

Section 10

Al Ain:

Culture and Heritage Sites

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Bait Mohammed Bin Khalifa



Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa (BMBK) is an important landmark in Abu Dhabi's history. As a component of the World Heritage Cultural Sites of Al Ain, the house offers valuable insights into the changing social, historical and architectural traditions of the nation during the 1950s and 1960s.

This historic home was built in 1958 for the late Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan (1909-1979), the father-in-law of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Founding Father of the United Arab Emirates. Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa was also the grandfather of the current President of the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The house was built at the height of the UAE's Transition Period (1930s-1960s), a time in which hybrid architectural styles evolved as a result of the economic impact of oil exploration and discovery, a symbol of a changing way of life, Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa is an example of the fusion of traditional architectural styles with modern building materials and techniques.

This home was once an eminent landmark and focal point for the community of Al Ain, as the late Sheikh Mohammed was a highly esteemed figure. Now conserved, Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa resumes its place as a vibrant hub for city residents by opening its doors as a community center in 2021.

The permanent exhibition at Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa gives an overview on the history of both the home itself and of the wider World Heritage property of the Cultural Sites of Al Ain. With a focus on Al Ain during the Transition Period, visitors to the exhibition will learn not only about the evolution of the house itself but also about the transformation of the surrounding city over the last 60 years. The list of exhibitions are:

- Exhibition Room 1: The House & Al Ain World Heritage Site
Introduces the visitor to BMBK and situates the house within the Al Ain UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It includes an Interactive touchscreen that users can navigate to learn about programs and events at BMBK.
- Exhibition Room 2: A glimpse into the 1960s
Introduces visitors to HH Sheikh Tahnoon, son of Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa. It exhibits the ambience of a room in the 1960s (without recreating the actual room of HH Sheikh Tahnoon).
- Exhibition Room 3: Adapting Building Traditions
Focuses on various elements of Transition Period architecture as represented in BMBK. It features 3 exhibition pieces; Firstly, it focuses on the different BMBK construction materials (cement, reinforced concrete, wood, etc.), secondly it mentions the cooling system in the house (particularly vernacular cooling elements: the courtyard, the liwan, etc.), and thirdly it focuses on the developments of certain parts of the house throughout time (i.e. the manama, the windows, etc.)
- Exhibition Room 4: The Transition Period in Al Ain
Describes the Transition Period in Al Ain and the urban transformations in the city. It includes 2 exhibition pieces: An exhibition with oral narration and visuals on the urban transformations in Al Ain, and a space for listening to interviews with Al Ain residents about the city during the Transition Period.

- Exhibition Room 5: Conserving the House Explains the conserving process. It displays pieces from BMBK with accompanying text panels explaining their conserving process and a documentary movie regarding the conservation process.
- Exhibition Room 6: Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Life & Legacy
Focuses on Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa. Features a movie with oral narration and visuals on Sheikh Mohammed and his role during the Sheikh Shakhbut and Sheikh Zayed eras.
- Exhibition Room 7: At the Heart of the Community
Focuses on the house as a community space. It accommodates three optical theatres about the house in social and communal events.

Also, there is an outdoor exhibition called “The Archaeological Wall” which illustrates the physical transformations of Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa since it was first built in 1985. Rather than refinishing the wall, it was decided to display it as scientific evidence to create a better understanding of the materials and design choices of transition period architecture. Evidence related to five key construction phases of the house is represented on the wall and each frame corresponds to elements linked to specific phase. Knowledge of these construction phases was informed by oral account, aerial photographs and archaeological investigations. While the exact date of each phases is unknown, building investigations were able to provide the chronological sequence of this transformation, which is illustrated in the models.

Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa has been rehabilitated to be used primarily as a community centre, with spaces available for hire by community groups and public or private institutions. Reservation requests can be made by email, phone or onsite. Entry to the exhibition, and to all elements of Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa, is free of charge.

Opening Hours

Saturday to Thursday 10am – 8pm

Friday 2pm – 10pm

Further your knowledge

www.baitmohammedbinkhalifa.ae

Knowledge Bank: Bait Mohammed Bin Khalifa

Overview

- The home was built in 1958 for the late Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan (1909-1979).
- The house was built at the height of the UAE's Transition Period (1930s-1960s), a time in which hybrid architectural styles evolved.
- This home was once an eminent landmark and focal point for the community of Al Ain, and now conserved, as a vibrant hub for city residents by opening its doors as a community center in 2021.
- The permanent exhibition at Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa gives an overview on the history of both the home itself and of the wider World Heritage property of the Cultural Sites of Al Ain;
 - Exhibition Room 1: The House & Al Ain World Heritage Site
Introduces the visitor to BMBK and situates the house within the Al Ain UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
 - Exhibition Room 2: A glimpse into the 1960s
Introduces visitors to HH Sheikh Tahnoun, son of Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa.
 - Exhibition Room 3: Adapting Building Traditions
Focuses on various elements of Transition Period architecture as represented in BMBK.
 - Exhibition Room 4: The Transition Period in Al Ain
Describes the Transition Period in Al Ain and the urban transformations in the city.
 - Exhibition Room 5: Conserving the House
Explains the conserving process. It displays pieces from BMBK explaining their conserving process and a documentary movie regarding the conservation process.
 - Exhibition Room 6: Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Life & Legacy
Focuses on Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa. Features a movie with oral narration and visuals on Sheikh Mohammed and his role during the Sheikh Shakhbut and Sheikh Zayed eras.
 - Exhibition Room 7: At the Heart of the Community
Focuses on the house as a community space. It accommodates three optical theatres about the house in social and communal events.
- The Archaeological Wall is an outdoor exhibition which illustrates the physical transformations of Bait Mohammed bin Khalifa since it was first built in 1985.
- BMBK accommodates spaces available for hire by community groups and public or private institutions, and reservation requests can be made by email, phone or onsite.

Al Ain Camel Market



Al Ain Camel Market is located east of Jebel Hafet in the second largest city of Abu Dhabi, Al Ain. It is thought that Al Ain has the largest camel population in the UAE.

In Section 6: Emirati Culture and Traditions, you will have read a great deal about the significance of camels in UAE history and culture. Visitors who want to understand the importance of the camel in the region's history and culture should visit the Al Ain Camel Market. Even today, camels are an important part of Arab culture and are used for milk, meat and racing.

The market is open from 6am to 7pm, with local shops closing at 11pm. Entry to the market is free for the general public, but those coming as part of an organised tour group are charged AED 30 per person. The busiest time for the market is just after it opens in the morning when trading is at its peak and mock races are often held to train camel jockeys. Other animals such as goats and sheep are also sold there and traders come from all over the Middle East to buy and sell animals.

The market is a great photo opportunity but visitors must ask permission first and be prepared to haggle if vendors ask for money in exchange (AED 10 or AED 20 is an acceptable price). It is best for visitors to agree these costs upfront before entering any animal pens with the vendors, despite how enthusiastic they may be.

Many different types of camels can be seen and bought at the market, with prices ranging from AED 300 - 55,000 depending on type and age. The most expensive animals are the long-legged, tan-coloured racing camels. Also on display are black, show camels and females which have large, round stomachs and are used for milk. From small, baby camels with their big eyes and unsteady legs to the noisy bulls used for breeding, showing their teeth, there is plenty to see.

Those visiting the market are often offered the opportunity to hand-feed the camels, hold a new-born lamb, or even try fresh camel milk, but will have to negotiate a price for these experiences. Visitors should ensure they have onward transportation as taxis can be hard to find. Alternatively, they can combine their trip to the market with a visit to the nearby Bawadi Mall where many top shops and brands can be found.

Knowledge Bank: Al Ain Camel Market

Overview

- The Al Ain Camel Market is located east of Jebel Hafeet in the region of Al Ain
- It is the last camel market of its kind in the UAE
- Al Ain is thought to have the largest camel population in the UAE

The market

- The camel market is a must-see for visitors who wish to understand the historic and cultural importance of the camel in Abu Dhabi and the UAE
- It is located near to the Bawadi Mall, a popular shopping destination with many well-known retailers and brands
- Camels are still an important part of Arabian culture and used for milk, meat and racing
- Peak trading hours at the market are early in the morning, just after opening
- Early in the morning there are often mock races held to train those destined to be camel jockeys
- There are excellent photo opportunities but visitors need to ask permission and be prepared to negotiate a cost, usually AED 10 - 20
- Experiences such as trying fresh camel milk, holding a new-born lamb or hand-feeding the camels may be on offer at a cost

Camels

- Visitors will be able to see a few varieties of camels on show at the market:
 - Show camels, which are black
 - Milking camels with big round bellies
 - Tan coloured racing camels, with long legs
 - Big bulls for breeding which do a lot of roaring and show a lot of teeth
 - Wobbly, wide-eyed babies
- The camels can cost anywhere from AED 300 - 55,000 depending on their age and intended purpose
- The most expensive camels are sold for camel racing
- Other livestock is also on sale at the market, such as goats and sheep
- Taxis to and from the market can be hard to find, so visitors should ensure they take a car, or ask the taxi they came in to wait for them when visiting
- The market traders come from all over the Middle East, from Afghanistan to Pakistan

Opening hours

From 6am – 7pm with shops closing at 11pm

Charges

- Entry is free for the general public
- For organised tour groups there will be a fee of AED 30 per person

Al Ain Museum



Al Ain National Museum is the oldest and the first museum in the UAE, having been established in 1969. It was originally located in Sultan Fort but was relocated in 1971 and now sits in the centre of Al Ain city on 1st Street.

The museum documents the history of Al Ain dating back 7,500 years. Visitors are taken on a tour of different stages of human history such as the Stone, Iron and Bronze Ages. The grounds of the museum also contain Sultan Fort, made of mudbricks, with towers at three of the corners and a gate to the south of the structure.

The displays are divided into two main sections: Archaeology and Ethnography, the study of people and cultures. These offer the chance to see everything from historic farming tools in the Agricultural Wing to a vast array of swords, shields, daggers and an axe in a wing dedicated to weapons.

The rich history and culture of the UAE is displayed in the Ethnography section through a variety of artefacts telling the story of the pre-oil era and life in the Emirates since it was created. Visitors who explore the exhibits will gain insight into the daily life of the nomads and the settled people.

An animal shoulder blade which was used as a tablet for writing practice is just one a number of ancient writing tools on display. The museum also includes jewellery dating back 4,000 years as well as cosmetic cases and a model wearing a historic, traditional wedding dress.

The Archaeology section offers visitors a chance to explore archaeological finds in the region from the Stone Age through to the Islamic period, with tools and arrowheads dating back to the sixth millennium BC. The displays offer a rare glimpse into the past thanks to a number of archaeological finds from tombs and settlements which have been excavated in the Al Ain area.

Al Ain National Museum also features an array of gifts that were given to the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, by presidents and ambassadors of countries from around the world.

The museum has been demolished and it will be reopened in the coming years.

<https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/learn/family-and-education-resources/activity-guide/al-ain-national-museum>

DID YOU KNOW? One of the artefacts in the museum is an actual moon-rock given to the UAE by NASA following the historic Apollo 17 trip to the surface of the moon.

Knowledge Bank: Al Ain Museum

Overview

- Al Ain Museum is located in the centre of Al Ain City on 1st Street
- The museum is the oldest in the UAE, established in 1969
- The museum was originally located in Sultan Fort, however it was relocated to its current position in 1971
- Sultan Fort lies within the grounds of the museum
- The museum charts the history of Al Ain from the Stone Age through to the foundation of the UAE, a view of the country's 7,500-year-old traditions and culture
- When visiting the museum, visitors will be able to see many archaeological artefacts from the region, including tools and arrowheads dating to the sixth millennium BC
- The museum is divided into two main sections: Archaeology, and Ethnography

Ethnography section:

- In the Ethnography section visitors will be able to see a variety of objects which tell the story of the UAE people in the pre-oil era and the life in the region of the Emirates. Visitors can see ancient writing tools, such as an animal shoulder blade which was used as a tablet for writing practice
- 4,000 year old jewellery is on display along with cosmetic cases and a model wearing a historic traditional wedding dress
- Traditional farming tools are on display in the Agricultural Wing
- Visitors who explore the household exhibits will gain insight into the daily life of the nomads and the settled people
- The museum has a wing dedicated to weapons, where visitors can see a variety of swords, shields, daggers and an axe

Archaeology section:

- The Archaeological section displays objects from the Stone Age to the Islamic period
- Some of the archaeological items are from tombs and settlements that have been excavated in the Al Ain area
- This section of the museum takes visitors on a tour of various ages in human history such as the Stone, Iron and Bronze Ages

Al Foah Date Factory



Al Foah was established in 2005 and its headquarters is located in the Al Ain region, close to Al Ain International Airport and approximately 90 minutes' drive from Abu Dhabi City. Al Foah is the largest date company in the world and is a subsidiary of Senaat which is owned by the Abu Dhabi Government.

The company exports around 80,000 tonnes of dates each year - 90% of what the company produces – to 48 different countries. Its top ten markets for dates are the UAE, India, Oman, Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Jordan, Syria, Sri Lanka and Somalia. It sells a variety of date products including stuffed dates, date syrup and date Halwa (a type of confectionery) under four brands aimed at different customers such as bulk buyers and the luxury market.

In 2014, Al Foah became the first company in the world to introduce automatic sorting of dates, using machines which sort by quality, size and colour. The largest machines can handle up to six metric tonnes per hour. During peak harvesting time from August to October, the factory operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In 2016, a library opened on site at the Al Foah headquarters to support the education of employees, suppliers and clients. The aim was to encourage employees to read in their own time and to provide a facility for customers waiting for their payment transactions and paperwork to be completed.

The farming of date palms originated in the Middle East/Arabia over 8,000 years ago and has now spread to North Africa, North America, South Africa and Australia. The date is an adaptable fruit which can be eaten ripe, semi-matured or dried. Dried dates can keep for up to 18 months and it is a tradition to break the Ramadan fast with a handful of dates.

Dates are considered to be a very healthy food as they are rich in phenols which are excellent antioxidants. They are also a good source of fibre which can help to maintain a healthy digestive system and contain potassium and iron as well as Vitamins A, E and C.

The Al Foah company has its own date farm, also in Al Ain City which is the largest organic date farm in the world. It covers 634.6 hectares and is growing 63,000 date palms organically. This area is certified by ECOCERT, a worldwide organic certification organisation based in France and also by UAE Organic. In total, the farm has over 147,000 date palms of up to 100 different varieties.

Knowledge Bank: Al Foah Date Factory

Overview

- The Al Foah company was established in 2005
- It is now the largest date company in the world
- Its headquarters is in the Al Ain region approximately 90 minutes' drive from Abu Dhabi City and close to Al Ain International Airport
- In 2016, a library opened on site at the Al Foah headquarters to support the education of employees, suppliers and clients
- Al Foah is a subsidiary of SENAAT, which is owned by the Government of Abu Dhabi
- 90% of the dates produced are shipped abroad to over 48 countries
- 80,000 tonnes of dates are exported yearly
- The top ten markets for dates are: UAE, India, Oman, Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Jordan, Syria, Sri Lanka and Somalia
- Al Foah sell a variety of date products including stuffed dates, date syrup and date Halwa (a type of confectionery)
- Al Foah incorporates four brands which are aimed at different customers
- In 2014, Al Foah became the first company in the world to introduce automated sorting of dates, introducing machines which sort the dates by quality, size and colour. Their largest machines can sort up to six metric tonnes of dates per hour
- During peak harvesting season, Al Foah operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Dates have been farmed in Arabia for over 8,000 years
- The farming of date palms originated in the Middle East, eventually spreading to North Africa, North America, South Africa and Australia
- The date fruit can be eaten when it is ripe, semi-matured or dried
- It is tradition to break Ramadan fast with a handful of dates
- Dried dates can keep for up to 18 months
- Dates are rich in natural phenols, which are excellent antioxidants
- Dates are a good source of fibre and can help to maintain a healthy digestive system
- Dates are a good source of potassium and iron, as well as Vitamin A, Vitamin E and Vitamin C

Al Foah Date Farm

- Al Foah Date Farm is located in Al Ain City
- It is the largest organic date farm in the world
- It spreads over 634.6 hectares and is growing 63,000 date palms organically
- The farm is certified by ECOCERT – an organic certification organisation based in France
- It is also certified by UAE Organic
- The farm has over 147,000 date palms of up to 100 different varieties
- Peak harvesting season runs from August to October

Al Jahili Fort



Al Jahili Fort was built by HH Sheikh Zayed the First in 1891 and is one of the largest forts in Al Ain. It is located in the centre of Al Ain city in the grounds of Castle Park and is a good example of the traditional architecture and cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi.

Construction on the fort began in 1891 and was completed in 1898. The original construction consisted of two buildings: a separate round tower, and a square fort which included a large courtyard surrounded by walls more than six metres tall.

The site now consists of the round watchtower, the square fort with defensive towers at its corners, two large walled enclosures and a historic mosque outside the walls of Al Jahili Fort. The watchtower is located 50 metres away from the fort and consists of four rounded tiers.

The fort was historically used as a summer retreat by the Al Nahyan family, one of the six ruling families of the UAE. It has also offered refuge to residents in the local area during periods of political unrest during the last century.

Early in the 1950s, the British military set up a base at Al Jahili Fort. They added a small military hospital and barracks to house the men who were stationed there. Later on, the UAE Army made use of these expanded facilities at the fort.

Major conservation work was carried out in 2007 to preserve the building and to add a temporary exhibition space and a visitor centre.

The conservation work included the addition of a modern cooling system. A network of chilled water pipes now run inside the plaster of almost every vertical and horizontal surface to ensure the temperature inside the fort remains comfortable all year round. The successful conservation project was recognised in 2016 when it won the Terra Award.

In 2013, experts used archaeological evidence and historic photographs to help reconstruct the fort's north gate.

Visitors can find out all they need to know from the fort's information centre and a full programme of events held there is available on the Visit Abu Dhabi website. They can also read a poem dedicated from the fort's original resident at the main entrance to the square fort's courtyard. The Visitor Centre includes an onsite. There is also a permanent exhibition of black and white photographs by the traveller, Wilfred Thesiger, in the north wing of the courtyard.

Entry to the fort is free. It is open daily between 9am and 5pm, except on Mondays when it is closed and Fridays when it is open between 3pm and 5pm.

OPENING HOURS

- Daily from 9am - 5pm
- Friday: 3pm - 7.30pm

DID YOU KNOW? The fort was used to shelter local residents during times of historic political unrest!

Further your knowledge

<http://gulfnnews.com/news/uae/culture/al-jahili-fort-treasure-trove-of-history-1.841355>

Knowledge Bank: Al Jahili Fort

Overview

- Al Jahili Fort is located in the centre of Al-Ain city in the grounds of Al Jahili Park
- The fort symbolises the traditional architecture and cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi
- The fort was built by HH Sheikh Zayed the First and is one of the largest forts in Al Ain
- Visitors can read a poem dedicated to the fort's original builder at the main entrance of the square fort.
- Construction began on the fort in 1891, this work was completed in 1898
- The Al Nahyan family historically used the fort as a summer retreat
- The site now consists of a round watchtower, a square fort with defensive towers at its corners, two large walled enclosures and a detached mosque
- There is an exhibition of black and white photographs by the traveller Wilfred Thesiger in the north wing of the courtyard
- Visitors can also browse the onsite bookshop
- During periods of historical political unrest the fort has been used to shelter residents of the local area
- The British Forces used the site as a base in the early 1950s, adding barracks and a small hospital

Architecture

- The original construction consisted of two buildings, a separate round tower, and a large courtyard framed by walls over 6 metres tall
- The tower is located 50 metres away from the square fort and consists of four concentric tiers. The design resembles Bronze Age towers discovered during archaeological digs in the Hili area

Conservation

- Major conservation work was carried out in 2007 to preserve the fabric and value of the building. This work included updating the newer parts of the fort into a visitor centre and temporary exhibition spaces
- The conservation work included the addition of a cooling system to ensure the temperature inside the fort was comfortable all year round. A network of chilled water pipes run beneath the plaster of almost every vertical and horizontal surface
- The conservation project won the Terra Award in 2016
- A reconstruction of the north gate of the nineteenth century enclosure took place in 2013. The reconstruction was based on evidence gathered from archaeology and historic photographs

Opening hours

- Open daily from 9am - 5pm
- Friday: 3pm - 7.30pm

Charges

- Entrance to the fort is free

Al Khaznah Tannery



“Abu Dhabi’s rich cultural offering invites visitors from all walks of life to enjoy authentic experiences. Al Khaznah Tannery will allow visitors to witness the art of producing hand-made sustainable leather goods, the process of which carries great significance within the Emirati heritage.”

Sultan Al Dhaheri, Acting Executive Director, Tourism Sector of the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT)

Al Khaznah Tannery is located in the desert between the cities of Al Ain and Abu Dhabi, 200km from Dubai. It is owned by the Government of Abu Dhabi and opened in 2007. It is Abu Dhabi’s only leather processing plant and the most technologically advanced in the UAE.

As well as locals, the plant employs skilled leather workers from countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Philippines, India and Iraq. They produce a range of goods including clothes, accessories, furniture and wall panels, often customised to the needs of the client. The skill and craftsmanship required means that some items can take up to ten weeks to produce.

The tannery mostly processes camel skin but also works with skins from goats, sheep and cows. All are sourced locally to minimise environmental impact.

Environmentally-friendly, the tannery only uses natural products to process the leather. Free from chromium and other metals, its leathers are biodegradable and sustainable and meet the REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) standards to protect human health and the environment.

Instead of using chemicals, the leathers are softened using natural oils made from sustainable vegetable extracts. The tannery adds to its green credentials by:

- reducing CO₂ in the atmosphere by using it in the production process
- recycling and reusing 80% of the water used in production
- creating waste products which can be used as fertiliser
- producing products which biodegrade in just four months, if sent to landfill

Visitors to the plant can observe the leather tanning process and purchase items made exclusively with Al Khaznah leathers from the tannery’s boutique.

Knowledge Bank: Al Khaznah Tannery

Overview

- The Tannery is based in the desert between Al Ain and Abu Dhabi, approximately 200km from Dubai
- Al Khaznah Tannery is owned by the Government of Abu Dhabi
- Al Khaznah was opened for business in 2007
- The Tannery mainly processes camel leather, but also works with cow hides, goat skin and sheepskin
- The boutique offers a variety of products made exclusively with Al Khaznah leathers
- The Tannery is the only leather processing plant in Abu Dhabi and is the most technologically advanced in the UAE
- During a tour, visitors will see the leather tanning process taking place
- The Tannery employs experienced and skilled leather workers from many countries, including Egypt, Sudan, Philippines, India and Iraq as well as many locals
- The production of the leather is customised depending on the client's needs
- Due to the care and craftsmanship Al Khaznah employs, products can take up to 10 weeks to produce
- The leathers have been used to make clothing, accessories, furniture and even wall panels

Environment

- The Tannery prides itself on using natural products to process the leather, ensuring products are free from chromium and other metals
- Al Khaznah leathers are biodegradable, sustainable, metal-free and meet the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) standards for the protection of human health and the environment from the risks that can be posed by chemicals
- The leathers are softened using natural oils; these oils are made from sustainable vegetable extracts
- All of the hides processed are sourced locally to reduce the environmental impact
- The Tannery itself contributes to the reduction of CO₂ in the atmosphere by using it in their production process
- 80% of the water used in the production process is then recycled and reused
- Waste products from the production process can be used as plant fertiliser
- If one of their leather products happens to end up in a landfill, it will biodegrade within four months

Al Qattara Arts Centre



Al Qattara Arts Centre is located near Al Qattara Oasis, in the restored Al Qattara fort complex in Al Ain. The centre, opened in 2011, is the first of its kind in Al Ain. The aim of the centre is to provide a place for the UAE community to study and practise arts and culture. Visitors can browse through the centre's gallery, library, exhibition hall and archaeological basement. The centre holds regular exhibitions and events, details can be found on the website.

The centre offers classes in a variety of subjects, including computing, music, drawing, painting and Arabic calligraphy. Classes are taught by experts in their field, such as the Arabic calligraphy class which is led by Mohammed Mandi, the man responsible for the decorative designs on the country's bank notes. The centre has hosted temporary exhibitions on a variety of arts, including modern works such as comic book art. Exhibitions also include pieces by local artists and mixed media arts.

The excavations during the building of the Al Qattara Arts Centre uncovered a five-metre-long sequence of archaeological layers, from the late Islamic period to the Iron Age, 3,000 years ago. Visitors can view a special presentation of the local archaeology in the centre's basement.

The arts centre is open daily, on weekdays from 8am to 1pm and 4pm to 9pm, and on Fridays between 4pm and 9pm.

Opening hours

- Saturday - Thursday 8 am to 8 pm
- Closed Friday

More information can be found at:

<https://visitabudhabi.ae/en/see.and.do/attractions.and.landmarks/cultural.attractions/al.qattara.arts.centre.aspx>

DID YOU KNOW? The centre has a fully-equipped pottery studio, a digital room suitable for photography and computer classes, a spacious calligraphy studio, an exhibition hall, and a café. Amazing facilities for creative types!

Further your knowledge

<https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/experience/culture-centres/al-qattara-arts-centre>

Visit Abu Dhabi's informative video on Al Qattara Arts Centre:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pdd6Bmg_BcM

Knowledge Bank: Al Qattara Arts Centre

Overview

- Al Qattara Arts Centre is located near Al Qattara Oasis, in the restored Al Qattara fort complex in Al Ain
- The centre opened in 2011
- The centre is the first of its kind in Al Ain
- The aim of the centre is to provide a place for the UAE community to study and practise arts and culture
- Visitors to the arts centre can browse the on-site gallery, library, exhibition hall and archaeological basement.
- The centre offers classes in a variety of subjects, such as computing, music, drawing, painting and Arabic calligraphy
- Classes are taught by experts in their field, such as the calligraphy class which is taught by Mohammed Mandi, the man responsible for the decorative designs on the country's bank notes
- The centre has hosted temporary exhibitions on a variety of arts, such as a feature on comic book art, and work by local artists and mixed media arts
- The excavations during the building of the arts centre uncovered a five-metre-long sequence of archaeological layers from the late Islamic period to the Iron Age, 3,000 years ago
- Visitors can view a special presentation of the local archaeology in the centre's basement studio

Opening hours

- Saturday - Thursday 8 am to 8 pm
- Closed Friday

Qasr Al Muwaiji



This historical fort was built in the early years of the 20th century by Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Khalifa and is located in Al Ain City in the Al Ain region of Abu Dhabi. The building is striking with its square enclosure, projecting corner towers and a grand entrance gate. It lies within the UNESCO Al Ain World Heritage Site although it is not a designated Site in its own right. In 1946, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was appointed Ruler's Representative in Al Ain and made Qasr Al Muwaiji his home and site of his *diwan* - a public council where he would receive guests and hear the concerns of the community. The word 'Qasr' is used to describe a palace.

It was here that Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the current President of the UAE was born in 1948. During his time there, Sheikh Zayed made many additions, reflecting its growing importance when the *diwan* complex doubled in size and the kitchens and guest rooms were enlarged to accommodate the increasing number of visitors that he welcomed. The mosque was also improved, and Qasr al Muwaiji's significance as a focus for the community increased as people came there to gather, pray and celebrate.¹

1966, Sheikh Zayed became Ruler of Abu Dhabi and he and his son Sheikh Khalifa moved to Abu Dhabi City. Later, the structures within were demolished and the fort was used as a date plantation for many years.

In 2008 the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT) began a programme of archaeological research and conservation work at Qasr Al Muwaiji during which the earliest coin discovered was dated 1897 which helped to date the construction of the site.

After restoration and building work, it was reopened to the public as a museum and permanent exhibition in 2015. The new exhibition space was designed to complement the original structure and ensure that it did not impact upon the historic fabric of the fort.

The museum has two main sections: a glass-walled structure within the courtyard and a tour through the rooms of the north-west tower. The exhibition tells the story of the fort and sets out the chronology of the members of Abu Dhabi's ruling family.

¹ Source: <http://qasralmuwaiji.ae/en/qasr-al-muwaiji-story/building-history/>

The 'President of the Nation' section tells the story of Sheikh Khalifa in seven chapters using photographs and text. Visitors will learn about Sheikh Khalifa's childhood, education and favourite pastimes such as falconry. A number of personal possessions are on display including his falconry equipment located in the north-west tower. At the end of this section is a poem inscribed on wood written by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, dedicated to Sheikh Khalifa.

As well as glass walls, parts of this new structure have transparent flooring to enable visitors to view the archaeological remains of the site. One highlight of the museum is an interactive table which explores the history of the fort and how the area within which it is located became designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There is no admission charge to the fort and complimentary audio guides are available.

OPENING HOURS

Open daily except Mondays

- From 9am to 7pm
- Fridays: 3pm to 7pm

DID YOU KNOW? British explorer Wilfred Thesiger stayed at Qasr Al Muwajji during the late 1940s as a guest of Sheikh Zayed.

Further your knowledge

Comprehensive Qasr Al Muwajji website:

<http://qasralmuwajji.ae/en>

Knowledge Bank: Qasr Al Muwajji

Overview

- Qasr Al Muwajji is located in Al Ain city in the Al Ain region of Abu Dhabi
- It was built in the early years of the twentieth century
- The fort is located within the World Heritage Site in Al Ain
- The fort was the site of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's *diwan*, or public council, where he received guests and heard the concerns of the community
- In 2008, the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT) began extensive archaeological and conservation work at Qasr Al Muwajji
- It was restored and reopened to the public in 2015 as a museum and permanent exhibition
- The site is the birthplace of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 1948
- The earliest dated coin excavated on the site is from 1897, which helped to provide an estimate for the construction of the site

Museum

- The new exhibition space was designed to complement the architecture of Qasr Al Muwajji, ensuring that it does not impact on the historic fabric of the fort
- There are two main sections to the museum:
 - An area in the courtyard walled with glass with views of the surrounding area
 - A tour through the north-west tower and its rooms
- The exhibitions tell the story of the fort and sets out the chronology of the members of Abu Dhabi's ruling family
- The 'President of the Nation' exhibition tells the story of Sheikh Khalifa through seven chapters, using photographs, poems and animations
- Inscribed in wood at the end of the exhibit is a poem written by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, dedicated to Sheikh Khalifa
- Visitors will learn about Sheikh Khalifa's childhood, including his education and favourite pastimes
- A number of personal items are on display, including some of the Sheikh's falconry equipment
- The building has transparent flooring which allows visitors to view the archaeological remains of the site
- A highlight of the museum is an interactive table which delves into the history of the fort

OPENING HOURS

Open daily except Mondays

- From 9am to 7pm
- Fridays: 3pm to 7pm

Charges

- Entry is free

Souq Al Qattara



The Souq Al Qattara was originally founded by Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the mid-20th century. It is now a colourful seasonal market open from October to May, promoting traditional Arabian culture and handicrafts. Visitors can sample sweets, dates and Arabian coffee, and can purchase hunting and riding tools, incense and traditional clothing.

Located in the centre of Al Ain city on the road that connects the Al Qattara and Al Jimi oases, the Souq Al Qattara hosts a wide range of family activities including lectures on the heritage of the UAE and local archaeological sites, and arts and culture exhibitions as well as an opportunity to buy traditional items.

When the market was first established, it was made up of individual mud shops, a typical traditional market which was an important community centre and a place for locals to shop and share news. The market was abandoned approximately 15 years ago after the discovery of oil changed the lives of those in the region. It was then restored by the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT) to become the attraction and cultural centre it is today.

The historic Souq is home to a number of celebrations throughout the year: the Traditional Handicrafts Festival, the UAE Flag Day celebrations, and the UAE National Day celebrations. Every Thursday and Friday evening from November to May, visitors will be able to see a variety of folklore shows and traditional dance performances.

A traditional handicraft market is held three days a week next to the Souq Al Qattara. The market was set up to help local producers develop their skills, support local families and encourage traditional crafts. Visitors can purchase handmade and local products at the market. The old-style market has 30 internal and 20 external shops selling local handicrafts and artwork.

The Souq's opening hours are from 8am to 1pm and 4pm to 10pm from October to May. Friday Market opening hours are every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 4pm to 10pm from October to May.

It is important to note that both markets close from the end of May until October to undergo renovation and repair in preparation for the new season.

DID YOU KNOW? The Souq has a specialised shop on Al Khos, where visitors can learn everything about this traditional women's handicraft which creates baskets and mats by braiding dried palm fronds.

Further your knowledge

Watch Visit Abu Dhabi's video on the Souq:

<https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/experience/heritage-festivals/al-gattara-souq>

Knowledge Bank: Souq Al Qattara

Overview

- Souq Al Qattara is located in Al Ain city on the road that connects the Al Qattara and Al Jimi oases
- The Souq is a seasonal market where visitors can sample sweets, dates and Arabian coffee, and can purchase hunting and riding tools, incense and traditional clothing
- The Souq was founded by Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the mid-20th century
- The Souq hosts lectures on the heritage of the UAE and local archaeological sites, arts and culture exhibitions, as well as family activities
- Every Thursday and Friday evening from October to May, visitors will be able to see a variety of folklore shows and traditional dance performances
- The market was initially established with individual mud shops, a typical traditional market which was an important community centre and a place for locals to shop and gossip
- The market was abandoned approximately 15 years ago after the discovery of oil changed the lives of those in the region
- The market was restored by the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT) to become the attraction and cultural centre it is today
- The Souq is home to a number of celebrations throughout the year:
 - the Traditional Handicrafts Festival
 - UAE Flag Day celebrations
 - UAE National Day celebrations

Traditional handicrafts market

- A traditional handicrafts market is held next to the Souq Al Qattara
- It is a traditional market held only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday
- Visitors can purchase handmade and local products
- The market was set up to help local producers develop their skills, support local families and encourage traditional crafts
- The old-style market has 30 internal and 20 external shops selling local handicrafts and artwork

Opening hours

Opening hours are from 8am to 1pm and 4pm to 10pm from October to May

Traditional handicrafts market opening hours

Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 4pm to 10pm from October to May

IMPORTANT: Both markets close from the end of May until October to undergo renovation and repair in preparation for the new season.

Section 10

Al Ain:

UNESCO Heritage Sites

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UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Al Ain



A United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO) World Heritage Site is a place listed by the organisation as being of 'special cultural or physical significance'. When sites are nominated to be listed as a World Heritage Site, they must meet UNESCO's criteria of being of 'outstanding universal value'.

All of the World Heritage Sites in Abu Dhabi are in the Al Ain region, approximately 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of Abu Dhabi City (including Hafeet, Hili, Bida Bint Saud and Oases Areas). Al Ain is known as the 'Garden City' as it has the highest number of green areas in Abu Dhabi due to the number of oases. In 2011, it was the first region in the UAE to be included on UNESCO's World Heritage Site list.

The sites in Al Ain, which date back to the Stone and Bronze Ages, clearly show the transition from nomadic to settled communities around the Al Ain oases which gave birth to the Emirati culture. The remains give an insight into the people's development, creativity and strength and how the population was able to adapt to the harsh desert environment and live there from the Neolithic Period to the present day. It includes circular stone tombs (c 2500 BC), wells and a wide range of adobe constructions, including residential buildings, towers, palaces and administrative buildings. Hili features one of the oldest examples of the sophisticated *falaj* irrigation system which dates back to the Iron Age. The property provides important testimony to the transition of cultures in the region from hunting and gathering to settled communities.

Visitors to the UNESCO sites will also obtain insights into Abu Dhabi's unique cultural traditions which developed in oases and desert environments.

Further your knowledge

The National newspaper's video footage:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-kcE-55M9o&t=2s

Abu Dhabi government's portal on archaeological sites:

www.abudhabi.ae/portal/public/en/citizens/culture-and-recreation/cultural-and-historical-sites/archaeological-sites

UNESCO information about the Al Ain UNESCO sites:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1343>

Knowledge Bank: UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Al Ain

Overview

- The UNESCO sites in Abu Dhabi are all in the Al Ain region, approximately 160 kilometres (100 miles) east of the capital of Abu Dhabi
- Al Ain is known as the 'Garden City' as it has the most green areas in Abu Dhabi
- In 2011, Al Ain was the first region in the UAE to be included on UNESCO's World Heritage Site list, comprising four locations: Hafeet, Hili, Bida Bint Saud and Oases Areas
- A UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place listed as being of 'special cultural or physical significance'
- If sites are nominated to be listed as a World Heritage Site, they must meet UNESCO's criteria of 'outstanding universal value'
- The sites in Al Ain clearly show the transition from nomadic to settled communities around the Al Ain oases which gave birth to the Emirati culture
- The Al Ain World Heritage Sites date back to the Stone and Bronze Ages
- The archaeological and architectural remains give visitors an insight into the people's development, creativity and strength
- The sites show how the local population was able to adapt to the harsh desert environment and live there continuously from the Neolithic Period to the present day
- They give the visitor insights into Abu Dhabi's unique cultural traditions which developed in oases and desert environments

Al Ain Oasis



The World Heritage Site of Al Ain was the first site in the UAE to be named as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It consists of 17 main components organised into four groups. These components are scattered throughout the city of Al Ain, cover over 8,000 years of history, and range from archaeological sites to cultural landscapes such as the oases of Al Ain.

Together, these components tell the story of how the oasis was created and symbolise the ability of humans to turn difficult environments into places where they can live and work.

This story of the Al Ain landscape shows how people overcame the hostile geography and climate in the area. It demonstrates how the resourcefulness of the ancient communities of Al Ain enabled them to move from a wandering, nomadic lifestyle to a settled one. Once settled, these communities were then able to start to farm the desert, irrigate fertile oases, organise and control the rights to water, grow food and even produce more supplies than needed to enable them to trade this extra produce. This established Al Ain at an important crossing point along the trade routes, linking together the ancient cultures of the region: Mesopotamia, Persia and the Indus Valley.

Al Ain is the only place in the world where all of the stages in the development of the oasis come together and can still be seen today. It is because all 17 components of this story are brought together in one great, oasis city, that together have been added to the World Heritage list.

Al Ain Oasis is just one of the 17 elements of the World Heritage Site of Al Ain. The largest of the six oases of Al Ain city, the Al Ain Oasis was opened in 2016 as the first cultural landscape - a place where man and nature come together - in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al Ain. UNESCO's designation of Al Ain as a World Heritage Site recognises the tradition of cultivating oases and their significance to humanity.

The Oasis covers over 3,000 acres and contains over 147,000 date palms with approximately 100 different varieties. Local farmers still work on the 550 date palm plantations in the area. Together, these palm trees provide a cool, shaded area where visitors and families can come to escape the heat of the city.

The Oasiscape

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE, wanted the oasis to be maintained and improved so that future generations of Emiratis and visitors to Abu Dhabi could enjoy and learn from it.

To help visitors navigate their way around the oasis, the Oasiscape was created - an official route of paths and trails to guide visitors on their tour of the oasis.

The Oasiscape aims to show that the area is not simply a park or garden, but operates as a living ecosystem. It reconnects elements of the past - the archaeological sites and the palm groves - with the vibrant city of the present. In doing so, it manages to preserve the peace and tranquillity of the oasis, extending this into the city of Al Ain, bringing with it an ecological and sustainable way of life with all of its culture and traditions.

As visitors travel through the Oasiscape, they learn about the oasis' buildings, the *falaj*, or irrigation system, and traditional methods of palm cultivation. You will have read about the *falaj* irrigation system in Section 8: Traditional Industries.

Journeying through the Oasiscape, visitors will come to the Eco-centre - an eco-friendly building which blends in with its surroundings on the edge of the palm grove. It contains a number of interactive installations and educational activities telling the story of the oasis and its creation. Here, visitors can learn about what an oasis is and the botanical layers it needs to function, as well as understand why Al Ain Oasis was designated a World Heritage Site.

Along the Oasiscape, the Miniature Oasis is a scaled model of the oasis which demonstrates how the various elements are constructed and work together. It includes replicas of the buildings and irrigation channels of the *falaj*, which carry water to the grounds, all made to scale. There is a monumental fountain which takes its water from the *shari'a*, an open cistern from which, historically, water would have been collected by members of the local community.

The West Gate Exhibition explains the ancient irrigation system of the oasis through its '*falaj*scape' and provides visitors with information on this traditional watering system which dates back hundreds of years. All along this trail, visitors can enjoy the beautiful scenery of the palm grove together with an educational experience and plenty of exercise. When tired, visitors can then stop for a rest at Al Ain Park Plaza, which offers shops, refreshments and views of Naqfa Ridge.

Elsewhere on the trail there is the Oasis Garden. This consists of three separate gardens: the Pre-Oasis Garden, the Orchard Garden and the Symbolic Garden. The three gardens represent the three layers of traditional oasis farms which are formed in a vertical, layered system. The layered gardens give crops and fruit trees the nutrients they need to survive. This three-layered approach was vital for the self-sufficiency of the original community.

The Pre-Oasis Garden is the bottom layer of the three tiers, in which crops such as wheat are grown. It provides food and stops the fertile soil from desertification (becoming desert sands once more). It also contains medicinal herbs and plants of cultural or religious importance. Amongst the crops and herbs, baby palm trees are planted to give the crops the shade they need to grow.

The second layer is called the Orchard Garden and contains various fruit trees and sugar cane which are important food sources.

The third and tallest layer is called the Symbolic Garden and is where tall trees and plants are grown to provide shade and protection to the fruit and grains on the lower levels.

The oasis is open every day from 8am to 5pm, although the restaurants, cafes and shops are open from midday to 9pm. Entrance is free.

Knowledge Bank: Al Ain Oasis

Overview

- Al Ain Oasis is located in the middle of Al Ain city in the region of Al Ain in Abu Dhabi
- It was the first managed UNESCO World Heritage Site in the UAE
- UNESCO designated the oasis a World Heritage Site in 2011
- Al Ain Oasis was opened to the public as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016
- The oasis covers over 3,000 acres and is home to over 147,000 date palms
- There are around 100 different varieties of date palms located in the oasis
- The oasis includes 550 farms and local farmers still work on the date palm plantations today
- It is a cool place with lots of shade from the palm fronds
- It is popular with visitors and families looking to escape the heat of the city
- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan wanted the oasis to be maintained and improved so that future generations of Emiratis and visitors to Abu Dhabi could enjoy and learn from it

Oasiscape

- Oasiscape is the name of the official visitor route around the oasis
- It gives visitors insights into the oasis' buildings, the *falaj* irrigation system and traditional methods of palm cultivation

Eco-centre

- The Eco-centre within the oasis educates visitors through interactive installations

Miniature Oasis

- The Miniature Oasis is a scale model which shows visitors how the oasis was built and why
- The Miniature Oasis has buildings and the irrigation channels made to scale

West Gate Exhibition

- Just inside the entrance to the West Gate there is a permanent exhibition known as *falaj*scape which gives visitors more information on the traditional *falaj* watering system which dates back thousands of years

Oasis Garden

- The Oasis Garden is three separate gardens: the Pre-Oasis Garden, the Orchard Garden and the Symbolic Garden
- The three gardens represent the three layers of a traditional oasis farm
- Traditional oasis farms formed in a vertical layered system
- The layered gardens give crops and fruit-trees the nutrients they need to survive
- This three-layered approach was vital for the self-sufficiency of the community

Pre-Oasis Garden

- The Pre-Oasis Garden is the first and bottom layer of the three-tiered system
- Crops such as wheat are grown at this level to provide food and also to stop the fertile soil from becoming desert sands once more (desertification)
- Medicinal herbs and plants of great cultural or religious importance are also grown in the Pre-Oasis Garden
- The crops and the herbs are placed next to baby palm trees which provide the shade they need to grow

Orchard Garden

- The second layer of the Oasis Garden contains fruit-trees and sugar cane which are both important food sources

The Symbolic Garden

- The third and tallest layer of the Oasis Garden system is known as the Symbolic Garden
- Tall trees and plants are grown here to protect and give shade to the fruit and grains on the lower levels

Al Ain Oasis opening hours

Oasis: daily 8am - 5pm

Restaurants, cafés and shops: daily midday - 9pm

Charges

Free to enter

Bida Bint Saud



Bida Bint Saud is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located 15 kilometres north of Al Ain city, just off the E95 road, and is the site of a collection of burial chambers or tombs. The tombs are situated both at the base and top of the rock formation, the Qarn Bint Saud. The Qarn is easy to see from the road as it is 800m long, 25m wide and 40m high.

At the base of the Qarn, the tombs date back to 3000 BC. With round, single chambers they are similar in design to those found at the foot of Jebel Hafeet and are hence referred to as 'Hafeet Tombs'. Originally, they would have been shaped like a dome or a beehive.

At the top of the Qarn, there is a collection of tombs dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages (approximately 2000 to 300 BC). Although items have since been removed from the tombs, they originally contained bronze and ceramic objects that spanned several centuries. Other items found at the tombs, but thought to date from later periods, include:

- pottery and stone containers
- blades
- swords
- arrowheads
- beads and other jewellery

The presence of these burial sites indicates a period of continuous settlement in the area. Further evidence of this can be found one and a half kilometres away, to the west of the tombs, where a 3000-year-old *falaj* was discovered. This *falaj* was a system of water channels for bringing water to the area and irrigating the land. Near to the *falaj*, the remains of a public building were also found. It is thought this building would have been the *majlis*, a meeting place or 'council' where the local chief or ruler could hold public meetings. It would also be from the *majlis* that the distribution of water would be controlled.

A large, central courtyard area was found here, which contained the remains of 12 pillars. The pillars would have originally supported a roof to cover this area. This would have formed the main building. Smaller storage rooms were also discovered around the central courtyard. Within these rooms, storage containers were found, thought to be used for distributing water from the *falaj*.

The significance of the *falaj* is twofold. Firstly, alongside the other *falaj* in the area from the same period, it demonstrates that this was one of the first areas globally to develop this type of irrigation system. Secondly, it was thanks to the construction of this network of water channels and the availability of water in the area that people could move away from a nomadic lifestyle, start to cultivate the land and settle in the area. This early settlement indicates the area had a significant role to play in the development of the region as a whole.

DID YOU KNOW? Excavations at the site have yielded artefacts including double-edged swords up to 40cm in length!

Knowledge Bank: Bida Bint Saud

Overview

- Bida Bint Saud is located 15km north of Al Ain city
- The site is a collection of burial chambers or tombs
- The tombs are located by the Qarn Bint Saud rock
- The Qarn is easy to locate being 800m long, 25m wide and 40m high

Design and age

- A number of tombs have been found at the base and on the top of the Qarn
- At the base of the Qarn, the tombs date back to 3000 BC
- They are similar in design to the Jebel Hafeet tombs with round, single chambers
- Like the Hafeet tombs, they would have originally formed a dome shape
- At the top of the Qarn, a collection of tombs from the Bronze and Iron Ages were found dated from 2000 to 300 BC
- In these tombs, double-edged swords have been discovered up to 40cm long!
- Archaeology teams have found a few pieces of pottery and stone containers, blades, arrowheads and beads thought to be of a later date

Public buildings

- 1.5km to the west of the tombs, archaeologists discovered a *falaj* water irrigation system dating back 3000 years
- This is thought to be one of the first of this type of irrigation system in the world
- Near to the *falaj*, parts of a public building were discovered
- The building is thought to have been a chief's *majlis* or meeting place
- A large courtyard was found in this spot with the base of 12 pillars which would have supported a roof structure
- Along with the meeting place, rooms used for storage were found and storage containers thought to have been for water
- The water could have been distributed from the *falaj* to the site in the containers
- This early settlement was significant in the development of the region

Hili Archaeological Park



Hili Archaeological Park is located approximately 12 kilometres north of Al Ain city near the village of Hili. It is internationally known, easily accessible and draws many visitors due to its many archaeological sites located in a relaxed and informal, beautiful garden environment.

The Government of Abu Dhabi decided to develop the park around the archaeological site to highlight the ancient monuments and to make them easily accessible. The sites are surrounded by gardens which can be used for picnics.

The settlement and tombs date back to the third millennium BC and were discovered in the 1960s when archaeologists began research there. Most of the towers and tombs found in Hili are from the Umm an-Nar period from 2500 to 2000 BC. This culture was named after Umm an-Nar Island off the coast of Abu Dhabi where a settlement and cemetery from that period were first found.

The first archaeological digs uncovered the remains of a Bronze Age tower dating to about 2500 BC. The tower was round and built of mud bricks. The tower buildings were actually small fortresses built around a water well. Their construction indicates that Al Ain was already becoming an important trade and economic centre in the Bronze Age.

In 1985, a *falaj* or irrigation system was discovered near Hili Archaeological Park. It is one of the oldest known examples of the *falaj* irrigation system in the world, dating to around 1000 BC. This *falaj* shows that settlers in this area were using advanced engineering techniques which had developed over centuries living in an area where water was scarce.

Due to the finds at Hili, which included pottery and vessels as well as the remains of the tower and *falaj* system, archaeologists now have a clear picture of how the inhabitants farmed, traded and survived.

The Hili tombs

The largest stone tomb discovered is known as Hili Grand Tomb. It is 2.5 metres high and 8 metres across. Inside, there are six stone chambers which were likely used for burying groups of people from the nearby settlement. It was in very poor condition so it was restored to enable visitors to see what it originally looked like.

At the entrance to two of the tombs, there are beautiful engravings of animals and humans. Outside another circular tomb, a pit grave containing the remains of hundreds of people was discovered. This pit dates to the very end of the Umm an-Nar period (2500-2000 BC)

The park is open from Saturday to Thursday from 9.30am to 4.30pm and on Friday from 10am to 10pm.

DID YOU KNOW? From the tombs uncovered at Hili, scientists found that the people buried there had high levels of malnutrition which led to extreme problems with their teeth!

Further your knowledge

Comprehensive Abu Dhabi Government webpage on Hili Archaeological Park:

<https://www.abudhabi.ae/portal/public/en/citizens/culture-and-recreation/cultural-and-historical-sites/al-hili-archaeological-park>

Knowledge Bank: Hili Archaeological Park

Overview

- Hili Archaeological Park is located approximately 12 kilometres to the north of Al Ain city in Hili
- The settlement and tombs dating back to the third millennium BC were discovered when archaeologists excavated there in the 1960s
- The archaeology of Hili gives archaeologists, locals and visitors an indication of what early life was like in the region
- Most of the monuments found in Hili are from the Umm an-Nar period (2500 - 2000 BC)
- The Umm an-Nar period dates from around 2500 BC to 2000 BC which is during the time of the Bronze Age
- The period is named after Umm an-Nar island off the coast of Abu Dhabi where a settlement and tombs from this time were found
- The Government of Abu Dhabi decided to build Hili Archaeological Park around the tombs and settlements so the public could see them
- The style of the park is relaxed and informal; it is set in gardens

Hili Settlement

- At the end of the 1960s, the first digs uncovered remains of Umm an-Nar period (2500 – 2000 BC) settlement and tombs
- The buildings uncovered were round in shape and made of bricks that were not baked or ‘fired’
- The round shape of the buildings was thought to be important. The buildings were actually small fortresses or towers built around a well
- The construction of the towers indicates that Al Ain was becoming an important trade and economic centre already in the Bronze Age. One of the reasons for this was that copper was mined from the nearby mountains and traded as far away as Iraq
- The *falaj* discovered near Hili Archaeological Park is one of the oldest known examples of the *falaj* irrigation system in the world, dating to around 1000 BC

Hili Tombs

- The tombs at Hili date back to the same Umm an-Nar period as the settlement
- Approximately 600 people of all ages were buried across the site
- One of the most interesting tombs discovered is known as Hili Grand Tomb; it is 2.5m high and 8m across
- In Hili Grand Tomb, six chambers were discovered along with human remains
- At the entrance of two of the tombs, there are beautiful engravings animals and people
- Near to the tombs, pit graves were discovered

Opening hours

Saturday to Thursday: 9.30am - 4.30pm

Friday: 10am - 10pm

Jebel Hafeet Tombs



Sitting at the foot of Jebel Hafeet, near the Omani border in the east of the Al Ain region, is an archaeological site containing hundreds of prehistoric tombs. They are referred to as 'Hafeet tombs' after this mountain and they date from c 3200 to 2700 BC.

Several of these tombs, located near Mezyad, were excavated in the 1960s by Danish archaeologists following the invitation of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the first President of the UAE. The tombs were constructed of roughly-cut stone and had a beehive shape. They were heavily robbed in antiquity, but each likely contained the remains of a few people. These people were buried with imported and local ceramic vessels, beads and some bronze or copper objects.

This discovery gave the name to a new period in the early part of the Bronze Age, which was named the 'Hafeet Period' and which dates from 3200 BC to 2700 BC. The artefacts from the tombs can be seen in Al Ain National Museum. The tombs are being incorporated into the soon-to-open Mezyad Desert Park. During the Hafeet Period, most of the inhabitants of the UAE were nomads who kept sheep, goats, and cattle. At the same time, however, some people also started to live in settled communities and grew crops, as seen at the site of Hilli 8.

More information about the Al Ain National Museum can be found in the Culture and Heritage part of Section 10.

The Jebel Hafeet tombs were included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Al Ain in 2011 and, since then, have been protected and preserved.

Knowledge Bank: Jebel Hafeet tombs

Overview

- The site of the Jebel Hafeet tombs is located near the Omani border to the east side of the region of Al Ain
- The tombs are made from roughly-cut stone blocks stacked on top of each other and are referred to as 'beehive' tombs as they are round in shape
- They consist of a single chamber with several people buried inside
- The tombs are 5,000 years old and are the earliest Bronze Age tombs discovered in the UAE
- The discovery of the Hafeet tombs gave the name of a new period in the early part of the Bronze Age named the 'Hafeet Period' which dates from 3200 BC to 2700 BC. During this period, most of the inhabitants of the UAE were nomads who kept sheep, goats, and cattle. At the same time, however, some people also started to live in settled communities and grew crops, as seen at the site of Hili 8
- Hundreds of the beehive tombs are placed at the base of Jebel Hafeet mountain
- They were pronounced a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011 and since then have been protected and preserved
- They will form part of the Mezyad Desert Park and be open to the public

Discovery

- The site of the tombs was discovered by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in the 1950s
- Sheikh Zayed instructed a team of Danish archaeologists to excavate the site in 1959
- The Danish team uncovered the tombs and also found ceramic pots and copper objects inside
- Visitors can see these artefacts in the Al Ain National Museum

Section 10

Al Ain:

Family Attractions

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Al Ain Zoo



Al Ain Zoo is a family destination and has over 4,000 animals. They live in enclosures similar to the surroundings in their natural habitats. There are around 200 species which live in the zoo and many of these are very rare with at least 30% of them considered endangered.

Located near the base of the Jebel Hafeet mountain in Al Ain city, which is 90 minutes from Abu Dhabi.

Visitors can look out for the zoo's animal celebrities, including baby penguin, Zaaferna the Giraffe, Liwi the zebra, Jambo the gorilla, Debo the Hippo, Nairobi the Rhino, Qais the leopard, the lion cubs family and the amusing Chimpanzees.

For an extra cost, visitors can enjoy a range of activities, including feeding giraffes and budgies. Other activities include camel riding, reptile encounters, lemur walk, penguin feeding, watching animals feeding, Cheetah Run show, enjoying Hippo & Croc Talks, the wings of Sahara show and parrot shows. The zoo also has a free train to get you around the enclosures during your trip.

Al Ain Zoo has its own petting zoo, named Children's Zoo & Children Discovery Garden, which are designed to look like a local farm. Here, families can feed and play with sheep, goats, camels, llamas, chickens, peacock, ducks & more.

Zoo visitors can now see many animal species at Al Ain Safari, and make use of the Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre, both of which opened in 2016.

Al Ain Safari

Magnificently positioned against the imposing backdrop of Jebel Hafeet, and a majestic finger-like extension of the rugged Hajar Mountains, the ground-breaking Al Ain Safari is being masterfully crafted out of the desert environment to incorporate its pristine surrounds. The full Safari will cover 217 hectares of land along the base of the mountain range. On the 20th of April 2016, the first section of Al Ain Safari was opened, called the African Safari, which at 54.5 hectares is already one of the world's largest man-made Safaris. It has become a continuously evolving natural home to a diverse range of native African animal and plant species including White Rhino, Giraffe and African Lion.

Al Ain Safari Tour

We have a number of private Safari SUV tour time slots available on a daily basis. Each SUV can accommodate 6 people and the tour takes approximately one hour. If you have children under 3 years old you are encouraged to use a child seat. Please ask your Safari Guide for assistance.

We offer a number of Safari truck tour time slots on a daily basis. Each truck can accommodate up to 22 people. The tour takes approximately 45 minutes. This tour is not suitable for children under 5 years old.

Dinner with the lions

Join loved ones or close colleagues for a gourmet dining experience underneath the Arabian skies, surrounded by the tranquil wilderness of Al Ain Safari. You will be treated in style throughout, starting with the warmest of Emirati welcomes from your specialist host Safari Guide. You will be taken on a sunset tour of Al Ain Safari before dusk appears culminating in an extraordinary gastronomic experience on the edge of Lion territory.

This premium activity has a limited availability with minimum price and it must be booked and paid in advance online.

Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre

The SZDLC is an architecturally stunning educational facility in the zoo's grounds, located at the heart of the Al Ain Zoo. The centre continues the legacy of the UAE's founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and teaches visitors about the past, present and future of the UAE through visual and interactive galleries and the use of multi-media. Emirati guides are on hand to provide a unique UAE experience at the centre.

The centre consists of five interactive galleries and one feature theatre:

- **The Sheikh Zayed Tribute Hall** is a gallery and tribute to his life and legacy. Visitors will gain an understanding of the values that drove his conservation principles
- **Abu Dhabi's Desert Over Time** gallery explores the natural and cultural history of the Arabian deserts as well as deserts worldwide
- **Abu Dhabi's Living World** gallery explores the ecosystems and biodiversity in Abu Dhabi
- **The People of the Desert** gallery looks at the tribal origins of the Bedouin people and allows visitors to get a flavour of traditional Bedu life
- **Looking to the Future** is a gallery which showcases Abu Dhabi's future plans and developments
- **Visions of the Arabian Desert** is the centre's feature theatre. Here, visitors fly over the Arabian Desert and travel back in time to see the geological eras

SZDLC is the first building in the UAE to get a sustainability rating of five pearls. The Pearl Rating System is the green building rating system developed by the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council. The centre has also received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification.

For Opening Hours:
Please visit www.AIAinzoo.ae.

SZDLC's tickets is including within zoo ticket rate.
Check the Al Ain Zoo website for the most up-to-date ticket prices, including group rates, at:

https://online.alainzoo.ae/zaa_b2c/opentickets.html?productGroup=WGEADM

To download a zoo site map go to:

www.alainzoo.ae/en/en-visit/en-zoomap.html

DID YOU KNOW? More than 30% of Al Ain Zoo animal species are classified as 'endangered' on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.

Further your knowledge

Downloadable site map:

<https://alainzoo.ae/map>

DID YOU KNOW? Al Ain Zoo is the Largest zoo in the middle east

DID YOU KNOW? Al Ain Zoo homes more than 4000 animals

DID YOU KNOW? Al Ain safari, located in Al Ain Zoo, is the largest man-made safari in the world

DID YOU KNOW? Al Ain Zoo is working on massive upcoming projects

DID YOU KNOW? Al Ain Zoo have penguins!

DID YOU KNOW? Most of Al Ain Zoo newborns are named by visitors & social media followers

DID YOU KNOW? With accelerating rates of species extinction and habitat loss throughout the world, conservation initiatives Has become increasingly important on a local and global level. Al Ain Zoo partnerships with international conservation groups provide opportunities for these onservation and educational initiatives on a dramatic and innovative scale.

Please check Al Ain Zoo Partnership through the below link:

<https://alainzoo.ae/our-partners>

Knowledge Bank: Al Ain Zoo

Activities

There are a variety of activities that visitors can enjoy at an extra cost, including:

- Budgie Feeding
- Penguin Feeding Show
- Parrot Talk
- Giraffe Feeding
- Hippo Talk
- Lion Feeding Time
- Cheetah Run Show
- Crocodile Feeding Show
- Crocodile Feeding Show
- Reptile Encounter
- Asian Animals Feeding Time
- Arabian Animals Feeding Time
- African Animals Feeding Time
- Parrot Show
- Wings of the Sahara Show
- Monkeys Enrichment Time
- Chimpanzees Feeding Time
- Gorilla Feeding Time
- Dinner with the Lion
- Feeding Safari Lions

Please check our website for the updated timings www.alainzoo.ae

Tickets

Check Al Ain Zoo's website for the most up-to-date charges and group rates etc.

https://online.alainzoo.ae/zaa_b2c/opentickets.html?productGroup=WGEADM

Other facilities and attractions within the zoo

Al Ain Safari

<https://alainzoo.ae/al-ain-safari>

Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Centre (SZDLC)

Al Ain Zoo Experiences:

<https://alainzoo.ae/explore-zoo/experiences>

Al Ain Zoo Services:

<https://alainzoo.ae/explore-zoo/visitor-services>

Al Ain Zoo corporate offers:

<https://www.alainzoo.ae/discounts-and-offers>

Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs



Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs is located in Al Ain at the foot of Jebel Hafeet mountain, just ten minutes' drive from Al Ain Zoo. The 160 hectare park is said to be the greenest area in the UAE due to the natural, hot water springs that rise to the surface in the area and keep the park constantly watered.

The water rises from kilometres deep within the ground through channels created by the movement of rock plates over thousands of years and is therefore geothermal in nature. Water arrives at the surface at a very hot temperature - between 40° and 45°C - and in places gushes from the ground. Like most hot springs throughout the world the water is thought to have beneficial properties.

The development of the site as a leisure and tourist attraction was overseen by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE. This scheme, along with other similar ones, led to him often being referred to as 'the man who turned the deserts green'. The park opened in 2004 and has become a very popular destination for both residents of Al Ain and visitors, especially on public holidays.

The park has a man-made lake and offers camping, barbecuing and fishing facilities. In addition, there are four indoor swimming pools, two for men and children and two for women only (aged 12 and upwards). It costs only AED 5 for an all-day pass to the pools. There are a number of restaurants and a mini market available in the park. Visitors can enjoy riding camels and take horse carriage rides in the park. Visitors wishing to stay overnight can rent one of the Green Mubazzarah Chalets operated by Danat hotels. There are over 200 one- and two-bedroom chalets on site.

Entrance to the Green Mubazzarah Park is free but Al Ain Municipality has recently announced that it will issue fines to anyone who leaves rubbish behind or lights fires outside designated areas.

Prices for the chalets can be found on the official website:

<http://greenmubazzarahchalets.danathotels.com/en/hotel-services.html>

DID YOU KNOW? Sheikh Zayad had a live satellite television link to the Green Mubazzarah construction site when he stayed in Switzerland.

Further your knowledge

The National newspaper article about the park and springs:

www.thenational.ae/uae/park-is-a-welcome-haven-of-green-1.423073

Knowledge Bank: Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs

Overview

- Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs is located at the base of the Jebel Hafeet mountain in Al Ain
- The park and hot springs are a ten minute-drive from Al Ain Zoo
- The 160 hectare (395 acre) park is thought to be the greenest area in the UAE
- The greenness is due to natural, hot underwater springs that rise to the surface
- The source of the hot springs was formed as the result of thousands of years movement of rocks or plates up to 2km below the surface
- The movement of the rocks caused them to split and this acted as channels for the water to rise to the surface
- The water temperature of the springs at the Green Mubazzarah is between 40°C and 45°C
- The hot water is thought to have therapeutic properties
- The land around Green Mubazzarah is constantly watered by the springs
- It was developed and overseen by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, founder of the UAE, and opened to the public in 2004
- Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was often referred to as 'the man who turned the deserts green' and the park is part of his legacy
- The park and springs are very popular for residents and visitors, with thousands of people visiting them on public holidays
- The park also features camping, barbecuing and fishing facilities
- In the park, there are four indoor swimming pools, two for men and children and two for women only (aged 12 and upwards)
- Al Ain Municipality has recently announced that it will issue fines to visitors who leave rubbish behind or make fires outside permitted areas

Green Mubazzarah Chalets

- Visitors wishing to stay overnight at Green Mubazzarah can stay at the Green Mubazzarah Chalets
- There are over 200 chalets at the site run by Danat Hotels

Charges

Entrance to the Green Mubazzarah Park is free.

The swimming pools cost AED 5 per person for an all-day pass

Hili Fun City



Hili Fun City is located to the north of Al Ain City and was the first-ever theme park in the Arabian Gulf, having originally been opened in 1985 by Sheikh Tahnoon bin Muhammad Al Nahyan.

Hili Fun City is located near to the Hili Archaeological Park, which has been recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and is also where ancient tombs have been discovered.

The theme park underwent a complete refurbishment and transformation in 2009. It now houses more than 30 attractions, from thrilling rides to family-friendly rides, as well as a 3D cinema which opened in 2017.

Entry to the park offers access to a whole host of fun attractions including:

- Twister Mountain – a twisting roller-coaster opened in 2010
- Sky Flyer – a set of carriages that spin round 360 degrees
- Thunderbolt – mobile carts that spin round a central column and swing side-to-side
- 3D Action Cinema
- A carousel
- Trains, including a circus train and The Hili Express
- Ali Baba flying carpet ride
- Hili Mouse junior roller-coaster

The park also features a family show, amphitheatre, picnic and play areas.

Between October and May, the park is open from 4pm until 10pm Monday to Thursday, from 12 noon until 10pm Friday and Saturday, and from 10am to 10pm on public holidays.

Between June and September, the park is open from 5pm until 10pm Monday to Thursday, from 4pm until 10pm Friday and Saturday, and from 4pm until 10pm on public holidays.

The park is closed on Sundays, unless a public holiday falls on Sunday. Wednesdays are reserved specifically for ladies only.

The reasonable prices charged by Hili Fun City make it a firm favourite for families visiting Al Ain. Tickets cost AED 50 from Wednesday to Saturday and AED 45 on Mondays and Tuesdays. Admission is free for children less than 90cms tall.

DID YOU KNOW? When it first opened in 1985, Hili Fun City was referred to as the Disneyland of the Gulf Cooperation Council and has hosted numerous royal families and VIPs.

Further your knowledge

Official website:

www.hilifuncity.ae

Hili Fun City promotional video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb9xWnhV15s

Virtual Tour:

<http://www.hilifuncity.ae/virtualtour/final.html>

Knowledge Bank: Hili Fun City

Overview

- Hili Fun city is located near Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in the north of Al Ain
- The site is located near to the Hili Archaeological Park, a site which has been recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site (see UNESCO World Heritage Sites for further information) and is also where ancient tombs have been discovered
- The park was opened in 1985 by His Highness Sheikh Tahnoon bin Muhammad Al Nahyan
- Hili Fun City was the Gulf's first-ever theme park
- The park underwent a complete refurbishment and transformation and reopened to the public in 2009
- The park contains more than 30 attractions from thrilling rides to family-friendly rides
- The park has recently opened a 3D cinema experience
- The park also features a family show, amphitheatre, picnic and play areas
- The competitive price of Hili Fun City makes it a firm favourite for families visiting Al Ain

Attractions

- **Sites and attractions at Hili Fun City include:**
 - 3D Cinema opened in 2017
 - Twister Mountain – a twisting rollercoaster opened in 2010
 - Sky Flyer - a set of carriages that spin round 360 degrees
 - Thunderbolt - mobile carts that spin round a central column and swing side-to-side
 - A carousel
 - Trains including a circus train and The Hili Express
 - Ali Baba flying carpet ride
 - Hili Mouse junior rollercoaster

Opening hours

	October - May	June - September
Public Holidays	10am - 10pm	4pm - 10pm
Friday and Saturday	12 noon - 10pm	4pm - 10pm
Monday to Thursday	4pm - 10pm	5pm - 10pm

The park is closed on Sundays, unless a public holiday falls on Sunday. Wednesdays are reserved for ladies only.

Charges

Hili Fun City charges AED 50 from Wednesday to Saturday and AED 45 on Mondays and Tuesdays. Admission is free for children less than 90cm tall.

Wadi Adventure



Wadi Adventure is a man-made, high-tech water sports facility located next to Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs in the foothills of Jebel Hafeet mountain in Al Ain city. It is the first of its kind in the region, and offers a number of exciting activities.

Wadi Adventure consists of five zones:

- Wake Park, where riders can enjoy riding a wakeboard pulled by an electric cable
- White Water Rafting Channels, where rafters can enjoy hour-long sessions on the water in three separate channels for beginners, intermediate and advanced levels
- Airpark, featuring an aerial, high-ropes obstacle course, a zip wire, a climbing wall and a giant swing
- Surf Pool, where visitors can surf the world's largest man-made wave at 3.3 metres
- Open Beach, where visitors can take a leisurely swim in the heated family swimming pool or the kids' splash area

Visitors can have lessons in all sports and activities and tuition is provided by certified trainers for all levels. In the White Water Rafting Channels zone, there are three channels – green for beginners, blue for intermediate, and black for advanced rafters. Rafters will have a 15-minute safety and tuition briefing before entering the water. Wadi Adventure has the world record for the longest artificial facility for rafting with the three combined channels stretching 1.7 kilometres. These white-water channels are also used for all levels of kayaking.

Wadi Adventure hosts some global events; the Middle East's first-ever World Rafting Championship was held there in 2016.

Visitors can stay refreshed by getting a snack at Rafter's Grill, or have a sit-down meal at the Surf Café. Mango Mango is the place to go for slushies, ice creams and desserts. Food brought in from outside is not permitted in the park, but there is something for everyone at one of the park's food outlets.

Visitors can rent or buy all equipment from the H₂O store or they can bring their own equipment to use after a safety check from park staff. The open beach area, family pool and splash area are open to all, but participants for the other activities must be at least 1.2 metres tall.

The park is open daily from 11am to 7pm. The Open Beach opens daily from 5pm to 6.45pm on weekdays, and Fridays from 3pm to 6.45pm. Ladies' Nights are held twice a month, on the second and fourth Thursday of the month.

General admission is AED 50 for one adult, and children below 1.2 metres are AED 25. Family passes can be bought for AED 120 and admission for guardians is AED 25. Please check the website for up-to-date prices for activities:

<https://www.wadiadventure.ae/>

DID YOU KNOW? Wadi Adventure was chosen as the training location for the first ever UAE rafting team.

Further your knowledge

Wadi Adventure YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WadiAdventure>

Knowledge Bank: Wadi Adventure

Overview

- Wadi Adventure is located next to Green Mubazzarah Park and Hot Springs in the foothills of Jebel Hafeet mountain in Al Ain city
- Wadi Adventure is a man-made, high-tech water sports facility
- It is the first park of its kind in the region
- Visitors to the park can enjoy activities in zoned areas:
 - **Wake Park** – for wakeboarding where riders ride a small thin wakeboard pulled by an electrically-driven cable
 - **White-Water Rafting Channels** – there are three channels - green for beginners, blue for intermediate and black for advanced rafters. Rafters enjoy hour-long sessions on the water after a 15-minute safety and tuition briefing. Wadi adventure has the world record of the longest artificial facility for rafting at 1.7 kilometres for the three combined channels. The white-water channels are used for all levels of kayaking
 - **Airpark** – featuring an aerial high ropes obstacle course, a zip wire, a climbing wall and a giant swing
 - **Surf Pool** – visitors can surf the world's largest man-made wave at 3.3 metres
 - **Open Beach** – visitors can take leisurely swim after all that activity in the heated family swimming pool or the kids' splash area
- Visitors can take lessons for all sports and activities and tuition is provided by certified trainers for all levels of competency
- Visitors can rent or buy all equipment from the H₂O store or they can bring their own equipment to use after a safety check from park staff
- Participants for the activities must be above 1.2 metres tall

Food and drink

- Visitors can grab a snack at Rafter's Grill
- The Surf Café offers sit-down meals
- Mango Mango is the place for slushies, ice creams and desserts
- Outside food and beverages are not permitted into the park

Events

- The Middle East's first-ever World Rafting Championship was held at Wadi Adventure in 2016

Acclaim

- Surfing Magazine voted Wadi Adventure's surf pool on to its '50 Favourite Surfing Sites' list worldwide
- The magazine ranked the pool the 41st best surfing beach in the world, even though it has artificially created waves

Opening hours

- Open daily from 11am - 7pm
- The Open Beach is open daily:
 - Weekdays from 5pm - 6.45pm
 - Fridays from 3pm - 6.45pm
- Ladies' Nights are held twice a month (second and fourth Thursday of the month)

Charges

- General admission is AED 50 for an adult
- Family passes are available for AED 120
- Admission for children below 1.2 metres is AED 25
- Admission for guardians is AED 25
- Visitors should check the website for up-to-date prices for activities

Section 10

Al Ain:

Outdoor Adventure – Land / Desert

GRASP | ABSORB | APPRECIATE



Al Ain Safari



Al Ain Safari is the largest man-made African-style safari park in the world where visitors can admire a wide range of animals. Opened in 2016, the 217- hectare safari park is located at Al Ain Zoo (see the Family attractions section) and was developed as part of its expansion plans to welcome more visitors to the site.

The park has over 250 African and local animals for visitors to see during their trip, as well as 2,500 plants from 38 African plant species. Larger animals in the grounds include lions, zebras and giraffes. The smaller animals include meerkats and dama gazelles. Visitors will see a variety of birds - crowned cranes and ostriches, as well as critically-endangered and locally-extinct animals, such as the scimitar oryx and the addax.

Al Ain Safari has a wide range of different safari options and packages for visitors to choose from. Visitors can join other guests on a 26-seat truck with a driver and expert safari guide, which will go on a pre-determined route of the park, or hire a private sport utility vehicle (SUV) which will be driven by a safari guide. The SUVs can drive near to the lion enclosure allowing visitors to study the big cats in their natural environment.

Located on Nahyan the First Street in Al Ain City, the safari park is open daily from 9am to 7pm. For the daring adventurer, night safaris are also available.

Even more visitors will soon be able to experience the atmosphere of an African safari overnight, as a large hotel is being built which overlooks the park grounds.

Prices for tours can be found on the Al Ain Zoo webpage:

<http://www.alainzoo.ae/en/en-visit/en-tickets-groupbookings.html>

DID YOU KNOW? Visitors to the safari are guided entirely by Emirati tourist guides.

Further your knowledge

Information on Al Ain Safari tours:

<http://www.alainzoo.ae/en/en-safari/en-safaritours.html>

The National newspaper's video of the Safari:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo6B62BtiXI>

Knowledge Bank: Al Ain Safari

Overview

- Al Ain Safari is located at Al Ain Zoo on Nahyan the First Street in Al Ain city
- It is the world's largest man-made African-style safari park in the world and opened in 2016
- The 217-hectare safari park is part of Al Ain Zoo's expansion plans and aims to attract more foreign visitors to the area
- The park has 38 varieties of African plants and a variety of African animals
- There are over 250 animals for visitors to see while on safari
- A large hotel is currently being constructed that will overlook the safari park grounds

Animals

- Visitors to the safari park will see a variety of African and local animals
- Large animals include:
 - lions
 - zebras
 - giraffes
- Smaller animals include:
 - meerkats
 - dama gazelles
- Birds include:
 - crowned cranes
 - ostriches
- Critically-endangered or locally-extinct animals include:
 - the scimitar oryx
 - the addax

Tours

- There is a wide range of different safari options and packages for visitors to choose from
- Visitors can share a 26-seat truck with other zoo guests, with a driver and expert safari guide
- Alternatively, visitors can hire a private SUV, which will be driven by a safari guide
- The SUVs can drive near to the lion enclosure which allows visitors to study the cats in a natural environment
- Night safaris are also available for the daring visitor!

Opening hours

The safari is open daily from 9am - 7pm

Charges

Up-to-dates prices for tours can be found on the Al Ain Zoo webpage:

<http://www.alainzoo.ae/en/en-visit/en-tickets-groupbookings.html>

Arabian Nights Village



The Arabian Nights Village is a specially-created 'desert experience' where guests can enjoy a range of local traditions, with optional, organised desert-based activities.

Opened in 2012, the village is located in the Razeen area of Al Khatim, on the Abu Dhabi to Al Ain highway. The village is 50km from exit 59 on the highway, also known as Route 22. Open to both day guests and overnight visitors, the village hosts private guests and corporate events.

The resort can be reached from Abu Dhabi by coach or transfer service which leaves daily at 3pm from Khalifa Park, behind the Park Rotana complex. Confident drivers who have their own 4X4 vehicle can access the village themselves by road.

Guests have several styles of accommodation to choose from:

- Bedouin tents (*Bayt Al Shaaer*)
- Palm houses (*Bayt Al Bahar*)
- Desert houses (*Bayt Al Bar*)
- The Fort Tower (*Al Manha*)

The village organises a range of activities for guests. There are daytime and night-time desert safaris led by licensed drivers. The more adventurous can go dune bashing in modern Toyota Land Cruisers, while more active guests could go quad or fat biking which is cycling on an off-road bicycle with over-sized tyres. If that isn't energetic enough, visitors could try sand surfing and sand sledding which involves sliding down sand dunes in a sled. The swimming pool at the village is free of charge for overnight residents, with a small charge payable by day guests.

Guests can dine at the buffet-style Al Maqam restaurant, which has a palm-thatched terrace. Al Maqam means 'gathering place' in Arabic and guests here are seated, Arabian-style on the floor, with *majilis*-style sunken seating. There are fire pits to keep guests warm on cold winter nights. Evening meals are served outdoors from 7pm.

A variety of food is on offer at the various cooking stations - from local Emirati dishes and traditional Arabic food to spit roasts and international cuisine. Healthy food options are also available. There are bread-making demonstrations and a range of other entertainment including musicians, belly dancers, henna artists and falconry shows.

There is a wide choice of drinks; soft drinks are free of charge and alcohol is available at an extra cost. Shisha pipes are available for hire.

Dress code at the village is conservative but appropriate beach wear is acceptable when by the pool. When taking part in the activities, visitors should dress for the occasion with light, loose-fitting clothes for modesty and protection from the sun. A hat or head covering is also advisable for the same reason. On winter evenings, a wrap, light cardigan or jacket is recommended to keep warm.

Visitors should check the website for the most up-to-date rates for accommodation and activities:

<https://arabiannightsvillage.com/>

DID YOU KNOW? Although an internet connection is available, there are no televisions on-site, for complete tranquility!

Knowledge Bank: Arabian Nights Village

Overview

- The Arabian Nights Village is located in the Razeen area of Al Khatim on the Abu Dhabi - Al Ain highway
- The village is 50km from exit 59 of the highway
- The village is a purpose-built 'desert experience' with organised desert activities which opened in 2012
- Arabian Nights Village is open to day guests and overnight visitors
- The village hosts private guests and corporate events

Accommodation

For overnight guests, there are four different styles of accommodation:

- Bedouin tents (*Bayt Al Shaaer*)
- Palm houses (*Bayt Al Bahar*)
- Desert houses (*Bayt Al Bar*)
- The Fort Tower (*Al Manha*)

Activities

Activities organised by the village include:

- Day desert safaris with certified and licensed safari drivers
- Overnight desert safaris with certified and licensed safari drivers
- Dune bashing in modern Toyota Land Cruisers
- Quad biking
- Sand surfing
- Sand sledding
- Fat biking
- A swimming pool at the village can be used for free by overnight residents or for a small charge for day guests

Dining and entertainment

Al Maqam Restaurant – a buffet restaurant with live cooking stations featuring:

- Local Emirati dishes
- Traditional Arabic dishes
- International classics
- Live cooking stations and spit roasts
- Live bread making
- Healthy food choices
- Complimentary soft drinks
- A wide selection of beverages
- Arabian-style floor level and sunken seating, *majlis* style
- Fire pits for winter nights
- Palm-thatched terrace
- Shisha and alcohol is available at an extra cost
- Live entertainment including musicians, belly dancers, henna artists and falconers
- Outdoor evening meals start at 7pm

Information for visitors

- There are two transportation options available to get to the village from Abu Dhabi:
 - **Coach/transfer service from Abu Dhabi:** the coach leaves daily at 3pm from Khalifa Park, behind the Park Rotana complex in Abu Dhabi
 - **Self-drive:** confident drivers with a 4X4 vehicle can access the village by road
- Dress code is conservative although this is a purpose-built tourist destination so appropriate beach wear is considered acceptable when by the pool
- Visitors should dress appropriately for activities, with light, loose-fitting clothes for modesty and protection from the sun. A hat or head covering is also advisable
- A wrap, light cardigan or jacket is recommended for winter nights

Charges

Visitors are advised to check the website for the most up-to-date rates for accommodation and activities:

<https://arabiannightsvillage.com/>

Jebel Hafeet



Jebel Hafeet is the highest mountain in Abu Dhabi and straddles the border with Oman but its peak is in Abu Dhabi. This 1,249-metre-high mountain is located in the Al Ain district and can be reached from the E40 road.

At the foot of the mountain, there are over 500 ancient burial tombs dating back over 5,000 years, many of which are dome shaped. They have been excavated by archaeologists and the whole area has been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. You will have read about the Jebel Hafeet mountain and its caves in Section 2: General knowledge of the UAE and Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Part way up the mountain is the Mercure Grand Jebel Hafeet Hotel, a unique mountain oasis which sits at around 915 metres high and is famous for its stunning views of Al Ain. The hotel organises activities to make the most of the mountain and advises visitors intending to go to the top of Jebel Hafeet to take a jacket or coat, as temperatures can be much cooler.

Winter afternoons are a good time to visit Jebel Hafeet as the views are usually clearer. In the summer months, it is wise to go in the evening when the temperature is cooler. The mountain provides a stunning night view from Al Ain City as the twisting, winding road to the summit is lit and shimmers in the distance.

The road to the summit is another claim to fame for the mountain as its 11.7 kilometre distance is considered the best road for driving and serious cycling in the UAE. In addition, it has been voted as the greatest road to drive on by various international magazines and websites. The road has two lanes going up the mountain but only one coming down.

There are 21 bends in the road, some sweeping but others tight hairpins. Good visibility means that drivers find it relatively easy to travel at speed. As the road surface is super smooth, cars and tyres do not suffer a great deal of wear and tear. However, drivers must take care as the police can, and do, impound visitors' cars and issue fines if they are caught driving without due care and attention. Even a sudden swerve can result in a fine of AED 1,000!

Knowledge Bank: Jebel Hafeet

Overview

- Jebel Hafeet is a mountain located in Al Ain
- Although part of the mountain straddles the border of Oman, the peak is in Abu Dhabi
- The 1,249-metre-high summit is the highest peak in Abu Dhabi
- The road up and down Jebel Hafeet is famous for driving and cycling
- In the foothills of the mountain, over 500 ancient burial tombs dating back 5,000 years have been discovered and excavated by archaeologists (see UNESCO World Heritage Sites within this section for more information on the Hafeet tombs)
- The Mercure Grand Jebel Hafeet Hotel is situated on the mountain at approximately 915m high
- The hotel is famous for stunning views of Al Ain well and organises activities to make the most of the mountain
- Visitors going to the top of Jebel Hafeet are advised to take a jacket or coat as temperatures are cooler at the top
- Winter afternoons are a good time to visit as the views are clear
- In the summer months, visitors are advised to go in the evenings when the temperature is cooler
- From Al Ain city, Jebel Hafeet provides a stunning night view as the road to the summit is lit and shimmers in the distance

Drive Jebel Hafeet

- The 11.7- kilometre road up and down to the summit is considered the best driving road in the UAE
- It has been voted as the greatest driving road by various international magazines and websites
- The road is rated alongside the famous Stelvio Pass in Italy and the Great Ocean Road in Australia
- The road contains two lanes in the upwards direction and one coming down
- The road features 21 sweeping and hairpin turns
- Drivers find the road up relatively easy to drive at speed as they can clearly see the road ahead
- The road surface is super smooth which means that cars do not suffer wear and tear
- Police impound visitors' cars and issue fines if they catch them driving without due care and attention. Even a sudden swerve can result in a fine of AED 1,000

Section 10

Al Ain: Shopping

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Shopping Malls in Al Ain



Al Ain is the second largest city in Abu Dhabi and has a good range of malls and souks for the discerning shopper looking for both traditional and luxury items (please refer back to section six for information on souks and traditional shopping in Abu Dhabi). New openings and expansions of existing sites have seen the malls on offer expand in recent years. The five main shopping malls are: Al Ain Mall, Al Jimi Mall, Bawadi Mall, Hili Mall and Al Foah Mall.

Al Ain Mall

Al Ain Mall opened in 2001 and currently offers around 350 stores and 60 cafés and restaurants. Located in Al Ain city, very close to the Omani border, the venue is known as the 'ever-active mall', because Al Ain Mall runs promotions and campaigns offering luxurious grand prizes all year.

In 2011, Al Ain Mall underwent a major expansion and nearly doubled its original size. The city's top entertainment facilities can be found in the mall, including the first full-sized ice rink in Al Ain made from real ice, a bowling and billiard centre and the Grand Cineplex.

The mall's opening hours are weekdays 10am to 10pm and weekends from 10am to midnight.

www.alainmall.ae

Al Jimi Mall

Al Jimi Mall is set over two levels with a third to be completed in 2018, and offers hundreds of shopping options, including Carrefour, Centrepoint, Home Centre, Fun City, Paris Gallery, Magic Planet and Virgin Mega Store.

The mall, which opened in 2002, is located in the centre of Al Ain city near to the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium. It was developed on the site of a meat and vegetable market which was built in the 1980s.

Al Jimi Mall is open daily from 7am to midnight. Whilst the Mall does not have its own website, you can view some impressive photographs of it on the architect's website:

<https://www.aldar.com/en/Commercial-Properties/Pages/DevelopmentDetails.aspx?DevID=Jimi-Mall>

Bawadi Mall

Bawadi Mall, opened in 2009, is the largest mall in Al Ain city, and houses over 400 shops of both international and regional brands, and a range of high street and designer names. Situated in an unusual location on the gravel flats of Khattam Al Shikla, heading towards Mezyad, Bawadi Mall has a food court and many casual dining outlets, as well as family entertainment such as a ski village, a roller-coaster, an eight-screen cinema and a 16-lane bowling alley.

The mall's opening hours are Sunday to Thursday from 10am to 10pm, and Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 11pm. More information is available on their website:

www.bawadimall.com

Hili Mall

Hili Mall is a boutique mall with more than 120 shops over three levels, located in the heart of Al Ain city's Hili district and linked to the five-star Hili Rayhaan Hotel by Rotana.

The mall houses a premium selection of men's, women's and children's fashion and accessories, electronic appliances, household goods, home décor and furnishing, coffee shops, restaurants, family entertainment and food court.

The mall is open daily from 9am to 1am. More information is available from their website:

www.hilimall.ae

Al Foah Mall

Al Foah Mall is Al Ain city's newest entertainment and shopping centre, located in the north of the city. The mall houses fashion, accessories, book, toy and homeware stores, a large children's entertainment complex and a 12-screen multiplex cinema.

The mall is open from Sunday to Thursday between 10am and 10pm, and Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 11pm. For more information see:

<http://alfoahmall.com/>

Knowledge Bank: Shopping Malls in Al Ain

Overview

- Al Ain city has a good range of malls and souks (please refer back to Section 6 for information on souks and traditional shopping in Abu Dhabi)
- New openings and expansions of existing sites have seen the malls on offer expand in recent years
- The main shopping malls are:
 - Al Ain Mall
 - Al Jimi Mall
 - Bawadi Mall
 - Hili Mall
 - Al Foah Mall

Al Ain Mall

Overview

- Al Ain Mall is located in Al Ain city, very close to the Omani border
- It opened in 2001 and houses 350 stores and 60 cafés and restaurants
- In 2011, Al Ain Mall underwent a major expansion and nearly doubled its original size
- The city's top entertainment facilities can be found in the mall including:
 - the first full-sized ice rink in Al Ain made from real ice
 - a bowling and billiard centre
 - the Grand Cineplex
- Known as the 'ever-active mall', Al Ain Mall runs year-round promotions and campaigns offering luxurious grand prizes

Opening hours

- Weekdays 10am - 10pm
- Weekends from 10am - midnight

Al Jimi Mall

Overview

- Al Jimi Mall is located in the centre of Al Ain near to the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium
- It was developed on the site of a meat and vegetable market that was built in the 1980s
- Al Jimi Mall opened in 2002
- The mall is set over two levels with a third to be completed in 2018
- It offers hundreds of shopping options, including:
 - Carrefour
 - Centrepoint
 - Home Centre
 - Fun City
 - Paris Gallery
 - Magic Planet
 - Virgin Mega Store

Opening hours

- Daily from 7am - midnight

Bawadi Mall

Overview

- Bawadi Mall is situated in an unusual location on the gravel flats of Khattam Al Shikla heading towards Mezyad
- It is the largest mall in Al Ain city and opened in 2009
- The mall houses over 400 shops of both international and regional brands, and a range of high street and designer names
- The mall also has a food court and many casual dining outlets
- Family entertainment includes:
 - a ski village
 - a roller-coaster
 - an eight-screen cinema
 - a 16-lane bowling alley

Opening hours

- Sunday to Thursday from 10am - 10pm
- Fridays and Saturdays from 10am - 11pm

Hili Mall

Overview

- Hili Mall is located in the heart of Al Ain city's Hili district
- It is a boutique mall with over 120 shops over three levels
- The mall houses a premium selection of:
 - men's, women's and children's fashion and accessories
 - electronic appliances
 - household goods
 - home décor and furnishing
 - coffee shops
 - restaurants
 - family entertainment
 - food court options
- The mall is linked to the five-star Hili Rayhaan Hotel by Rotana

Opening hours

- Daily from 9am - 1am

Al Foah Mall

Overview

- Al Foah Mall is located in the north of Al Ain
- The mall is Al Ain city's newest entertainment and shopping centre
- The mall houses fashion, accessories, book, toy and homeware stores
- There is also a sizeable children's entertainment complex
- The mall has a 12-screen multiplex cinema

Opening hours

- Sunday to Thursday from 10am - 10pm
- Fridays and Saturdays from 10am - 11pm