

# Stay & PLAY



If you're stuck holidaying at home this Easter, don't fret—you don't have to spend your time off slogging through endless DVD box sets...

*Words by Yi-Hwa Hanna*

## 1 GLAMPING IN DIBBA

As much fun as camping on the beach can be, when you're looking for a relaxing weekend away it's not always quite as much fun when you're stuck without a hot shower, a pillow or a kitchen to retreat to once you're ready for a bit of civilisation again. The solution, of course, is glamping. Set on one of Dibba's beautiful beaches, surrounded by the atmospheric Musandam mountains and with a view of the enticing blue waters, *Absolute Adventure's Adventure Centre house* ([www.adventure.ae](http://www.adventure.ae)) is the perfect spot for a glamping getaway.

The traditional Al Shahi-style house sleeps up to 14 people, and has three bathrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, outdoor barbecue area, a majlis, a small freshwater pool, a large courtyard, a traditional Bedouin tent and last but certainly not least, air-conditioning—

**There are plenty of mountain trails you can bike, hike and climb from within easy reach...**

a welcome respite from the heat. There are plenty of mountain trails you can bike, hike, trek and climb from within easy reach of the house, while watersports like kayaking, diving, sailing and swimming beckon in the water beyond. You can even pop down to the local fish market to buy fresh catch for dinner. Staff are on hand to help organise activities, provide you with gear and even help prepare meals if need be, making it the perfect jumping-off point for enjoying the great outdoors. And with seriously reasonable rates (simply call and state your preferred dates and size of party for a price quote), it's the perfect outdoor escape. Just don't forget your passport!



The Burj Al Arab



## 2 BURJ AL ARAB & BURJ KHALIFA

Living in the GCC, it's easy to forget just how lucky we are to have two of the world's most amazing buildings at our doorsteps, but why wait for your friends and family from overseas to come and visit before you finally see Dubai's famous Burj Al Arab and Burj Khalifa?

While both hotels undeniably do have a reputation for being on the pricier side, there are still affordable ways to visit: Check out the views from the tallest building in the world by buying your Burj Khalifa At The Top viewing deck experience online, directly from their website ([www.burjkhalifa.ae](http://www.burjkhalifa.ae)) in advance for a set date and time, and you'll pay only Dhs125 as opposed to the Dhs400 it'll cost you for just rocking up at the door. Bonus: You'll also get to go in through the pre-paid tickets queue, which is usually shorter. If you'd prefer to dine there instead, don't be intimidated if you find the prices of the At.mosphere Grill a little out of your reach (pun intended)—the At.mosphere Lounge also offers a fantastic view, along with delicious, reasonably priced eats and drinks as well as regular seasonal deals such as a three-course set lunch menu for Dhs390 per person.

Over in Umm Suqeim, enjoying tea at the Burj Al Arab ([www.jumeirah.com](http://www.jumeirah.com))

The Burj Khalifa



is an excellent way to visit the world's first seven-star hotel without having to spend too much. With three different options to choose from, including an evening *High Tea for Dhs285 per person*, a *Sky Tea at the Skyview Bar for Dhs450 per person*, or the *Ultimate Afternoon Tea in Sahn Eddar from Dhs360 per person*, there's bound to be an option to suit you. All of the teas come with a selection of delicious eats, elegant surroundings and, quite often, live entertainment, but reservations are essential so be sure to book your table in advance. →



Kite Surfing

### 3 BEACH KITE SURFING

If you're the active type and looking to try something a little different, why not try your hand at kite surfing at the beach? Tucked onto a beautiful stretch of Dubai's Jumeirah Beach, Dukite ([www.dukite.com](http://www.dukite.com)) is the city's official kite surfing club. Set up to help regulate the sport and ensure it was accessible to anyone, the centre's Kite School works to IKO (International Kiteboarding Organization) standards and offers lessons for everyone from beginners to more seasoned kitesurfers.

Dukite's expert instructors are all internationally certified, and will make sure your learning environment (the aptly named Kite Beach) is as safe as possible before teaching you the essentials such as techniques, tricks, skills, maneuvers, technical know-how and pretty much everything you need to develop your kitesurfing ability. The sport uses your entire body, and as your legs control the board and your arms and abs control the kite, it's an excellent full-body workout.

*Prices for an individual lesson begin from Dhs350, including all equipment,* though the cost goes down if you manage to drag your friends along and turn it into a 2-4 person group event. It's also suitable for kids. If you become such a fan that you invest in your own kite, the centre also does kite repairs. While their main set-up is in Dubai, the Dukite team aims to train students to be able to eventually kite surf independently anywhere. Sign us up!

### 4 AL TAMIMI STABLES

Seeing a reindeer in the desert may seem like an impossible dream, but at Al Tamimi Stables ([www.tamimistables.com](http://www.tamimistables.com)), it's now a reality. Located in Sharjah's Al Zubair area, this family friendly farm is described as "the UAE's best kept secret" and it's easy to see why: with more than 500 animals, a vast range of indoor and outdoor activities, a fully-equipped equestrian centre and plenty of sporting facilities spread over 30 acres of land, it's a breath of fresh air.



Making friends at the petting zoo

**"[There are] nature trails, horse shows, sports games and a petting zoo to explore"**

Al Tamimi's animal family includes everything from deer, goats, gazelle, emus and ostriches to petting farm animals such as rabbits, lambs, calves and yes, even reindeer. Over in the equestrian centre, you'll find Arabian horses, Andalusians, Napstrappers, Fresians and adorable Shetland ponies that are sure to be a hit with little ones, who can also learn how to groom and care for the horses there.

But it isn't all about the animals: there are plenty of activities to keep the entire family busy, too. Children can enjoy crafts, cooking, dance, language, art and sports classes, as well as the chance to

experience real-live farm production activities such as milk, wool, vegetable and date production and farming.

Meanwhile, mum and dad can also get involved with nature trails to hike, horse shows to watch, sports games to take part in and the petting zoo to explore; there's even a greenhouse and a recording studio. When you get hungry, the cafe serves up homemade cakes, sandwiches and seasonal soups. *The stables and farm are open six days a week from 9am to 6pm, and with entry costing just Dhs35 for adults and Dhs20, it's the perfect place to spend an exciting and affordable day out with the entire family.*

Al Tamimi's equestrian centre is sure to be a hit with the kids



## 5 SKYDIVING IN DUBAI MARINA

We've all seen them: the photographs of friends flying through the air, spread-eagled and strapped to a guide, high above The Palm Jumeirah with the ocean and island in the background. But why not make this the year you get your own? Skydive Dubai ([www.skydivedubai.ae](http://www.skydivedubai.ae)) is closed during the months of June, July and August, but throughout the rest of the year their "Palm DZ" jumping location is a thrilling way to see the beautiful city of Dubai. As long as you meet the requirements (jumpers must be 18 years of age or older, and women must weigh less than 90kg) the experience is open to first-time tandem jumpers as well as old hands, and a professional team will make sure you know exactly what you're doing, and that it's all done safely. A jump costs Dhs1,750, and comes with digital stills and a video of your experience to take home with you. Once you've accomplished that first rush of flying over the Palm Jumeirah, you can also try a tandem jump at their "Desert Campus" (limited sessions available Tuesdays through Sundays). Talk about a bird's eye view!

**Open to first-time jumpers, a helpful professional team will make sure you know what to do**



Flying high

## 6 YAS WATERWORLD

Standing out among the UAE's existing selection of impressive water parks isn't an easy feat, but Abu Dhabi's Yas Waterworld is a venue worth dedicating an entire day to. Right from the start, visitors are made to feel welcome by Sultan, Dana, Salma, Naseer and co, a host of characters that are the stars of the fictional pearl-diving village the park is themed upon (read the full story on [www.yaswaterworld.com](http://www.yaswaterworld.com)).

Inside, more than 40 attractions await, including an old-world Arabian souk, an interactive treasure hunt, various shops and, of course, exciting rides. Thrill levels range from "Young fun"—suitable for little ones—to "Adrenaline Rush," which aren't for the faint of heart. There are four levels, and all of the rides are clearly marked so it's easy to decide what level of

scream-worthy, heart-racing activity you're feeling up to. Daredevils will love the Liwa Loop, a high-intensity looping waterslide that's the first of its kind in the Middle East that's said to be the most extreme—we're talking floors that drop from beneath your feet before a heart-pounding high-speed rush. Meanwhile, the Dawwama tornado ride sees six people seated on one large, circular raft

sent flying through funnels and more, and is perfect for groups. The snake-themed rides are another hit: the Serpent Spin drops you into a watery bowl of darkness lit by twinkling LED lights, then shoots out of a snake's mouth into a pool, while the Snake's Tale ride uses sound, light and chilled fog to take things to the next level. When you're ready for something a little more slow-paced, floating lazily down the Al Raha River beckons.

All of that excitement inevitably works up an appetite, and when hunger takes over there's a wide selection that includes everything from grills, pizzas, smoothies, sandwiches, salads, Arabic delicacies, ice cream and baked treats like funnel cake and pancakes. *Entrance is reasonable, with tickets costing Dhs225 (or Dhs185 for children under 1.1 metres tall, while kids aged three or younger go in for free).* →



Snake-themed rides



Go kayaking in the mangroves

## 7 CRAB HUNTING IN THE UMM AL QUWAIN MANGROVES

If you fancy the idea of catching your dinner, why not try a spot of crab hunting one weekend? The Flamingo Beach Resort in Umm Al Quwain ([www.flamingoresort.ae](http://www.flamingoresort.ae)) hosts a unique night-time crab hunting excursion, in which you head out into the thicket of mangrove islands on a boat to hunt for crabs. If you just want to kayak through the mangroves, that is an option, but it's the crab hunting that's the real draw here.

The resort supplies all of the necessary equipment, along with a tutorial on how to catch a crab, and before you know it you'll be wading through the cool, knee-deep waters, spear in hand, ready to ensnare your dinner. Since the excursions take place at low tide, they're suitable for children to take part and it can be an exciting adventure for the entire family.

While you wear your own swimwear for the trip, water-resistant shoes can be rented from the hotel.

Once you've claimed your catch, you'll head back to the resort where you can feast on a buffet dinner on the beach that includes a catch of the day crab dish, featuring the crustaceans caught on your excursion. While you can opt for a room and crab hunting package deal (that includes breakfast and dinner) from Dhs725, the hotel accommodation is quite basic so if you're looking for something a little more luxurious, we suggest spending the night elsewhere and heading to the Flamingo for the crab hunting experience alone. *Prices for just the night crab hunting safari start from around Dhs180 per person*, varying based on the length of your excursion, the number of people involved and whether you plan to include transport to and from another destination.

**8 JEBEL HAFeET**  
Just an hour and half's drive from the hub of Dubai, Jebel Hafeet boasts one of the highest peaks in the UAE, clocking in at 1,240 above sea level. Drive to the top of the mountain for a stunning view, then on your way down, we suggest stopping by the natural hot spring pools. The steaming waters will soothe away any aches and pains (not to mention feel fantastic on any weary limbs, aches and pains), then munch on a packed picnic lunch in one of the lush green areas around Green Mubazarrah area at the base. If you're lucky, you might even catch a glimpse of the local wildlife, which includes bats, foxes and birds. Not in the mood to drive? The road leading up there has been described as one of the greatest driving roads in the world, but you can cycle to the top instead. If you're

**Drive to the top of the mountain for the view, then stop by the hot spring pools on your way down**

not ready to leave quite yet, stretch your visit out a little longer with an overnight stay at the Mercure Grand Jebel Hafeet ([www.mercure.com](http://www.mercure.com)). Situated on the mountain itself, the hotel has a health club, three swimming pools—some with water slides—as well as a mini golf and children's playground to keep you entertained. Come sunset, head to the bar for a fantastic view of the city below.

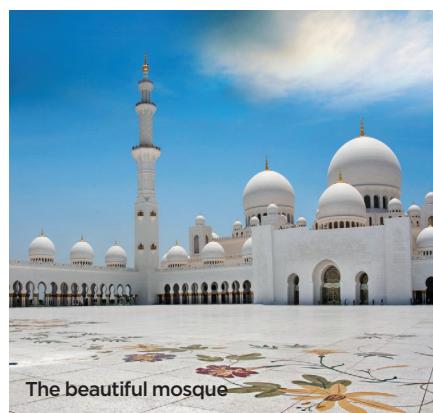
Jebel Hafeet



## 9 SHEIKH ZAYED GRAND MOSQUE

The largest mosque in the UAE and the eighth largest in the world—it's big enough to hold 40,000 worshippers at once—the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is one of the most beautiful structures in the country. If those superlatives aren't enough for you, here's another: The carpet in the main prayer hall is rumoured to be the world's largest, too, weighing 35 tonnes.

The mosque's glittering pools and gleaming white arcades have become an iconic symbol of the UAE and, more specifically, the capital, with many a visitor taking an abaya-clad photograph of themselves smiling alongside the pillars. By day or by night, the glimmering spectacle of the stunning architecture reflected in the pools is enough to take your breath away. The unique lighting was reportedly designed to reflect the phases of the moon, while indoors, you'll find another impressive lighting spectacle: the seven glittering, Swarovski crystal-encrusted chandeliers imported from Germany. The craftsmanship of the marble columns—laid with mother of pearl—is second to none, while the



**"The glittering pools and arcades have become an iconic symbol of the UAE"**

calligraphy found throughout is simply beautiful. Dress respectfully (abayas and sheilas are provided for free to women, but modest dress is still expected around the premises), don't forget your camera, and get ready to be wowed.

## 10 DEEP SEA FISHING

While the UAE is loved for its gorgeous beaches, grand hotels and fabulous shopping, beyond the coast lies an fascinating underwater world teeming with sea life. Deep sea fishing is an exciting way to explore the deep blue, with the chance to test your skills and catch fish such as sailfish, king fish, queen fish, tuna, barracuda, grouper, trevally and more. If you've never fished a day in your life, don't worry—while there are numerous companies that organise deep sea fishing excursions, most provide a professional skipper and crew on-board to help you, all of the equipment, and snacks to keep you pepped up along the way. Not only will you feel immensely proud as you're photographed proudly holding up your catch of the day, you'll also feel exceptionally satisfied if you manage to take one home for dinner, too. Prices start from Dhs450 for a four-hour trip depending on the size of the boat; try Deep Sea Adventure ([www.deepseaadventure.net](http://www.deepseaadventure.net)), Deep Blue Sea Fishing & Yacht Charter ([www.deepbluefishing.net](http://www.deepbluefishing.net)), or Al Wasl Cruising & Fishing ([www.cruiseindubai.com](http://www.cruiseindubai.com)) ■



Deep sea fishing