



Day Trips from Dubai & Abu Dhabi

Sharjah p171

Dubai's northern neighbour, the emirate of Sharjah, is almost joined at the hip to Dubai's suburbs. Once there, however, particularly around the restored central Heritage and Arts Area, this cultured and heritage-oriented emirate feels like a world apart.

Al Ain p173

The famous Al Ain oasis, with wonderful forts, museums and even ancient Bronze Age burial sites, offers a rural retreat after the frantic pace of Dubai.

UAE East Coast p176

Sleepy fishing villages, rugged mountains, desert dunes, museums and the oldest mosque in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) bring the rest of the Arabian Peninsula within a day trip of the Gulf cities.

Sharjah

Explore

Long before Abu Dhabi began improving its cultural credentials, Sharjah was declared the Unesco Cultural Capital of the Arab World – and deservedly so. Once you have penetrated the confusing outskirts of town, the historic old town, located north across Sharjah Bridge, is easy to navigate on foot. Plan on setting aside several hours to explore its Heritage and Arts Area, as well as the souqs and excellent museums.

One caveat: Sharjah takes its decency laws very seriously, so do dress modestly. That means no exposed knees, backs or bellies – and that goes for both men and women. It's also the only emirate that is 'dry' (ie no alcohol is available anywhere).

The Best...

- ➔ **Sight** Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation
- ➔ **Place to Eat** Shababeek (p172)
- ➔ **Place to Shop** Central Souq (p172)

Top Tip

If you're visiting more than one museum in Sharjah, a 'Multi-Museum Ticket' will save you some dirhams. These cost Dh15 for individuals and Dh20 for families and are good for admission to several museums, as well as a few smaller venues. You can pick them up at any of the museums or the tourist office.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** Buses to Sharjah's Al Jubail station near the Central Souq and Heritage and Arts Area depart every 10 minutes from Al Ittihad station in Deira and from Al Ghubaiba station in Bur Dubai. The ride takes about 40 to 60 minutes and costs Dh10. From Abu Dhabi there's a bus from the main bus station every 30 minutes from 5am to 11pm (Dh30, minimum three hours).
- ➔ **Car** From the World Trade Centre roundabout in Dubai, take the E11 (Sheikh Zayed Rd) north to Sharjah where it's called Al Ittihad Rd. Traffic can be horrible, especially during rush hours, so it's best to travel in the late morning and late evening. The drive can take from

30 minutes to two hours, depending on traffic. Add another one hour 50 minutes if coming from Abu Dhabi along the E11.

- ➔ **Taxi** A taxi from Dubai starts at about Dh60, Dh20 of which is a tax that the taxi driver has to pay to the Sharjah authorities.

Need to Know

- ➔ **Area Code** 206
- ➔ **Location** 15km north of Dubai; 166km north east of Abu Dhabi.
- ➔ **Tourist Office** (206-556 6777; www.sharjah-welcome.com; 9th fl, Crescent Tower, Buheirah Corniche, Al Majaz; 7.30am-2.30pm Sat-Thu)



SIGHTS

SHARJAH MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

MUSEUM

(206-565 5455; www.islamicmuseum.ae; cnr Corniche & Arabian Gulf St; adult/child Dh5/free; 8am-8pm Sat-Thu, 4-8pm Fri) Pretty much everything you always wanted to know about Islam is addressed in this well-curated museum in a converted souq right on the waterfront. The ground-floor galleries zero in on different aspects of the Islamic faith, such as the Five Pillars of Islam, including the ritual and importance of hajj. Other rooms trace Arab scientific accomplishments, especially in mathematics and astronomy, while the upper floor navigates through 1400 years of Islamic art and artefacts with manuscripts, ceramics, armour, woodwork, textiles and jewellery.

BAIT AL NABOODAH

HISTORIC SITE

(206-568 1738; www.sharjahmuseums.ae; Heritage Area, off Corniche; adult/child Dh5/free; 8am-8pm Sat-Thu, 4-8pm Fri) This 1845 house, a former pearl trader's home with a grand entranceway, elaborately carved decorations and an ample courtyard, is a fine example of early Emirati architecture and daily living. Head upstairs for close ups of the pretty porch.

SHARJAH ART MUSEUM

MUSEUM

(206-568 8222; www.sharjahmuseums.ae; Arts Area, off Corniche; 8am-8pm Sat-Thu, 4-8pm Fri) **FREE** Just east of the Heritage Area, the Arts Area is anchored by one of the region's largest and most impressive art museums