



DUBAI TODAY

Travel Today Feature May 2012



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Plenty To Do On Longer DXB Stay

Kiwi Agents In Dubai

A selection of Kiwi agents is in Dubai this week experiencing the destination's diverse product, and Emirates is hoping the famil will help drive sales of its popular stopover packages.

"Dubai, the home of EK, is a vibrant and exciting city and the best way for us to promote this is to give our travel trade partners the chance to experience it first-hand," says EK VP Australasia Barry Brown. "Travel consultants are incredibly important to us, and we hope those who have secured a place on this famil will help drive further sales of the attractive stopover packages EK, Dubai Tourism and Arabian Adventures jointly offer." EK's stopovers include a choice of 60 hotels, 24-hour check-in, breakfast and transfers.

The Basics

- Dubai is eight hours behind New Zealand and weekend is Fri-Sat. Fri is the Muslim rest day.
- UAE currency is the dirham, and \$1 is approx AED4. Credit cards are widely accepted but smaller shops and small restaurants prefer cash and taxis only accept cash.
- Dubai uses the same three-pin plug as the UK; power is 220-240 volts.
- Certain medicines are restricted and controlled by Dubai as part of its hard-line drugs policy. These include some over-the-counter medicines like those containing Codeine. Clients travelling with restricted medicines should carry a doctor's note or prescription; keep medicines in the original packaging and only bring an appropriate amount.



Showcasing the new but celebrating the old, Dubai's wealth of holiday options, both traditional and modern, offer Kiwis plenty of reasons to stay longer.

Dubai Tourism will focus on new market segments for Kiwis as it looks to grow the number of travellers heading to the destination, and increase their length of stay.

Kiwis generally treat Dubai as a stopover, says Dubai Tourism Commerce and Marketing Australia and New Zealand director Julie King—but adds the NTO is investing a lot in the market as it looks to grow their length of stay to three or four nights.

Smartphone App

The free Definitely Dubai smartphone app gives visitors top tips on where to eat, what to see and where to shop.

The app lets users scan their surroundings to find nearby attractions, landmarks, hotels, shops and restaurants; check out deals and special offers from shops, tour operators, restaurants and spas; access a map; use a currency converter; and call a restaurant or shop directly from their phone. See definitelydubai.com

This means showing New Zealanders what there is to do in Dubai, especially in the areas of culture, luxury, sports and events, cruise, gastronomy and affordability.

"We're hoping we can look at growing the Kiwi market by 7-10% over the next 12-18 months, and we are adding a lot of investment to that market, such as through promotions and incentivising agents to join the Dubai Experts programme," says King.

"There's a lot of activity happening in New Zealand, and I would be hoping to start seeing positive growth out of the market."

It's all about opening Kiwis' eyes to new experiences—luxury is more affordable than many would think, says King; sports events such as golf, tennis and horse racing in the emirate are taking off; cruise is developing at a fast pace; the region is home to some top restaurants (and Kiwis love their food, King adds); and despite the idea that the emirate costs a fortune, there is also plenty at the lower end of the price scale.

Dubai Top Tips

Adventure World's Lara Kamionka was this month acknowledged for achieving the highest rating for a Kiwi agent in the Dubai Expert programme. Here, Lara shares her top tips for travelling to Dubai:



- The Dune Desert Safari is great fun and gives clients a chance to relax away from high rises. I recommend they do it towards the end of their trip and end on a high note.
- To get their bearings and have bragging rights every visitor should travel up the Burj Khalifa.
- Suggest clients head down to a local restaurant at dinner time, sit on the sidewalk and try some local cuisine.
- Modest lightweight clothing is ideal and a light jacket or shawl might be needed during winter. Take only necessary clothes so there is room for shopping and souvenirs.
- Dubai Mall is great for the whole family, with around 1200 retailers, an indoor aquarium, ice rink and KidZania. Most malls are open 1000-2200 Sun-Wed and 1000-2400 Thu-Sat.
- Ski Dubai is great fun and a chance to escape the dry desert heat.
- Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding is great for a traditional breakfast and learning about Emirati culture.
- Try to think of Dubai as a destination rather than a stopover. There is plenty to do and keep visitors entertained for a seven-night holiday!



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Dubai Experts

Dubai Tourism's Dubai Experts programme for agents has had a particularly good response from New Zealand, says the NTO, especially over the last month.

Overall there are now 322 Kiwi experts, but the NTO is always keen to see more.

The NTO is looking at a number of ways to encourage more agents to complete the programme, including with famils, discount cards, special newsletters and group meetings. For more, see dubaixperts.com

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Kids Rule: Family Travel In Dubai

Tips For Families

Agents in Dubai on the Emirates, Dubai Tourism and Arabian Adventures mega famil yesterday got to experience for themselves what families can get up to in the emirate. Flight Centre Central City's Curtis Crosswhite shares his tips:



- Don't let the heat put you off, everything's inside!
- The Mall of the Emirates has an area where you can drop your kids off and then go shopping.
- KidZania is great for entertaining children—there's nothing else like it.
- The water parks are really safety conscious, I've never seen so many lifeguards, and staff are very helpful.
- There's more to Dubai than you think. The aquarium, Ski Dubai, there's so much here for kids.

Life's A Beach

Dubai's beaches are very calm, perfect for swimming children. Free beaches include the Jumeirah Open Beach, Kite Beach, Umm Suqeim Beach, while Jumeirah Beach Park costs a few dirhams but has lifeguards, a play area and barbecues.



Wild Water Fun: Zoom Past The Sharks in Dubai

Families are spoilt for choice when it comes to water parks in Dubai, home to Wild Wadi and The Atlantis' Aquaventure. Wild Wadi is themed around the tale of a girl named Juha, and is free for anyone staying at a Jumeirah property, while Aquaventure's slides include the ominous Leap of Faith, a steep drop in a transparent tunnel through a shark-infested lagoon (which featured on Amazing Race recently). Both parks are very well-patrolled by lifeguards and feature slides and rides for all thrill levels. Meanwhile the Atlantis also counts its own aquarium, the Lost Chambers which recreates the legend of the lost city of Atlantis, and Dolphin Bay among its family-friendly attractions.



Water-based and in-door activities form the basis of Dubai's family-friendly proposition, keeping the kids cool in the sometimes blistering heat, including Wild Wadi, pictured above.

While the adults were letting their imagination run wild designing the fantastic sky-scrapers, hotels and shopping malls that dominate Dubai's skyline, they didn't forget about the kids.

The same imagination (and deep pockets) has gone into turning Dubai into an entertaining playground for children too.

A land run entirely by children, aquariums, water parks, a giant arcade and plenty of calm shallow beaches—the emirate is packed full of activities for kids.

The developers also took into account the heat, and most activities are either indoors or themed around water, making them a

great year-round proposition. Dubai Mall alone offers enough to keep families entertained for a couple of days.

Guaranteed to make young children happy (and to impress the older folk too) is KidZania, an indoor world run by kids aged two-16 years.



Children can have a go at different jobs, as pictured above, earning money along the way. The most popular option is learning to be a pilot in a flight simulator, but they can also design their own laptops, play at being a doctor, pump gas, film a television show, make pizza and more.

During the week there are often morning school groups visits, so urge clients to head in after 1300.

A Little Shopping Time

While the kids are entertained, adults should try and hit the shops. The UAE, especially Dubai, is home to the second highest number of international retail brands after the UK, a recent study by CBRE found. Of 326 retailers surveyed, 53.8% had branches in Dubai, second only to London. Similar to the souks, in some shops it is acceptable to try to bargain prices down.

Summer Surprises

Hotels offer special rates and there are plenty of shopping deals, entertainment, giveaways and spa specials on during the Dubai Summer Surprises festival, which is on this year 14 Jun-14 Jul.

The festival also includes the opening of giant 'edutainment' venue Modesh World, which will stay open until 22 Aug. It's packed with activities including arts and crafts, horse and camel riding, inflatables and trampolines, sports, skateboarding clinics, a BeyBlade zone, Lego, a book bazaar, souq, fun fair and more. Entry is AED10 for adults, AED15 for children.

View From The Top



Tell clients it is definitely worth pre-booking a trip up to the top of the world's tallest tower, the Burj Khalifa—it will cost just AED100, whereas turning up on the day will cost AED400 and places sell out very quickly. Pictured enjoying the View from the Top as part of the Emirates mega-famil on Mon are Kiwi agents Tasha Wilson of Flight Centre Riccarton Mall and Victoria Keating of World Travellers Queenstown.

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Cultural Must-knows

Although men customarily shake hands, Emirati women generally don't offer their hands to men and many Emirati men prefer not to shake hands with women. It's best to wait for a hand to be offered first, says Dubai Tourism.

Most people know by now (thanks to some high-profile news reports) but it may be worth reminding clients that public displays of affection are not a good idea. Neither is offensive language, aggressive behaviour, spitting or smoking outside of designated areas—they're considered offensive and can land travellers in some pretty serious situations.

It's also advisable to let the hotel know if clients are travelling as an unmarried couple, says Dubai Tourism.

Other tips are: Seek permission before photographing locals, especially women; swimwear is acceptable by the pool or beach; and women should keep their knees and shoulders covered in public (pashminas and scarves are useful).

Dubai Museum

Housed in the oldest building in Dubai, the 1799 Al Fahidi Fort, the Dubai Museum tells the story of Dubai and displays everyday life in the emirate with working models and lifelike displays including a market, school, desert and pearl diving. The museum is open 0830-1930 Sat-Thu and Fri 1400-1930.

Exploring Dubai's Spice and Soul



The Bastakiya Quarter was originally home to textile and pearl traders. Many homes have been restored and visitors can wander through and others are now galleries. The area provides a colourful insight into Dubai's history.

When many people think of Dubai it's the wealth, malls and towers they picture, but the city is rich in both modern and traditional culture.

Those who enjoy a touch of the exotic can explore old pearl merchant homes, take a wooden abra down the creek, haggle for spices in a souk, visit a mosque, the Dubai Museum or the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding, which promises to answer any question visitors may have—and nothing is considered offensive.

Meanwhile the country is also home to a burgeoning modern art scene,

Alcohol Rules

Visitors to Dubai can drink alcohol in licensed venues—the minimum drinking age is 21—and they can bring four bottles of Duty Free into the country. Drinking or being drunk in public will not be tolerated.

and there are plenty of galleries to explore.

The Islamic country is considered to be one of the most tolerant, but clients should be especially respectful in how they dress when visiting cultural areas.

Jumeirah Mosque

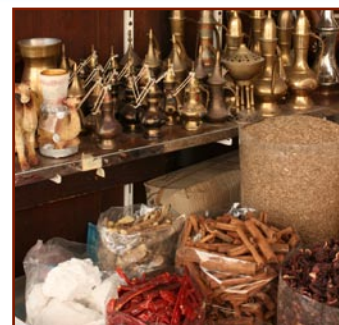
The Jumeirah Mosque is one of the few mosques in Dubai open to the public. The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding hosts visits of the mosque every Sun, Tue, Thu and Sat at 1000, clients should have shoulders and knees covered. The centre promotes 'Open Doors Open Minds' and will happily answer any question clients may have.

Dubai Gets Arty

The art scene is developing at a rapid pace in Dubai, from traditional Islamic art and calligraphy through to modern pieces.

The annual Art Dubai festival is getting bigger every year, while the warehouses in Al Quoz, which used to be largely industrial, are now becoming art galleries. Another great place to check it out is the Bastakiya Quarter, which was originally established by textile and pearl traders. Only two families still live there, while many homes have been restored so visitors can wander around, and others have been turned into galleries. Good ones to check out include XVA Gallery and Majlis Gallery.

The quarter is also home to the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding, perfect for learning about heritage and traditions.



Souk Shopping Tips

Dubai's souks are great for a Middle Eastern shopping experience and there are some good bargains to be had, especially in the gold souk—but tell clients they should barter. The price on the sticker, or the one offered, can be two, three or even four times what shopkeepers will actually accept from someone with the right bargaining skills—confidence seems to be key! Dubai's souks include the Deira Gold Souk, Deira Spice Souk and Bur Dubai Souk for textiles and trinkets. The gold souk reportedly has around 70 tonnes of gold on sale at any time, and part of that gold has been made into the 58.7kg gold ring near the entrance, recognised as the world's heaviest. For those who prefer to shop in air-conditioned comfort, the Dubai Gold and Diamond Park is popular with locals and tourists.

Airport Express Exit

Emirates-owned Arabian Adventures is the only operator which meets guests as they get off the plane and before they head through passport control. It's a welcome service after the long-haul flight.

Dubai Economy Fares

Emirates has Dubai fares for sale to 17 May priced from \$2421 ex Auckland. The levels are valid for departures to 31 May and 03 Jul-31 Oct.



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Endless Action Packed Options



For Petrolheads

Unsurprisingly for a country where petrol is the equivalent of around 50c a litre, motorsports and cars are popular with both Emiratis and visitors alike. The Dubai Autodrome offers a range of activities for petrol-head clients, including the chance to drive an Audi R8 V10 supercar or give a Formula 1-style single seater a spin. There are also go-karts and a laser strike arena, as Kiwi agents (pictured) discovered this week on the mega-famil.



From negotiating desert peaks and race tracks to camel riding and indoor snow—Dubai offers a wide range of activities for adrenalin junkies.

Shopping, beaches and spas—for some reason that isn't enough for some travellers, who are looking for a little more action.

There is plenty to keep the adventurous happy in Dubai, whether on a boys' week away or a family holiday. The usual suspects like diving, go-karting and skiing are joined by some more unusual options, including sandboarding, wadi-bashing

(driving through valleys and dry riverbeds in the Hajjar Mountains), 4WD safaris on the dunes and even camel polo.

Although some of the activities require a little bit of driving to get to (such as the dunes, wadis and some of the dive sites) much of the action is right in the city itself.

... Event City

For those who prefer to watch the action, Dubai attracts some world-class events and was recently named the Middle East's leading sports destination. Drawcards include the Dubai World Cup, the world's richest horse race (with a USD1 million prize up for grabs), Dubai Desert Classic and Dubai Tennis Championships. For a list of the events and a downloadable app, see dubaicalendar.com

Camel Polo

For a taste of action Dubai-style, truly adventurous clients could try camel polo, similar to polo but with a few essential changes. The game is accessible to all skill levels, and clients will be taught to swing a mallet as well as ride and steer a camel. See poloclubdubai.com/en/polo/camel-polo.html

Dubai Snapshot

World Journeys' most popular Dubai option is the two-night Dubai Snapshot, which offers a taste of the emirate's must-sees, including the Jumeirah Mosque, Al Fahidi Fort, gold souk, belly dancing and a sand safari. It costs from \$645pp t/s.

Win A Dubai Trip

Adventure World is offering agents the chance to win a five-day Dubai package including four nights in a five-star hotel, dinner in the desert and a trip up the Burj Khalifa. To be in to win, make a Dubai booking before 30 Jun. The wholesaler has a the three-day Essential Dubai, from \$345pp t/s, and five-day Off Road Adventure in the Emirates, from \$2267pp t/s.

Ski In The Desert



By now most people have heard of Ski Dubai in the Mall of Emirates, thanks to the absurdity in having snow in the middle of the desert—but what struck agents on this week's mega fam was how useable the facility is for skiers and snowboarders. Comments included that the attraction 'wasn't just a gimmick, it was well worth a visit'. The attraction is also home to some very cute penguins but they generally sleep in the morning, so suggest clients with kids time their visit for the afternoon. It's also a great place to escape Dubai's heat, but clients should be aware, it is very cold. Packing gloves and beanies might seem ridiculous but it won't once they are inside. Pictured above enjoying the slide at Ski Dubai on the EK megafamil this week is HoT Newmarket's Amber King and Cruiseabout's Michelle Sutton.



Safari Desert-Style

The sand dunes are a giant playground for 4WDs, which take off up and down the hills at sometimes alarming speeds (although drivers will adjust the thrill level according to the client). Arabian Adventures' popular Sundowner safari takes clients into the desert to hit the dunes (in air conditioned 4WDs—no old-style jeeps here). The tour includes a fascinating falcon show, stopping to watch the sun set, and a Bedouin camp where clients can get henna tattoos, hold falcons, eat and drink—and of course ride a camel. Pictured above attempting to do just that are Sue Hamilton, Intrepid My Adventure, and Michelle Rook, Galaxy Travel World Travellers Rotorua.

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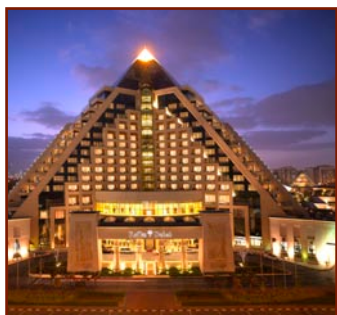
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High-flying Luxury

Innovative Luxury Tips

Among the standout options for high end clients is the iconic Burj Al Arab, says Innovative Travel. The spacious and sophisticated suites are butler serviced 24/7 and dining experiences range from under the stars to under the sea and are only part of the facilities. Innovative has a three-night stay including luxury return airport transfers, daily breakfast and desert safari from \$2895pp twin (normally \$4200pp twin).



Kiwis Demand Five-star

World Journeys says it has increasing numbers of Kiwis asking for five-star-plus properties in Dubai, with one of the most popular options Raffles Dubai. The hotel is a 19-storey pyramid-shaped structure and is perfect for affluent business and leisure travellers, says the wholesaler. Features include an outdoor pool, Amrita Spa with seven treatment rooms, sauna and Jacuzzi. Rates start at \$310 per room s/t, making it good value for the higher end in hotels, says World Journeys' Kate Gohar.

EK's Arabian Airpass

Clients keen to explore the Middle East can use Dubai as a base and go exploring with an Arabian Airpass. The pass lets travellers visit 12 cities in the region, from Cairo to Muscat, all from the Dubai base. No minimum stays are required and fares start from USD60 per flight sector.



Emirates' New Zealand manager Chris Lethbridge experienced some of Dubai's high-end offering yesterday—literally! Lethbridge is pictured skydiving over the emirate's man-made Palm Island.

Dubai isn't shy about its wealth—opulence is on show everywhere, from the Swarovski crystals embedded in the elevators of the Meydan to the herd of golden horses welcoming guests to the Al Qasr hotel.

It's a great option for Kiwi travellers who have extra to spend, as the emirate is used to wealthy guests and knows how to show them a good time.

Other than a huge array of luxurious hotels, everything else a high-end traveller could want is easily accessible, including malls full of designer brands, high-quality spas, top restaurants and exclusive activities such as

Skydive Dubai over the Palm.

Although there are plenty of options for those with money to burn, Dubai also offers excellent options in the affordability sector, says Dubai Tourism. Many three- or four-star hotels offer the chance to experience the emirates' luxuriousness, it has plenty of free attractions like the fountain, old town, shopping malls or even just visiting the various five-star hotels in town for a nosey, and taxis are incredibly reasonable—around AED70 from the airport to hotels on the Palm, which are some of the furthest away. The city's public transport such as the metro is also an excellent option for those doing it on the cheap.



World's Tallest Hotel

The luxury JW Marriott Marquis Hotel will be the tallest hotel in the world when it opens this year, reports local Marriott representative Maggie Hunt. Spread across two towers, the hotel will eventually boast more than 1600 rooms, with a 'spectrum' of business facilities, an array of bars and restaurants plus a gym and spa. The first tower, set to open later this year, will have 804 guest rooms and 16,912m² of meeting space.

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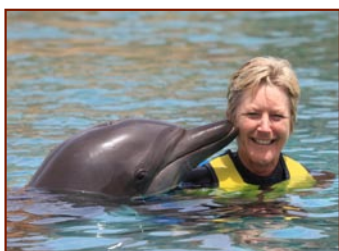
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Kiwi Agents Lap Up Dubai

Haute Couture Options

The Armani Hotel in the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, is another suggested option from Innovative Travel's Robyn Galloway. The hotel boasts Armani's signature style to the very last detail. There's eight restaurants, an Armani Spa and haute-couture fashion accessories from the Giorgio Armani Prive' collection. Innovative has three-night Fountain Suite packages, with return luxury airport transfers, daily breakfast and desert safari from \$1480pp twin (normally \$2080pp s/t). Galloway says agents can combine these with one of Dubai's world class premium events, activities and attractions in an exotic, exciting Arabian setting.

Top-seller's Dubai Tips



Loris Sowen was the top-selling Kiwi agent in the Emirates, Dubai Tourism and Arabian Adventures mega famil. On the last day the top agents could choose to go sky-diving or stay at sea level and head to Atlantis' Dolphin Bay for a swim with dolphins, where Sowen met Black. Going for a ride was a welcome cool-off following a desert breakfast with falcons! Sowen shares what she learnt while on the famil...

- I used to think Dubai was just a stopover destination, but you could actually use it as a total destination. It's got a lot of activities, and there's something for everyone.
- Everyone should do the desert safari, that was a highlight.
- The shopping is amazing—but clients should be aware that the malls don't open until 1000.
- The Burj Khalifa is a must and clients should pre-book to save money.
- Flying Emirates—the service was fantastic.



1: Emirates sales executive Lynda Tudor tries her hand at falconry. **2:** Jenni Byrne of House of Travel Ponsonby, Sheryl Holmes of Travelcom Tauranga and VesnaFahn, Travel Brokers. **3:** A mystery agent shows his support for the brands that got him to Dubai while at laser tag at the Dubai Autodrome. **4:** Sarah Clarke of Holland Clarke and Beatson; Ash Creevey, House of Travel Dunedin; Jo O'Neill, Holland Clarke and Beatson; Victoria Keating, World Travellers Queenstown; Billy Ballantine, HoT Invercargill; Anne-Marie Le Lievre, Orbit Christchurch and Susie Bernard, HoT Gore do their best to stay cool in the searing 44 degree heat. **5:** Mike Smith of Tandem Christchurch, Gary Condon of Westside United and Jeremy Matthews of APX Christchurch suited up for some go-karting at the Dubai Autodrome. **6:** Meeting the polar bear at Ski Dubai are Michelle Sutton of Cruiseabout Parnell, Sheryl Holmes of Travelcom Tauranga, and Angeline Gower and Esther van Zoelen of Travelcom at the Mount. **7:** Leena Bhikharidas from Harvey World Travel Ponsonby, Michelle Sutton of Cruiseabout Parnell, Jeremy Matthews of APX Christchurch and (front) Amber King of House of Travel Newmarket meet a camel in the desert.

Mega-famil 2013 Plans

Around 80 Kiwi agents got a taste of what Dubai has to offer this week on the inaugural Emirates, Dubai Tourism and Arabian Adventures mega famil. If you missed out on the fun, rest easy—EK Australasia VP Barry Brown told agents that they are hopeful of holding a similar famil next year.

Getting There In Style

Emirates has short-life business class fares to Dubai ex Auckland only and priced from \$8451 for sales to 31 May. Levels are valid for departures to 31 Jul and flight restrictions apply.

Speak The Language

English is widespread and road and shop signs, menus and tourist information leaflets are in Arabic and English, but Emiratis appreciate visitors who make an effort to speak Arabic.

Hello – Marhaba

Peace be upon you (a general greeting) – As-salaam alaykum

Reply – Wa alaykum as-salaam

Goodbye – Ma-assalaama

Please – Min fadlak (to a man); min fadliki (to a woman)

Thank you – Shukran

Yes – Na'am **No** – La

How much (price)? – Bekam?

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