



## Houses and History

Explore Heritage Houses in the Bastakiya Area and Discover the History of Dubai in the Museum

*This leaflet takes you on a walk around the Bastakiya historical area (also called the Al Faheidi historical area) with its iconic wind towers and finishes at the Dubai Museum*

Dubai developed along its Creek and this is where you will find the older parts of Dubai such as the Bastakiya area.

*A map of Bastakiya with the key houses. Museums and cafes can be found at the end of the leaflet.*

### Bastakiya

The Bastakiya area on the south or Bur Dubai side of the creek is pleasant area to explore and get a sense of life before skyscrapers and air conditioning. The area was developed by Iranian (Persian) traders. It is named after the town of Bastak, part of the Arab-dominated province of Lars in south central Iran. They were encouraged to settle here by tax concessions granted by Sheikh Maktoum bin Hashar, the ruler of Dubai at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His aim was to encourage trade and develop Dubai as a key trading port. The Iranians brought their entrepreneurial skills, trading links and knowledge of the world with them. The local tribes were still living in thatched huts called Barasti, in stark comparison to the modern buildings in the Bastakiya with their cooling towers.



*Example of a reconstructed Barasti Home near the entrance to Bastakiya*

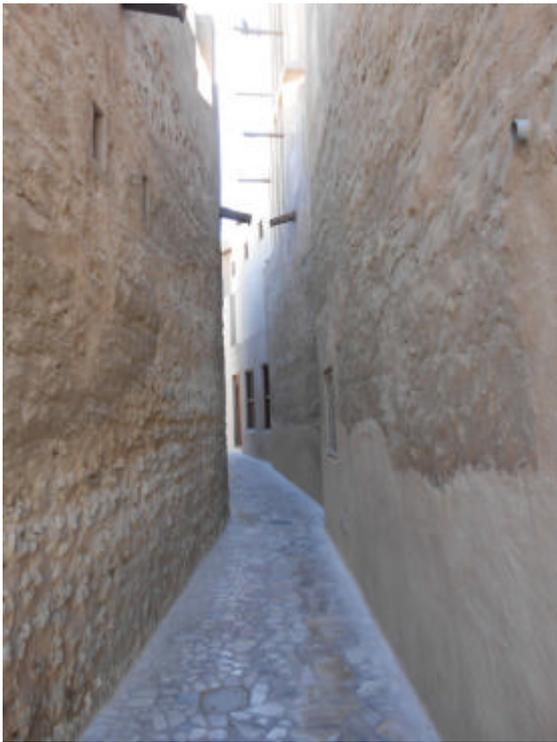
This area has only just survived. About half of it was demolished in the 1970s to make way for modern offices and the rest was falling into despair with a few of the old houses being used as warehouses. In the late 1980s it was all scheduled for demolition, when a local British architect, Rayner Otter, began a campaign to preserve what was left of the area. He wrote to Prince Charles and the Prince arranged to visit the area when he visited Dubai. It is thought that he helped to persuade his Emirati hosts to preserve the area since the plans for demolition were cancelled and the area was restored by the Dubai Municipality. The restoration is rather 'clean and tidy' and it can remind you a little of a theme park, but it does show how the area looked and the historical houses show how people lived with the heat.

Some of the historical houses with their distinctive wind towers are open to visitors. The wind towers are called arjeels and the number a house has was an indicator of the owner's wealth.



*Windtower in Bastakiya*

The square towers rise one or two storeys above the roof and have openings on all sides to catch any breeze that is about. The shafts in the towers caught the breeze, directing the air down one channel and forcing the warm air up and out. Damp cloth 'sails' can be hung from pegs in the wind towers to cool the air and help to funnel the breeze down into the house. The homes are built close together to keep the narrow alleys (sikkas) in shade for much of the day – a characteristic seen in many hot countries.



*Narrow Lanes in Bastakiya*

The map shows the layout of the Bastakiya area with the sites of historical houses and cafes identified. There is no charge to look around the historical houses. Most are now used as offices, museums, galleries or cafes. Near the Bastakiya mosque are museums for coins and stamps. The houses are pleasant and the displays will appeal to coin and stamp enthusiasts. Do take note of the entrance doors to the various houses; many are heavy antique examples with elaborate carved decorations. Historians disagree on whether these decorations were traditional Arab, based on Islamic designs, or inspired by Indian decorations.



*Door of Heritage House*

The houses all follow a similar lay out with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms.



*Courtyard of Heritage House (Nr. 13)*

Look out for galleries on the second floor of some of the houses.



*Gallery in a Heritage House*

There are a few pleasant cafes where you can take a break and these are also situated in the houses.



*Arabian Tea House Courtyard*

Bastakiya is also establishing itself as a centre for the arts with several galleries located in the area.



*Sheikh Mohammed Centre*

The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding is found in the Bastakiya area. This centre holds events such as cultural meals, heritage tours and visits to Jumeira Mosque.



After exploring the Bastakiya area make your way to the Al Faheidi Road (the Arabian Tea House

and Local House face out onto this road) and turn right. After a couple of hundred yards you reach a right turn towards the museum and see the minaret of the Grand Mosque.



The Grand Mosque is opposite the Dubai Museum. It has 54 domes, a capacity of 1,200 people and one of the tallest minarets at 70m. It

was rebuilt in 1998, but is a replica of the original 1900 mosque. As with most mosques it is only accessible by muslims. If you wish to visit a mosque you can take a tour around Jumeriah Mosque, more information is available from the Cultural Centre.



*Dubai Grand Mosque*

## Dubai Museum

*Opening hours Sat – Thurs 8.30-17.30;  
Fri 14.00-17.30 Entrance Fee 3Dhs, no  
credit cards.*



*Entrance to Dubai Museum*

Before you enter the museum take a moment to look at the remains of the town wall. Question – what do you build walls with when all around you is sand? Answer – fossilised coral. You can see in the section of the wall close to the museum how coral from the seabed has been used to form the wall along with gypsum.



*Town Wall remains near Museum*

This is the remains of the oldest town wall built about 1800. It once surrounded the old city including the Al Faheida Fort (now the Museum), the Grand Mosque and some residential houses. It was about 600m long, 50cm thick and 2.5m high. Most of the wall was demolished at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup>.Century to make way for the expansion of the city. There is also a little of the wall left in the Bastakiya area. A later wall was built in Deira (the other side of the Creek) in the 1850s.



*Dubai Museum*

The museum is located in the restored Al Faradi Fort which is believed to be the oldest building in the area. Built in 1787 to defend the city against foreign invasions, it was once home to about 100 men and was also the home and office of the Ruler. It is built of sea rocks (fossilised coral), palm tree trunks, palm fronds, mud bricks and sarooj (mortar made from imported clay, manure and water). The fort is 41m long and 33m wide and has towers at three corners. The oldest round tower is 12.5m high and 5m in diameter with a narrow entrance. The tower on the northwest corner is

square with three storeys and the last is a round tower on the north east corner. The second floor of the fort has a path 5m wide along the top of the walls. Three vast halls facing the courtyard were added in about 1900. The main entrance door is made of teak and studded with iron nails. Initially built as barracks, the halls served as Dubai's jail as late as 1971.

The museum has been incorporated into the fort without altering its original structure. It was opened as a Museum in 1971. It illustrates the history of this 5000 year old city from its trading and seafaring origins through pearl diving, the oil boom and finally the international city it is today. The courtyard of the museum has a well, some local boats formally used for fishing and pearl fishing and water containers.



*Boats in the Museum Courtyard*

There are also examples of the early types of houses found in the Gulf. The Al Kaimah house was used by the early inhabitants and was built of palm branches.



*Al Kaimah – an early house*

An Al Arish was a house with a wind tower made of burlap (a coarse cloth made of jute or hemp). In winter, the people tended to leave the houses and live in tents that were warmer.



*An Arish House*



*Interior of an Arish House*

The halls around the courtyard have displays of armour, weapons and musical instruments. There is limited information on the exhibits – but look out for the curved daggers (the Khanjar dagger is from Oman) and the ‘tambura’ a large harp.

Downstairs you enter the new galleries completed in 1995. There is an audiovisual show that takes you through the recent history of the city and it is quite astonishing how quickly the modern city has grown. Moving on from here you can wander through tableaus that show life in the souk and homes in the 1950s.

These include the interiors of shops and workshops.



*Dubai Museum – Spice Shop*



*Dubai Museum – Pearl Merchant*

Following life in the town, life in the desert is explored as you walk through a desert camp and there is information on finding and managing water.



*Dubai Museum – Al Falaj*

The Falaj system of irrigation was devised about 3000 years ago to water the date palms.

Water is brought from underground sources and delivered to the date gardens.

Moving on you reach a section looking at Dhow building, fishing and pearl diving. Pearls were a source of wealth for the area before oil and before the advent of cultured pearls from Japan. Pearl divers made about 50 dives a day, each lasting about 3minutes.

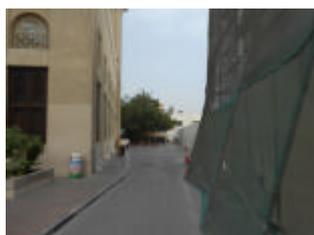


*Dubai Museum – Pearl Diving*

The final section of the museum displays artefacts from archaeological sites in Jumeirah and other local sites. This includes pots, jewellery, weapons and other domestic items. These show that despite the harsh environment, there is evidence that civilisation in the area dates back over 5,000 years and mean that Dubai and its surroundings was a centre of construction, agriculture, craftsmanship and art.

There is a small shop – but if you hoped to find a café, then you will be out of luck – if you want refreshments the closest cafes are probably back in the Bastakiya area.

Before leaving the area you may wish to have a quick detour to see the Hindu Lane along side the Hindu Temple. Take the alley opposite the

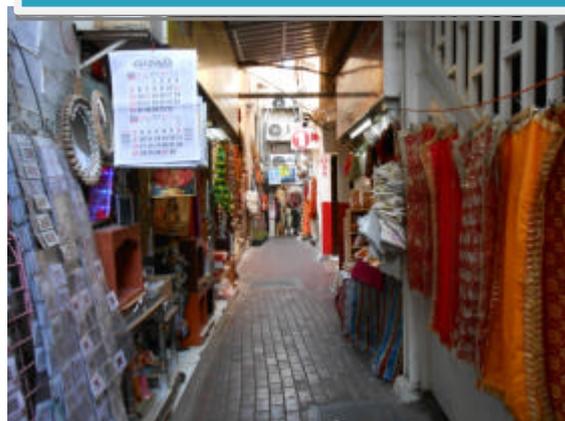


Museum, off Ali Bin Abi Taleb Street and down the side of the Grand Mosque.

This alley turns left into Hindu alley which runs along the side of the Hindu Temple. It is full of little shops selling items for puja – prayer/worship. Typically this is fruit, a flower garland (often marigolds) and milk. There are ready made sets for sale as well as lots of pictures and statues of Hindi gods.

### Hindu Temple

*Krishna Mandir - it is only open during prayer time usually 6.30, 8.30, 10.15, 17.00 and 18.00 admission is free.*



*Hindu Lane*

This is the end of the walk and you need to re-trace your steps along Al Faheidi road to return to your car or metro.

Alternatively, you can move on to Walk 2. To reach the start of Walk 2, turn right at the end of Hindu Lane and then almost immediately left to reach the Fabric Souk.



## Area Information

**Access - Driving** - there is pay and display car parking alongside the creek, off Al Seef Road. Walk towards the Bastakiya with the creek on your right and passing many floating restaurants. If arriving by taxi, ask them to drop you near Bastakiya nights – (right)



**Metro** - use Al Fahida station on the Green Line. Leave the metro station via EXIT 3 and walk down Al Mussallah Street



At the bottom of the road you will see the Bastakiya area ahead of you.



**Refreshments** – There are several restaurants and cafes within the Bastakiya area – Arabian Tea House (Nr 50), Local House (Nr 51), AXA (Nr 14), Bastakiya Nights (Nr 2), and Orient Guest House (Nr 48).

**Toilets** – The cafes and restaurants have toilets for clients and there are public toilets in the area (Nr 30)



## Key Buildings in the Bastakiya Area

Nr	Description	Comment
*	Remain of the wall	Another section of the old wall of Dubai remains
1	Aresh 	Local House built of canes and palm leaves
2	Bastakiya Nights	This is the oldest building in Bastakiya and was constructed by Abdul Razaq Abdul Raheem Al Bataki in 1895 and restored in 2004. Restaurant – serving Arabic fare
3	Mohammed Sharif Sultan Al-Ulama's Heritage House 	Build in 1931 by Mr Mohammed Sharif Sultan who was the commercial judge in Dubai. The house has two floors with a spacious internal courtyard and two wind towers, traditional columns, arches, decorative gypsum screens and capitals. It was restored in 1997. Now used as offices for the Architectural Heritage Department. <i>Open to the Public 8 -2 –Sat – Wed Free</i>
5	Philately House 	Stamp Museum covering the history of stamps and of the UAE Postal Service with examples of stamps from around the Emirates. The restored house is pleasant to view and the collection would appeal to serious stamp enthusiasts <i>Open 9 -1 Thurs 9am – 8pm Sat – Wed Free</i>
6	Bastakiya Mosque 	
7	Coin Museum 	Covers the history of coins in the Arabic Area with many examples displayed and some explanatory AV displays. As with the stamps, the house is pleasant and the coins collection would appeal to an enthusiast. <i>Open Sat – Thurs 8 -8. Free.</i>

8	Architectural Heritage Society 	This building was constructed by Mr Abdul qadir Abdul Rahman Al Rashidi in 1936 and restored in 2001. Heritage House that is used by the Heritage Society whose objective is to maintain and protect the architectural heritage in the region. You are welcome to look inside. There is a lovely inner balcony that is a reminder of similar ones seen in other parts of the Arab world. <i>Open Sat-Wed 8 – 1 and 5 – 8. Thurs 9 -1.</i>
10	Tashkeel Artists Studios	Private
13	Heritage House 	Built in 1925 by Abdul Razzaq Uztadi. It has two entrances, a wind tower, decorative pillars, traditional ceilings and corners and guest rooms. It was renovated in 2006 and is used as an Interactive Gallery. <i>Open 9 – 9 except Fri 3pm -9pm</i>
14 and 46	XVA	This building was built by Mr Admed Al Sidiqi in 1960 and was restored in 2003. Hotel and Art Gallery. Good place to stop for coffee or a mint lemonade
17	Dar Ibn Al Haytham For the Visual Arts 	Restored Heritage House used as a Gallery
18	Restoration House 	Restored House has some information on the restoration of the area – e.g. the range of windows and doors to choose from. In the centre is a large tree, a Ficus Infectoria planted in 1950. <i>Open Sun – Thurs 8 – 2 Free</i>
20	Dar Al Nadwa	Built in 1925 by Mr Abdul Rahman Mohammad Farroq. And restored in 2001 to house the Heritage Awareness section and it is used for lectures, exhibitions and other cultural events. <i>Open Sun-Thurs 8 – 2. Free</i>
29	Art Connection 	Art studios with a painted car in the square outside.
30	Toilets	
32	Shop	Sells calligraphy and art. They will write your name in Arabic calligraphy
37	Shops	Art Gallery at one end with Royal Saffron a spice and incense shop as well
42	Shop	Sewar Art – selling prints and calligraphy. They will write your name in Arabic Calligraphy
43	Gallery	Art gallery
45	Dar Al Adaab	House of Literature with information on the Annual Festival of Literature
48/49	Guest House	Orient Guest House – also location for refreshments.
50	Cafe	Arabian Tea House

51	Cafe	Local House
52	Art gallery	Majlis Gallery



*Bastakiya Area Map*