an impressive increase of 11% from last year over the Eid period. The Eid period also witnessed 1,700 guests savour enjoy the fireworks at the Yas Marina and over 250,000 shoppers browse through the sales racks of Yas Mall during just the first 24 hours of Eid.

Overall, we feel that 2017 has already exceeded all expectations when it comes to visitation. After having welcomed a total of 27 million visitors in 2016, we look forward to welcoming international tourists from a variety of countries including Russia, India, China and the GCC region— especially from Saudi Arabia.

What are the upcoming events at Yas for the rest of 2017?

Whether you're visiting with family or friends, there's something for everyone on Yas Island! The events line-up for the remainder of the year is truly the most impressive to date. At least 1 big event is taking place every 2-3 weeks on the island, for a record total of 23 events over the upcoming period! An unprecedented five international shows will be held at Yas Island. These include Harry Potter in Concert (GCC exclusive), Cartoon Network Live (UAE debut), and Trevor Noah (Abu Dhabi debut).

- Cartoon Network, the UAE's most successful children's brand and second biggest brand after McDonalds, will hold the debut show of the Cartoon Network Live! Tour from 11-14 October.
- The UAE's largest event & Yas Island's flagship Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix will return on 24 – 26 November, 2017, along with the supporting Yasalam city-wide entertainment festival.
- Returning to Yas Island after being a huge success in 2014 is Nitro Circus Live, who I'm sure will deliver an action-packed performance at the Yas Marina Circuit on 6 October.
- The Winterland Carnival will return from 27-31 December for the second year after the success of



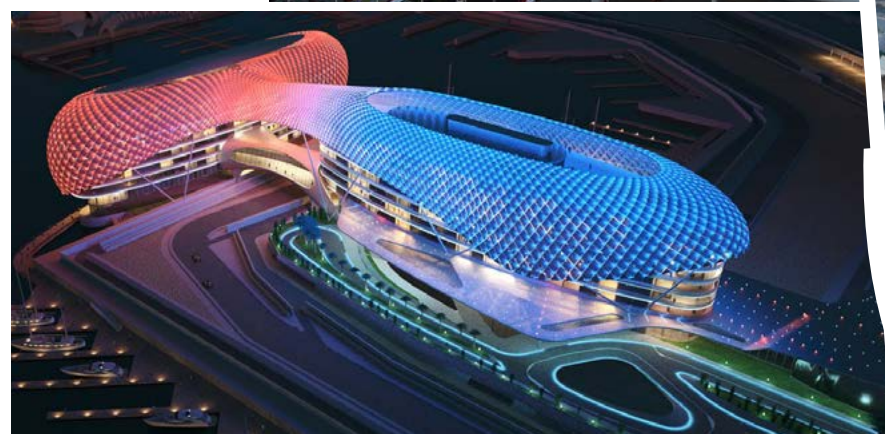
“We're currently making great progress with our partners to bring yet another exciting theme park to Yas Island “Warner Bros””

the inaugural event which attracted over 26,000 attendees.

- We round up the year with a stand-up performance from the award-winning comedian and host of The Daily Show, Trevor Noah, who is making his Abu Dhabi debut on 15 December..

How important is the process of combining traditional and modern aspects in such events?

At Yas Island, we are constantly looking for ways to provide visitors with interesting offerings. Each attraction on the island is built keeping the highest international standards in mind whether it is the fastest rollercoaster in the world or UAE's first Formula One circuit. However, the UAE has nurtured a very rich culture that is unique to the region and it would be a shame to not display the beautiful traditions to visitors, particularly tourists. We always try to inculcate various traditional customs especially when it comes to the famous, warm Emirati hospitality through various activities and celebrations at Yas Island. Recently during our Eid Celebrations, we had traditional Ayyala performances



around Yas Mall along with henna artists, and also served our guests with the locally popular coffee drink, gahwa. We do believe in perfecting that blend between traditions and modernity to appeal to a wide variety of tastes.

Tell us about the awards that you received.

In terms of awards, our theme parks have won multiple awards and it pushes us to continuously surpass ourselves in terms of service and experience. Recently, Ferrari World became a proud winner of the World Travel Awards' Middle East's Leading Tourist Attraction in 2016 along with Trip Advisor's Certificate of Excellence among several awards. Similarly, Yas Waterworld featured on Trip Advisor Traveller's Choice and won the Gold International Aquatic Safety Award for two years in a row. Yas Waterworld is also a winner of The Best Water Park Award by the 2015 "Where to?" Awards in partnership with Trip Advisor.

What was the added value brought to you through working here in Abu Dhabi?

When you are a part of the tourism industry, it is crucial for you to have an insight about people from various cultures. Abu Dhabi with its multicultural residential community immensely aids this process. With our major markets being India, China, Russia, and the GCC, the corresponding communities residing in Abu Dhabi and interacting with us on a daily basis in public areas give us a lot of insight into their culture and interests and in turn enables us to create suitable experiences for them.

How can you manage to meet the different tastes and preferences of clients of more than 200 nationalities?

Yas Island receives an impressive variety of international and local visitors, all of whom have a range of needs from entertainment and leisure to hospitality, conferences and events. Thus, we work with our many partners in Abu Dhabi, such as the Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA), and Etihad Airways to ensure that we host activities and events that cater to every type of visitor—creating multifaceted and memorable experiences for guests visiting from near and far.

“ We look forward to welcoming international tourists from a variety of countries including Russia, India, China and the GCC region



دبي

RECEIVES 8 MILLION OVERNIGHT VISITORS DURING FIRST HALF OF 2017

A record total of 8.06 million international overnight tourists arrived in Dubai during the first six months of 2017, reflecting a stellar 10.6 per cent increase over the same period last year. Figures released by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) affirm the foundational strength, and sustained acceleration of the emirate's tourism sector, as it stayed the course of its impressive growth trajectory from January this year, underscoring the expanding appeal of Dubai as a global tourism destination of choice.





Western Europe contributed 21 per cent of the overnight visitor volumes

PERSISTENT GROWTH

Almost all of Dubai's top 20 inbound visitor source markets saw positive or near stable year-on-year performances in H1 2017, with five of the top 10 delivering standout double-digit growth. India continued to top the list of traffic generators, for the first time crossing the 1 million mark over a six-month period with 1,051,000 Indians visiting the city between January and June, up 21 per cent over the same period last year. Saudi Arabia and the UK retained their spots as the second and third largest feeder markets respectively, with the former rallying to stabilise in June despite facing economic challenges in 2017, while the latter delivered reliable volumes backed by solid 4 per cent year-on-year growth.

The strategic impetus of recent regulatory changes granting citizens from China and Russia free visa-on-arrival access to the UAE was evident in the continued growth peaks being delivered from these markets as they topped the charts with 55 per cent and 97 per cent increases respectively over the first six months of 2016. As a result, China delivered 413,000 visitors to end H1 2017 in fifth place, and Russia cemented its return to the top 10 with 233,000 visitors. With the exception of Oman – the GCC's second highest volume driver – which continued its negative slide through 2017 witnessing a sharp 30 per cent decline, the remainder of the top 10 all saw increased contributions. The USA continued its resurgence to end mid-year up 6 per cent in sixth place, followed by Pakistan up 11 per cent in seventh, Iran up 27 per cent in eighth, and Germany up 6 per cent in ninth spots respectively.

From a regional perspective, Western Europe contributed 21 per cent of the overnight visitor volumes, maintaining its pole position from earlier in the year, reflective of Dubai Tourism's strong international destination marketing efforts aimed at driving consideration from a wider spectrum of European market segments. Dubai sustained its appeal among traditional stronghold markets across the GCC that collectively accounted for 19 per cent of traffic during H1 2017, driven by efforts to continually revive the city's offerings encouraging frequency of regular repeat travel.



Helal Saeed Almarri: We ramp up efforts to increase Dubai's accessibility, visibility & overall appeal



CONTINUOUS EXPANSION

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General, Dubai Tourism, commented: "We are extremely pleased that Dubai has sustained the momentum of growth we achieved in the first quarter to deliver a strong double-digit performance through H1 2017, setting the stage for continued acceleration in tourism volumes and GDP contribution this year. Our strategic investments, innovative destination promotion programmes, responsive federal policy reforms, and long-term global partnerships are evidently paying dividends as we ramp up efforts to increase Dubai's accessibility, visibility and overall appeal, minimise barriers to travel, and ultimately drive both first-time and repeat visitation.

"Alongside the continuous expansion and enhancement of Dubai's infrastructure and tourism proposition, and backed by the strength of our industry stakeholders across government and private sectors, our goal now is to ensure that the city builds on this positive trajectory through not just the remainder of 2017 but also further, to get us closer to our Tourism Vision 2020 target of 20 million annual tourist arrivals. In parallel our focus is on creating today for global travel, what the world may aspire to in 10 years - innovating - harnessing the

power of data, redefining the customer journey, and amplifying the voice of the traveller – in line with the 10X Agenda set by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, to ensure that Dubai is a decade ahead of any other global city."

Hotel supply

Spread across a total of 676 establishments, Dubai's hotel room inventory stood at 104,138 at the end of June 2017, up 5 per cent compared to the same time last year. Notably, despite the increase in supply, average occupancy across all hotel and hotel apartment categories stood at 79 per cent, increasing 1 percentage point over the end of June 2016. Occupied room nights were also up year on year, totalling 14.53 million compared to 13.77 million at the end of H1 2016, underscoring the continued success and attractiveness of Dubai's diversified hospitality sector.

8 UNIQUELY STRANGE: OTHERWORLDLY DESTINATIONS FOR YOUR BUCKET List





A BIG

part of travel is that feeling you get when experiencing something completely new, something you haven't seen or done before. Many travel destinations offer an amenity or two that other places don't – but there are only a few locations in the world that offer a truly unique experience. Here's a list of some mysterious places around the world, our Top 10 Strange and Spooky places that are well worth a visit!

TO SUA OCEAN TRENCH, SAMOA

The To Sua Ocean Trench (which literally means 'big hole with water') is an idyllic site located in Samoa's Lotofaga village. The trench is surrounded by beautiful manicured gardens with views out across the Pacific Ocean. A ladder is installed allowing visitors to descend 15 meters down into the trench filled with turquoise waters and lit up by the bright Samoa sunshine. The gurgling sounds of the water can be heard through the underwater caves linking the trench to the ocean.

TUNNEL OF LOVE, UKRAINE

Ukraine's leafy Tunnel of Love, near the town of Klevan, is a three-kilometer section of private railway that serves a nearby fiber-board factory. A train runs daily through the ethereal tunnel delivering wood to the factory. At other times the beautiful avenue of trees is witness to a very different journey - love. It is a favored spot for young romantics to stroll with their special someone. The magic happens in spring when the trees that line the rails burst into life and create a leafy enclosed arch over the track. It is said that couples can come here to make a wish and if they are sincere in their love it will come true.



WHITEHAVEN BEACH, AUSTRALIA

The Whitsundays' Whitehaven Beach is a pristine beach stretching seven kilometers, gently lapped by rippling waves of turquoise and aquamarine. The sand at the Australian beach is so pure and white that it is 89 percent silica, and is believed to have been brought to the beach from sea currents over millions of years.



FLY GEYSER, NEVADA

Fly Geyser is a man-made geothermal geyser reaching around five feet high in Washoe County, Nevada. It sits on a seven-foot mound and was created accidentally when drilling took place at the point in an attempt to find sources of geothermal energy in 1964. Although people are not entirely sure why it occurred, it was most likely due to the well being left unplugged, leading to the accumulation of dissolved minerals which rose to the surface and created the mound on which the geyser sits. Plumes of hot water continuously spew up to five feet in the air, which fills the numerous surrounding terraces of pools with water.

DEVIL'S BRIDGE, GERMANY

The Gothic-style Kromlauer Park in Germany is home to the ancient Devil's Bridge, which is said to have been built around 1860. A unique feature of the bridge is its reflection on the water's surface creating a perfect circle.



BLUE CAVE, CAPRI

The Blue Grotto is a sea cave on the coast of the island of Capri, southern Italy. Sunlight, passing through an underwater cavity and shining through the seawater, creates a blue reflection that illuminates the cavern. The cave extends some 50 meters into the cliff at the surface, and is about 150 meters (490 ft) deep, with a sandy bottom. The Blue Cave is at its most beautiful between 11am and noon when the sun's rays pass through an underwater opening to create a beautiful blue light. Boats can be taken inside the cave, but for a surreal experience you should take an underwater swim to see the rocks glimmer in silver and pink.





ZHANGYE DANXIA LANDFORM, CHINA

With its rolling hills, rocky peaks and multitude of colours, this otherworldly site looks like no place on Earth. The spectacular lunar landscape can be found at the Zhangye Danxia Landform Geological Park in Gansu Province, China. Like one giant red, orange and yellow-hued paint spattered artwork, the park offers breathtaking views that blaze with color. The unusual coloration in the rocks is the result of red sandstone and mineral deposits being laid down over 24 million years.

CANO CRISTALES, COLOMBIA

The Cano Cristales is a river in Colombia which displays a vibrant explosion of colors for a short time each year. It happens when the water level drops and the sun warms the moss and algae at the bottom of the river, making the blooms turn bright red. The amazing transformation can be viewed for a few weeks from September to November.

UAE FORTS GRANDEUR OF THE PAST



United Arab Emirates has promptly grown into one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. It is home to some of the best places to shop, eat, and stay. UAE Comprises of seven states that includes Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain. The place boasts of wind-swept mountains, crazy sand dunes, verdant green parks, vivacious souks, pristine beaches, effervescent forts, and so much more. Let us know what UAE was all about before the emblematic infrastructure, top-quality facilities came in and changed the way we see UAE.

By: Sameh Al Sharqwi





NAIF FORT



AL FAHIDI FORT



AL FAHIDI FORT

The Al Fahidi Fort was built around 1799 to defend Dubai against invasion and is probably the oldest building in the city. Beautifully restored in the 1993, it now houses the Dubai Museum and offers a fascinating insight into the city's heritage and culture.

NAIF FORT

Naif Fort was built in 1939 in a strategic location of Deira's district, in the heart of the commercial city. It is the first police station in Dubai, and the headquarters of Public Prosecution and the Civil Court at the time, where it included the office of the Commander-in-Chief of Dubai police, the offices of the Dubai Police, Investigations, Court and Detention Rooms. In the early

Each fort was unique in its layout and design, but they all consisted of similar features

In the 1990s, the Fort has been renovated while preserving its archaeological features and in 1997, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum ordered to convert one of the wings of the fort into an official museum, open to visitors to know about the history of the police and security services in the emirate of Dubai.

A visit to Naif Museum will provide a unique opportunity to discover the early attention, which dates back to more than 60 years, to the security aspects in Dubai, which is considered as one of

the most important pillars for urban and economic development, and what Dubai has achieved from this early attention in reaching a distinct security experience that made Dubai achieve advanced global positions in its security services. Also, viewing the humble beginnings of the security services in Dubai and comparing it to what has been achieved now of excellence and development and modernization.

AL HISN FORT, SHARJAH

For close to 200 years, Al Hisn Fort has guarded Sharjah, its cannons and towers facing towards the sea to shield the emirate's residents from all backgrounds.

With the changing times, the fort, which is now surrounded by the modern urban extensions that includes the roadways and high rise buildings, still remains testament to long and proud history.

With the help of renovation, the former magnificence as part of a broad 15-month renovation project, the fort is restored, featuring distinctive features including wind-scoops, columns that will attract tourists and visitors.





THE KALBA FORT

Located in the north of the Kalba city center, right beside the Bait Sheikh Saeed Bin Hamad Al Qasimi. In 1623, the Portuguese captured a fort in the northern part of Kalba from "a certain Casmr" (which means the ruling family of the Al Qasimi), and the following year they started to build their own fortress on the same site. When they were forced to leave the region around 1650, the Arabs built their own fortification on the remains of the Portuguese fort. Since December 1996, the Kalba Fort is open for visitors, even though it seems that the restoration process still continues.

DHAYA FORT, RAS AL KHAIMAH

The fort was built in the 16th century at a strategic location in the northern part of Ras Al Khaimah. It has direct access to the various roads – including the coastal road – as well as other dunes and mountains, and is considered of major importance to the emirate. Dhaya Fort was built in this strategic location to battle invaders & serve other military purposes. The fort has two towers from which to monitor the movement of the enemy, but it lacks a water tanker, and that historically means that fighters did not stay in the fort for very long periods of time.

UAE forts have a vital role today in promoting our civilization

The vast majority of historians believe that the fort was built under the Al Qawasim family which ruled the area at the time.

FUJAIRAH FORT

Draped over a rocky mound above vestiges of Fujairah's old village and a date-palm oasis, this restored fort looks splendid, especially when floodlit at night. Built from mud, gravel, wood and gypsum in the 16th century, it's a compact composition of circular and square towers that aided in its defence. There's usually a caretaker around in the morning to open the heavy teak door, so you can climb up the towers and ramparts for great views.

UMM AL QUWAIN FORT

This place is the right place for all the history buffs who want to get into the history and culture of UAE. The fort was, in fact, the residence of the Emirates ruler and the Sheikh of Umm Al Quwain and did the additional task of guarding the gate to the main city. The fort is located at just the right location to act as a watchtower, considering it oversees the sea at one side and the creek on other. After the res-



idence of the Sheikh was shifted, the place first became a police station and then a museum. It is this museum that houses some of the carefully preserved important historical artifacts that were found at nearby archaeological sites such as Al Dour as well as a well preserved collection of weapons used throughout the history of UAE. The place is particularly popular as a tourist attraction as there are not many historical buildings in UAE and this one figures among the most important ones.

RIXOS

PREMIUM DUBAI

SHINES AS THE
LATEST
LIFESTYLE
DESTINATION
IN JBR





Dubai, a city where Arabic tradition meets urban lifestyle, has risen to become one of the most prominent holiday and business hub of the world. Located at the urban destination, Jumeirah Beach Residence, Rixos Premium Dubai brings its distinguished hospitality facility in the spotlight with an experience that combines the best of leisure, entertainment and dining.

With panoramic room views overlooking the beach and the world's largest Ferris Wheel, The Dubai Eye, the 35-storey lifestyle hotel welcomes its guests from all around the world where the pulse of the city can be best felt. The hotel is within close proximity to popular shopping destinations such as The Walk, Dubai Marina Mall, Mall of the Emirates and the city's buzzing highway, Sheikh Zayed Road. The impeccable crystal design of the tower is an architectural landmark transforming the cityscape of JBR.



LUXURY ON ANOTHER LEVEL

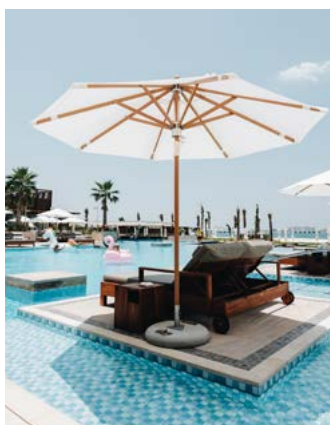
“With an influx of attractions and multi-national corporations opening in the region, Rixos Premium Dubai’s sought-after location and unparalleled amenities will position the property as a prominent landmark in Dubai,” said Mr. Fettaf Tamince, Founder and Chairman of Rixos Hotels.

Witness the wonder hidden within the 414 rooms and suites of Rixos Premium Dubai, featuring sophisticated interiors fused with contemporary accents and picturesque views of the Arabian Gulf. Spa-inspired bathrooms, spacious lounge areas replete with furnishing that are statement pieces, designer upholstery and luxe amenities are only a few elements to discover during this one-of-a-kind staycation.

Stefano Capaccetti, General Manager of Rixos Premium Dubai said, “Guests can expect an array of high quality services and facilities featuring lavish rooms and suites, delectable restaurants, extensive spa and fitness programs, and luxuriant beach and pool access which caters to all of the guests’ needs.”

UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCE

Experience an exquisite culinary journey that befits all culinary gourmands by giving yourself up to the 9 superlative dining choices at Rixos Premium Dubai. Its signature restaurant, Turquoise Restaurant is labeled as a classic modern dining venue that offers a broad spectrum of exotic cuisines from all over the world including Mediterranean, India, pan-Asian and Middle



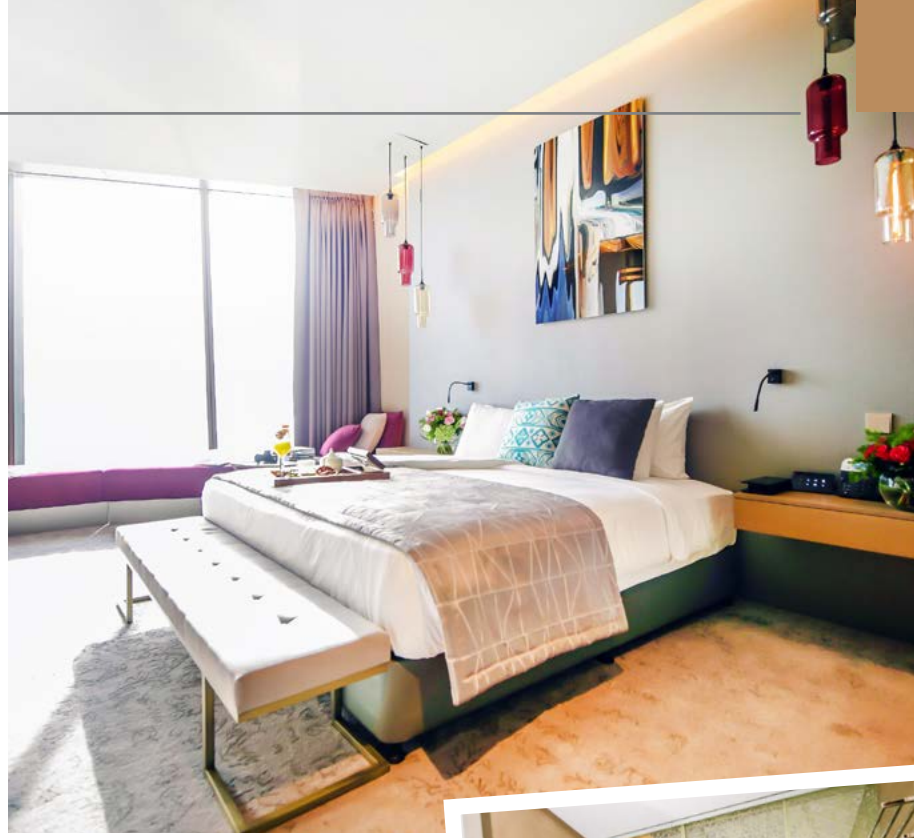
The sought-after location and unparalleled amenities will position the property as a prominent landmark in Dubai



Eastern. Headed by Executive Chef Inan Dogru, Turquoise offers extravagant breakfast and dinner buffets inspired by the lavish traditions of the Turkish Sultans. “My team and I are reinventing the traditional Turkish culture with respect to gastronomy and service. Each diner will be transported to the ethereal days of the Ottoman empire, lathering in treatment that befits a Sultan,” said Executive Chef Inan Dogru. Families and friends are invited to indulge in delectable offerings during the festive Friday brunch featuring live cooking stations, unique blends of beverages and a selection of Turkish cuisines for AED 270 per person.

Turquoise also debuts a buffet corner dedicated for diners with fitness and dietary concerns. The healthy food station features protein meals, chia puddings, oats, peanut butter banana loaves and whole grain bagels.

For elegance and sophistication, guests can seek Crystal Lounge that features fresh and ar-



omatic desserts, pastries and light breakfast items. Guests can indulge in a rich business lunch, casual dinner or an idyllic social gathering with mesmerizing beach and pool views. Afternoon teas are perfected with an exquisite selection of canapes, baklava and Turkish Delights, complimented by the warmth of superior coffee blends and fragrant teas for AED 190 per person. The experience is designed to revive and inspire the senses, as soulful saxophone music washes over you.

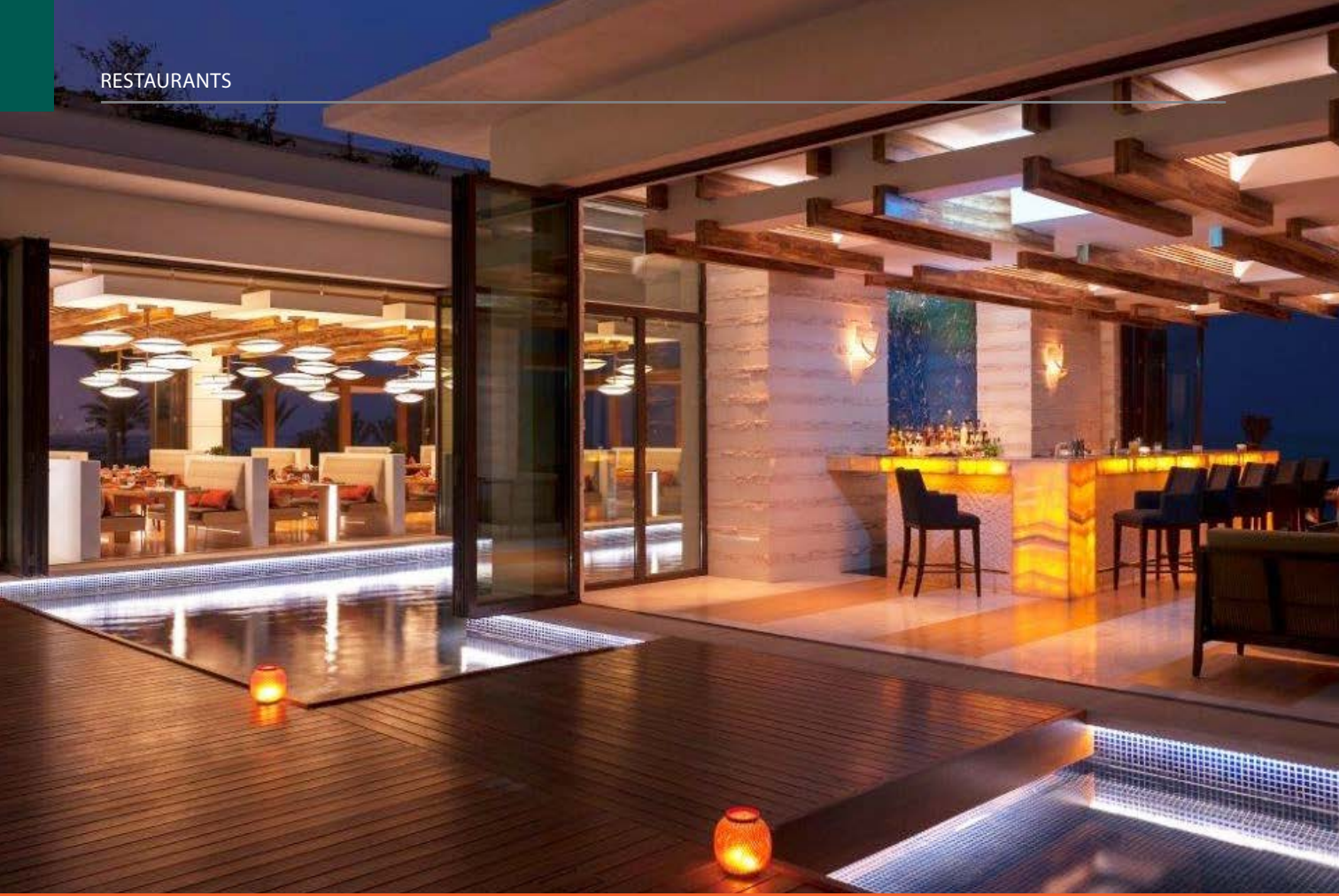
LIFE IS BETTER WHEN YOU CHECK IN

Wallow in an experience of utter exclusivity with infinity pool amenities set with sun loungers, private beach and an array of the most exhilarating water sports available for a truly exciting hotel experience. Rixos Premium Dubai offers a state-of-the-art fitness centre, RixGym with floor-to-ceiling views of the azure Arabian Gulf, as well as Natureland Spa known for its signature Turkish Hammam.

Not only that, Rixos Premium Dubai also offers a convenient form of luxury shopping with in-house high-end boutiques including Rodeo Drive, Via Ordeo and Ocean Drive set to open this year and popular shopping destinations within close proximity to the hotel.

Spread across the well-appointed hotel is a luxurious collection of ten conference and banquet venues catering to 10-100 guests. Each conference and banquet halls are designed with business entrepreneurs in mind, incorporating well-tailored features fitted with ultra-modern facilities. Small to medium-upscale meetings are perfected with wireless and cable internet, flat screen TVs and DVD players, high-tech audio-visual equipments and an on-site IT support for a flawless meeting. The offer is sated with branded stationery, tea and coffee making facilities and complimentary mineral waters for all.

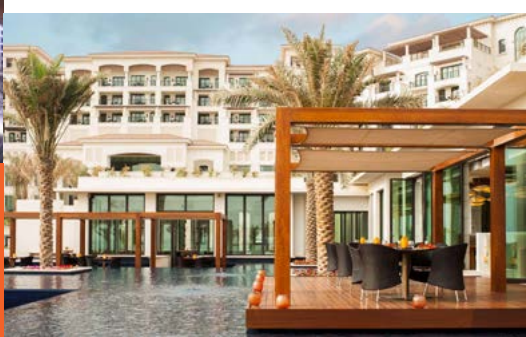
“
Rixos Premium Dubai
also offers a convenient
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SONTAYA

STUNNING INTIMATE SETTING AT ST. REGIS SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT

Sontaya, meaning sunset in Thai, is the seductively beautiful venue at The St. Regis Saadiyat Island Resort that is set amongst a series of floating pavilions that look out to the beach and across the turquoise Arabian Gulf. Featuring enchanting ambience and flavorsome fare, the pavilions and terraces overlooking shimmering pools exude romance by night, while signature cocktails complement the restaurant's cheerful energy during the day.



SUNSET DELIGHTS

Capture unforgettable views of the Saadiyat beach while enjoying our three-course sunset menu featuring a refined selection from our signature dishes. Make sure to stop in for this special menu any day of the week.

LUNCH WITH A VIEW

With uninterrupted view of the pristine Saadiyat beach, Sontaya is a stunning spot to enjoy a delicious light lunch, enjoy a 3 course set menu with a selected aperitif, water and tea or coffee.

ASIAN FUSION BRUNCH

Relax and soak up the sunshine while you enjoy the stunning view of Saadiyat Beach. Experience the best of South-east Asia Cuisine every Saturday with our Asian Fusion Brunch at Sontaya.

Tantalize your taste buds with our variety of Salad, Homemade Duck Spring Rolls, Prawn and Chicken Dumpling, Pan Seared Dory Fish and make the most of the wok dishes, Thai curries and fried rice.

Enjoy the mastery of the chef's knife skills with the wide array of delicious and delightful platters. Every dish has been carefully created and cooked in the most traditional way with a modern touch.

AWARDS:

Best South East Asian restaurant | Fact Dining Awards 2017

Highly commended romantic restaurant | Time Out Abu Dhabi Restaurant Awards 2016

Best Asian | Time Out Abu Dhabi Restaurant Awards 2016

Favourite Thai Restaurant | What's on Awards 2016

Highly commended Best South East Asian restaurant | Time Out Abu Dhabi Restaurant Awards 2014

Best South East Asian restaurant | Time Out Abu Dhabi Restaurant Awards 2012



DUBAI BEACHES... FUN IN THE *Sun*





The crystal clear waters of the Arabian Gulf are always in focus in Dubai, even from the soaring skyscrapers of Sheikh Zayed. Spend a full day in and out of the water on Kite Beach, get your selfie in front of Burj Al Arab or enjoy being pampered at one of the iconic beach clubs, which fringe the Palm Jumeirah. You'll find that's where the activity is at, too, from kite surfing and paddle boarding to running along the 14km green cushioned running track along Jumeirah Corniche. Sun, sand, blue skies and even bluer water – find the perfect beach for you.



JUMEIRAH BEACH

The glorious Jumeirah Beach lies along Dubai's coast, providing stretches of soft white sand on which to relax and play. Visitors to Jumeirah's hotels, like the seven-star Burj Al Arab, enjoy private beaches offering water sports. If you're not a hotel guest, you're welcome to relax at Jumeirah Beach Park, the public portion of the beach. You can barbecue, stroll around the cafés, or simply grab a mat, lay back, and take it easy while the sun sets.

SUNSET BEACH

The calm sands of Sunset Beach, located behind Sunset Mall in Jumeirah, provide the perfect location to relax with the sun, sand, and picturesque Arabian Gulf. It's one of the quieter spots along the coast, and also one of the widest, providing a beautiful opportunity for morning jogs and strolls against the setting sun. Located not too far from Kite Beach, the tranquil spot lets you sit back and relax as you watch kite surfers perform their stunts.



DUBAI LADIES CLUB

Overlooking the golden sands of the exquisite Jumeirah coastline, the ladies-only Dubai Ladies Club offers you an escape to a unique sanctuary of tranquility, relaxation and luxury. Sure to meet the needs of every woman, Dubai Ladies Club offers a combination of modern, world-class facilities and services, from the Moroccan-inspired Al Asalla spa, fully-equipped fitness center and swimming pools, to private beach access, outdoor jogging tracks and sport courts, and hosts a variety of engaging events and activities all year round. Your home away from home, Dubai Ladies Club offers the culinary delights of various restaurants and cafés, and members can also enjoy some retail therapy at a wide range of leading shops housed at the club.



AL MAMZAR BEACH

Spread out over 106-hectares, Al Mamzar Beach features four pristine beaches as well as a large section with manicured lawn, swaying palm trees, winding foot and bike paths, three pools, and an amphitheater for the kids. While there are food kiosks throughout, Al Mamzar also offers many pleasant grassy areas for a picnic. If you're in the mood for VIP treatment, Al Mamzar also offers a choice of air-conditioned, rentable chalets.



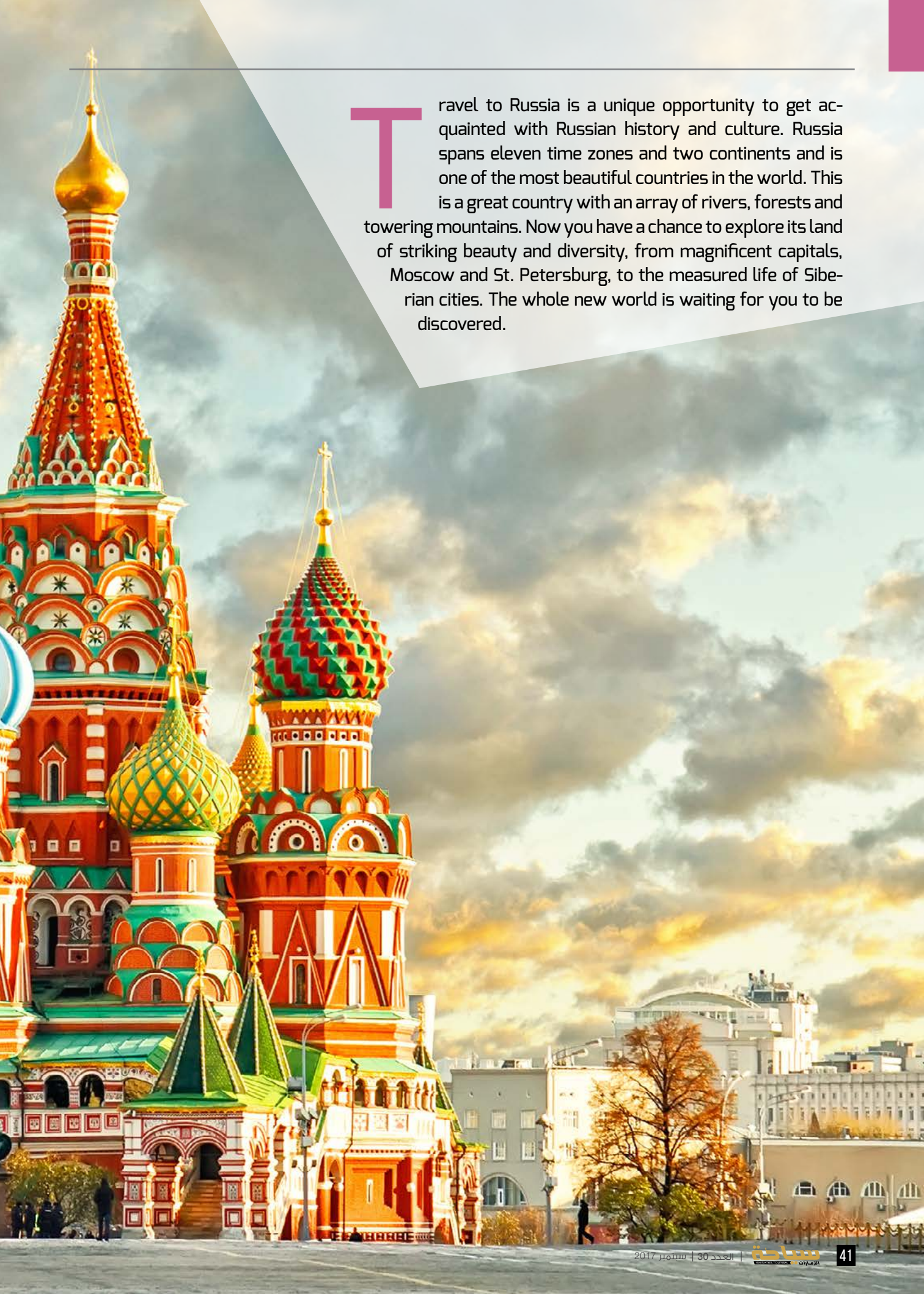
JBR BEACH

The waters are fairly calm here and popular with bathers, and the hotels offer a variety of watersports such as parasailing, wakeboarding and banana boating that anyone can sign up for, as well as camel rides. It is by far one of the most fun, family friendly beaches in Dubai, and the skyscrapers of Marsa Dubai provide a spectacular backdrop to your activities, all just a quick stroll from the cafe culture of The Walk.



REVEAL YOUR OWN Russia

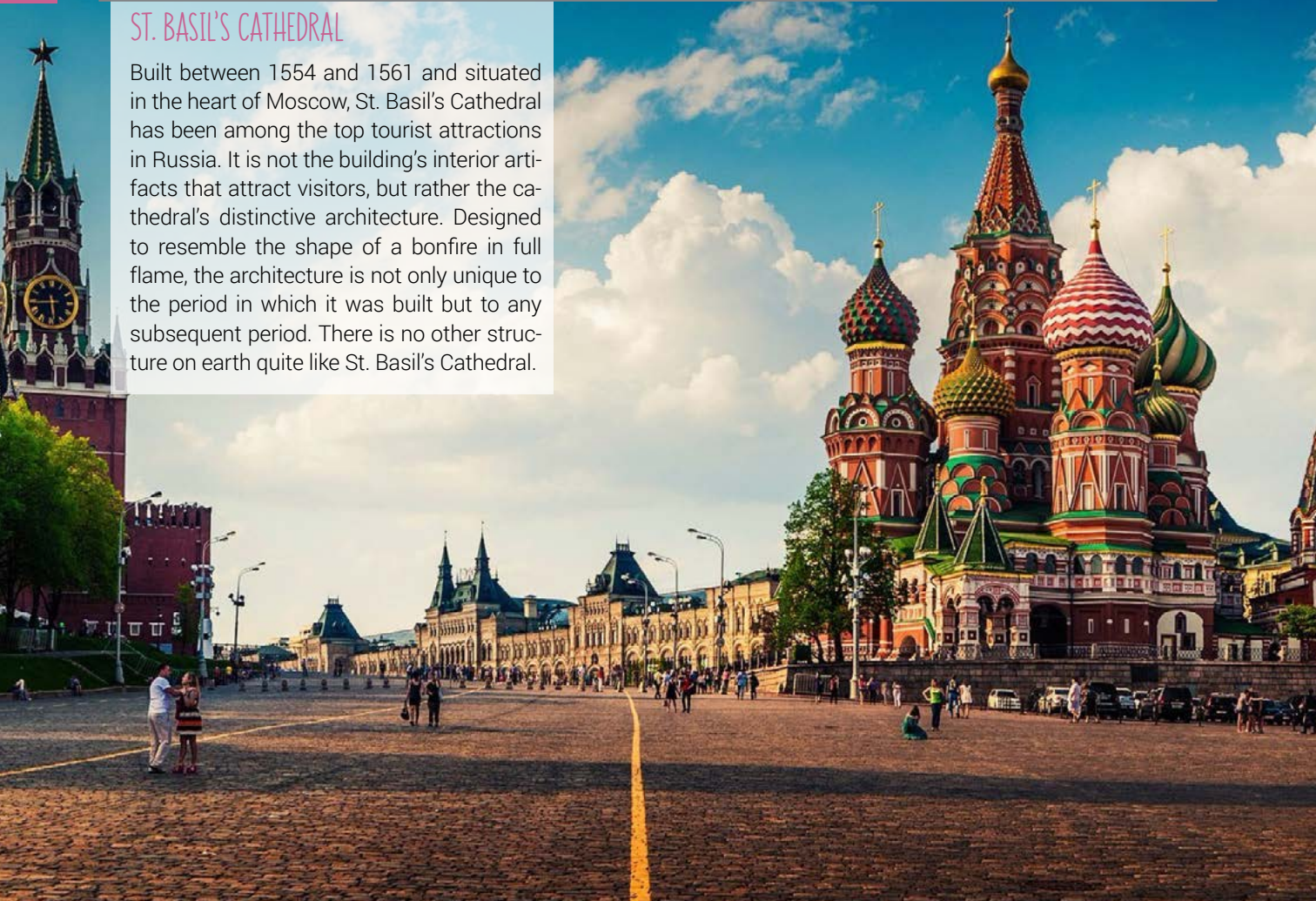




Travel to Russia is a unique opportunity to get acquainted with Russian history and culture. Russia spans eleven time zones and two continents and is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. This is a great country with an array of rivers, forests and towering mountains. Now you have a chance to explore its land of striking beauty and diversity, from magnificent capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg, to the measured life of Siberian cities. The whole new world is waiting for you to be discovered.

ST. BASIL'S CATHEDRAL

Built between 1554 and 1561 and situated in the heart of Moscow, St. Basil's Cathedral has been among the top tourist attractions in Russia. It is not the building's interior artifacts that attract visitors, but rather the cathedral's distinctive architecture. Designed to resemble the shape of a bonfire in full flame, the architecture is not only unique to the period in which it was built but to any subsequent period. There is no other structure on earth quite like St. Basil's Cathedral.



THE KREMLIN

The Kremlin is a must-see attraction for anyone visiting Moscow. Home to the nation's top governmental offices, the walled enclosure also houses four cathedrals built in the 15th and 16th century as well as several notable museums. The 250-acre grounds include the Armoury, filled with royal treasures of the past, and the Diamond Fund Exhibition, a collection of jewelry that includes a 190-carat diamond given to Catherine the Great.





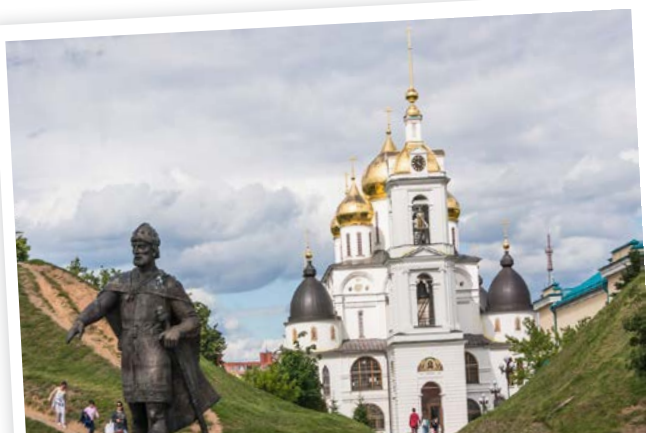
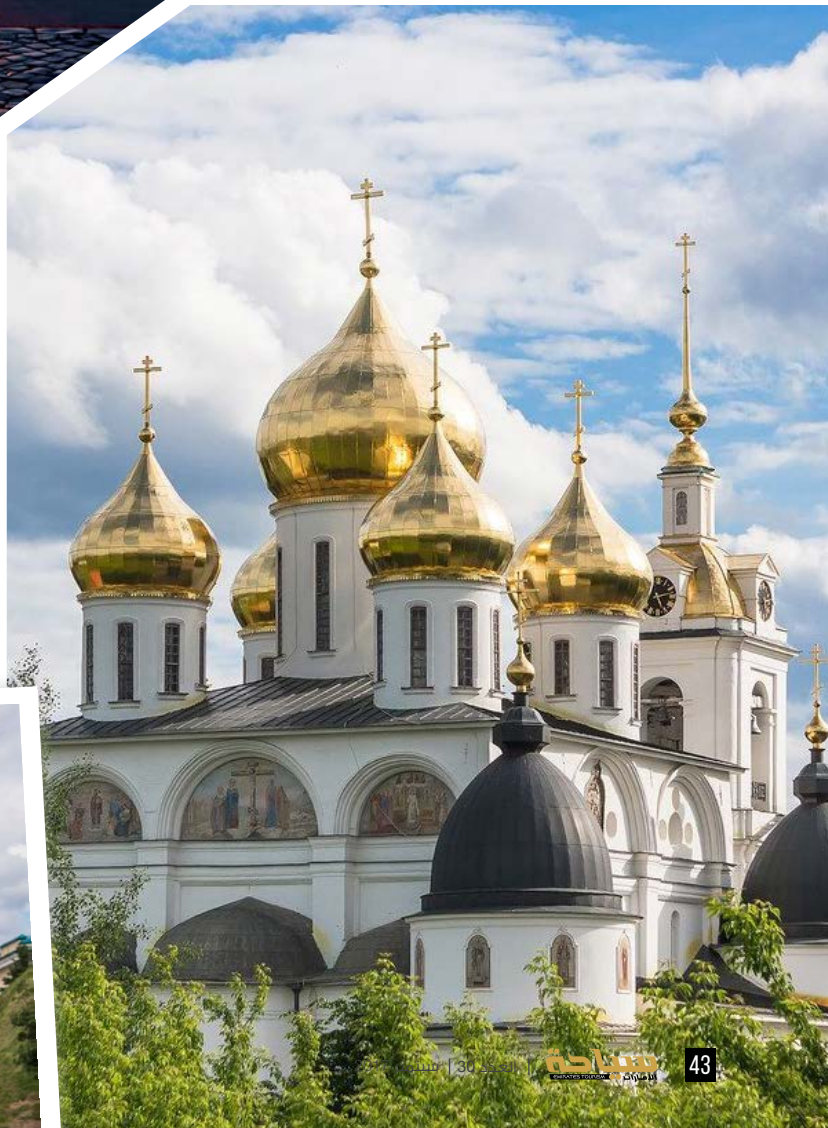
HERMITAGE MUSEUM

The State Hermitage is one of the largest of art and historical museums in the world, the Federal State Institution of Culture. The tourists visiting St. Petersburg begin their acquaintance of the city from it.

Founded in 1764 by Catherine the Great, the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg is a massive museum of art and culture showing the highlights of a collection of over 3 million items spanning the globe. The collections occupy a large complex of six historic buildings including the Winter Palace, a former residence of Russian emperors.

DMITROV

Dmitrov, one of the most prosperous of medieval Muscovy's secondary towns, was fated to play a role in some of the most dramatic episodes in 20th-century Russian history. Officially, Dmitrov was established in 1154 by Prince Yuri Dolgoruki, the founder of Moscow. Archeological excavations near the town citadel, however, indicate the presence of a settlement in distant pre-historic times. Today it's still possible to see the massive earthen walls dating from the 12th century, which originally supported a wooden fortress with several towers and two main gates



LAKE BAIKAL

One of the world's oldest geographical features (formed 25 to 30 million years ago), magnificent Lake Baikal is the highlight of Eastern Siberia. Summer travelers enjoy gob-smacking vistas across waters of the deepest blue to soaring mountain ranges on the opposite shore; rarer winter visitors marvel at its powder-white surface, frozen steel-hard and scored with ice roads. Whether they swim in it, drink its water, skirt its southern tip by train, cycle or dog-sled over it in winter or just admire it from 2000km of shoreline. Banana-shaped Baikal is 636 km from north to south and up to 1637m deep, making it the world's deepest lake, containing nearly one-fifth of the planet's unfrozen fresh water.



BOLSHOI THEATER

Bolshoi Theatre is one of the largest theaters of opera and ballet in Russia and one of the most important ones in the world. The complex of buildings of the theater is located in the heart of Moscow, at the Theatre Square. More than 800 works were performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre, including the first Russian operas and operas by celebrities such as Verdi, Wagner, Bellini, Donizetti and other composers.

SUZDAL

Once the capital of several Russian principalities, Suzdal is the jewel of Russia's "Golden Ring," ancient cities that the country has preserved as living museums of Russia's cultural past. Those who wish to experience the best of Russia's historic architecture, full of onion-dome topped kremlins, cathedrals and monasteries, will find it in Suzdal. Dating back to 1024, the entire city is like a large open-air museum that transports visitors back in time.

ST. ISAAC'S CATHEDRAL

St. Isaac's Cathedral was originally the city's main church and the largest cathedral in Russia. It was built between 1818 and 1858 to be one of the most impressive landmarks of the Russian Imperial capital. One hundred and eighty years later the gilded dome of St. Isaac's still dominates the skyline of St. Petersburg. Although the cathedral is considerably smaller than the newly rebuilt Church of Christ the Savior in Moscow, it boasts much more impressive facades and interiors. The cathedral's facades are decorated with sculptures and massive granite columns (made of single pieces of red granite), while the interior is adorned with incredibly detailed mosaic icons, paintings and columns made of malachite and lapis lazuli.



KIZHI ISLAND

Located in Karelia, a region in Northwestern Russia that borders Finland and the White Sea, Kizhi Island is best known for its incredible open-air museum. Karelians have lived in the region since the 13th century, torn between the cultures of the East and the West. The museum's collection features the 120-foot high Church of the Transfiguration of Our Savior, a structure made famous by its 22 domes. Other tourist attractions includes dozens of wooden houses, windmills, chapels and barns. The peasant culture is represented with craft demonstrations and folk ensembles.



AGURA WATERFALLS

Walking along the river Agura , you will admire the world of outstanding natural beauty: dizzying cliffs, exotic vegetation , breathtaking canyons , amazing waterfalls... From the bridge over Agura opens a magnificent view to the lowest Agura waterfall. It has two cascades : first the water enters into the narrow canyon, and from it - into a small lake . Walk a little further and see the upper falls - a powerful stream of water falling from a height of more than twenty meters. There you will be surprised by the Nature - restless inventor - by several picturesque Baths, and a cascade of eight thresholds of small waterfalls. In the shady Agura Gorge, located almost in the city, you will feel the gentle coolness, enjoying the sound of birds singing and waterfalls gurgling.





TEST OF WILL POWER ON HOT SANDS

DUBAI HOSTS THE INTERNATIONAL RAMDHA CHALLENGE 2017



The Dubai Sports Council, in co-operation with Emirates Travelers, presented the first-of-its-kind “Dubai International Ramdha Challenge”, (meaning ‘hot sand’ in Arabic), on Saturday, 9th September, at Mushrif Park. The challenge was held over a distance of 200 meters under the theme ‘From Dubai to the World’ with the competitors being flagged off at 1 pm. As per the rules and regulations, participants need to walk in burning heat over the set distance without any footwear or the use of any oils or substances on their feet.



The winner of the Challenge is the fastest one to walk the 200 meters

A HEALTHY CHALLENGE

Participants were allowed to take breaks at specific rest points that were located at every 10 meters throughout the course. The winner of the Challenge is the fastest one to walk the 200 meters.

“Our leaders are always encouraging us to be innovative with our ideas. Walking barefoot in the hot desert sand is not just a challenge, but also has varied healthy aspects to it,” Awad Bin Mohammad Bin Mejren, President, Emirates Travelers Club.

DUBAI IS THE START POINT

“His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai has always been pushing us towards a joint vision that brings forth new and innovative ideas. I believe that barefoot walking on hot sand can be quite a challenge and we intend to make a start right here in Dubai and then take this idea to the world,” he added.

The widely-travelled Bin Mejren has already organized informal Ramdha events in other emirates, including the last one in Al Ain that attracted close to 1,000 participants. “Honestly, we have been quite surprised with the response we have been getting for our events, both from expatriates and Emiratis,” Bin Mejren said.

“There are several healthy aspects to the race and this gives us a further push to take Dubai to the rest of the world. We are started off with Dubai and from here we want to expand and reach out to the world by organizing similar events elsewhere in the future,” he added.

There was a special medical team from the Arabian European Hospital to supervise the well-being of all competitors during the event. Participants were allowed to wear head gear to keep the sun away, while persons with diabetes, heart issues and skin conditions were not be allowed to participate.



Mejren: We intend to make a start right here in Dubai and then take this idea to the world



“

Omar bin Khediya DUBAI HAS IT ALL!

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Travel is essential for fashion designers to stay up to date with the latest trends in fashion, art and beauty around the world. This was expressed by the businessman Omar bin Khediya, son of Dubai, the city that embraces all forms of novelty, thus becoming a hub for business and economy. To discuss about that and more, "Emirates Tourism" interviewed Mr. Omar Bin Khediya and the dialogue went as follows:

LAMA EZZAT

With regards to tourism, let's talk about travels in your life.

Having been accustomed to living near the sea, we loved traveling from place to another, & we often returned loaded with pearl & corals. Anyone accustomed to the habit of traveling must have passion for it, & those who never traveled have left much to be desired. For me, traveling is an opportunity to enjoy beauty, view different people's cultures & be open to the latest trends in the world of fashion.

Throughout your travels, what are the cities that left an impression in your mind?

Without a doubt, there were cities that attracted me more than others although each has its own beauty that left great memories in my mind. However, there are some cities that I missed & wish I can return to them such as Los Angeles, New York, London, Shanghai & Berlin. Los Angeles has countless tourist destinations. It is the world's hub for innovation. Suffice it to say that one in each six of its residents works in creative industries.

In London, I came to know how to invest my life. I was fascinated by its beauty, museums, paintings & folklore clothing, something that firmly established the identity concept deep inside me. All this contributed to the formation of my experiences and developed my career and my life in general.

In Berlin, I saw real beauty and came to see the Tiergarten Park being the most beautiful in Berlin where the lush greenery and wonderful flowers are seen all over the place. The park is characterized by its fresh air and entertaining shows, thus attracting numerous visitors. I was also attracted by the Musical Instrument Museum being one of the greatest attractions in Berlin. The museum displays several musical instruments from the 16th century until today, featuring nearly 3000 instruments of different shapes and types kept as artifacts since ancient times. The museum attracts art and culture-loving visitors & tourists.

Being a Dubai native, how do you see your city?

I'm so proud of being from Dubai. This city is a source of proud not only for its natives but to whoever lived in it & saw the progress it achieved today.

There is always something new in Dubai; it always amazes me with its civilization leaps that made it the fastest growing city in the



DUBAI HAS BECOME THE FOCUS OF THE ENTIRE WORLD'S ATTENTION

world. The city overlooks the Arabian Gulf coast & has several world-known hotels & residential towers as if the city is designed to charm tourists with their different nationalities & social levels.

Indeed, Dubai is the place I prefer the most in the world owing to the diverse cultures, international carnivals and shows. This is the reason why I keep repeating that I'm so proud to be a native of this city that has become the focus of attention of the entire world.

When do you feel like traveling abroad for reset and leisure?

I travel when I feel the need to change. Besides, my work requires traveling to attend the world's latest fashion shows to be updated on the latest fashion trends in terms of clothing, decoration & art.

Could you talk to us about your own store, and how did you get the idea of shifting your family's house into a store and coffee shop?

The primary objective of opening the O Concept store was to add something new and creative to the fashion world in the region. So, it is more than just a store I opened, it's an experience because it was the first of its kind in Dubai. It was the first to exhibit fashion, decoration, art and even serve coffee, all under one ceiling.

The name O Concept is a truly unique one. How did you come up with that name?

The store is expressive of my own character and of everything I love. "O" is the first letter of my name "Omar".

The store's decorations are extremely eye-catching. Who did the design for you?

It was the creative decorator Pam Oushal who is well known for her works for international brands such as "Valentino" and "Pacioti". I played a key role in deciding the idea and Pam implemented it professionally.

Throughout your experience, how do you see the fashion market in Dubai today?

Dubai has it all! All the fashion brands, perfumes, shoes and accessories. Here, exhibitions are held and designers flock from across the world to Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, especially in fashion weeks as well as the Wedding Carnival. Therefore, Dubai is well known as an international hub for fashion.

Dubai yesterday and Dubai today, how do you see it?

Dubai represents the future, not only for the Middle East but for the entire world as well.

I TRANSFORMED THE HOUSE OF MY CHILDHOOD INTO FASHION STORE & A REST HOUSE FOR FAMILIES.

