



# DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

Travel Today Feature May 2013

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## DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

### Let The Fun Begin...

Emirates and Dubai tourism are hosting 80 kiwi (and 200 Aussie) agents in Dubai this week for the second annual mega famil. The agents, made up of top sellers and randomly drawn winners, will experience both old and new Dubai, while the highlight is expected to be an *Amazing Race* style competition with challenges created around some of Dubai's top attractions. See *Travel Today* over the coming days for details.

### Cultural Dos And Don'ts

There are certain things travellers to Dubai should remember to be respectful of the local culture, and keep themselves out of trouble.

Men customarily shake hands but Emirati women generally don't offer their hands to men and many men prefer not to shake hands with women—it's best to wait for a hand to be offered.

Public displays of affection, spitting, offensive language and smoking outside of designated areas can land travellers in trouble, and clients should also let the hotel know if they are travelling as an unmarried couple.

Other tips include seek permission before photographing locals, swimwear is acceptable by the pool or beach, and women should keep their knees and shoulders covered in public.



### Go Back In Time At The Dubai Museum

Dubai has a long and fascinating history stretching back thousands of years, and visitors can learn all about it in the Dubai Museum. Housed in the oldest building in Dubai, the 1799 Al Fahidi Fort, the museum includes displays and working models showing markets, schools, pearl diving, ship building, ancient burial sites and more. It's also air conditioned, making it a great place to spend an afternoon out of the heat, and costs just AED3 to enter. The museum is open 0830-1930 Sat-Thu and 1400-1930 Fri.

## Souk Shopping 101



**For those who have never experienced market-type haggling before, Dubai's souks are a great place to start—the sellers are generally polite without being too overbearing, and it's reasonably easy to brush off unwanted attention.**

Clients should be aware though that the first price offered—or the one on the sticker in the case of jewellery

### Souvenir Bazaar

If clients are keen on buying souvenirs like pashminas and embroidered shoes, they might want to try the Meena Bazaar near the abra station across the creek from the Gold Souk. Scarves and other souvenirs appeared to be more reasonably priced there than in the Gold Souk, with pashminas starting from around AED10. They won't find any gold there though.

shops—could be two or three times what the seller is willing to accept for the item. A general rule of thumb is offer them around a third or half of what they ask for first, then work your way up until you can agree on a price—and remember, confidence is key.

Dubai's souks include the Deira Gold Souk (where there is apparently around 70 tonnes of gold on sale at any one time), Deira Spice Souk and Bur Dubai Souk (for textiles and trinkets). There's also the Dubai Gold and Diamond Park if clients are keen to shop in air-conditioned comfort.

Leonie Keane of House of Travel Ellerslie (pictured above) shows off her shoe purchases.



Pictured shopping in the gold souk today are Adele Baker of Flight Centre Glenfield, Gemma Grogan of Flight Centre West City and Alex Raine of Tandem Travel.

### AED To NZD

The New Zealand dollar buys roughly three dirhams, making converting easy—just divide it by three.

### A Cultural Insight

With the spotlight on Dubai more than ever thanks to the new Emirates and Qantas partnership, recent news reports suggest there may be a lack of understanding for some when it comes to what to expect when travelling in a Muslim country.

Helping visitors to understand the local culture, customs and religion of the United Arab Emirates has been the goal of the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding for the past 15 years.

The centre operates an Open Doors Open Minds policy, and promises to answer any question, from where do you get your milk to what is your position on gay marriage.

If clients are lucky they will be spoken to by the charming and very funny Nasif Kayed (pictured) who knows how to keep his audience entertained.

Urge them to book for lunch or breakfast. There also a delicious array of Emirati food to sample—don't miss the Ligamat, fried dough balls covered in date syrup. For details and tour options see [smccu.com](http://smccu.com)



### Jumeirah Mosque

The Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding runs visits of the Jumeirah Mosque, one of the few in Dubai that is open to the public. The tours run Sun, Tue, Thu and Sat, clients should have shoulders and knees covered.

### Hard Rock Dubai

A popular spot for ex-pats, and one that scored well with Kiwi agents on the mega famil this week, is Hard Rock Café Dubai.

The café's obligatory rock star memorabilia, includes a pair of Michael Jackson's shoes which the man himself signed on a visit to the café in the 90s, and enthusiastic staff whose rendition of Gangnam Style went down a treat with the Kiwi agents.

It claims to be one of the few places in Dubai which has live music seven nights a week, and has function rooms available. The café also urged agents to 'watch this space' as there will be 'something amazing out the front of our venue soon'.





## DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

# Amazing Race Dubai: Kiwi Teams Win

New Zealand agents, you can be proud of your peers—after a day of sledging, climbing, presenting, riding, swimming, tasting and smelling, the first two teams to win the Dubai Race at the Emirates and Dubai Tourism mega famil were made up of Kiwis.

The 280 agents on the famil (80 Kiwis and 200 Aussies) were split into teams of four for the race on Fri. They were dropped at the Mall of the Emirates and told to find the coldest place in the mall, which led them to Ski Dubai where they had to climb a wall, take a sledge ride and find a penguin.

It was then time to find the tallest place in Dubai—At the Top at the Burj Khalifa, where they were instructed to jump on the Metro and head to Dubai Mall.

Once at the mall, agents had to search for a clue hidden in a fish tank at the Underwater Zoo which directed them to a 'world where children become adults' (KidZania), where they had to try their hand at radio or newspaper reporting.

Next up was having a go on the rides at SegaRepublic, and then on to the Burj Al Arab for a photo next to the iconic hotel.

Nearby at the Wild Wadi waterpark, the agents had to try out four of the popular rides, then make their way to the Madinat Jumeirah.

With the heat causing some frayed nerves by this point, the Kiwis kept their cool as they correctly identified the secret ingredient in Arabic coffee (cardamom) and perfume (vanilla and honey).

The aptly named Team One crossed the line first, followed by Team Three—but after the points from the challenges were added up, Three managed to scoop first followed by One. The winning teams took home prizes including accommodation and tour product.



**1** Winners: Teams One and Three, both made up of Kiwis, were the first to cross the finish line. Pictured are (back) EK South Island rep James Richards; Kerri Parkin of HoT (T3); Lynley Baker, Flight Centre Mt Maunganui (T3); Kylie Jennings, HoT Morrinsville (T3); Maridel Garcia, Target Travel (T1); Ruth Lumsden, Destinations Travel Management (T1); Morwenna Williams, Calder and Lawson HoT (T1); Jackie Setz, Travelsmart Napier (T1); and (in front) EK rep Lynda Tudor and Dave Leary of HoT Havelock North (T3). **2** A clue hidden in Nemo's tank directed agents to the nearby KidZania. **3** Underwater World at Dubai Zoo, one of the Amazing Race stops is home to all manner of marine animals, from fish and jellyfish to otters and penguins. **4** Snow time: Julia Blackburn of HoT Morrinsville, Kelianne Keen of HoT Merivale and Jodi Ross of APX Wellington meet one of the Ski Dubai locals. **5** Jeanne Ng of Ellerslie Flight Centre finds the quickest way back down the hill at Ski Dubai. **6** The view from the top of the Burj Khalifa. **7** On A High: Jacyntha Havenaar of HoT, Gemma Grogan of Flight Centre West City and Amanda Elliott of Cruiseabout Ponsonby experience the Burj Khalifa. **8** At Madinat Jumeirah agents had to identify the mystery scent in Arabic perfumes. **9** Milica Stankovic of Flight Centre The Palms tries to identify the mystery smell in Arabic perfume. **10** The amazing Madinat Jumeirah, an old-world Arabic 'city' built from scratch, drew comparisons to Vegas. **11** And they're off...let the Amazing Race begin. **12** Curtis Crosswhite of Flight Centre Central City, Adele Baker of Flight Centre Glenfield, Mika Tofield of Globe Travel, Tanya Franklin of The Travel Brokers and Geoff Leslie of HoT Remuera at Wild Wadi Waterpark. **13** The mini world that is KidZania. **14** Pam Tukaki of Harvey World Travel Taupo, Andrew Kemp of HoT Kemp and Adele Baker of Flight Centre Glenfield get ready to speak on 'radio' about Dubai's cuisine. **15** Jo Wright of Flight Centre Howick and Leonie Keane of HoT Ellerslie prepare a radio piece at KidZania.





## DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

# Bigger Mega Famil Planned For 2014

This year's Emirates and Dubai Tourism mega famil saw a number of improvements on the inaugural famil last year and agents can expect next year's famil to be 'bigger and better' again.

This year's famil was extended by a day and saw the introduction of the 'Amazing Race', with agents racing around Dubai completing challenges. The reason for the introduction of the race was to give agents 'a very different way of seeing Dubai's attractions rather than going on traditional site inspections', says Dubai Tourism Australia and New Zealand director Julie King. The race encouraged agents to find

their own way around Dubai, including riding the metro—which opened early on Fri morning just for the agents—and many of those on the famil commented that they hadn't realised how easy it was to get around the city.

While there were a few hiccups in the inaugural race, the NTO was thrilled with the 'competition, passion and excitement' shown by agents—and that 66 out of 70 teams finished the race (four were lost to the temptations of shopping and water parks).

Next year the NTO will look at changes including introducing different starting points throughout the city.



## Massive Aquaventure Expansion

Aquaventure Water Park at Atlantis The Palm is opening five new rides which it promises will add an 'extreme level of excitement' to the park's offering.

The new rides are well underway and from what agents saw peeking over the top of walls this week, they look likely to leave the park's existing rides in the dust when they open in Aug. The 40m high waterslide tower housing the rides will loom over the existing Ziggurat complex, says Atlantis—and while the details are sketchy, it hints that 'courage will be tested on new thrill rides unveiling cutting edge technology with never before seen surprises'.

"Adventure seekers will test their lim-

its, while those looking for a shared journey will be able to enjoy with friends and family. This non-stop water play area will add an extreme level of excitement to the overall Aquaventure experience," Atlantis has promised.

The expansion will also see the addition of new dining experiences, with a 'wide selection' of fast and easy options including pizza, Arabic mezze and gelato.

Aquaventure became famous for its Leap of Faith slide—a steep drop into shark tank—after it featured on the Amazing Race, but it also has plenty of gentler entertainment, including the Lost Chambers aquarium and swimming with dolphins.



## Kiwi Agents Urged To Upskill On Dubai

New Zealand and Australia have become hot property for Dubai suppliers following the announcement of the Emirates and Qantas partnership, with many keen to get a piece of the Australasian pie, as agents found out at the Dubai mega famil workshop on the weekend.

Agents heard from 34 companies keen to increase their business out of the Australia and New Zealand markets, and apparently there were plenty more suppliers clamouring for a chance take part in the workshop.

"This is a very exciting time for Dubai for Australians and New Zealanders," said DTCM head of region Australia New Zealand Mohamed Al Muhairi. "We're delighted with the new Emirates/Qantas partnership and the

recent announcement this will be extended to New Zealand."

With travelling to Dubai never easier for Kiwis and Aussies, now is an 'opportunity time for you to get to know our city', he told agents at the workshop.

Pictured, from Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, are Saleh al Geziry, Mohamed al Muhairi and director Australia and New Zealand Julie King.

## Affordable Dubai



Despite Dubai's reputation for luxury, there's plenty to do in the emirate for those whose budget doesn't stretch as far as staying at the Burj Al Arab, says Dubai Tourism.

Free activities include browsing art galleries in the Bastakiya neighbourhood; watch the free fountain and light show at the Dubai Mall (the first show starts at 1800 and last show is 2300, with repeats every 30 minutes); watch daily feeding at the Dubai Mall Aquarium; or head to one of Dubai's free parks such as Mushrif Park (where there are swimming pools and camel rides) or the Jumeirah Public Beach. The DTCM's suggestions of activities that cost under \$1 include crossing the creek on an abra, eating a shawarma, the Dubai Museum, travelling the metro and smoking a sheesha pipe. Meanwhile for a cheap meal, Al-Mallah restaurant in Satwa is a local favourite for authentic eats—and clients can follow it up with a sheesha.

## Dubai Experts

With so much attention on Dubai, now's a great time for agents to upskill through the Dubai Experts programme, says Dubai Tourism. The programme includes incentives like famil opportunities and the NTO is working on others too.

[CLICK HERE](#)

## Definitely Dubai App

The free Definitely Dubai app lets users scan their surroundings to find nearby attractions, landmarks, hotels and restaurants; check out deals and special offers from shops, restaurants and spas; access a map or currency converter; and call restaurants and shops from their phone. It's free to download, see [definitelydubai.com](http://definitelydubai.com)

## Mega Famil Pics

For more photos from the Emirates and Dubai Tourism mega famil—and for updates on the destination—see the Definitely Dubai Facebook page for Australia and New Zealand at [facebook.com/DTCM.ANZ](https://www.facebook.com/DTCM.ANZ)





## DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

### Third A380 “Huge” Opportunity For Kiwis

It was a big week in terms of EK news for both Kiwis and Aussies last week, with regulatory approval being granted for the QF partnership and the announcement that the A380 will be introduced on the Brisbane route.

Both developments open up huge opportunities for Kiwi travel agents, EK's regional manager Western Australia Darren Tyrell told *Travel Today* in Dubai last weekend. “We're delighted to receive regulatory approval for the EK/QF partnership in New Zealand, allowing those EK/QF codeshare arrangements to flow through across the Tasman,” he said. The airlines have already aligned



product including frequent flyer programmes and baggage allowance, and pricing ‘for the most part’ has been aligned although Tyrell said they know there is still some work to do and they're on the case.

Meanwhile the extra A380 means not only will more Kiwis be able to head to Brisbane from Auckland—a route which sees a ‘lot of traffic’—but it will also see more have the chance to experience the popular A380 product when transiting through to Dubai and beyond. Emirates' regional manager Western Australia Darren Tyrell with Dubai Tourism's general manager trade relations and partnerships for Australia and New Zealand Veronica Rainbird.

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### Mega Agents Glam Up For The Atlantis Gala Dinner

Atlantis the Palm treated agents to a gala dinner on Sat night, giving agents the chance to taste food from each of the resort's restaurants (including the very flash Nobu). World Travellers members Victoria Keating, Wendy Smith, Andrew Parke and Margot Searle are pictured at the lavish event.

### DXB: Constantly Evolving

Dubai's tourism product is constantly evolving and even if clients have been before they are likely to find an entirely different destination if they visit again, says DTCM's Mohamed Al Muhairi. There's always new restaurants and hotels popping up in the emirate—15 new hotels will open this year alone, and by 2013 Dubai will be home to 636. “Even if your client has been to Dubai before they will return to find a different city,” he said.

### Sheraton Dubai Opens

The Sheraton Dubai Mall of the Emirates Hotel opened in Mar, making it Starwood's 14th property in the emirate.

The hotel is directly connected to the huge Mall of The Emirates, which features over 560 retail brands as well as the popular Ski Dubai indoor ski slope.

The new Starwood property has 418 guest rooms, meeting and event space, four restaurants and lounges, spa and gym.



### Lifestyle Managers & Understated Armani Luxury

As you'd expect, the Armani Hotel Dubai oozes class, from the ‘lifestyle manager’ who explains the dizzying array of buttons in your room to the Armani-branded sugar cubes that go in the coffee you just whipped up in

your personal Nespresso machine.

The hotel is found at the bottom of the Burj Khalifa, and those lucky enough to get a fountain suite can tune in to the sound of the famous Dubai Fountains then watch from the comfort of their room.

Even if your room is facing the other way, you can amuse yourself watching Ferraris line up outside the lobby below (luckily for those who can't figure out which button closes the curtains).

The hotel's Italian and Indian restaurants were each recently named the best in their category in the city, and there are five other restaurants to choose from.

### Aus/NZ In Top 10

Dubai is looking to grow Australia and New Zealand to become one of its top 10 source markets as part of its Tourism 2020 plan, said Dubai Tourism's Australia/New Zealand director Julie King at the mega famil. “We're relying on a lot of your support to make that happen for us,” she told agents.



### Desert Camp Send Off For Kiwi Agents

The Emirates and Dubai Tourism mega famil wrapped up on Sun evening for most of the agents with an Arabian Adventures desert safari, one of the most popular attractions for visitors to Dubai.

The evening started with some 4WD dune bashing, then a falcon show, and finally it was on to the desert camp where there was entertainment including belly dancing, camel rides, henna tattoos and Arabic food.

Pictured in the desert are Andrew Kemp of House of Travel Timaru, Mark Bascand of BCD Travel and Bridget Hanrahan of Harvey World Travel Rangiora.





## DUBAI MEGA FAMIL

# EK's Top Sellers Experience Lux DXB

The mega famil has been designed as an incentive which agents really aspire to, says Emirates—and this includes extra rewards for the airline's top achievers.

This year, the top agent from New Zealand (Morwenna Williams of Calder and Lawson, pictured) and each of the Aussie states were given a full extra day to enjoy, meaning two days of luxury that saw them swim with dolphins at Atlantis The Palm's Aquaventure, have a traditional hamman treatment at the Talise Ottoman Spa, dine at the Burj Al Arab and spend



a night and full day at the Al Maha Desert Resort and Spa. The airline and Dubai Tourism intend to continue building on the famil to ensure it remains a highlight of agents' calendars—and one to brag about to colleagues.

## Highlights Of The Dubai Race On Video

It was impossible to miss the 280 Kiwi and Aussie agents decked out in red as they sped around Dubai on Fri in an 'Amazing Race', and now those who were left behind can watch the highlights in a video captured by Dubai Tourism. Click on the link (right) to see agents race through attractions including Ski Dubai, the Burj Khalifa, KidZania, Sega World, Wild Wadi waterpark and the Madinat Jumeirah, completing challenges along the way.



## Slower Paced Desert Glam A Winner

While Dubai's urban glitz and glamour undoubtedly has its appeal, the top Emirates sellers got to experience the slower desert pace on Mon and Tue in what was a highlight of the trip.

The lucky top six were taken to the luxurious Al Maha desert resort, where they each had their own private villa (with pool) and the chance to take part in activities including a sunset camel trek, falconry, nature walks, archery, 4WD desert drives and horse riding on a herd which include some from Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Bin Al Maktoum's stables.

The romantic resort unsurprisingly sees a lot of honeymooners, and only caters to children aged over 10. Rates start at around USD1000 a night in the low season, including three meals a day and all activities.



## Relaxation In One Of UAE's Largest Spas

After a week of racing, shopping and dune bashing, there were some serious knots in need of removing from agents' backs and necks this week—and luckily Dubai is home to one of the Middle East's largest and most luxurious spas.

The Talise Ottoman Spa at the Jumeirah Zabeel Saray covers 8000m<sup>2</sup> and offers 42 individual treatment rooms

and three traditional Turkish hammams. Treatments rooms include the aromatherapy room, hydro-therapy room, Vichy shower, floatation bed, floatation pool, sauna and steam rooms, two snow rooms, adventure showers, hot and cold jacuzzis, and hot stone beds. There is a couples' spa, and larger private treatment and relaxation rooms can be rented out for celebrations. The spa theme follows that of the hotel, which resembles an Ottoman palace, and guests at the hotel can use the facilities including an amazing Thalassotherapy pool (pictured).



## Gold iPads For Guests

The top achievers were at the Burj Al Arab for lunch on Mon just as the hotel, already recognised as the ultimate in luxury, announced its latest high end development—24 carat gold plated iPads.

The iPads will be offered to all guests when they check in, for their use while they stay in the hotel.

They act as a 'virtual concierge', with information on restaurants and spas, private dining, butler and housekeeping services—and if guests become attached, they can buy their own in the hotel's boutique for around USD10,200.

The hotel also recently introduced iMacs into all of its lavish suites, one of which the top achievers got to check out on Mon.

## Home Of Tallest Hotel

Dubai became home to the tallest hotel in the world in Feb with the opening of the distinctive JW Marriott Marquis Dubai—and when the hotel's second tower opens next year, it will be the largest hotel in Dubai. The 72-storey property is 355m high—just 26m shorter than the Empire State Building. It fills a 'long identified gap' in catering to the region's MICE market as the first hotel in the region able to cater to large groups, says Marriott, offering more than 7500m<sup>2</sup> of indoor and outdoor event space including two ballrooms. The hotel also features nine restaurants, five bars and lounges, a spa and health club, and 30m swimming pool.

