



**CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE:** Relax on the Corniche; watch a craftsman at work in the Heritage Village; feast on mezze; go glam at the Emirates Palace Hotel.



## FAST FACTS

### CURRENCY

UAE Dirham (AED)  
US\$1 = 3.7 AED

### VISA

Requirements vary. Log on to [www.uaeinteract.com/travel/visas.asp](http://www.uaeinteract.com/travel/visas.asp) for more information.

### BEST TIME TO VISIT

From March through May and September through November when temperatures hover around 20°C.

### GETTING THERE

Singapore Airlines currently flies 3 times weekly from Singapore to Abu Dhabi, and from March 15, 2009, will fly there daily.

### MORE INFORMATION

[www.visitabudhabi.ae](http://www.visitabudhabi.ae)

Read more about Singapore Airlines' increased flight frequency to Abu Dhabi in Insights on Page 78.

# ABU DHABI: 5 MUST DOs

## THE ESSENTIAL QUICK GUIDE FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS.

BY RAMSEY QUBEIN

### 1 REGAL SPLENDOUR

With more than 1,000 Swarovski chandeliers, interiors gilded with real gold, and expansive marble floors, the Emirates Palace Hotel is the place to see and be seen. Stop for a meal at Anar, the Persian restaurant, or Sayad, for fresh seafood. Want some pampering? How about the Diamond Experience Ritual, which uses real diamond dust to exfoliate the skin. Those not wishing to break the bank can stop by for a cup of coffee or a glass of champagne. *West End Corniche*, Tel: 971 2 690 9000, [www.emiratespalace.com](http://www.emiratespalace.com)

### 2 FUN IN THE SUN

While temperatures can soar, there is a balmy breeze year-round, which makes spending time in a swimsuit an attractive proposition. Splash about at the public beach along the 6km-long Corniche or head out to the secluded Lulu Island just off the coast. This man-made recreational island is a short boat ride away and affords a beautiful view of the cityscape from its collection of restaurants and beaches. An entrance fee of 15 dirhams (US\$4) provides access to the island's many facilities, like a children's water park and equestrian centre.

### 3 BARGAIN FOR GOLD

Take your pick from the glittering array of gold jewellery at the Madinat Zayed Gold Souk in Muroor Road and don't forget to bargain. Prices may be halved if you play the game properly. There are many tempting shopping malls as well, like Marina Mall (*Qasr Al Amwaj Street, Al Corniche Area*, Tel: 971 2 681 8300) and Abu Dhabi Mall (*Tourist Club Area*, [www.abudhabi-mall.com](http://www.abudhabi-mall.com)), but bargaining is less acceptable here. For an authentic local experience, visit the Iranian Souk (*Al Meena district*) for traditional wares including carpets, pottery, spices, antiques and jewellery.

### 4 STEP BACK IN TIME

Within a few minutes' drive of most city hotels are a host of historical sites. The Heritage Village (*Breakwater*, Tel: 971 2 681 4455) museum showcases aspects of daily life and the Emirate's Bedouin history with reconstructed souks, mud brick houses and depictions of village life. Qasr al Hosn (*Sheikh Zayed the First Street*) is considered one of the oldest structures in Abu Dhabi, dating back to the 18th century. Also known as White Fort, it served as the former Al Nahyan royal family's residence until the mid-1900s.

### 5 DUNE THRILLER

Explore the magnificent desert landscape surrounding the city aboard a four-wheel-drive jeep. Don a helmet and 'sail' over crested dunes with a trained driver. It's a thrill a minute. Expeditions often culminate in a mezze (selection of small dishes) feast under a tent on the dunes. Hotel concierges can arrange a trip, or you can try Desert Adventures for its experience and variety of tours. *Desert Adventures*, Tel: 971 2 635 2788, [www.desertadventures.com/html/tourssafaris.html](http://www.desertadventures.com/html/tourssafaris.html) ✉

