

40 hours



Dubai

Clients heading to Dubai?

Laura French gives the
lowdown on the city that
spares no expense

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he tallest, the grandest, the biggest, the best; Dubai is a city of superlatives, where everything – from the glittering skyscrapers to the chandelier-bedecked hotels, the sprawling shopping malls to the high-speed theme parks – is done with a dose of all-out, outlandish extravagance. But it's not only about the glitz, with the likes of Dubai Creek and the desert offering a more traditional, cultural take on things. We've put together a guide to both sides for clients wanting a two-day getaway in one of the world's most iconic cities. ➤





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

VR Park; Burj Khalifa; La Mer;
Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo

PICTURES: Dubai Tourism; Victor Romero;
JV Photography; Fares Jammal; Sebastian
Opitz/Parallax Creations; JD Studio UAE

top tip

Check out visitdubai.com
for more information

DAY ONE

10.00: Kick things off with a trip downtown. You can't come here and not visit the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, which soars up more than 2,700ft like a giant needle. Even the lift up is an experience, whizzing you 125 floors high in a matter of seconds to reach the observation deck, where you get 360-degree views over the city – a sea of silver and white stretching off in every direction, skyscrapers poking through like mini Lego models. Tickets from £31.
tickets.attthetop.ae

11.30: Next door is the Dubai Mall, a sprawling entertainment hub that's the size of 200 football pitches. Stop by the Dubai Aquarium & Underwater Zoo to see the world's largest collection of sand tiger sharks as well as penguins, exotic fish and wide-eyed owls, plus one of the largest crocodiles in existence. Entry from £32.
thedubaiaquarium.com/en

13.00: Afterwards, up the adrenaline factor with a trip to the VR Park. Also in the mall, it's a pitch-black, fluorescent-lit indoor amusement park that's home to rides, arcade games and attractions that use virtual-reality headsets to plunge you into another realm. Among the highlights is a rollercoaster that simulates flying over the city as you hurtle along a real-life, stomach-lurching

track, and a desert simulator that had us jolting up and down the dunes in a dusty 4x4, scorpions and insects smashing into the windscreen in a way that felt so realistic I had to duck. Tickets from £37.

14.00: Feeling peckish? Make a beeline for La Mer, an artsy, colourful collection of cafes, restaurants and boutiques set on a pristine, powder-sand beachfront. Towering palm trees, verdant gardens and landscaped ponds line its shiny, manicured promenade, and there's a sizeable water park on hand for families, as well as playgrounds, watersports and surf-style shacks

that give it a Miami-meets-Caribbean vibe.
lamerdubai.ae/en

16.00: A 10-minute taxi ride away is the Dubai Frame, a giant, gold structure that juts up from the contemporary Zabeel Park. It's set at the dividing point between the old, low-rise part of the city and the new, skyscraper-clad side, with a lift hurtling you up to take in the contrasting views. There's a vertigo-inducing glass floor you can walk over, alongside an interesting museum about the future of the city. Tickets from £10.
thedubaiframe.com



CAESARS PALACE BLUEWATERS DUBAI

Opened in late 2018, the much-anticipated Caesars Palace – the first of its kind outside Las Vegas – doesn't disappoint. Set on the new Bluewaters Island and one of two hotels on the wider Caesars Resort Bluewaters Dubai, it has 194 rooms, all with sleek decor, huge bathrooms and high-tech touches with a creative, stylish design that has all the Julius Caesar influences you'd expect, including a giant statue of his head in reception. There's a beautiful, quiet pool area overlooking the beach, plus Gordon Ramsay's acclaimed Hell's Kitchen restaurant.

In the rest of the resort, there are five other restaurants – including rooftop Japanese spot Paru – as well as a Roman-inspired spa and several kids' clubs. It's all set around a new waterfront promenade that, while currently a little quiet as it's still under development, promises to be one of the city's next big hubs with shops, restaurants and the soaring Ain Dubai (the city's answer to the London Eye).

DESTINATIONS

DUBAI | MIDDLE EAST

BEST OF THE REST

🌟 **Dubai Parks and Resorts:** With its Legoland, Motiongate and Bollywood parks, this is a magnet for adrenaline enthusiasts. Among my highlights was the Madagascar Mad Pursuit rollercoaster at Motiongate – which has you blasting off at serious speed with pitch-black, fluorescent lights flashing all around – and the indoor Miniland at Legoland, complete with a tiny replica of the Burj Khalifa.

🌟 **Expo 2020:** Dubai will host Expo 2020 for 173 days next year, with art installations, a rotating observation tower, 200 food outlets, rooftop screenings and the nation's first Emirati opera among the attractions, all themed around 'opportunity, mobility and sustainability'.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Spice Souk; desert safari;
Gold Souk; Dubai Creek

PICTURES: Dubai Tourism; ShuGa Photography; Shutterstock

18.00: When night falls, head to the Marina – a trendy collection of cafes, street-food pop-ups and shops set around a twinkling, yacht-lined harbour that's popular with the expat crowd. At the heart of the action is Pier 7, where seven swanky restaurants stacked on top of one another overlook the water. Among the standouts is Asia Asia, which serves fusion dishes against an Instagrammable backdrop of giant Buddha statues, glossy marble floors and fuchsia-pink furnishings. pier7.ae/en

DAY TWO

09.30: Dubai isn't just about the superlative skyscrapers and glossy malls. For a more

traditional experience, head to Dubai Creek, the oldest part of the city and once the UAE's main trading hub, which helped the city rise to prominence in the mid-20th century. Today squeaky, wooden abra boats shuttle you across the water to see its highlights, which include the Spice Souk, where puffs of incense rise above tubs of mustard-yellow turmeric, deep-orange cinnamon and rainbow-coloured mixed spice. Vendors entice you into their stores with sweet, coated dates and rich, camel-milk chocolate, while Arabian lamps hang above sequined Indian bags and Emirati crafts.

11.00: From here, it's a three-minute stroll to the Gold Souk, the biggest

gold market in Arabia, made up of a network of narrow streets where necklaces, rings, bracelets and entire gold dresses shine out from glossy shop windows, with precious stones and sparkling diamonds everywhere you look.

12.00: Interested in learning more about the area? Head over to Al Shindagha Museum, a recently opened, ultra-modern spot where interactive displays, photos and videos talk you through the history of Dubai Creek, with stories from locals who grew up in the area, and a panoramic-screen film projection that shows how it developed. Entry from £3. alshindagha.dubaiculture.gov.ae/en

13.00: If there's one thing you can't leave here without seeing, it's the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding. Decked out with burgundy rugs and traditional Arabian furnishings, the centre hosts various experiences including an interactive cultural lunch, where

a lively Emirati tells you about traditional dress, culture and cuisine, before you tuck into a buffet of local and Indian-influenced dishes (think hearty curries, biryanis and syrupy, doughnut-like *luqaimat* balls). Lunches take place at 1pm from Sunday to Thursday (price depends on group size). cultures.ae

16.00: No visit would be complete without a trip into the Dubai desert. Platinum Heritage offers a half-day option that has you bumping up and down the sand dunes in an open-top 4x4, passing oryxes, gazelles and other wildlife, before stopping to see a falcon show, where an expert falconer tells you all about how they train these solitary birds. It's followed by a dinner and cultural performance at a Bedouin camp, where a smorgasbord of barbecued meats (I even tried camel) are served around a campfire as performers sing, dance and drum the evening away (prices from £124). platinum-heritage.com **TW**

BOOK IT

Emirates Holidays offers three nights' B&B at Caesars Palace Bluewaters Dubai from £689 per person, based on two sharing a Palace Deluxe King Room with Resort View. The price includes flights and is valid for travel from June 1 to July 9, 2020. emiratesholidays.com