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*TravelVince is an ever-evolving guide, as much as Dubai.  
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## GALLERY ONE

**CATEGORIES:** Gifts & Specialties, Home & Design, Shopping

**Make a Call:** +97145576306

**Visit Website:** <https://www.g-1.com/>

**Get Directions:** Financial Centre Road - Downtown Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Gallery One is present in all major Dubai shopping areas such as Mercato Mall, Dubai Mall, The Walk JBR, Souk Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai Festival City, Riverland and Souk al Bahar.*

Gallery One started as a photography store years ago at Souk Madinat Jumeirah and has become a major seller of Arabian art, collages, photography for the home. Moreover, they have developed greeting cards, stationary lines, stickers and gifts with Arabic and Dubai motifs. There is a lot of beautiful things, and they also deliver worldwide in case you get carried away and buy a big picture.

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## BOX PARK

**CATEGORIES:** Shopping, Shopping Areas & Malls

**Make a Call:** +97143173999

**Visit Website:** <http://www.boxpark.ae/>

**Get Directions:** Al Wasl Rd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Al Wasl Road | Jumeirah*

Along Al Wasl Road in Jumeirah, not far from [City Walk](#), Box Park is a modern, urban shopping and entertainment area. With the young people living in Dubai in mind, Box Park is a collection of colorful shipping containers that make space for cinemas, shops, restaurants, bar, and cafés. It is a great place to enjoy the mild spring and autumn weather, especially in the evenings, when the Box Park becomes a very lively hotspot. (<https://jeepadvice.com/>)

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Image by Box Park Dubai on Instagram

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## ROVE HOTELS

**CATEGORIES:** Great Location, Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97145619999

**Visit Website:** <https://www.rovehotels.com/>

**Get Directions:** Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Downtown, City Center, Trade Center and Healthcare City with a new property soon to open in Satwa.*

When it comes to affordable hotels in Dubai, I normally get confused and really don't know much what to recommend. For a while, my choice was the Ibis (Trade Center or Dubai Mall) or a hole-in-the-wall in Deira, for an "atmospheric" stay. But now there is a cool chain called Rove, with four properties so far and a fifth on its way. Affordable rooms in prime locations are just what was missing in Dubai.

A post shared by Rove Hotels (@rovehotels) on Jun 29, 2017 at 3:48am PDT

## DUBAI OPERA

**CATEGORIES:** Arts & Culture, Theatre, Concerts & More

**Make a Call:** +97144408888

**Visit Website:** <http://www.dubaiopera.com/>

**Get Directions:** Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid, Near Burj Khalifa, Downtown Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard | Downtown*

Dubai Opera is the Emirate's new bet on culture. The beautiful glass building amidst the gardens of Downtown Dubai and the Burj Khalifa Fountain now hosts international theater groups, Broadway musicals, jazz concerts, dance ensembles and much more. You can visit the Opera just for a drink at the glitzy bar but try buying tickets for whatever event there is during your stay in town to fully enjoy this new cultural center.

## MIRZAM CHOCOLATE

**CATEGORIES:** Gourmet & Food, Shopping

**Make a Call:** +971507242411

**Visit Website:** <https://www.instagram.com/mirzamchocolate/>

**Get Directions:** Street 8 - Al Quoz 1 - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

[Alserkal Avenue](#) | Al Quoz

*Daily from 10am to 7pm*

In the artsy and industrial area of Alserkal Avenue, where art galleries share space with car dealers and garages, you will now find a chocolate factory. Mirzam Chocolates imports cocoa beans from the best producers from all over the world and transform them into thin and delicate chocolate bars in Dubai adding only premium ingredients and spices. There are bars with dates, fennel, cardamon or just 82% cocoa from Cuba. The production area has glass windows so you can peek into the chocolate-making process. The packaging is wonderful and hard not to buy a handful.

## BEST OF ABU DHABI

**CATEGORIES:** Out of Town

**Visit Website:** <http://visitabudhabi.ae/en/default.aspx>

**Get Directions:** Abu Dhabi - United Arab Emirates

Abu Dhabi, unlike its nearby brother [Dubai](#), is a less hectic and more subdued destination. Its airline, [Etihad Airways](#), is not as hip as [Emirates](#). The Abu Dhabi skyline, albeit interesting, is not as Manhattan-like as Downtown Dubai or Dubai Marina. However, the charm of Abu Dhabi lies in its new cultural institutions and a more coordinated development strategy. I would not discard a full day around town if you are in Dubai or a layover if you are connecting with Etihad.

The best place to start would be the Corniche. There are plenty of great hotels to choose from in the area, from the very famous 7-star [Emirates Palace Hotel](#) to the incredibly beautiful [Jumeirah Etihad Towers](#) or the huge [Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche](#). Two of the top-10 tourist attractions are already here. The first one being the Emirates Palace behemoth with its golden sumptuousity and 14 restaurants. Book lunch or dinner at [Hakkasan](#) for a sumptuous Asian meal or at [Mezlai](#) for authentic Emirate cuisine (book a table outside, in one of the tents for an unforgettable evening). With a restaurant reservation, there is a good reason to get into the hotel, take pictures in the lobby, walk around and have a fabulous meal.

At the Jumeirah Etihad Towers, you can go up to the [Observation Deck at 300](#) for a 360-degrees view of the Emirate on the skyscraper's 74th floor (they serve a sumptuous high tea). Try to figure out if the Presidential Palace is bigger than the Emirates Palace when seen from above. Needless to say, there are plenty of dining options in the towers with [Li Beirut](#) being my favorite for Lebanese food and [Tori No Su](#) for Japanese.

Not far from the Corniche is the 18th-century [Qasr al Hosn](#), built years ago by the Bani Yas family to control the coastal navigation routes and protect the first settlement in the area. It is a cultural institution with rotating exhibitions. Still in this side of town is the one and only Sheik Zayed Mosque, in itself a reason to come all the way to Abu Dhabi.

The [Sheik Zayed Mosque](#) opened in 2007 and is considered the religious center of the United Arab Emirates. Its architecture reminds me of the Taj Mahal in India, but it dwarfs the Indian Mausoleum in size and scale. It is open every day, and there are very few restrictions to visit it, mainly wearing modest clothing (you can rent abayas and kanduras, the local attires, at the entrance) and no public displays of affection. At the end of the day, this is a religious site. I would recommend going towards the end of the day to have beautiful sunset light illuminating the domes and to hear the day's last call to prayer. You will have goosebumps.

If, by the time you finish your visit to the mosque, you are hungry or feel like having a drink, head to The [Souk at Qaryat Al Beri](#) for a wide choice of bars and restaurants (and shops, of course). By the way, the jaw-dropping [Shangri-La Abu Dhabi](#) is in this area.

Separated from the continent by a series of bridges and connecting highways you will find Saadiyat and Yas Islands. The Abu Dhabi government is investing heavily in transforming the desert into a major tourist destination. [Saadiyat Cultural District](#) is the home of the [Louvre Abu Dhabi](#), the [Abu Dhabi Guggenheim](#) (opening perhaps in 2020, read here about the [controversy surrounding its delayed construction](#)), the [Zayed National Museum](#) and the [Manarat Al Saadiyat](#). The [NYU Abu Dhabi](#) campus is also on the island. FYI, the [Parisian Sorbonne University also has a campus in Abu Dhabi](#), but not on Saadiyat Island.

Further away and closer to the airport is [Yas Island](#), where you can enjoy the thrilling rides at the [Ferrari World](#), drive on the [Abu Dhabi Grand Prix Formula 1 track called Yas Marina](#), shop and eat at the [Yas Mall](#) (my favorite restaurant in Abu Dhabi is [Indian cuisine Asha's](#)). The alien-looking [Yas Viceroy Hotel](#) is an attractive place to visit or stay at, especially if you have a long connection between flights and do not want to stick around at the [Abu Dhabi Airport](#) (not until the new Etihad airport is finally ready).

#### OUT OF TOWN

While Dubai has the superb [Al Maha Resort](#) in the Al-Ain Desert, Abu Dhabi has the [Anantara Qasr Al Sarab](#), near the southern Liwa Dunes, some of UAE's highest and oldest sand dunes. A mere two-hour drive will whisk you into deep Arabia, with all the comforts of a luxury hotel chain, of course.

For something absolutely out of this world, have a look at the [Anantara resorts on Sir Bani Yas Island](#). Amidst the Emirate's mangroves, by the Persian Gulf, you will encounter blue waters and plentiful wildlife in a stunning setting. There are three resorts to choose from, each with a distinct style. You can't get this in Dubai.

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## ETIHAD MUSEUM

**CATEGORIES:** Arts & Culture, Museums

**Make a Call:** +97145155771

**Visit Website:** <http://etihadmuseum.dubaiculture.ae/en/Pages/default.aspx>

**Get Directions:** Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Second of December Street, near Al Diyafa Street | Jumeirah*

*Daily from 10am to 8pm*

Dubai's Etihad Museum showcases the history of the United Arab Emirates through photographs, artifacts, multimedia and a library. Even though the country is rather young, having been formed only in 1971. However, there is a lot to tell from the region before it became the United Arab Emirates. Past and present are on display, and you will be surprised at how much history and culture the country is made of. If you are interested in how a small collection of fishing villages and pearl diving communities became a regional powerhouse, do pay them a visit. In the mild evenings a stroll along Al Diyafa Street, right in front of the museum is very pleasant, with some remnants of times gone by such as independent restaurants, small shops and people walking along the streets.

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## KITE BEACH

**CATEGORIES:** City Areas, Neighborhoods

**Get Directions:** Umm Suqeim, just off Jumeirah Beach Road, near Jumeirah Beach Hotel - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

Every time I go to Dubai I make sure to pass by Jumeirah's Kite Beach. It is just a few blocks away from the famous Burj al Arab and Jumeirah Beach hotels. One of the last public beaches in the area, it has remained democratic and open to all despite its proximity to the luxury condos and expensive hotels. I like to watch the sunset there and take pictures with the hotel because it is so iconic it really makes me feel in Dubai. The water is almost always warm, so a dip in the waves can be a good way to finish your day. The [Surf Café](#) is nearby in case you get hungry.

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## MARINA SOCIAL

**CATEGORIES:** Eating, Fine Dining

**Make a Call:** +97144466664

**Visit Website:** <http://marinasocialdubai.com/>

**Get Directions:** Intercontinental dubai marina

*Intercontinental Dubai Marina | Marina | \$\$\$*

*Daily from 7pm to 12midnight*

*The Social Room (bar) has more extensive opening hours*

*Brunch on Fridays from 12:30pm to 3:30pm*

Marina Social is chef Jason Atherton's first Dubai venture overlooking the Persian Gulf at the happening Dubai Marina. The menu is focused on Mediterranean cuisine with dishes for sharing. The Social Room is a large bar area with DJs and a lively vibe. For a more intimate experience, you can book the Dining Room for up to 16 guests. For great value, try the Friday brunch.

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## CITY WALK

**CATEGORIES:** Shopping, Shopping Areas & Malls**Make a Call:** +97143173999**Visit Website:** <http://www.citywalk.ae/>**Get Directions:** 39 Al Safa St - Dubai - United Arab Emirates*Al Wasl and Al Safa Road Junction in Al Satwa, near Downtown**Sunday to Thursday from 10am to 10pm**Friday and Saturday from 10am to 12midnight**Some shops and restaurants have different timings*

If I were to tell you to select one destination in all of Dubai where to look for excellent restaurants and shops I would definitely say City Walk. The lifestyle mall is a novelty in the Emirate as most of its space is outdoors, thus providing an area of socializing differently from the usual malls. Moreover, their mix of brands is second-to-none. In one location you can eat at Parisian Big Fernand Burger or a gourmet meal by Germany's Tim Raue at [Dragonfly](#). As for shops, expect nothing less than Barbara Bui, Carven, Rag and Bone, Lumas and Agent Provocateur. All in all, there is a French touch to the place with BHV Marais and Galeries Lafayette. Expect great views of the Burj Khalifa from many plazas and fountains. A genuinely enjoyable place to wander around.

## % ARABICA

**CATEGORIES:** Coffee & Sweets**Make a Call:** +97143217251**Visit Website:** <http://arabica.coffee/>**Get Directions:** 39 Al Safa St - Dubai - United Arab Emirates*Al Mustaqbal Street | City Walk | Al Satwa**Sunday to Wednesday from 9am to 12midnight**Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 9am to 1am*

The beautiful UAE flagship coffee shop % Arabica at the City Walk mall is a must-visit for coffee lovers. The Japanese coffee chain is expanding rapidly across the globe and has chosen this excellent location to develop its brand awareness. They roast their beans in-house and you can choose your desired roasting level. There is another branch at the Dubai Mall.

## AT.MOSPHERE

**CATEGORIES:** Drinking, Eating, Fine Dining**Make a Call:** +97148883828**Visit Website:** <http://www.atmosphereburjkhalifa.com/>**Get Directions:** 1 Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Blvd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates*122nd floor Burj Khalifa | Downtown | \$\$\$\$**Entrance via Hotel Armani Dubai***LOUNGE DAILY***Breakfast from 7am to 11am**Lunch from 12noon to 2:30pm**High Tea from 12noon to 4:30pm**Dinner from 5pm to 2am***RESTAURANT DAILY***Lunch from 12:30pm to 2:30pm*

*Dinner from 6:30pm to 10:30pm*

At.mosphere is the world's tallest bar and restaurant. From high above the 122nd floor of the world's tallest skyscraper you are able to see all of Dubai. It can be an alternative to the building's often crowded and busy At The Top Observation Deck. It does not come cheap, but take it as an experience. My recommendation is for you to try to book a table close to the window at the A La Carte Evening Menu at the Lounge. Check on Google or on your phone the time of sunset and book your table for 30 to 45 minutes before sunset so you will have time to get there, order a drink and enjoy the light. After or during your dinner you will see the light show at the Fountain and in a way the AED 320 minimum spend can be well worth the experience.

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## THE DUBAI MALL

**CATEGORIES:** Shopping, Shopping Areas & Malls

**Visit Website:** <https://thedubaimall.com/>

**Get Directions:** The Address Dubai Mall - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Downtown*

*Daily from 10am to 12midnight (1am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday)*

The Dubai Mall is simply the world's largest shopping center. A city in itself, with not only shops and restaurants, but theme parks, fountains, ice rinks, an aquarium, supermarket and much much more. It is impossible not to see it alongside the immense Burj Khalifa building, the world's tallest.

It is very easy to get carried away and waste a good part of your time in Dubai inside The Dubai Mall. However, in the sweltering summer days, when outside temperatures easily reach 45°C it becomes a heaven with air conditioned peace and comfort. If you enjoy shopping and browsing, you will love it. It has an outstanding mix of brands from many places you would not normally see on Western malls, plus all the big names seen from Baku to Buenos Aires.

The highlights are the Fashion Avenue, with high end shops, the Dubai Aquarium, the Dubai Fountain (do watch the hourly shows in the evenings) and the Burj Khalifa experience (going up to the observatory). All in all, a destination in itself.

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## VIDA DOWNTOWN

**CATEGORIES:** Great Location, Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97144286888

**Visit Website:** <http://www.vida-hotels.com/en/vida/>

**Get Directions:** Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Blvd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard | Old Town | Downtown*

My favorite hotel in Dubai was the Address Downtown which, unfortunately, burned down on New Year's Eve 2016. So my second best is Vida Downtown, a few blocks away and with a more "local" style or architecture. With impeccable service, lots of bars and restaurants and outstanding Burj Khalifa views, it is a good option in the busy Downtown area. ([fastfoodmenuprices.com](http://fastfoodmenuprices.com))

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Image from Vida Downtown' website

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## DUBAI DESIGN DISTRICT

**CATEGORIES:** City Areas, Neighborhoods**Make a Call:** +97144333000**Visit Website:** <http://www.dubaidesigndistrict.com/>**Get Directions:** Dubai Design District - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

Dubai Design District, or simply d3, is a new development close to the Creek, east of Downtown. Much of it is still under development, with a few brave entrepreneurs already moved in. It aims to concentrate all the creative industries of the city in one area in order to create better synergies and to make Dubai a regional creative hub.

So far much of what you can see there are restaurants, cafés and shops. There are some cool events from time to time and a few art galleries. With time it will attract more freelancers and be a real center for businesses related to print, media, fashion and art.

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## ASHA'S

**CATEGORIES:** Casual Dining, Eating**Make a Call:** +97143951231**Visit Website:** <http://www.ashasrestaurants.com/dubai/>**Get Directions:** Mall of The Emirates - E11 Sheikh Zayed Rd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates*Mall of the Emirates | \$\$**Indian with another venue at WAFI Center in Oud Mehta**Daily from 10am until 10pm (12midnight on Thursday, Friday and Saturday)*

Asha's offers contemporary north Indian food served in a casual spot but prepared with very good care. I love all the dishes and you can ask the waiter for the degree of spiciness you prefer. Very popular with Indians, which is a good sign. The restaurant has been going on in Dubai for a very long time and the chain has expanded to other cities in the Middle East and the UK. If you have never tried Indian food, this is a great place to start.

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## MUCHACHAS MEXICAN CANTINA

**CATEGORIES:** Casual Dining, Drinking, Eating, Restobar**Make a Call:** +97143275878**Visit Website:** <http://muchachasdubai.com/>**Get Directions:** Safa Park - Sheikh Zayed Rd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates*Holiday Inn Express at Safa Park | Mexican | \$\$**Daily from 12noon to 1am (Thursday and Friday until 2am)**The kitchen takes a break from 3pm to 6:30pm*

If you are craving for Mexican food, Muchachas is waiting for you. With a very nice décor and a party atmosphere on evenings and weekends, this is a place to come when it is busy and bustling. Delicious food and awesome drinks. Remember not to drink and drive in the UAE.

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## LA PETITE MAISON

**CATEGORIES:** Eating, Fine Dining

**Make a Call:** +97144390505

**Visit Website:** <http://lpmlondon.co.uk/dubai>

**Get Directions:** Gate Village, Building 3 - towards DIFC Parking - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Gate Village 08 | DIFC | French | \$\$\$*

*Daily from 12noon to 3:30pm and from 7pm to 11:30pm*

*Bar is open continuously from 12noon to 12midnight*

The atmosphere at La Petite Maison is very much of a bistro in Knightsbridge or Mayfair in London, with a French twist. You could almost swear the UAE is miles away after a glass of sparkling wine. Favorite haunt of the bankers, investment fund managers and art dealers of the DIFC, La Petite Maison has excellent food and impeccable service (though at a price). Book in advance not to be disappointed and enjoy every dish with a nice glass of wine. I like the Ratatouille with Feta and the Lamb Rack.

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## ZUMA

**CATEGORIES:** Eating, Nice Restaurants

**Make a Call:** +97144255660

**Visit Website:** <https://www.zumarestaurant.com/zuma-landing/dubai/en/welcome>

**Get Directions:** Gate Village, Building 3 - towards DIFC Parking - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Gate Village 06 | DIFC | Japanese | \$\$\$*

*Lunch daily from 12noon to 3:30pm (Friday and Saturday from 12:30pm to 4pm)*

*Dinner daily from 7pm to 12midnight (Thursday and Friday until 1am)*

Zuma has an excellent Japanese Izakaya style menu and the setting is striking, with large windows facing the Emirates Towers. Once you have to make a choice of what to order, you will find it hard not to want to order everything. Getting there can be quite tricky from the main gate of DIFC, but ask your way around. By taxi you can get dropped close to the entrance.

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## THE SUM OF US

**CATEGORIES:** Coffee & Sweets, Delicious Bistros, Eating

**Make a Call:** +971564457526

**Visit Website:** <http://thesumofusdubai.com/>

**Get Directions:** Burj Al Salam - 6th St - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Ground Floor | Burj al Salaam | World Trade Center | \$\$*

*Daily from 8am to 12midnight*

*Dinner from 5pm onwards*

The Sum of Us is [Tom&Serg's](#) sister venue on the World Trade Center area. The same passion for good food, great coffee and friendly service. They claim to bake the best sourdough bread in the UAE, and one would not be surprised if they actually did as attention to detail is paramount. You can stop by at any time of the day for some granola, sandwiches, quiches and eggs. However, at dinnertime their menu excels and for the pistachio falafel I would cross the planet (and since I did, I would also

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order the pumpkin ravioli to make the crossing worth every bit).

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## HAKKASAN

**CATEGORIES:** Drinking, Eating, Fine Dining, In Restaurants or Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97143848484

**Visit Website:** <http://hakkasan.com/locations/hakkasan-dubai/>

**Get Directions:** Emirates Towers - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*G Floor | Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel | DIFC | Cantonese | \$\$\$\$*

*Daily from 6pm onwards*

*On Fridays there is a dim sum brunch from 12noon to 4pm*

A meal at Hakkasan is an experience for the senses. The Cantonese restaurant, present in many cities around the world, has been in Dubai since 2011 and is still among one of my favorite spots in the city. The sophisticated atmosphere reminds an old Chinese palace, with niches and corners where you feel very private. The lighting is a bit dim, but not dark. Everything is just right. The service has always been beyond excellent and all items on the menu have proven to be top notch. I like ordering different dishes to share as you must try as much as your hunger will allow. But save space for the cocktails and desert, of course. You can also enjoy the bar, with an outdoor seating area and great views of the DIFC skyline. It gets very lively for happy hour and on weekends.

FYI: "The dress code is smart casual. No sportswear. Jeans are permitted as long as they are worn smartly with shoes and a collared shirt. Please do not wear hats inside Hakkasan."

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## THE SURF CAFE

**CATEGORIES:** Casual Dining, Eating

**Make a Call:** +97143466292

**Visit Website:** <http://www.thesurfcafedubai.com/>

**Get Directions:** Jumeirah Beach Rd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Jumeirah Beach Road | Umm Suqueim 2 | Salads, Sandwiches, Sushi and more | \$\$\$*

*Daily 8am to 11pm*

The Surf Café is one of those places you can drop in at any time of the day to be well served with varied and delicious food, close the famous Kite Beach. From smoked salmon bagels at breakfast to sashimi in the afternoon, the menu is very comprehensive leaning towards the colorful and healthy.

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## CITY OF LIFE

**CATEGORIES:** Films & Videos, Insider Info

**Get Directions:** Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

City of Life shows the life of different Dubai characters that intertwine. There is the rich Emirati, the flight attendant, the Indian cab driver, the local middle class and so on. Not an excellent movie but good enough to grasp the types of life people have in the city.

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## SKYDIVE DUBAI

**CATEGORIES:** Cool Stuff, Feel | Sinta

**Make a Call:** +97143778888

**Visit Website:** <http://www.skydivedubai.ae/>

**Get Directions:** Dubai Marina - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*There are two drop zones (DZ)*

*One at Dubai Marina, overlooking Palm Jumeirah and the other at the desert, on the Dubai - Al Ain Road.*

*Book well in advance*

If there is one adrenaline charged adventure on my bucket list is a tandem jump over the Palm with Skydive Dubai. I really don't know if I would have the courage to just jump from the plane, but the whole experience does not leave my mind. I even have two friends who said they would jump with me...

However, every time I book a trip to Dubai, the list is full, there is no space and so on. The hardest part might be booking the jump, not actually jumping. This is also because I want to jump over the Palm and not at the desert.

Skydive is part of something larger, called [XDubai](#), a company devoted to adventure, sports and other super thrilling events in the city. If that is what you like, keep an eye on their website for dates and events.

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## KINOKUNIYA BOOK WORLD

**CATEGORIES:** Books & Magazines, Shopping

**Make a Call:** +97144340111

**Visit Website:** <https://uae.kinokuniya.com/>

**Get Directions:** The Dubai Mall - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*At the Dubai Mall*

*Daily from 10am to 11pm (12midnight on Thursday, Friday and Saturday)*

Kinokuniya in Dubai is one of the biggest bookshops I have ever seen. It is bigger than the Kinokunyas I visited in Tokyo and Bangkok. The selection of books and magazines is staggering (there are over 500.000 titles in stock) and you can end up spending hours browsing the bookshelves, having a coffee overlooking the new Opera House or simply wandering around.

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## ALSERKAL AVENUE

**CATEGORIES:** Arts & Culture, Galleries

**Make a Call:** +971505569797

**Visit Website:** <http://alserkalavenue.ae/en/index.php>

**Get Directions:** Al Quoz - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Al Quoz Industrial Area*

*Daily from 10am to 7pm*

*Closed on Fridays*

Alserkal Avenue is home to Dubai's most exciting art galleries and art spaces. A mix of warehouses and galleries in the middle of garages and construction sites, it does feel like an oasis of culture. ([merakisalonnc.com](http://merakisalonnc.com)) With ever more events such as film

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screenings and parties, the area has become Dubai's art hub.

- Even the warehouses in Alserkal look like works of art

- There is a café and a co-working space in the area

- There is a photographer's studio and place to print in large format

## TASHAS

**CATEGORIES:** Coffee & Sweets, Delicious Bistros, Eating

**Make a Call:** +97143855500

**Visit Website:** <http://www.tashascafe.com/locations/dubai/jumeirah/>

**Get Directions:** Al Wasl Rd - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*The Galleria Mall, Al Wasl Road | Jumeirah | International bistro fare | \$\$*

*Daily from 7:30am to 11pm*

South Africa's Tashas just opened its first venture abroad, at the Galleria Mall in the heart of Jumeirah. The location is perfect, as the mall is quite intimate and Tashas has both outdoor and indoor seating. The menu is all encompassing, making it the ideal stop for either a cake & coffee or a full lunch. I had the steak tartare and the beetroot juice and just managed to resist ordering the succulent looking dates covered with white chocolate and pistachios. It is a breathtaking place indeed.

## COYA

**CATEGORIES:** Drinking, Eating, Fine Dining, In Restaurants or Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97143169600

**Visit Website:** <http://www.coyarestaurant.com/dubai>

**Get Directions:** Jumeirah - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*At the Four Seasons Restaurant Village | Jumeirah | Peruvian | \$\$\$\$*

### **Lunch**

*Daily from 12:30pm to 3:30pm*

### **Dinner**

*Saturday to Tuesday from 7pm to 11:30pm*

*Wednesday to Friday from 7pm to 12 midnight*

### **Pisco Lounge**

*Saturday to Tuesday from 12:30pm to 1:15am*

*Fridays from 12:30pm to 2:00am*

Coya Restaurant has it all. A fantastic location, at the Four Season's Jumeirah Beach Restaurant Village, great décor, excellent drinks and some of the best ceviche I have ever had. ([patchhawaii.org](http://patchhawaii.org)) Service is also great, with that professional, friendly touch. Oh, and the DJ was excellent too!

I was lucky enough to be seated in a reserved room, to the right of the reception area, with a more intimate feel than the main dining room (though diners could also smoke in the area). As I was with a friend, we shared a few piscos. The ones made with infused pisco were just to die for. And the ceviche platter we ordered was more than enough for the two of us. It is a very in place at the moment, with lots of people going there just for drinks at the Pisco Lounge and the great atmosphere. And the Friday Brunch is one of the best in Dubai. Go for it!

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Image from Coya Dubai on Instagram

## TOKO

**CATEGORIES:** Drinking, Eating, Fine Dining, In Restaurants or Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97144428383

**Visit Website:** <http://www.toko-dubai.com/>

**Get Directions:** Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*At the Vida Hotel | Downtown | Asian | \$\$\$\$*

*Lunch from 12noon to 3pm*

*Dinner from 7pm to 2am*

At the stylish Vida Hotel facing Burj Khalifa, this branch of Sydney's famous Toko has been the talk of the town since opening in 2013. The menu is full of delicious contemporary Japanese dishes, the aubergines being a highlight (I love them). Can get quite busy and loud, especially on Ladies Night (Wednesdays). Try booking a table in the entrance garden if the weather permits. By the way, they have a night brunch every Tuesday, from 7 to 10pm.

## AL MAHA DESERT RESORT

**CATEGORIES:** Hotels, Splurge

**Make a Call:** +97148329900

**Visit Website:** <http://www.al-maha.com/>

**Get Directions:** Murquab - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Dubai – Al Ain Road, approximately 1 hour by car from Downtown or Dubai Airport.*

The Al Maha Desert Resort and Spa is a once in a lifetime experience. If you have the means, please book at least a one night stay there, in the middle of a conservation area, full of oryx, gazelles and falcons. Each suite is a spacious villa, with its own pool, a large bathroom and windows facing the desert. I was there during winter and the pool's water was warm. A dip after dinner, with an incredible starry sky was just incredible.

Everything during the stay is included, apart from drinks and spa treatments. In my first night I chose the Sri Lankan dinner (you have to book in advance) and it was delicious. For the tours, a group of very well prepared and friendly South African guides accompany the guests. The whole staff is very friendly and professional, the food is excellent. The overall experience is a must.

## TOM & SERG

**CATEGORIES:** Coffee & Sweets, Delicious Bistros, Eating

**Make a Call:** +971564746812

**Visit Website:** <http://www.tomandserg.com/>

**Get Directions:** Al Quoz - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Al-Joud Center, near Ace Hardware on Sheik Zayed Road | Al Quoz | Café-Bistro | \$\$*

*Sunday to Thursday from 8am to 4pm (kitchen closes at 3:45pm)*

*Friday and Saturday from 8am to 6pm (kitchen closes at 5:45pm)*

When I lived in Dubai I always dreamt of a place like this, where you could sit down for a coffee, have a bite to eat, work on your laptop, see the world go by, outside of a mall, with a lot of cool people going in and out plus a good vibe.

Now there is Tom & Serg. The menu is rather short, for light meals, but the food tastes really good. And they are very particular about their coffee, so make sure you get some caffeine rush before heading out into Dubai. By the way, they bake cronuts!!!

It is a great place to stop by before or after visiting [Alserkal Avenue](#), the area's art district.

## XVA HOTEL

**CATEGORIES:** Boutique, Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97143535383

**Visit Website:** <http://www.xvahotel.com/>

**Get Directions:** BASTAKIA NIGHTS RESTURANT - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Al Fahidi Neighborhood - Bastakia | Bur Dubai*

For those interested in history and art, the XVA Hotel can be a very good choice in Dubai. Away from the glitz and glam of Downtown, the Marina and the Palm Jumeirah, this boutique property is located in the heart of old Dubai, where the traditional houses have been renovated and the historic atmosphere revitalised over the past 10 years.

Part of an art gallery, you will stay amongst paintings and sculptures in a traditional Arabian house. It is a great base to enjoy a day or two of this forgotten Dubai, where most tourists may never set feet, unfortunately. The area is vibrant, has a totally distinct feel from the "modern" Dubai and it is well worth a visit, for a drink or a cinema screening if you are not staying here.

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## AL NAFOORAH

**CATEGORIES:** Eating, Nice Restaurants

**Make a Call:** +97144323232

**Visit**

**Website:** [https://www.jumeirah.com/en/hotels-resorts/dubai/jumeirah-emirates-towers/restaurants\\_bars/al-nafoorah/](https://www.jumeirah.com/en/hotels-resorts/dubai/jumeirah-emirates-towers/restaurants_bars/al-nafoorah/)

**Get Directions:** Emirates Towers - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*At the Boulevard - Emirates Towers | DIFC | Lebanese | \$\$\$*

*There is a second branch at the hotel Jumeirah Zabeel Saray - Palm Jumeirah*

**Lunch**

*Daily from 12noon to 3:30pm*

**Dinner**

*Daily from 7pm to 11:30pm*

Al Nafoorah has been serving the finest Lebanese food in Dubai at the Emirates Towers for ages. It is one of Sheikh

Mohammed's favorites, and mine too. ☐☐ Do not expect a very trendy place like its counterparts Hakkasan and The Ivy, also at the Emirates Towers, but a more traditional kind of atmosphere.

When it comes to the food, be ready for an overwhelming experience of tastes and textures. Everything is balanced, seasoned just right and cooked to perfection. I normally share cold and hot mezzes, not having space for the kebabs (but certainly for desert and Turkish coffee).

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## SOFITEL DOWNTOWN

**CATEGORIES:** Great Location, Hotels

**Make a Call:** +97145036666

**Visit Website:** <http://www.sofitel-dubai-downtown.com/>

**Get Directions:** Dubai - Dubai - United Arab Emirates

*Sheik Zayed Road | Downtown*

The Sofitel Downtown is an excellent choice not only for its location, with great views of Burj Khalifa and a block away from the Dubai Metro station, but also because it is fairly new (opened in 2015), has very nice rooms, an amazing breakfast buffet and a swimming pool overlooking Downtown.

From the hotel's lobby to Dubai Mall, it is a 12 minute walk over the passageway linking the metro station to the mall. So even during Dubai's humid and hot summer you can still manage to get there without fainting or sweating bucketloads.

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