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MAGAZINE



Photo courtesy of: Jumeirah Zabeel Saray

Flying High IN DUBAI

Words by Carolyn Gerin

Dubai – the land of shimmering sands, the world’s tallest building, indoor ski slopes and home to Emirati sheiks in Bentleys surveying their holdings across a golden, hotel-studded horizon.

As a travel writer and thrill-seeker, what’s not to love about a city that holds more Guinness World Records for architectural acrobatics than anywhere on earth? Dubai, located on the

northern side of the UAE, has many sides to its glittery rep. It’s touted as the new, modern face of the Middle East with a raging art scene, runway-worthy fashion and luxury shopping, hip and haute hotels, rapturous restaurants and deep ties to its nomadic desert roots. Forget about that “Vegas of the Desert” moniker. Dubai is one-of-a-kind, pure class (admittedly, with a dash of man-made artifice) with more romantic “wow-factor” experiences per square foot than many predictable honeymoon getaways. The best part? All of these magical venues are radically different, bringing unforgettable memories and texture to your getaway.





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Photos courtesy of (top to bottom, left to right): Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, Madinat Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf, and © gordondix, iStockphoto, #5396907

EMIRATES TO THE EMPIRE

Fly Emirates, the official UAE airline, to luxe Dubai International Airport and toast your adventure with a glass of Veuve in the sleek Emirates Business Class Lounge. Upon arrival it's a short drive to the Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, a homage to the opulent Ottoman Empire replete with gold vaulted ceilings, velvet wall hangings and chandeliers in a riot of colored crystals.

Be a time traveler touring the gold, textile and spice souks of the old city (and stocking up on pashminas). Luxuriate with afternoon tea in the jewel-toned Sultan's Lounge in preparation for the decadent Turkish hammam spa treatment at the Talise Ottoman Spa. Lie on heated stones under domed azure tiles; melt into the exfoliating cleansing ritual and amber oil massage. Indian cuisine at Amala and cocktails at the icy-mod Voda Bar end one perfect day.

Take a lift up the Burj Khalifa Skyscraper – the tallest building in the world – and see the golden city diffuse into endless desert from a 360-degree vertigo-inducing vantage point.

Get ready for an eye-opening epiphany at the Sheikh Mohammed Cultural Center for Understanding – learn about Middle Eastern mores: from how to tie-up a camel in the desert, to the wearing of “national dress:” the burka, abaya and thawb.

Post-enlightenment, pretend you're celebrities over a freshly-caught seafood feast at the waterfront Pierchic – with full view of that fab hotel you saw last week on National Geographic, the Burj Al Arab, then repair to your private beach for an afternoon snuggle.

Abracadabra! Time to change it up and check into the luxurious Madinat Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf courtyard summer houses modeled after authentic Arabian architecture. Spend a lazy afternoon and wind your way through three kilometers of waterways and landscaped gardens. Don't miss out on epic shopping at the curated Madinat Souk, a bazaar of surprisingly affordable exotic gifts, scarves and jewels you won't find anywhere else. Start your evening with cocktails at dusk at the Bahri Bar (with a full view of the “Burj”), appetizers at Pai Thai and nouvelle Mexican cuisine at Tortuga.

1 & 2: Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, 3: Madinat Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf, 4: Luxe goods for sale at the Madinat Souk

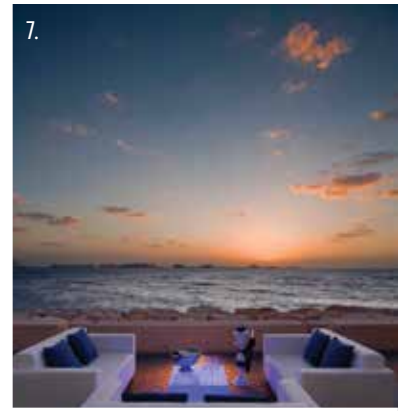




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Try breakfast at the sumptuous Khaymat Al Bahar with fresh juice, coffee drinks and regional specialties. Time to relax again? The Talise Spa offers tranquil private chambers where expert hands massage away any residual jetlag.

You've arrived: The Burj Al Arab, or Burj, the most famous hotel in the world. An architectural wonder: one part sailboat and one part spaceship, it's over-the-top in the best ways. Check into your duplex suite overlooking the water with a full view of the Dubai skyline. Your personal butler, stationed outside your suite, exists to cater to any whim 24-7. The dozen roses, Champagne in the great room, a full Jacuzzi bath, stadium-sized bed, walk-in closet and a boutique's worth of Hermès toiletries are surreal.

Walk through the golden oyster shell of Al Mahara – the backdrop for many marriage proposals – and experience the extraordinary floor-to-ceiling aquarium as you dine on fresh-caught sea bass, foie gras ravioli and caviar. Be sure to also check out Junsui (an East Asian restaurant where the ceiling is covered with stars) or Al Iwan for tasty Middle Eastern and regional delicacies.

Thrill seekers – get thee to the helipad: As the propellers beat the wind over your head, pretend you're Posh and Becks as you

board your private helicopter for a heart stopping, birds-eye tour of the Burj Kahlifa, the Palm Jumeirah and the historical Dubai Creek.

Relax afterwards with the ultimate afternoon tea at Sahn Eddar: Champagne, finger sandwiches, sweets and pungent tea are the perfect transition to lounging on your private beach to cap-off such an adventurous day!

Dubai is dramatically different in all the best ways because the locals, the tourism board, Emirates Airlines and the royal family dearly want it to be the top destination in the world for business and pleasure – and it shows. After one week, we realized we had experienced so many wonderful, “first-time” experiences, that time seemed to slow down...and isn't that the whole point of your honeymoon?

The Wear Factor

Emiratis don't expect you to cover up like they do and want to make tourists feel welcome.

Out of respect, it's never a bad idea to bring along an extra pashmina to cover bare shoulders and adopt a “smart casual” look in public areas.

Leave your “Vegas” gear at home.

Photos courtesy of (top to bottom, left to right): Madinat Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf, Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, 7 & 8: Burj Al Arab

5: Madinat Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf, 6: Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, 7 & 8: Burj Al Arab

