

Exciting ways to discover Dubai beyond the city walls

24 Apr 2021, Dubai, UAE



Dubai is known worldwide for its iconic city skyline, encompassing magnificent skyscraper hotels, manmade islands, beach resorts, leisure and entertainment attractions, and world-class dining destinations. Moreover, Dubai's rich calendar of events is a huge draw among UAE residents and visitors, with the city shining as a global hub for retail, entertainment, business and sports events. As one of the safest places in the world to visit, there is truly something for all travellers to enjoy.

Yet Dubai's charm extends well beyond the city walls, with mountains, mangroves, desert, native wildlife and coastline just a stone's-throw away. With a huge range of incredible outdoor adventures waiting to be discovered, a journey to these rugged landscapes offers a new and meaningful way for UAE residents to experience Dubai once again and authentically re-connect with the destination. What's more, with trips back to nature where there is plenty of space to roam and feel safe set to be at the top of travellers' priority list for 2021, Dubai offers the perfect escape.

Explore the natural landscape

Beyond the metropolitan city of Dubai and through scenic desert lies the stunning mountain range of Hatta. Just a 90-minute drive from Downtown Dubai, this mountain conservation reserve is nestled amidst the majestic Hajar Mountains, which extends for 700 kilometres and is the highest mountain range in the eastern Arabian Peninsula. The area offers great outdoor adventures and natural scenery making it a great choice for photographers, nature lovers and adventure seekers. The area's mountains, wadis and farms act as the perfect backdrop for a range of diverse leisure experiences including the Hatta Dam, a stunning spot for kayaking and boat trips where mountains meet the water. Beautiful nature walks are plentiful with more than 30 kilometres of hiking trails, whilst the Hatta Wadi Hub offers a range of daring activities with such as archery, axe throwing, mountain carting, wall climbing and a zip-line experience. For travellers looking to enjoy an organised safari experience, leading tour operator Platinum Heritage offers a number of safe sustainable experiences through a dedicated Hygiene Manager. Guests can drive through the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve in a Series 1 Landrover to spot native wildlife amongst the rocks and dunes. On board the vintage vehicles, a

morning wildlife safari finishes off with a traditional Emirati breakfast and storytelling by a local Bedouin.

Wildlife

The expansive Al Marmoom Desert Conservation Reserve spans 10% of the emirate of Dubai and is the UAE's largest unfenced nature reserve. Just one hour's drive south of the city it invites visitors to venture through the sands, cycle amid the dunes or enjoy a picnic in the wild. Known for its sustainability initiatives, Al Marmoom is abundant with native wildlife such as Arabian gazelles, camels and birds. Once considered globally extinct, the Arabian oryx has successfully been saved after breeding programmes and re-introductions into the wild. The nearby Al Qudra lakes, a network of manmade lakes in the desert, are home to 170 types of bird species, including endangered or vulnerable species such as the steppe eagle and the Asian houbara. Birdwatching is a popular activity and guided full or half-day tours are available through the UAE Birding Group. The calming waters are also a welcome spot for nature-lovers to enjoy a sunset picnic, or early risers can head over at dawn to catch a glorious desert sunrise.

Possibly the jewel-in-the-crown is the atmospheric Love Lake Dubai; a scenic spot consisting of two heart-shaped lakes connected to each other, surrounded by romantically inspired sculptures and greenery.

Located on the edge of the city there's also the serene Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary. This expansive wetland reserve serves as a breeding ground each year for crustaceans, mammals and fish, but it is the brightly coloured flamingos that steal the show in winter. Visitors will also find grey herons, great egrets, reef herons, cormorants, black-winged stilts, sandpipers and ospreys at this natural habitat, which is closely monitored and protected by the Dubai Municipality.

Sport

As well as leading rugby, golf and tennis tournaments in the city, sporting enthusiasts have a lot to enjoy outside of the city. Fitness fans will delight in the Al Qudra cycling path, which is found close to the Love Lake. This 86km track cuts through the sandy terrain and is popular with both professional and amateur riders, taking from 1.5-3 hours to complete. For something a bit different, enjoy a new-age take on the traditional Emirati sport of camel racing at the Al Marmoom Camel Racing track early on a weekend morning, where the 'ships of the desert' hurtle through the dirt track, reaching speeds of 40km/h. There is also the fortress-like JA Shooting Club which offers a unique recreational and competitive environment with an indoor and outdoor academy, offering five floodlit clay shooting ranges accessible for both beginners and experienced shooters. In addition to amazing experiences on land, those who enjoy exploring on the ocean can enjoy trips with Deep Blue Fishing, who offer cruises along the spectacular Dubai coastline and out into the Arabian Gulf on luxury yachts and fishing boats with experienced crew.

Remote retreats & spas

After a challenging year, trips that offer wellness activities with much-needed fresh air hold huge appeal and Dubai is home to a range of remote resorts that accommodate this wish. The Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa on the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve takes glamping to another level, with luxury tented-style villas in a resort setting, each featuring its own private infinity pool. Activities on offer here include horse-riding, nature walks and sunset camel trekking over the rolling dunes, whilst the Timeless Spa has a wide range of wellness, rejuvenation and beauty therapies that draw on the wisdom of Middle Eastern and South East Asian aromatherapy traditions. Bab Al Shams Desert Resort Spa is another rustic-chic desert oasis and home to a desert ecosystem consisting of birds, geckos and a cornucopia of wildlife. The resort's award-winning Satori Spa indulges all the senses and encourages guests to completely unwind with luxurious treatments including aromatic body scrubs and hot stone aromatherapy.

With so much space to breathe in Dubai's expansive landscape and activities that promote natural social distancing, travellers can reignite their love for discovery once again. Visitors also have the comfort of the DUBAI ASSURED' stamp, which ensures that all establishments within

the tourism ecosystem have implemented the health and safety protocols. The compliance stamp, which is reissued every two weeks by relevant authorities, serves as a visual identity reassuring guests that all stringent safety and hygiene measures prescribed by the authorities have been adhered to. In addition, Dubai was awarded the 'Safe Travels' Stamp by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in 2020, giving travellers near and far the confidence to visit the destination in 2021.

