



Section 11

Arts, Music
Poetry and Dance

Section 11: Arts, Music, Poetry and Dance

Through your work on this section you will be gaining the following Abu Dhabi knowledge:

- Artistic mission and focus of major cultural institutions, museums, historical sites and cultural properties through the Emirate
- Tourist-oriented knowledge of collections
- Music and performing arts
- Emirate of Abu Dhabi literature; basic knowledge of books written about Abu Dhabi

You will also be able to evidence some aspects of the following learning outcomes:

LO8 Name and give basic information on the main regular festivals and events

LO15 Give details of Emirate hospitality and traditions

The arts

As well as trying to preserve the culture and heritage of Abu Dhabi, there is an interest in encouraging art and creativity, especially in visual and performing arts.

The Economic Vision for Abu Dhabi 2030 includes setting up a number of world-class museums in the cultural district on Saadiyat Island which will provide a home for global art and culture for UAE citizens to appreciate and enjoy. This would also help Abu Dhabi to become a world-class cultural destination.

The design and construction of these iconic buildings is only the beginning of an exciting journey. In the meantime, a temporary exhibition space, Manarat Al Saadiyat, hosts a series of cultural programmes dedicated to developing art appreciation and awareness.

See Section 10 for information on the museums and arts centres within Saadiyat Cultural District.

Mandatory Activity: Cultural focus of institutions and knowledge of collections

As a tourist guide, you will need to have a good working knowledge of the cultural institutions themselves (see Section 10), to know their artistic focus and missions as well as a basic understanding of the collections within them.

Although this seems like a large task, being organised with your research and collating your information on collections in a chart or diary will make it simpler when you come to refer to what's on and where in Abu Dhabi.

Carry out some desk research, referring to the following websites and fill in the **Arts in Abu Dhabi - What's On** chart that follows. You will need to update the collections on a regular basis so it is worth photocopying the chart and keeping your knowledge up-to-date by checking in with the web-based Abu Dhabi events page as well as checking each institution.

Add to each of these charts throughout your course.

Visit Abu Dhabi – for details of individual cultural institutions. Use the search function to find them:

<https://visitabudhabi.ae/en/>

Major cultural institutions

Cultural and art institution	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/exhibitions/collections
Al Qattara Arts Centre	The centre sets out to provide a venue where arts and culture can be studied, practised and developed by the entire UAE community.		
Manarat Al Saadiyat	Manarat Al Saadiyat is a purpose-built art, culture and social centre, proving a focal point for visitors and the local community to enjoy international exhibitions, home-grown innovative art, inclusive talks, seminars, screenings, art classes and production facilities for professionals and amateurs alike. Visitors can enjoy picturesque outdoor facilities as well as an onsite café at Abu Dhabi's leading regional and international hub for art and culture.	<p>Open:</p> <p>Daily: 09:00 to 20:00</p> <p>Phone: +971 (0)2 657 5800</p> <p>Email: manaratalsaa diyat@tcaabu dhabi.ae</p>	<p><i>Manarat Al Saadiyat</i> means 'the place of enlightenment'. It was opened on October 2009. It stretches over 15,400 square metres and features the following sections:</p> <p>Three Galleries - hosting world-class museum exhibitions and events such as Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum and Abu Dhabi Art Fair</p> <p>Auditorium - engaging the public with talks, seminars, movies, etc.</p> <p>Atrium – a central events gallery.</p> <p>Studio – a dedicated open-plan space that will offer workshops and art classes for children and adults of all ages and abilities. Studio will also host an Artist-in-Residency programme.</p> <p>Pavilion - a garden space and venue to host corporate and social events.</p> <p>Restaurant – incorporating a café /brasserie as well as fine dining options.</p> <p>Photography Centre - a hub for all photographers and camera enthusiasts, offering a digital lab space, studios, make-up rooms, changing rooms and dark rooms.</p> <p>UAE Pavilion - an iconic building facing Manarat Al Saadiyat, designed by Lord Norman Foster.</p>

Cultural and art institution	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/exhibitions/collections
Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre	<p>The Grand Mosque centre sets out to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasise the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's noble deeds and contributions to humanity, in a way that celebrates his legacy and memory 2. Cooperate with research centres as well as religious, educational and cultural institutions 3. Enhance cross cultural communication and introduce the Centre as a cultural tourism destination 		
Qasr al Hosn	Tells the story of Abu Dhabi and its people through the city's oldest building.		
Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital	Offers an exciting and interactive tour with falcons taking centre stage. Charts the history of falcons and their part of UAE heritage.		
Zayed Centre	Looks into the life of the late Sheikh Zayed, affectionately known as the 'Father of the Nation'.		
Miraj Islamic Centre	A large collection of unique Islamic art pieces sourced from around the Muslim world including Egypt, Syria, Iran, India, Iraq, Kashmir and Russia.		

Cultural and art institution	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/exhibitions/collections
Women's Handicraft Centre	A showcase for local arts and crafts.		
Warehouse 421	<p>Set up to celebrate art and culture, design and creativity, performance and music, from local and international artists and designers.</p> <p><i>"Warehouse 421 is a new cultural destination in Abu Dhabi's port area of Mina Zayed, where warehouses are transformed to become a platform for artistic expression, understanding, and further development of the UAE's creative community."</i></p> <p>Source: www.warehouse421.ae/en/visit</p> <p>Warehouse 421's strap line is "Creativity, education and fun for everyone". Launched in 2015, this cultural space encourages artists to show their creativity and strengthen and bring together the UAE's creative community.</p> <p>Located in the Mina Zayed district of Abu Dhabi, it was transformed from an industrial warehouse to become a hub for art and culture. The conversion of Warehouse 421 has been overseen by the Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation as part of its mission to support the growth of the arts and cultural scene in the UAE.</p>		<p>Find out more about the events at Warehouse 421 by visiting their website on: https://www.warehouse421.ae/en/</p>
The National Theatre & Cultural Centre	<p>The theatre has state-of-the-art lighting, sound and film equipment and it also incorporates a lecture and conference hall which can accommodate up to 150 people. It also has a multi-purpose hall for arts and crafts exhibitions.</p>		
Art Hub	<p>The art hub focuses on new and established visual artists from across the world. It helps with cross-cultural artistic exchanges between national, regional and international artists.</p>		

Museums

Museum	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/exhibitions/collections
Emirates National Auto Museum	Houses around 200 cars belonging to HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan.		
Al Ain Classic Car Museum	Collects, maintains and displays vehicles and books related to the development of transport in the UAE.		
Zayed National Museum	The Zayed National Museum in Saadiyat Cultural District will tell the story of the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, his unification of the United Arab Emirates, the history of the region and its cultural connections across the world. It will aim to be the centrepiece of the cultural district. The programmes will be ongoing.		
Louvre Abu Dhabi	The museum houses the aesthetic expressions of different civilisations and cultures, from the most ancient to the most contemporary.		
Guggenheim Abu Dhabi	The museum will be a leading platform for global modern art and culture, presenting the most important artistic achievements of our time.		
Al Ain Palace Museum	The former home of HH Sheikh Zayed, the 'founder of the Nation', programmes and workshops at the museum display the spirit of the past with a vision for the future.		
Al Ain National Museum	Featuring archaeological and ethnographic artefacts, Al Ain National Museum offers information about local traditions and culture.		

Historical sites

Historical site	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/exhibitions/collections
Qasr al Muwajji	The exhibition, within the courtyard of Qasr al Muwajji, tells the story of the palace and its residents.	Usually held annually from January - April	<p>Al Muwajji is now a world-class museum and permanent collection of exhibitions charting the importance of the city of Al Ain in the culture and heritage of Abu Dhabi.</p> <p>There are numerous exhibition spaces housed within the fort including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sheikh's Palace This highlights the life of HH Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, where he was born and raised in Qasr Al Muwajji Evolution of Qasr Al Muwajji The development, significance and role of the fort is explored in this interactive exhibition which charts the evolution, life and regeneration and restoration of the fort President of the Nation This exhibition highlights and celebrates the achievements of HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Poem Wall This exhibition space features a poem about HH Sheikh Khalifa and his leadership, written by his brother, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nayhan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. The poem is in the traditional form of an Arabic ode
Al Jahili Fort	<p>An active visitor destination with an information centre and exhibition space.</p> <p>After extensive and careful restoration work led by the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT), Al Jahili Fort was opened as a cultural centre for the public in 2008.</p>		<p>Al Jahili Fort Exhibition</p> <p>North Wing: hosts a permanent exhibition dedicated to a documentary video of the life of the British explorer and photographer Wilfred Thesiger. The exhibition is called 'Bin London and Freedom of the Desert'</p> <p>West Wing: now a temporary exhibition centre</p> <p>South Wing: contains a bookshop, majlis and visitor information centre</p>

Historical Site	Cultural mission and focus	When	Events/Exhibitions/Collections
Al Ain Oasis	Located in the heart of Al Ain, it is the UAE's first curated UNESCO world heritage site visitor experience.	Usually held annually from January - April	<p>The oasis at Al Ain hosts a seasonal farmer's market, arts and handicraft workshops, storytelling, outdoor films and a year-round photography programme</p> <p>Travels Through Our Traditions: groups are invited to spend time with Emirati women in their homes and farms to discuss different ways of life and experience Emirati culture first hand</p> <p>My Old House Bus Tours: visits of old homes, oases and historical and cultural sites of Al Ain, accompanied by archaeologists and conservators from the Department of Culture & Tourism</p>



Al Ain Oasis

The Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation

The Foundation's mission is:

"To invest in the future of the United Arab Emirates by investing in its people."

The Foundation develops and supports strategic initiatives in the areas of education, arts, culture, heritage; and health. The Foundation is the family foundation of Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan and was founded by Her Highness in 2010.

HH Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan is the wife of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the son of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, 'Father of the Nation' and first President of the UAE.

The Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation focuses its work around three key pillars:

- Education
- Arts, culture and heritage
- Health

From time to time, the Foundation develops and supports new ideas outside of these three pillars, particularly when it wants to explore new areas of interest and future development. In addition to its work on programmes, the Foundation hosts a monthly speaker series called Muntada: The Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Forum for New Ideas.

Find out about the Foundation from their website:

<http://www.shf.ae/en/>

Intangible cultural heritage

Before we move further with this section, we should explain what 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' means as this is a term which will be used throughout your training during the Abu Dhabi tourist guide programme.

Intangible cultural heritage could also be thought of as 'non-touchable' heritage. Consider this: you can touch and feel an ancient stone carving but you can't touch a dance or a poem. Therefore, the ancient stone carving is tangible heritage and the dance or poem is intangible cultural heritage. You can hold a rug – tangible heritage, but the act of weaving the rug is intangible.

Intangible cultural heritage is passed through the generations, often through storytelling. Intangible cultural heritage provides communities with a sense of identity and tradition.

Traditional poetry and dance

The United Arab Emirates enjoys a strong tradition of dance and poetry which has played an important part in many aspects of its people's lives; the Bedouin people are a good example.

The Bedouin men would come together after a day in the desert and exchange news or details of important events. During this time, the men would tell stories passed down from their forefathers and recite traditional poetry which spoke of love, bravery, nobility and wisdom.

Hand in hand with the poetry came dance. Often simulating battle scenes, the men would dance in groups using props such as swords, sticks and rifles to add meaning to the performance.

This traditional poetry and dance gives us a vital link into the history, culture and heritage of the region and is widely practised in the Emirate today. Such is the importance of some of these poetry and dance forms that UNESCO has formally listed them as a part of the region's Intangible Cultural Heritage. They are indicated in the descriptions below.

Traditional poetry

There are two main forms of traditional poetry which are an essential part of the heritage of the UAE and Abu Dhabi: *Nabati* and *Al-Taghrooda* poetry. Take a look at each in turn:

Nabati poetry

Nabati poetry dates back to the 16th century and is sometimes called The People's Poetry and Bedouin poetry. Like *Al-Taghrooda*, *Nabati* poetry forms a part of the culture and oral history of the Arabs of the Arabian Gulf and Peninsula, linking the past to the present and giving us an important insight into historical customs.

Nabati poetry is free-form, direct and spontaneous in style. The focus is not on the creation of poetic phrases, rather easy-flowing words and verses.

Further your knowledge

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President of the UAE, is a prolific *Nabati* poet. You can read more about this form and listen to the Sheikh reciting poetry on his website.

<https://sheikhmohammed.ae/en-us/nabatipoetry>

Al Azi

Al Azi is a traditional artistic performance from the UAE, practised amongst the tribes that lived in the desert and oases of Al Ain, and also the Al Shehi tribe in Ras Al Khaimah. Al Azi is a poetry recital without rhythmic or musical instruments, performed by one person, who will recite a line from the poem, with and others standing in a line then repeating the same words.

There are three types of poetry that can be used in Al Azi; the alphabetical, which is the oldest type and the most complicated because it needs great vocal technique in terms of breathing and tone because there can be up to 68 lines of poetry to recite; the numerical, which depends on numbering the poetry lines from 1 to 10 - which means that the poem is short; and Mu'allaqa which is considered one of the new styles, and which does not depend on a specific number of lines.

Experts have emphasised that the performance is the most important element in Al Azi, including physical gestures that can excite the audience. There are different elements involved in this performance; the poet who writes the poem and the performer, who has great vocal skill and is trained to perform. Sometimes the poet plays the role of the performer, but if the person lacks the talent to recite, then a performer should be hired. A third party involved are the backing singers, who repeat the poetry lines after the performer. They usually hold a stick or swords while performing.

For the UAE, this art is performed at official ceremonies such as national celebrations, weddings, and receptions for the president's guests. The poems used are about patriotism, bravery and courtship. Because of its value, this art was added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in December 2017.

Further your knowledge

UNESCO website: Al Azi, art of performing praise, pride and fortitude poetry

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/al-azi-art-of-performing-praise-pride-and-fortitude-poetry-01268>

Al-Taghrooda

This poetry form is traditionally practised in UAE Bedouin settlements and homes. In Abu Dhabi, *Al-Taghrooda* has been performed in the deserts of the western region and, more recently, in suburban areas outside of large cities due to relocation of tribes. Men attending camel markets and races also come together to perform *Al-Taghrooda*.

Al-Taghrooda is a type of spoken Bedouin poetry which is chanted in a melodic form. It was originally written and performed by men while travelling on camel or horseback and its purpose was to entertain travellers on their journeys through the desert. The subjects chanted about have been passed down within tribes and so this poetry forms a vital link into the history, culture and heritage of the region.

Al-Taghrooda includes a poetry duel where one person starts with a poetry line, prompting the other to respond with a line similar in rhyme. The lines used are unique, have deep meaning and help to produce a new poem full of creativity, praise and fun. One of the most important aspects of *Al-Taghrooda* is the bonding that occurs between the groups during the exchanges.

This art was often used in rural areas to pass the time when two or three people came together to look for a lost camel or horse. *Al-Taghrooda*, which is popular at weddings, is also performed on horseback to urge horses to speed up. The equestrian form of *Al-Taghrooda* usually exchanges lines about courage, bravery and nobility.

More recently, *Al-Taghrooda* has developed into a form of poetic expression due to social and economic shifts. It now involves less chanting and employs particular poetic meters. Rather than simply being performed orally in groups, these days it is found in written form and recordings.

Due to its cultural significance, *Al-Taghrooda* is now listed as a part of the region's Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO and is performed during social and national festivals around the Emirate.

If you would like to know more about this melodic poetry form, watch the following UNESCO YouTube video and make some notes:

DID YOU KNOW? The English translation of *Al-Taghrooda* is 'twitter' (bird song) ¹

¹ Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE>

Traditional dances and performances

Al-Ayyala

Al-Ayyala is a very popular dance form involving poetry chanting, drumming, music and dance. It is performed during weddings and other festive occasions in both the Sultanate of Oman and UAE.

In the UAE, certain tribes in Al Ain and Abu Dhabi cities are famous for performing the *Al-Ayyala*. It is mainly men of all ages who take part but in the UAE girls also get involved.

The dance performance is like a large battle scene, with two rows of men facing each other carrying thin bamboo sticks which act as spears or swords. The more people who join the dance the better, as it becomes so much more of a spectacle. Some *Al-Ayyala* dances can have up to 200 participants!

Clothed in traditional dress, several girls (*al-na'ashat*) stand in front of the dancers and toss their long hair from side to side. This is to signify that the girls have faith in the men dancing to protect them.

Nabati poetry forms the chanting part of the performance and instruments used in the performance are small and large drums, tambourines and brass cymbals.

This dance is considered as an officially recognised aspect of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the UAE by UNESCO.

"The rows of men [then] alternate their movements, signifying victory or defeat; they chant poetic lyrics and move their heads and sticks in synchrony with the drum rhythm. The performance is governed by rules with a leading figure called al-abu (the father) or al-ras (head), who sets the rhythm of the performance (2 strong beats in ¾ time). Between the rows of performers are drummers, musicians and individual performers (al-jaweela), who move around holding swords or guns that they occasionally hurl to the sky and catch."

Intangible Cultural Heritage UNESCO ²

² Source: UNESCO <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-ayyala-a-traditional-performing-art-of-the-sultanate-of-oman-and-the-united-arab-emirates-01012>

Harbiya

The *Harbiya* dance is performed by two lines of men facing each other, with a line of rifle carriers placed between the two rows. If the number of dancers increases, the rows begin to split into sections. The dancers recite poetry by repeating melodic phrases.

This dance is now commonly performed at weddings; though it is warlike, strangely it provides the background for love poems!

Further your knowledge

Take a look at this enchanting dance form in the following video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtVlENx-6_w

Al-Razfa

Performed by all ages and classes of men throughout the UAE, *Al-Razfa* is a traditional performing art which has become a very popular form of entertainment.

Similar to other traditional dances and performances like the *Maled* and the *Harbiya*, the men face each other in two distinct rows. Other dancers then gather in the space between. A 'duel chorus' forms with one group responding to the other's chants, usually from *Nabati* poetry, while drums and other instruments accompany the performance.

Al-Razfa has been officially recognised by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the UAE.

"The dancers perform choreographed movements to the music while holding wooden replica rifles in their hands and in some cases, young girls swing their hair in time to the music. Originally performed as a communal celebration of victory, Al-Razfa is now widely popular as a form of entertainment. Practitioners have adapted musical instruments and composed melodies to interest younger audiences while maintaining the older expressions and oral traditions of the art. Performers may include heads of State and elders or very young children. Today, Al-Razfa is transmitted directly within the family through participation and observation at social occasions. The roles of individual performers are learnt by practice, while girls receive instruction from their mothers and older sisters."

Intangible Cultural Heritage UNESCO ³

³ Source: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-razfa-a-traditional-performing-art-01078>

Laiwa

The *Laiwa* dance and its music were traditionally performed after men had returned from a long sea voyage or when celebrating a good season of pearl diving. Again, this dance is performed at weddings and other special occasions and is a tradition brought to the region by Omani merchants.

Again, a dance performed by men, the participants stand in a wide circle with one or several drum players. A single male playing a reed instrument paces in the middle of the circle. The remaining participants clap and dance around the middle man and others form a line which then enters the circle and paces along with the lone male.

Al-Yollah

Al-Yollah is a very popular battle scene dance in UAE culture. It is performed by a group of men which involves spinning and throwing a dummy rifle made entirely of wood and metal plating. Men dance to the rhythm and music by moving in an up-and-down step while constantly spinning, throwing and performing several tricks with the rifle. This type of dance requires great physical skill and concentration.

Al-Na'ashat

The performance of *Al-Na'ashat* was traditionally given by Bedouin women at various kinds of important celebrations.

During *Al-Na'ashat*, the female dancers roll their heads from side to side to display the beauty of their long hair, especially when the song performed relates to love, pride or bravery.

Maled

Another popular dance performed by tribes in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai is the *Maled*. This name comes from the word *mawlid* which means the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed. This dance is different to other folk dances in the Emirates because of its ties to a religious occasion.

The dance has two sections:

- The first section is the Maled al Sira and has readings about the life of the Prophet
- The second section is the Maled al Samaa, which is the movement of the piece

Thirty people are split into two rows facing each other. The first group is called *Ahl al Sama'a*, the 'hearing people'. Some members of this group recite while others beat tambourines to give pace and a steady rhythm. The second row is known as *Al Radida*, the 'chorus'. This group repeats key phrases from the first group.

Music

While Abu Dhabi has embraced the modern, pop and classical styles of music, traditional music and song are deeply connected to the culture and heritage of the UAE region.

Traditional uses of song and music

Song played an important part in the lives of working people. Men and women created songs and chants to help them carry out tasks and jobs, such as bringing up water from the wells and diving for pearl oysters in the Arabian Gulf. In pearling, a professional song leader (*Naha'am*) was stationed on the dhows and it was his specific job to begin song and chanting such as *Hoyamal* and *Ohyamal* to rally the men into action. At appropriate moments and with songs and rhymes relevant for a particular task or job, the *Naha'am* would initiate the song and all the sailors would join in as they worked.

Further your knowledge

A fascinating insight into the songs of the pearl divers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwKm17qloUQ

Another ancient form of Bedouin singing, *Al-Sameri*, (from the word *samer* meaning to stay up at night) was sung by the Bedouin people through the night, accompanied by the *Rababah*, a traditional Arabic stringed instrument.

Instruments

Traditional Arabic music makes use of the traditional drum, the *Tablah* (otherwise known as a goblet drum, chalice drum, *doumbek* or *tarbooka*) which is a small vase-shaped drum with a wide neck, made of earthenware. Other instruments that feature in traditional Arabic music are:

- The *Nai* or *Nay*: a long flute-type instrument blown at the end rather than the side
- The *Rababah*: a stringed instrument that looks like a violin
- The *Oud*: a traditional pear-shaped stringed instrument from the same musical family as the guitar

DID YOU KNOW? The *Nai* has been played for 4,500–5,000 years, making it one of the oldest musical instruments in continuous use!

Further your knowledge

The history of the *Oud*:

<http://abudhabimusic.ae/en/bait.al.oud/history.of.the.oud.aspx>

Music events in Abu Dhabi

Music events and festivals in and around Abu Dhabi are numerous and music of one genre or another is featured in most of the Emirate's festivals.

The Department of Culture & Tourism's (DCT) music programme

The Department of Culture & Tourism has a dedicated focus on both local and international music through its established Music Programme.

Abu Dhabi Classics

Preserving its connection with local and traditional music and welcoming established and promising talent from around the world, the eight-month long annual Abu Dhabi Classics Programme brings together some of the leading contemporary artists in the field of Arabic and Western classical music. Musicians come together to showcase their talent in various events at venues throughout Abu Dhabi.

Further your knowledge

Keep your knowledge up-to-date with what's on at the next Abu Dhabi Classics by visiting the following link regularly and also signposting interested visitors to it so they know what's on when too.

<http://abudhabimusic.ae/en/abu.dhabi.classics.aspx>

Bait Al Oud series

The *Bait Al Oud* series of events, organised by the Department of Culture & Tourism through its Music Programme, celebrates Arabic musical heritage. It aims to spread the culture and awareness of the oud as a traditional instrument and to promote the awareness and use of Arabic musical instruments in Abu Dhabi in particular and the UAE in general.

Further your knowledge

Find out what's on and where and who is playing at the next *Bait Al Oud* series by visiting the following link regularly:

<http://abudhabimusic.ae/en/bait.al.oud.aspx>

The Umsiyat series

The *Umsiyat* series of outdoor music and poetry events runs in conjunction with the Abu Dhabi Classics season and *Bait Al Oud* concerts. It is organised by the Department of Culture & Tourism as a part of their Music Programme events.

Umsaiyat focuses on integrating different forms of music and poetry with a particular focus on the Arabic definition of universality.⁴

The series is organised under the Patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Shamsa Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan.

Further your knowledge

Keep informed on what's on during the next Umsiyat Series by checking the following webpage and keeping notes.

<http://abudhabimusic.ae/en/default.aspx> - search for Umsiyat for relevant information

As a part of their annual Music Programme, the Department of Culture & Tourism also organises talks, workshops and lectures by some of the great contemporary musicians:

"...in a bid to revive the culture of dialogue, tolerance and openness to other cultures."⁵

Check the websites in this section regularly to see what's on and when. You can add them to your 'What's On' chart of cultural events.

⁴ Universality is the quality of involving or being shared by all people or things in the world or in a particular group

⁵ Source: <http://abudhabimusic.ae/en/default.aspx>

Emirati music series

The Emirati Music Series aims to preserve the rich musical tradition of the country as well as offer a platform of musical expression for the new generations, in historical venues.

Abu Dhabi festival

This multi-disciplinary annual festival is the largest cultural celebration in the entire region, usually held throughout the month of March.

Check the following link from time to time to make sure you are noting what musical events feature at the next festival.

www.abudhabifestival.ae/programme_category-music

Yasalam After-Race concerts

This annual series of concerts are a popular and exciting addition to the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix for ticket holders. The concerts feature the latest pop stars and DJs from around the world and run for four nights alongside the Grand Prix days. The after-race concerts are held at the region's biggest open-air event facility, du Arena. Beats on the beach concerts are part of the Yasalam concerts and are held in the Corniche area. These concerts are open to the public and are free of charge.

Further your knowledge

Find out who is playing at the next Yasalam After-Race Concert by visiting the following website and keeping some notes on this year's star performers.

<http://www.yasalam.ae/>

For more on what's on at du Arena, please refer back to Iconic Landmarks in Section 10.

Books

A wide range of books has been written about Abu Dhabi and its history, culture and traditions. Some of them are listed here:

The Oases, Al Ain Memoirs of Doctura Latifa, Gertrude Dyck

Gertrude Dyck helped to launch the UAE's first hospital and was instrumental in the development of healthcare. She died in 2009 at the age of 75. Gertrude Dyck was a nurse and midwife, nicknamed Doctura Latifa by the many patients she helped during her 38 years of service at the Oasis Hospital in Al Ain. During her years of service, she was duty midwife for many of the 90,000 births including for members of the Royal Family. ⁶

Before the Oil, Personal memoires of Abu Dhabi 1954-1958, Susan Hillyard

Susan Hillyard was the only European woman in Abu Dhabi during the 1950s. She wrote this book as an academic research project initially but then altered it to become more appealing to a wider audience. Hillyard was an Arabic speaker who mixed with all walks of life, from wealthy sheiks to those living in poverty. She was prompted to write the book by Sheikh Zayed who wanted an accurate account of life before the oil so that people could be aware of how oil had changed their way of life. ⁷

From Rags to Riches, A Story of Abu Dhabi, Mohammad Al Fahim

Mohammad Al Fahim was born in Abu Dhabi in 1948. He experienced severe poverty in the years before oil wealth transformed the country. He grew up in the Ruler's palace, barefoot like his friends, all of whom are now senior figures in the United Arab Emirates. This book provides an account of the transformation of a Bedouin society into a wealthy country. ⁸

⁶ Source: <http://www.enhg.org/AlAin/History/GertrudeDyck.aspx>

⁷ Source: <https://www.beforetheoil.com/>

⁸ Source: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/161498.From_Rags_to_Riches

Arabian Sands, Wilfred Thesiger

This Penguin Classic includes an introduction by Rory Stewart. It documents Wilfred Thesiger's time exploring the Arabian deserts, where he travelled with the Bedouin people and experienced their everyday challenges of hunger and thirst, and their long journeys in the hot sun and bitterly cold nights. ⁹

Keepers of the Golden Shore, A History of the United Arab Emirates, Michael Morton

Michael Morton tells the extraordinary story of how the Emirates and its ruling families evolved from a tribal society to become one of the richest countries. ¹⁰

Ask Ali, a Guide to Abu Dhabi

This book is written by rising media star and public speaker, Ali Alsloom. Well-travelled Ali is thought to be an Emirati expert on intercultural affairs, with a sensitivity to expats. The book tells the story of how the UAE went from 'camel to Cadillac' and provides essential information for relocating to Abu Dhabi. It tells the reader where to find the best restaurants and how to show respect during Ramadan. ¹¹

Poems from the UAE, Dr Shihab Ghanem

Dr Ghanem is a UAE citizen who has a Master's degree in Engineering and a Doctorate in Economics. He is a retired Director of Engineering of Jebel Ali Free Zone and Dubai Ports and a retired Managing Director of Mohammed bin Rashed Technology Park. He has published 61 books including 16 books of verse in Arabic, two in English and 24 volumes of verse translated from Arabic to English, and from various languages to Arabic via English. ¹²

The Wink of the Mona Lisa and Other Stories from the Gulf, Mohammad Al Murr

A fictional account of different aspects of life among the people in the Gulf. ¹³

In a Fertile Desert: Modern Writing from the United Arab Emirates, Denys Johnson-Davies

A book of short stories from the UAE by both men and women who tell of the harsh times before oil and the unbelievable changes that have come about in the space of two generations. Some tell of the struggles faced in the early days, while others bring the past and present together nostalgically. ¹⁴

⁹ Source: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/10240/arabian-sands>

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk/display.asp?ISBN=9781780235806>

¹¹ Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7824815-ask-ali>

¹² Source: <http://thepoeticheart.com/poets/dr-shihab-ghanem/>

¹³ Source: [Source: http://www.booksarabia.com/books/arabian-literature-arts-and-crafts/the-wink-of-mona-lisa.html](http://www.booksarabia.com/books/arabian-literature-arts-and-crafts/the-wink-of-mona-lisa.html)

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6298687-in-a-fertile-desert>

Knowledge Bank: Arts, Music, Dance and Poetry

1. Artistic mission and focus of major cultural institutions, museums, historical sites, and cultural properties through the Emirate

- Al Qattara Arts Centre - a venue where arts and culture can be studied, practiced and developed by the entire UAE community
- Al Jahili Fort - an active visitor destination with an information centre and exhibition space
- Wahat Al Karama - permanent tribute to UAE's soldiers and other Emiratis who lost their lives while serving the Nation
- Al Ain Palace Museum - programmes and workshops at the museum display the spirit of the past with a vision for the future
- Al Ain National Museum - offers information about local traditions and culture
- Manarat Al Saadiyat - gives previews and information about the new Saadiyat Cultural District and hosts Abu Dhabi Art
- Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre ---demonstrates the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's noble deeds and contributions to humanity, in a way that celebrates his legacy and memory
- Qasr al Hosn Exhibition - tells the story of Abu Dhabi and its people through the city's oldest building
- Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital - charts the history of falcons and their part of UAE heritage
- Zayed Centre - looks into the life of the late Sheikh Zayed
- Emirates National Auto Museum - Houses around 200 cars belonging to HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan
- Al Ain Classic Car Museum - collects, maintains and displays vehicles and books related to the development of transport in the UAE
- Miraj Islamic Centre - large collection of unique Islamic art pieces sourced from around the Muslim world
- Warehouse 421 - set up to celebrate art and culture, design and creativity, performance and music, from local and international artists and designers
- Zayed National Museum - tells the story of the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan
- The Louvre - The Arab world's first universal museum
- The Guggenheim - Displaying art from around the world

2. Tourist-oriented knowledge of collections

- The Qasr al Hosn tells the story of Abu Dhabi and its people through the city's oldest building. The exhibition gives the 450-year history of the city of Abu Dhabi and the conservation of the fort itself.
- The exhibition, within the courtyard of **Qasr al Muwajji**, tells the story of the palace and the life of Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Al Muwajji is now a world-class museum and permanent collection of exhibitions, charting the importance of the city of Al Ain in the culture and heritage of Abu Dhabi. There are numerous exhibition spaces housed within the fort including:
 - The Sheikh's Palace
 - Evolution of Qasr Al Muwajji
 - President of the Nation
 - Poem Wall
- After extensive and careful restoration work led by the Department of Culture & Tourism (DCT), **Al Jahili Fort** was opened as a cultural centre for the public in 2008. There are three exhibition areas in Al Jahili Fort as follows:
 - **North Wing** - hosts a permanent exhibition dedicated to a documentary video of the life of the British explorer and photographer Wilfred Thesiger
 - **West Wing** - temporary exhibition centre
 - **South Wing** - houses a bookshop, *majlis* and visitor information centre

3. Traditional Poetry

- Nabati poetry dates back to the 16th century and is sometimes called The People's Poetry and Bedouin poetry.
- Nabati poetry is free-form, direct and spontaneous in style. The focus is not on the creation of poetic phrases, rather easy-flowing words and verses.
- Al Azi is a traditional art performance among the tribes lived in the desert and oasis of Al Ain, and also among the Al Shehi tribe in Ras Al Khaima.
- Al Azi is a poem performance without rhythmical or musical instruments where it is performed by one person who will say the poem and others who are standing on a horizontal queues repeat the line.
- Al Azi is performed in official ceremonies like national celebrations, weddings, and reception of the president's guests.
- Al Azi poems are about patriotism, bravery, and also courtship.
- Al Azi has been added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in December 2017.
- Al Taghrooda is a poetry form traditionally practised in UAE Bedouin settlements and homes.
- It is performed in the deserts of the western region and, more recently, men attending camel markets and races also come together to perform Al-Taghrooda.
- Al Taghrooda is a type of spoken Bedouin poetry which is chanted in a melodic form. It was originally written and performed by men while travelling on camel or horseback and its purpose was to entertain travellers on their journeys through the desert.
- Al Taghrooda includes a poetry duel where one person starts with a poetry line, prompting the other to respond with a line similar in rhyme.
- Al Taghrooda is now listed as a part of the region's Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2012 and is performed during social and national festivals around the Emirate.

4. Music and performing arts

- *Al-Sameri* is an ancient form of Bedouin singing, sung by the Bedouin people through the night
- *Tablah* is a traditional drum
- *Nai* or *Nay* is a long flute type instrument blown at the end rather than the side
- *Rababah* is a stringed instrument that looks like a violin
- *Oud* is a traditional pear-shaped stringed instrument from the same musical family as the guitar
- Traditional dances and performances include:
 - *Al-Ayyala*
 - *Harbiya*
 - *Al-Razfa*
 - *Laiwa*
 - *Al-Yollah*
 - *Al-Na'ashat*
 - *Maled*
- There are two main forms of traditional poetry that are an essential part of the heritage of the UAE and Abu Dhabi – *Al-Taghrooda* and *Nabati* poetry

5. Emirate of Abu Dhabi literature: basic knowledge of books written about Abu Dhabi

- The Oases, Al Ain Memoirs of Doctura Latifa, Gertrude Dyck
- Before the Oil, Personal memoires of Abu Dhabi 1954-1958, Susan Hillyard
- From Rags to Riches, A Story of Abu Dhabi, Mohammad Al Fahim
- Arabian Sands, Wilfred Thesiger
- Keepers of the Golden Shore, A History of the United Arab Emirates, Michael Morton
- Ask Ali, a Guide to Abu Dhabi
- Poems from the UAE, Dr Shihab Ghanem
- The Wink of the Mona Lisa and Other Stories from the Gulf, Mohammad Al Murr
- In a Fertile Desert: Modern Writing from the United Arab Emirates, Denys Johnson-Davies