

TOURS



A walk to remember

From pearl diving to date syrup, discover the history of Dubai



When we think of Dubai, its history and heritage are pretty far down the list of traits that jump to mind – somewhere below towering skyscrapers, extreme sports and outrageous brunches. But turn the clock back about 70 years and Dubai was not much more than a small trading port known for its pearl diving and fishing. It's this little-known backstory that the Dubai Historical District (DHD) – along with the DHD Rejuvenation Executive Committee and Desert

Gate Tourism – is hoisting up to sea level with new walking tours around the city's old quarter Khor Dubai, affectionately known as Dubai Creek. Tales From The Past daytime tour covers all the usual tourist haunts, starting at the Heritage Village, then Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House (where the royal Al Maktoum family lived until 1958), then along the creek enjoying a picturesque trip in an abra across the water. As we walk through the old neighbourhoods, our Emirati guide



shares his knowledge of the past, taking us through important times in the UAE's history and recounting how locals lived a hundred years ago. He took us through the materials Bedouins used for their camps, the techniques women used to fry up sweet luqaimat (crunchy donuts covered in date syrup), and how men would live at sea for up to five months diving for pearls. In Deira, you'll meander through the haphazard souks, where stalls sell everything from saffron to sieves, and explore Dubai's first school, and now heritage site, Al Ahmadiya. The four-hour tour culminates in an Emirati feast inside an air-conditioned majlis. While the tour doesn't take you off the beaten track, it's a fantastic crash course in Emirati history for residents, and a perfect guided journey for tourists keen to explore more than the malls. a *Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House, Al Shindagha, Bur Dubai, Dubai, Mon and Thur 10am to 2pm, Dhs350. Tel: (04) 4421155. Metro: Al Ghubaiba. dubaidesertgate.ae*

ALSO TRY



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NAIF BY NIGHT
Frying Pan Adventures' eye-opening photography and food tours around Dubai's lesser-known haunts have become the emirate's worst-kept secret. Its Unseen Trails: Naif By Night takes you through the old district's hectic streets, exploring the shops and cafés on the way, ending with dinner at one of Naif's hidden gems. March 2, 9, 16 and 29
🏠 Al Ras Metro Station, Exit 2, Al Ras, Deira, Dubai, Dhs595, 5.45pm to 10.45pm. Metro: Al Ras. fryingpanadventures.com
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CYCLE AROUND THE CREEK
Take the tour into your own hands (or handles) and explore old Dubai by bike. Hire one from Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers and meander by the water, exploring the streets of Al Ras and Naif, crossing under a pedestrian tunnel to Bur Dubai, and discovering the Heritage Village. 🏠 Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers, Baniyas Street, Dubai, Dhs25 per hour. Tel: (04) 2281111. Metro: Union. sheratondubaicreek.com
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DISCOVER THE DESERT
Platinum Heritage might be pricier than other safari tours, but it's worth it for a real insight into Dubai's Bedouin history. On the overnight safari, you can spot wild Arabian oryx from your vintage 1950s Land Rover and watch a falcon display at sunset, before sampling Emirati dishes under the stars at camp, and listening to a local Bedouin's stories over breakfast. 🏠 Various locations, Sun, Tue, Thur and Fri, 3pm to 10am, Dhs895. Tel: (04) 3884044. platinum-heritage.com

