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Abu Dhabi

Photo: rjnworks

Photo: UggBoyUggGirl [PHOTO // WORLD // TRAVEL]

With its awesome glass skyscrapers that reflect the bustle of daily life, magnificent buildings such as the Emirates Palace, its lively souqs, excellent international restaurants and its long stretches of white beaches lapped by the crystal clear waters of the Persian Gulf, Abu Dhabi is a city of outstanding contrasts.

The throbbing heart of the city lies 250 metres off-shore on an island linked to the mainland by the Al Maqtaa Bridge and Mussafah Bridge. Home to the respected Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation and the Al Hosn Palace museum, along with numerous venues for the arts, the wealthy city is the cultural as well as the commercial hub of the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Photo: Sarah_Ackerman

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THE CITY

Photo: UggBoy UggGirl [PHOTO // WORLD // TRAVEL]

Abu Dhabi can trace its history way back to the Bronze Age and has a long tradition of profitable trading, but it wasn't until the 1950's – when oil was found – that it was transformed from its desert landscape into the fabulous city it is today. Designed in a grid-like fashion with wide open spaces and boulevards, it is the second largest city in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, after its neighbour Dubai. It is the seat of government and the capital of the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Daily life centres around its main thoroughfares, including the busy Sheikh Zayed Street and the paved waterfront Corniche. Always bustling, the Corniche is where visitors can be seen admiring the stunning pink-washed Emirates Palace at the Ras Al Bateen, built as a hotel for visiting royalty, and locals can be seen jogging or cycling with much enthusiasm. Families with children and leisure walkers regularly enjoy the atmosphere.

A short walk from the waters edge are streets full of shiny new skyscrapers that house the city's financial and banking institutions, its world famous company offices and its government buildings. At pavement-level, hotel and restaurants cater for every taste, while shopping malls are full of designer fashions. In contrast, the many souqs offer gold, spices or traditional craft items.

DO & SEE

Photo: Sarah_Ackerman

The Corniche sweeps along the waterfront from one side of the city to other, passing by the lavishly-planted Al Markaziyah Gardens, one of the many parks in the city, and Lulu Island across the water, which is delightful with its palm trees and nature reserve.

Abu Dhabi's attractions are diverse – from landmark architectural triumphs to centuries-old structures and beaches.

Emirates Palace

Dominating the skyline along the Corniche, the massive Emirates Palace oozes opulence and luxury. Built as a hotel, one of the finest in the world, it is worth seeing – even if the room rates are out of budget. Look out for the Triumphant Arch under which royals pass if staying in the palace and its gardens full of fountains. The palace is famous for its gold-plated lobby, roof frescos and crystal chandeliers.

Address: The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 690 9000
Tickets: Free
Internet: www.emiratespalace.com

Al Maqtaa Fort

Built to protect the city from invaders around 200 years ago, this fort stands close to the Al Maqtaa Bridge on its approach to Abu Dhabi city. Built in the traditional style of the day in soft sand coloured stone with ornately carved wooden features, and remaining almost intact, it is

considered an important historical reminder of the city's past.

Address: City Approach Road
Phone: +971 2 444 0444 (Tourist Office)
Tickets: Free
More Info: Near Al Maqtaa Bridge

Emirates Heritage Village

A Bedouin desert camp complete with tents made from goat's hair, a bustling souq, mud hut village and a fishing harbour are all reconstructions that make fascinating displays in the Emirates Heritage Village. Visitors can sometimes try their hand at traditional crafts like pottery or weaving, which are demonstrated in a series of small workshops within the village. It sits on the breakwater overlooking Abu Dhabi's Corniche.

Address: The Breakwater
Opening hours: Mon-Thurs & Saturday: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. - 9 p.m. And Fridays, from 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Phone: +971 2 681 4455
Tickets: Free
More Info: info@torath.ae

Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Mosque

A fabulous white structure and a landmark in Abu Dhabi, the mosque was built to incorporate architectural influences from around the world. Moroccan, Italian, Chinese and styles from the UAE itself can be detected. There are over 1,000 columns and 80 domes decorated with marble and semi-precious stones, while huge courtyards and lakes can be seen in the grounds. The mosque has four minarets on its corners. It is named after Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, president of the UAE for over 30 years.

Address: Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan mosque
Phone: +971 2 444 0444 (Tourist Office)
Tickets: Free

Qasr Al Hosn Palace

Built in 1761 as a royal residence and the city's oldest building, this beautiful palace can be found next to the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation. Its main entrance is decorated in true Islamic style with colourful tiles, while inside mashrabiya screens and carved wooden doors have stood for centuries.

Address: Sheikh Zayed First Street, Khalid Sin Al Waleed Street
Opening hours: Open 7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Saturday to Thursday.
Phone: +971 2 621 5300
Tickets: Free
More Info: email info@cultural.org.ae

Women's Handicraft Centre

No visit to Abu Dhabi would be complete without a visit to this fascinating centre. Local female Bedouin artists and artisans, usually wearing a traditional dress, demonstrate age-old crafts, including henna body painting, embroidery and silver thread work in a series of small huts. Visitors should remove their shoes before entering the huts as is the local custom.

Address: Al Karamah Street
Opening hours: Open 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Sunday - Thursday.
Phone: +971 2 447 6645
Tickets: Free

Al Bateen Shipyard

Abu Dhabi has long been famous for its expertise in building dhows, the traditional sailing vessel that was the lifeline to importing and exporting goods in days gone by. Visitors can still see a more modern version of the crafts being made at the Al Bateen Shipyard, which can be found on the west side of the island.

Address: Bainunah Street
Tickets: Free

EATING

Photo: Sarah_Ackerman

Emirati cuisine is quite cosmopolitan and you can find food from all over the world. The specific food for the United Arab Emirates is a blend of Asian and Middle Eastern cooking.

Breakfast is usually bread served with cheese or eggs while the main meals contain plenty of meat, grain and dairy. They often drink a red tea with mint after dinner, as it helps the digestion.

Fishmarket

An elegant restaurant that has a long held reputation for its great Thai-style lobster, crab and other seafood specialty dishes, each presented with a creative twist, Fishmarket is open for lunch and evening dining daily. It is located right on the beach and is part of the Intercontinental Hotel.

Address: Bainounia Street
Phone: +971 2 666 6888
Internet: www.ichotelsgroup.com

Etoiles Abu Dhabi

One of the many restaurants found inside the Emirates Palace, this sophisticated eaterie has a lavish décor, and an international fine dining menu created by an award-winning Michelin-starred chef. Not to mention the fabulous panoramic views out over the Arabian Sea. Perfect if you wish to impress a business associate or a loved one. Open daily for evening dining.

Address: Emirates Palace, The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 690 7999
Internet: www.emiratespalace.com
More Info: restaurants.emiratespalace@kempinski.com

Biella Café Pizzeria

Offering a great array of pizzas, pasta dishes and salads, the casually elegant Biella Café Pizzeria has a lively atmosphere and is a great place to relax with friends. Be sure to try one of its lavish ice cream desserts. Open daily.

Address: Marina Mall
Phone: +971 2 681 8849

Marakesh

With a dramatic burnt orange and golden decor, this, at times lively restaurant, will provide a dining experience to remember. Authentic Moroccan dishes are served every evening from 7 p.m., often accompanied by belly dancing and a Moroccan band. Marakesh is located inside the Millennium Hotel Abu Dhabi.

Address: Khalifa Street
Phone: +971 2 626 0333
Internet: www.millenniumhotels.com

Zyara Café

Serving a wide range of Lebanese dishes daily from 8 a.m. right through to midnight, including its famous brunch on a Friday, the Zyara Café is convenient for an informal meal. It is easy to find next to the Hilton Hotel.

Address: The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 627 5007
More Info: zyara@emirates.net.ae

Zen

One of the most popular eateries to enjoy fresh sushi in town, Zen is always lively with sophisticated people in animated conversation. Its choice of dishes is expansive and its teppanyaki bar is famous. It is situated in the Al Ain Palace Hotel.

Address: The Corniche
Opening hours: Open daily, from noon through to 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. to

midnight.
Phone: +971 2 679 4777
Internet: www.alainpalacehotel.com
More Info: aphbd@emirates.net.ae

CAFES

Photo: Qasim Al Khuzaie

Cafés in Abu Dhabi tend to be sophisticated yet informal, and serve a wide choice of coffees with light snacks and pastries rather than fast food.

Vienna Plaza

An Austrian-style coffee house, the Vienna Plaza serves delicious pastries and light snacks. Bright and elegant, this café is a delightful place to meet friends or business associates for a quick meeting on the move.

Address: The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 692 4171
Internet: www.hilton.com

Vision Coffee Shop

Shiny and sleek in looks, the Vision Coffee Shop inside the Vision Hotel has a tempting display of pastries and cakes, some covered in chocolate, others oozing fruits and cream. It's difficult to resist.

Address: Tourist Club, Old Mazda Street
Opening hours: Open daily from 8am until late.
Phone: +971 2 699 2666
Internet: www.visionhotel.net

West Side Coffee Shop

Smart casual is the dress code at this international coffee shop within the Oryx Hotel. Elegant yet informal, it serves light snacks and a choice of coffees. Be sure to try its frothy hot chocolate.

Address: The Corniche, Abu Dhabi
Phone: +971 2 692 2218
Internet: www.aldiarhotels.com/oryxhotel

Prego's

Lunch and dinner are served on the terrace of this smart yet informal brasserie style restaurant. The theme is Italian, and the freshly prepared pasta dishes and the pizzas straight out of the wood-fired oven are specialities.

Address: Beach Rotana Hotel
Phone: +971 2 644 3000
Internet: www.rotana.com

Ninar Coffee Shop

This popular coffee shop offers sandwiches with an impressive range of fillings, along with juices and coffees. The theme of this eaterie is Mediterranean and its dress code casual. Easy to find: right near the Royal Meridian Hotel.

Address: Khalifa Street, Abu Dhabi
Opening hours: Open 8 am until late.
Phone: +971 2 672 2267

Cappuccino's Lobby Café

Living up to its name, this bright and light café in the lobby of the Crowne Plaza Hotel serves frothy cappuccino in huge cups every day, from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. Other coffees and teas are available too, of course, and there's a delicious array of cakes, pastries and finger sandwiches to choose from.

Address: Sheikh Hamdan Street
Phone: +971 2 616 6187

BARS & NIGHTLIFE

Photo: Giorgio Montersino

Abu Dhabi has a good choice of bars and nightclubs, although almost all will be found inside hotels as only these premises can serve alcohol.

Black Pearl

The Black Pearl is a cocktail bar with a swish decor, big comfy sofas, an elite clientele and an amazing selection of drinks. Located right on the watersfront at Al Raha Beach, it hosts live music most evenings.

Address: Al Raha Beach Hotel, Al Raha Beach
Opening hours: Open daily from 6 p.m. until the early hours.
Phone: +971 2 508 0555

La Pergola Bar

Located on the roof of the Novotel Centre, the La Pergola Bar is a lively sports bar complete with a widescreen television showing the games of the day and a jukebox playing the latest sounds.

Address: Al Markaziyah
Phone: +971 2 633 3555

Trader Vic's

An elegant French Polynesian venue that has a long held reputation for its great cocktails presented with considerable flair, Trader Vic's is open daily.

Address: Beach Rotana Hotel
Phone: +971 3 7545111
Internet: www.rotana.com

Level Lounge

If you adore house and techno sounds you will enjoy a visit to Level Lounge. DJ's provide the music, while the LL team serves drinks inside or on the terrace.

Address: Sheikh Hamdan Street
Opening hours: Open evenings Wed - Fri.
Phone: +971 2 621 0000

Cloud Nine

A great evening out can be had at this subtly-lit, elegant cigar bar. Intimate and relaxing, it serves cool drinks and snacks as live jazz is played quietly in the background.

Address: Sheraton Abu Dhabi, Al Markaziyah
Phone: +971 2 677 3333

Zenith

The place to be seen if you are young and trendy, Zenith is an intimate club where you can dance the night away. Its theme nights are popular, especially Bubbly Night when unlimited fizz is served.

Address: Sheraton Abu Dhabi, Al Markaziyah
Opening hours: Open 9 p.m. until late.
Phone: +971 2 677 3333

SHOPPING

Photo: UggBoy UggGirl [PHOTO // WORLD // TRAVEL]

Whether you choose to haggle for a bargain in a bustling market – otherwise known as a souq – or spend time in a lavish air conditioned mall just off the Corniche, shopping in Abu Dhabi will be a memorable experience.

Traditional purchases include carpets, rugs, textiles, gold and spices, all of which can be found in dedicated souqs where lots of stalls selling the same thing are grouped together. An example is the Gold Souq, found not far from the Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al-Maktoum Street. Such items can be found in general souqs too, or in specialist shops.

Souqs are also good for finding antiques or craft items to take home as souvenirs. In contrast, the shopping malls tend to be full of expensive jewellery and designer fashions. Among the best are the Abu Dhabi Mall in the Tourist Club Area (Tel: +971 2 645 4858, www.abudhabi-mall.com), where you can shop for just about anything from big names like Betty Barclay and the Early Learning Centre.

The Marina Mall in The Corniche (Tel: +971 2 681 8300, www.marinamall.ae) is another excellent mall. The Khalifa Centre, which lies to the north of the city near the Mosque Gardens, is a great place to find traditional crafts (Tel: +971 2 667 9900).

SLEEPING

Photo: Sarah_Ackerman

Abu Dhabi has been appointed the richest city in the world by CNN and Fortune magazine and luxury is present in every corner. The city has been carefully planned out and here is your chance to experience being fully pampered. Make sure to book in advance to be sure that you will get the accommodation you desire.

Emirates Palace

If money is no object or you simply want the finest experience possible while in Abu Dhabi then a stay at the Emirates Palace is a must. Each guestroom promises indulgence with every possible luxury provided. There's a spa and leisure centre too, plus the hotel has a dozen restaurants and bars to choose from.

Address: The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 690 9000
Internet: www.emiratespalace.com

Hilton International Abu Dhabi

Guests can enjoy relaxing on the private beach gazing out over the Gulf during a stay at this plush, city centre hotel. Guestrooms are luxurious and feature a marble bathroom, while on-site amenities include a beauty salon and fitness suite, business centre and its La Terrazza Restaurant and Jazz Bar.

Address: The Corniche
Phone: +971 2 692 4171
Internet: www.hilton.com

Shangri-La Hotel Qaryat Al Beri

This luxurious five-star hotel sits on a long stretch of private beach in the heart of the city. Its Arabic décor style gives it a warm, welcoming feel. Facilities include a spa and business centre, as well as beautifully presented guestrooms and suites.

Phone: +971 2 509 8888
Internet: www.shangri-la.com
More Info: Waterfront between the Al Maqtaa Bridge and Mussafah Bridge

Tulip Inn Al Rahba

A lavishly decorated three-star hotel on the outskirts of the city, the Tulip Inn Al Rahba offers attractive and well-equipped guestrooms, a fabulous banqueting hall and a choice of restaurants, including its Shahrayer Sheesha Garden eaterie for dining al fresco.

Address: Al Rahba, Sheikh Zayad Road
Phone: +971 2 563 8557
Internet: www.tulipinnalrahba.com

Jumeirah at Etihad Towers

Jumeirah at Etihad Towers has 382 rooms and suites, with exceptional views of the spectacular city. The hotel has a spa area, pool, gym and an observation deck.

Address: West Corniche
Phone: +971 4 364 7555
Internet: www.jumeirah.com

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Photo: Hunny Alrohaif

Airport

Flights arrive into Abu Dhabi International Airport from around the world. The airport, the second largest in the United Arab Emirates, has a full range of facilities for travellers, from ATM's to tourist information. It lies just over 30 kilometres from the city centre, with three major highways, the Salam Street (Highway 8), Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum Street (Highway 2) and the Khaleej Al Arabi (Highway 30) ensuring quick transfers. Abu Dhabi Airport Taxis are available outside the airport, with around AED 70 charged for the journey into the city.

Internet: www.abudhabiairport.org

Taxi

Getting around Abu Dhabi is straightforward, with most visitors opting to travel in the inexpensive taxis that dart around the city constantly. It's a simple process of flagging a taxi down, telling the driver your destination and paying the small amount required for the ride. The base rate is AED 3 and an additional AED 75 added per kilometre thereafter. Taxis can be booked through several companies. They have regular parking slots outside hotels and shopping malls too.

Al Ghazal
Phone: +971 2 444 5885

National Taxis
Phone: +971 2 555 2212

Post

There are many post offices in Abu Dhabi, which are operated by Emirates Post. The main one, Abu Dhabi Central, is open daily 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Phone: +971 2 621 1611
Internet: www.emiratespost.ae

Dentist

There are many clinics and private dental practices in the city, including the British Dental Clinic. Telephone 998 for an emergency.

Phone: +971 2 677 3308

Pharmacy

Abu Dhabi has many pharmacies that open 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m., some even 24-hours. To find the nearest to you telephone the Abu Dhabi Municipality's 24-hour hotline (Tel: +971 2 677 7929). For medical emergencies call 998.

Telephone

Country code: 971

Area code: 2

Electricity

220/240 volts at 50 Hz, with square three-pin sockets.

A
B
C
D
1
2
3
Lulu Island
Arabian Gulf
Corniche Road West
Corniche Road
Corniche Road West
Corniche Road East - 1st Street
Lulu St
Capital Gardens
Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Street
East Road
Umm Al Nar Street
Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed St
Corniche Road
Al Meena Street
Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Street
Al Salam Street
Sheikh Zayed the Second Street
AL MARKAZIYAH
AL MARKAZIYAH
MADINAT ZAYED
MADINAT ZAYED
Liwa Street
Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum Street
Ittihad Square
Al Istiqlal Street
Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Street
Sheikh Zayed the Second Street
Bani Yas Street
AL MARKAZIYAH WEST
Corniche Road West
Khaled Bin Al Waleed Street
Cultural Foundation
Al Hosn Palace
Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum St
East Road
Al Nasr Street
AL HOSN
Sheikh Zayed the First Street
AL MANHAL
Family Park
Al Falah Street
AL DHAFRAH
East Road
0
250 m

Al Falah Street	D3
Al Istiqlal Street	A2 B2
Al Meena Street	D1
Al Nasr Street	A3
Al Salam Street	D1 D2
Bani Yas Street	D2
Corniche Road	C1 D1
Corniche Road East - 1st Street	B2 C1
Corniche Road West	A2 A3 B1 B2 C1
East Street	C2 C3 D3
Khaled Bin Al Waleed Street	A3 B3
Liwa Street	B2
Lulu Street	C2
Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum Street	B2 B3 C3
Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammad Street	B2 C2 D1 D2
Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Street	B2 C1 C2 D1
Umm Al Nar Street	C1
Zayed the First Street	A3 B3
Zayed the Second Street	C2 C3 D2