



Abu Dhabi

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan Mosque p119

This fabulous mosque – also known as the Grand Mosque – is a vast building with fairytale domes, lofty minarets and spectacular Islamic detail, including handcrafted panels, richly carved surfaces and massive twinkling chandeliers.

Falcon Hospital p120

Take a flight of fancy to the fascinating (and unusual) Falcon Hospital.

Emirates Palace Hotel p119

Wonder at the sheer opulence and lashings of gold leaf at the extraordinary Emirates Palace Hotel.

Abu Dhabi Heritage Village p119

Watch the craftsmen at the Abu Dhabi Heritage Village with its re-creation of a Bedouin encampment.

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi p119

Scream as loud as you can when riding the fastest rollercoaster in the world at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi.

Explore

The emirate of Abu Dhabi has recently invested heavily in culture, education and environmental innovation. Slowly, almost stealthily, the largest – and wealthiest – emirate is emerging from the shadow of its glamorous northern neighbour. In other words, if you haven't visited for a while, you'll be in for a surprise.

One of the most welcome recent developments is the expansion and extension of the waterfront Corniche, with its white sandy beaches and wide Mediterranean-style promenade. You can rent a sunbed and beach umbrella here; remember, Fridays are busiest.

Like its flashier neighbour, Abu Dhabi also has some futuristic buildings. Don't miss the extraordinary disc-shaped HQ or the Leaning Tower of Pisa-style Gate Tower. And be sure to visit the stunning main mosque, whose snowy white marble domes seem to hover above the city like a mirage. And nearby, on Yas Island, looms the glass grid shell of the spectacular Yas Hotel, which has the city's Formula One racetrack roaring through it.

Abu Dhabi is by far the largest emirate, comprising almost 87% of the country's total area. Looking at the impressive skyline, you may find it hard to imagine that only 50 years ago Abu Dhabi was little more than a fishing village with a fort, a few coral buildings and a smattering of *barasti* huts.

The emirate is reasonably straightforward to navigate as it is planned along a classic American grid system. The Corniche Rd is bookended by the *mina* (port) to the east and the Emirates Palace to the west.

The main confusion you will encounter regards streets that, perplexingly, often have multiple names, as well as numbers. Pass the Sat Nav someone...!

Best Places to Eat

- Finz (p121)
- Jones the Grocer (p120)
- Sho Cho (p121)

Best Places to Drink

- Cristal (p122)
- Belgian Café (p122)
- Etoiles (p123)

Best Shopping

- Central Market (p123)
- Marina Mall (p123)
- Abu Dhabi Mall (p123)

Top Tip

Unlike many other mosques, Abu Dhabi's magnificent Grand Mosque allows non-Muslims to visit on their own. However, for a more in-depth experience we recommend that you join one of the free 60- to 90-minute guided tours (in English) that conclude with a Q&A session.

Getting There & Away

Bus Buses to Abu Dhabi leave from Dubai's Al-Ghubaiba station every 40 minutes (single Dh20, return Dh40). The trip takes two hours.

Car Abu Dhabi is approximately 1½ hour's drive from Dubai. Follow the Sheikh Zayed Rd (E11 highway) southwards and follow the signs.

Taxi A private taxi will cost in the range of Dh250, although a shared taxi will reduce the price to around Dh50. **Al-Ghazal** (☎02-444 9300; ghazal@adnh.com) takes advance bookings.

Need to Know

- **Area Code** 02
- **Location** 150km south of Dubai
- **Tourist Office** ☎02-444 0444; www.visitabudhabi.ae, www.abudhabitourism.ae; Al-Salam St

LOCAL LIFE

- **Sheesha time** *Sheesha* cafes are spread across the grassy verge next to the Corniche and are great for soaking up some local ambience.
- **Quran reciting** Approaching the Grand Mosque, you pass by the tomb of Sheikh Zayed where attendants recite the Quran 24/7 over the beloved ruler's grave.
- **Fruit & vegetables** Watch the vendors haggle with customers at this colourful fruit and vegetable souq at the port.