

Dubai Mega Famil 2014



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Dubai Mega Famil 2014

Kiwi Agents Take On Dubai With EK



At the weekend 45 of Emirates' top-selling Kiwi consultants jetted into Dubai for the annual mega famil to get a taste of the ever-expanding and ever-changing city in the desert.

The emirate is currently enjoying a fresh surge of development, with new hotels ranging from two- to three-star to opulent five-star properties across the city and onto The Palm man-made island.

Ahead of Expo 2020 and in line with Dubai Tourism's ambitious goal to become the world's most visited city by 2020, hotel occupancy has been growing at a rate of knots, according to the latest data from STR Global.

The emirate experienced a 2.2% increase in occupancy to 84.4% in Apr, and growth has also been seen in

average daily rate which has increased 11.4% to AED1,065.92.

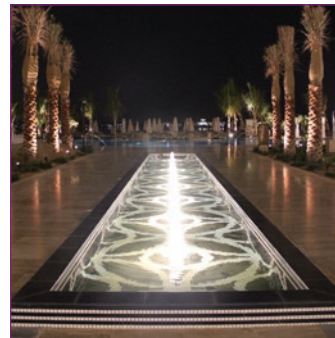
"Demand growth reported a double-digit increase for the first time since September 2013, resulting in the highest occupancy levels in Apr for the last seven years," says STR Global's Elizabeth Winkle.

Getting There

Emirates offers thrice-daily direct Airbus A380 services to Dubai over Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, and once-daily flights from Christchurch using Boeing 777 aircraft. Last week EK executive Barry Brown hinted that A380 flights from Christchurch were entirely possible, and there's even been talk that EK will eventually offer non-stop Dubai-New Zealand services in the future.

Waldorf Astoria

The opulent new Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah opened its doors six months early late last year, and is already on the travel radar of many visitors to the city, owing to its iconic name brand. For the first time on Mon night, the hotel closed its pool and beach-side restaurant just for the Kiwis, showing off the truly luxurious property and its views of the Dubai skyline. The hotel's senior sales manager Fabian Schwarze says the property is looking to work with wholesalers in the Australia and New Zealand markets to increase its profile. The palatial resort boasts its own private beach, and offers a number of dining and entertainment options for guests.



Emirati Culture 101

"Ask me anything guys, come on, let's talk!" said director of the Sheik Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding Nasif Kayed as the group sat around a traditional emirati buffet. That's the philosophy of the centre, it's a place guests can go and share a meal with some true emiratis, and learn about their culture, religion and way of life. The centre offers cultural meals for breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner throughout the week, as well as Arabic lessons and visits to the Jumeira Mosque. Kayed needed a little audience participation to demonstrate how to wear the black abaya that many emirati women don when they leave the house, and Flight Centre's Georgia Sheldrake-Hewitt obliged (pictured above). See cultures.ae



World's Tallest Hotel Welcomes Kiwi Contingent

One of Dubai's newest hotels, and the tallest hotel in the world at more than 300m, the JW Marriott Marquis hosted the New Zealand contingent for its welcome cocktail event on Sun. The new hotel boasts two towers and 1100 rooms, which will increase to more than 1500 when the second tower is fully opened. Pictured left: Dubai Tourism's Australasia director Julie King with Infinity's Emma Bull, Fuzion's Simone MacDonald and Carlene Thomas of House of Travel Auckland. Right: Geoff Leslie of HoT Remuera, Robbie Bell HoT Dunedin and Andrew Graham of Student Horizons at the Marriott.



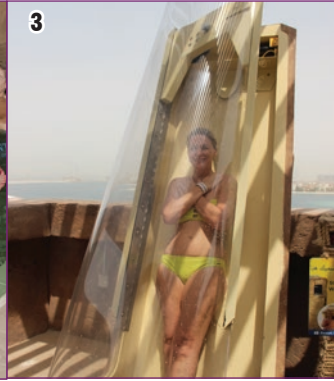
Agents Get A Taste Of Snow In The Desert

Fresh for day one of the famil, the group headed to the Mall of Emirates to check out the slopes of Ski Dubai, the massive in-door snow and ski attraction that draws visitors and residents alike. Kitted up with snow boots and puffy jackets, the group set about exploring.

- 1 Leigh-Ann Newton of Flight Centre Albany bobsledding at Ski Dubai.
- 2 Deb Natoli, HWT Miramar and Karen McDonald, BCD Wellington.
- 3 Dave Prior, Flight Centre Albany, grabs a board.

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Adventures On The Palm



Quite a few Kiwis nearly took flight when they rode the Leap of Faith, and Poseidon had his revenge on others as day two of the Emirates Dubai Mega Famil took the group to Atlantis The Palm's Aquaventure waterpark.

A favourite for family visitors to Dubai, Aquaventure offers sever-

al hectares of beach areas, a long and winding Lazy River to float down and two towers of water slides ranging in fear-factor from very little to stomach-jump inducing anxiety that for some was hard to overcome.

The Tower of Neptune's star ride is the Leap of Faith, which shoots those game enough straight down the face of the tower—it's so steep riders often come away from the slide for a split second at the top before firmly coming back into contact with the slide to fly down.

A second tower of slides, The Tower of Poseidon, is home to Poseidon's Revenge, an adrenaline-slide that sees riders lean back in a pod only for the floor to drop out from beneath them, sending them falling at full-speed into a tube ride that lasts only seconds... some of the group braved it, including DTCM's Veronica Rainbird.

For those after a slightly cruiser adventure, the large rafts for around six guests took a leisurely trip down a massive slide, or some raced each other on twin tube slides.

Also on offer at Aquaventure is

Dolphin Bay, where more than 30 dolphins live and interact with visitors on a daily basis, and a new Sea Lion Point—where the resident seals will soon be on hand to come face-to-face with guests. See atlantisthepalm.com

1 Carlene Thomas, HoT Auckland; Emma Bull, Infinity; and Simone MacDonald, Fuzion Travel soak up the sun at Atlantis' Aquaventure.

2 Research for clients! *Travel Today's* Jess Harkins, HWT Milford's Barbara Wrightson and Emirates' Tammi Woodside try out the waterslides at Aquaventure at Atlantis The Palm.

3 DTCM's Veronica Rainbird braves Poseidon's Revenge, one of Aquaventure's newest rides.



Atlantis The Palm

Another one of Dubai's landmark hotels, Atlantis the Palm, hosted the New Zealand team for the day, giving them a small taste as to what the property has to offer. Located on the outer ring of the first Palm man-made island, Atlantis is a five-star family and leisure guest resort with a number of room categories and interconnecting suites. During the northern summer, Dubai's low season, the resort increases its kids age to 16, and offers families half-board for the duration of their stay. In addition to several kilometres of private beach, and the Aquaventure waterpark, there's the Lost Chambers aquarium and the sprawling gardens at the resort. See atlantisthepalm.com

Palm Developments

The Palm Jumeirah is still undergoing intense development, with new residential, service and tourism product under construction on its many fronds. By 2016 the island will be home to Nakheel Mall, a standalone mall complex that will feature international and local brands.

The monorail, which goes all the way to Atlantis, will also stop at the mall when it's complete, says DTCM.

Concert Time

Dubai is on the radar of a number of international pop artists and acts, with concerts including Justin Timberlake and Kings of Leon happening this month alone. Lady Gaga has also just announced a Dubai date, 10 Sep, on her new Art Pop Ball tour. The concert will reportedly be censored to stay in line with the more conservative Emirati culture, say widespread reports.

Share #mydubai

Dubai Tourism is encouraging the city's residents and visitors to contribute images that capture their perception of Dubai in a new campaign on Facebook and Instagram under the #mydubai hashtag. Encourage clients who are heading to Dubai to post their photos, and some of the best ones will be published in a book, says DTCM.

Check out a selection of the shots compiled so far [HERE](#)

I Need A Dirham

The local currency in Dubai is the dirham. The current exchange rate is around 1:3, which makes converting purchases back into NZD pretty simple. Agents should advise their clients that Dubai's taxis, while cheap, only accept cash so clients should have some on hand when they arrive.



Address Downtown Puts On Show For Kiwis

The Address Downtown Dubai hosted part of the Kiwi mega famil group for dinner last night, giving those staying at the Armani Hotel in the Burj Khalifa the chance to see the iconic building and the now-famous Dubai Fountain show before dinner at the property's Italian, Japanese and international-inspired restaurant Fazaris. The property has also recently opened Cut by Wolfgang Puck, a move proving popular with visitors to the hotel, says Address sales manager leisure Beatriz Jimenez. For more on the Address Hotels & Resorts portfolio, see the Dubai famil coverage on Fri.

Pictured: Tanya Fuller, HoT Motueka; Trish Murphy, Orbit Wellington; Jody Simpson, UT Whitianga; Deb Natoli, HWT Miramar; Simone MacDonald, Fuzion Travel; Karen McDonald, BCD Wellington; Nick Lowe, APX WLG; Fiona Atkinson, Travel Brokers; Rachel Meng, UT Birkenhead; Raelene O'Loughlin, Tempo; Robbie Bell, HoT Dunedin; and Emma Bull, Infinity at the Address Downtown.

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Hitting The Souks



Dubai's old quarter is also home to three major souks, peddling textiles, spices and gold jewellery—where the spectacle of huge dowry necklaces is worth a window shop alone.

The textile souk, or Meena Bazaar, is on the same side of Dubai Creek as Bastakiya, and offers pashmina scarves, beaded slippers and shoes, homewares and clothing—including traditional Arab garb, kaftans and souvenir t-shirts. Across the creek just a short abra ride away are the spice and gold souks, where visitors and locals alike battle the crowds



for fragrant herbs, spices and confectionary, and high-quality gold or silver jewellery.

Pictured above: Leigh-Ann Newton and her lovely new kaftan, bought for around \$12 at the Textile Souk.

... Souk Shopping Tips

Bargain hard. Tell clients to aim for around half of the vendor's initial offer and, as in many other bargaining cultures, be prepared to play the game and walk away—there's another vendor around the corner that most likely has another version of what they're after. Most vendors are extremely friendly and more than willing to give 'a very good price' or 'morning price' for their first customers of the day.

When it comes to gold, the price per gram is set daily and is the same in all 350 gold shops in the gold souk. It's the price of the additional design and construction of the pieces that will vary—and clients should bargain here too.

Spices need to be packaged properly and declared when re-entering New Zealand for inspection by MAF.

Be A Dubai Expert

The Dubai Expert agent training programme is designed to provide an all-encompassing knowledge of Dubai and is broken down into three key areas/modules: Know Dubai, Sell Dubai and Add Dubai. Completing the modules increases agents' chances of being able to visit Dubai—it was one of the criteria for the New Zealanders on the famil this week. See anz.dubaixperts.com

Jumeirah Beach Area

One of the newest precincts in Dubai, the Jumeirah Beach Residences area is a resort-like area that boasts a number of five-star chain hotels, including the Sofitel Dubai Jumeirah Beach, where the Kiwi mega famil group had lunch Wed.

The area is said to be becoming increasingly popular with the Australia and New Zealand market, not only in the hotels, but also in the many apartment hotels dotted around the area.

There's also the Beach Walk, a newly developed mall and a public beach which features FOC changing and toilet facilities in the heart of the precinct, and views of the Palm, Atlantis and even the Burj Al Arab on clear days.



Meydan Beach Club

The Meydan Beach Club is a swanky complex on the beachfront of the Jumeirah Beach Residences, close to the main shopping and dining action, but also offering visitors a private and exclusive area to spend a day in the sun. At AED150 entry Sun-Thu, AED495 on Fri (including AED250 f&b credit) and AED250 on Sat, the venue offers a large restaurant with indoor, terrace and outdoor dining, a fully equipped state-of-the-art gym and spa treatment services. Agents on the famil agreed the club would be ideal as a day destination for a Dubai layover, or as a relaxing first day in the city for clients staying in the area, with its gym, spa and many areas to relax or socialise in. Pictured at the club: Barbara Wrightson, HWT Milford and Janet Lewisham, Travel Brokers soak up some sun.

DXB Nuts And Bolts

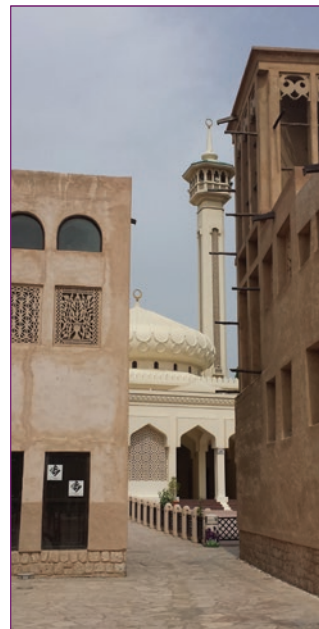
- Dubai is eight hours behind New Zealand.
- The emirate's weekend is Fri-Sat, and Fri is the Muslim rest day.
- Power is 220-240 volts using the same three-prong plug as the UK.
- Some medicines are restricted in Dubai in line with its strict drug laws, including some over-the-counter medicines that contain codeine. A doctor's note or prescription is needed to carry such drugs, and they should be kept in original packaging.



Armani Deli Dinner

Wed night saw the famil groups indulge in a hosted dinner at each of their respective hotels, including The Fairmont, Shangri-La, Madinat Jumeirah and the Armani Hotel in the Burj Khalifa. At the Armani Deli, the delegation was swept away to Italy for a four-course deli meal, including saffron risotto with veal osso bucco, seafood with pasta, fresh breads and antipasti and delectable desserts.

Pictured: Emma Bull, Infinity and Simone MacDonald, Fuzion Travel at the Armani Deli.



Bastakiya-Dubai Museum

The morning sun pounded the sandstone in Bastakiya, where the Kiwi mega famil agents were exploring Dubai's roots as a desert and port city, long before the development of its soaring skytowers.

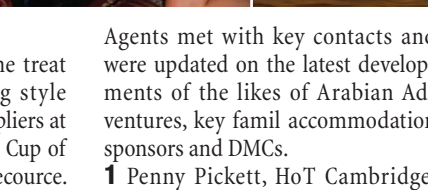
A number of traditional homes have been restored in the area, and now feature restaurants, institutions and the Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding.

To further delve into the emirate's history that spans hundreds of years, there's the Dubai Museum in the 1799 Al Fahidi Fort. It boasts examples of traditional Emirati architecture, as well as weapons, tools and musical instruments, alongside displays depicting markets, pearl diving, burial sites and ship building. It's open 0830-1930 Sat-Thu and 1400-1930 on Fri, and entry is AED3.

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TABS ON
**TRAVEL
TODAY**
Fri 16 May 14 p4

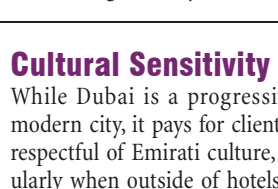
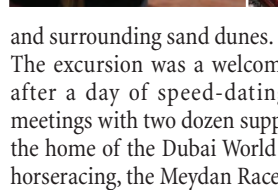
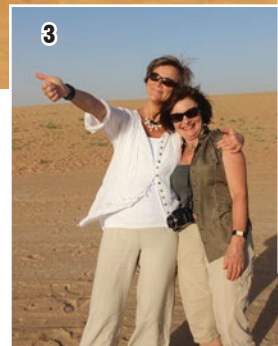
Dune Bashing In Dubai's Desert



Day four of the Dubai Mega Famil saw the Kiwis join forces with a 200-strong delegation of Australian Emirates top sellers, and the group came together over one of Dubai's most popular attractions from our combined markets, the desert safari.

Hosted by Emirates-owned Arabian Adventures the safari saw the group go for a hoon in the sand dunes to a sunset spot and falcon show.

The group learned about the ancient hunting techniques used by falconers in the region—who once captured wild falcons on their annual migration to use for hunting during the winter—only to release them back into the wild to fend for themselves when the harsh summer months came. Mojo the falcon posed for pictures with some keen agents, before it was time for a little more dune bashing to the desert safari camp for dinner, henna tattoos, a stunning belly dance performance and a little taste of shisha under the full moon



and surrounding sand dunes. The excursion was a welcome treat after a day of speed-dating style meetings with two dozen suppliers at the home of the Dubai World Cup of horseracing, the Meydan Racecourse.

Mastering The Lingo

English is widely spoken in Dubai, but it's always charming to locals for visitors to try using some phrases in the local language. Some key Arabic phrases are:

Hello: **Marhaba**. Peace be upon you (general greeting): **As-salaam alaykum** – reply **Wa alaykum as-salaam**. Goodbye: **Ma-assalaama**. Please: **Mid Fadlak** (to a male), **min fadliki** (to a female). Thank you: **Shukran**. Yes: **Na'am**. No: **La**. How much?: **Bekam?**

Cultural Sensitivity

While Dubai is a progressive and modern city, it pays for clients to be respectful of Emirati culture, particularly when outside of hotels. Overt public displays of affection are a definite no-no, and can land visitors in trouble. Men shake hands, but few women will and many men prefer not to shake hands with women—so it's best to wait until a hand is offered. Other tips include asking permission to photograph someone, keeping swimwear for beside the pool, and for women, keep knees and shoulders covered while out and about.

Dubai In World's Top 25

Dubai has been recognised by Trip Advisor in its 2014 Traveller Choice Awards as one of the Best 25 Places to Go in the World.

Chief executive of the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing Issam Kazim says with last year's successful bid for the 2020 World Expo, new attraction openings and this year's announcement of its 2020 vision, Dubai is well placed to attract new visitors and those enticed by this first appearance in the Trip Advisor list.

"This year we've already seen the launch of the Dubai Food Festival, a range of world-class events in music, culture and sport and more hospitality openings," he says.

Honeymoon Upgrades

For newly-weds heading away on honeymoon via Dubai, the Sofitel Jumeirah Beach offers free room upgrades, advised assistant director of sales Nadine Zinhobl at the Dubai Mega Famil workshop. For example, clients booking a side-view room will be upgraded to a front beach view room overlooking Jumeirah beach.

While the hotel doesn't offer its own private beach, beach kits including a bag, mat, towel and drink bottle are available to all guests FOC.

Dubai Calendar

Dubai is home to an increasing number of events, and to keep up with them all as an add-on fun experiences to clients' trips, agents can check out dubaicalendar.com From the Dubai Shopping Festival in Jan, to the Emirates Airline Dubai Rugby Sevens and any of the Muslim holidays throughout the year, the website keeps track of the city's happenings, and sends out a monthly update. See dubaicalendar.com

Bed Tax Addition

Agents should be aware that Dubai recently introduced a bed tax for international visitors staying in the city's many hotels.

The nominal charge, around USD2.50 per person per night at a five-star hotel, will be collected in-house for clients booked before its implementation, and is included in most hotels' room rates moving forward.

Agents met with key contacts and were updated on the latest developments of the likes of Arabian Adventures, key family accommodation sponsors and DMCs.

1 Penny Pickett, HoT Cambridge; Ken Knight, HoT Morrinsville; Aaron Arden, HoT Te Awamutu; Jay Crenell, HoT Tauranga and Robbie Bell, HoT Dunedin surf the dunes.

2 Dubai Tourism's Julie King and Veronica Rainbird with Emirates' Kim Tomlinson.

3 Vesna Fahn and Janet Lewisham, both Travel Brokers, wait for sunset in the desert.

4 Birthday ladies Lee Smith, Flight Centre Riccarton Mall and Rachel Lobb, Calder and Lawson celebrate with a little belly dancing.

5 Penny Pickett of HoT Cambridge meets Mojo the falcon.

6 Leigh-Ann Newton, Flight Centre Albany gets a henna tattoo.



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TABS ON
TRAVEL TODAY
Mon 19 May 14 p6

MyDubai Race Caps Off Mega Famil

It was time to get to know Dubai Mall a little better on day five of the Dubai Mega Famil on Fri—as the Kiwis were joined by the Australian group for the MyDubai Day race.

Teams of six were given iPads loaded with challenges and questions that had them racing around the mall, finding landmarks, exploring attractions and posting photos from their adventures.

It all started At the Top, with agents getting their bearings by braving the ride up to the 124th floor of the Burj Khalifa to take in the 360° view of the city and surrounding desert.

The soft sand of the beachfront at Madinat Jumeirah was welcome respite to the tired and sore feet of the agents at the end of the day, and offered a surreal final evening with the



sun setting over the Burj Al Arab. In the end three Aussie teams took out the trio of prizes, which included return trips to Dubai with five-

star accommodation and activities. Dubai Tourism's Australasia director Julie King thanked the agents for their support of the destination, and encouraged them to contribute further to the destination's growth. "We need your support to help us increase the length of stay for clients in Dubai, both as a standalone destination and a stopover," she says.

... 2015 Famil?

King hinted that next year's famil will include some of the many new attractions opening in the coming year, offering agents a whole new perspective on the destination. Pictured: Deb Natoli, HWT Miramar; Bridget Middlemiss, UT Cambridge; Karen McDonald, BCD Wellington and Trish Murphy, Orbit Wellington.

Dubai App

Clients should be advised to download the free Definitely Dubai (named that way for now, given the new branding) app. It lets them scan their surroundings to find local attractions, restaurants, hotels and landmarks, as well as where to take advantage of special deals. There's also a currency converter tool. Download the app from definitelydubai.com

Polo With A Twist

Dubai's Polo Club offers a game with a Middle Eastern twist for clients to try, Camel Polo. Visitors to the club are taught how to play the game, which is said to be accessible to those of all abilities. DMCs including royal family owned Gulf Ventures can arrange trips to the club including lessons or see poloclubdubai.com

Dubai Secrets

Emirates' Kiwi escort on the 2014 mega famil is EK's new sales exec and former cab-in crew member Tammi Woodside. As a crew member Tammi lived in Dubai for four years, and she shared her Dubai secrets with *Travel Today*.



1 Fri Brunch at Al Qasr in the Madinat, just stunning views, from AED475 with non-alcoholic beverages, AED575 with bubbly and cocktails and AED795 for Moet.

2 Ladies nights use to be Tue in Dubai but apparently it is becoming a regular nightly thing at most bars, I would always check out *Time Out Dubai* to see what was on.

3 Movies under the stars at Wafi Mall – held on a Sun in the winter months and it is free!

4 Another really nice restaurant at Wafi is Sevilles, it is a Spanish tapas restaurant.

5 360 – You go through Jumeriah Beach to get to this bar and they take you on a buggy to watch the sun set over Burj Al Arab. Get in early to get a spot, it gets really busy and it is not a big area.



The Race Is On For Kiwi Agents In Dubai

1 Andrew Graham, Student Horizons; Lee Smith, Flight Centre Riccarton Mall; Tanya Fuller, HoT Motueka; Georgia Sheldrake-Hewitt, FC Alexandra; Peter Dunn, Discover Travel. **2** Dave Prior, Flight Centre Albany. **3** Emma Bull, Infinity; Simone MacDonald, Fuzion Travel; Nick Lowe, APX Wellington; Carlene Thomas, HoT and Linda Gorter, Flight Centre Westgate. **4** Leigh-Ann Newton, Flight Centre Albany. **5** Raelene O'Loughlin, Tempo Travel; Rose Fong, House of Travel; Fiona Atkinson, the Travel Brokers; Rachel Meng, UT Birkenhead and Jody Simpson, UT Whitianga. **6** At Sega Republic from left, Rachel Lobb, Calder & Lawson; Vesna Fahn, Travel Brokers; Rancee McGregor, Travel Brokers; Janet Lewisham, Travel Brokers. **7** The Hotties, back row from left, Penny Pickett, Aaron Arden, Catherine Smith. Front row from left, Ken Knight and Jay Crennell. **8** Barbara Wrightson, Harvey World Milford.