

# Deira

## Neighbourhood Top Five

**1** Plunging headlong into the **souqs** (p53) for a sensory dose of *Arabian Nights* flair: pungent aromas at the Spice Souq, glittering gold at the Gold Souq, heady Arabian *attars* at the Perfume Souq, wriggling ocean critters at the Fish Souq and local dress

and accessories at the New Naif Market.

**2** Feeling mesmerised by the Dubai skyline across the glistening Creek from the lounge at **QDs** (p61).

**3** Strolling down leafy **Al Muteena St** (p55) and stopping for *masgouf* (grilled fish) in an Iraqi restaurant.

**4** Checking out Dubai's first school, **Al Ahmadiya** (p53), housed in an exquisite traditional building.

**5** Crossing **Dubai Creek** (p54) in an *abra* (traditional water taxi), enjoying an atmospheric journey unchanged for decades.



For more detail of this area, see Map p244 and p246 ➔

## Explore Deira

Hugging the northern side of the Creek, Deira is one of Dubai's oldest and most charismatic neighbourhoods, a world apart from the sky-piercing towers of modern Dubai. The most historic area is Al Ras, near the mouth of the Creek, where sightseeing highlights include a restored pearl trader's home and the city's first school. Nearby, brightly painted dhows (traditional sailing vessels) still dock along the waterfront as they have since the 1830s. But Deira's biggest asset is its cluster of atmospheric souqs (spice, gold, perfume, fish, produce); a tangle of narrow lanes heaving with a cacophony of sounds and smells that bursts to life in the late afternoon.

The souq area is also Dubai's most dazzlingly multicultural neighbourhood, a bustling cauldron peacefully shared by immigrants from around the globe. Many operate little restaurants perfect for soaking up the local colour and for sampling authentic fare from such far-flung locales as India, Syria, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Iraq and Afghanistan. For a more upscale experience, book a dinner cruise aboard a dhow, festively decorated with twinkling lights, or head to a Creekside alfresco lounge in one of the high-end hotels. Deira also brims with Russian, Filipino, Lebanese, Indian and Pakistani nightclubs, usually found in budget or midrange hotels. They typically feature enthusiastic house bands, cheap beers and, yes, some illicit and seedy going-ons.

Southeast of the souqs along the Creek, Deira gets increasingly modern. There are big shopping malls like the Deira City Centre and Dubai Festival City Mall, as well as such architectural landmarks as the Etisalat Tower, easily recognised by the giant 'golf ball' at its top.

## Local Life

- **Haggle** Enjoy bargaining in the souqs. It's a favourite local pastime and, as long as you're comfortable with a little lighthearted confrontation, it's good fun.
- **Traditional coffee** Kick-start your day by ducking into a tucked-away cafe for a shot of Arabic coffee.
- **Exotic meals** Take a culinary journey to Yemen, Lebanon or wherever your nose leads you in the souqs and around Al Rigga and Salah Al Din metro stations.

## Getting There & Away

- **Metro** Deira is served by both the Red and Green Lines; they intersect at Union station. The Red Line travels to the airport.
- **Boat** *Abras* link the souqs in Deira and in Bur Dubai. A water bus travels further southeast to Baniyas from the Dubai Old Souq station.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

A cheap and easy way to get a feel for the atmospheric Dubai Creek is by crossing it aboard an *abra*, a traditional water taxi, for a mere Dh1. If you want a more in-depth experience, consider hiring a private *abra* to sail past various Creek communities with the wind in your hair and seagulls cheering you on. Boats can be hired at all *abra* stations; the going rate is Dh100 per hour.

## Best Places to Eat

- Al Tawasol (p55)
- Traiteur (p60)
- Shabestan (p57)
- Aroos Damascus (p55)
- Ashiana by Vineet (p60)

For reviews, see p54. ➡

## Best Places to Drink

- QDs (p61)
- Cielo Sky Lounge (p61)
- Irish Village (p61)

For reviews, see p61. ➡

## Best Places to Shop

- Deira City Centre (p62)
- Gold Souq (p52)
- Dubai Festival City Mall (p63)

For reviews, see p62. ➡