

# DUBAI:

## An Overnight Success ...20 Years In The Making

*by Peggy Bendel*



**Five years ago,** few Americans had heard of Dubai. Today, you would be hard-pressed to find someone who HASN'T.

While the era of "hot" destinations seems to have ended, if there still is such a thing, Dubai would be it. Four years ago, just four North American tour operators ran programs to Dubai; today there are 24, with more on the way. This year's ATME Atlas Award for Best Brand offers the perfect opportunity to have a look at what's new – and it's guaranteed that by publication time, there will be more!

The second largest of the seven United Arab Emirates, Dubai has made one of the most dramatic transformations of modern times: in twenty years, growing from largely empty desert to one of the boldest and most modern skylines in the world.

According to Alba Hotchkiss, Director of the New York-based Dubai Tourism Office North America, "Such projects as The Palm (actually, there will be three!); the World, accessed only by water; Ski Dubai, an indoor ski slope in an elegant shopping mall; Burj Al Arab, the iconic seven star sail-shaped hotel, now a decade old; Burj Dubai, slated to be the world's tallest building, have literally and metaphorically put Dubai on the map."

Business and leisure travel are both booming, as visionary projects such as Media City; a state-of-tomorrow's-art airport; and Tiger Woods' first golf course join an array of the world's most prestigious brands, complemented by an ever-changing skyline and extraordinary service and technology at every turn, starting with the microchip in your hotel room key.

#### Modern Art in Modern Dubai

The region's first-ever museum of Middle Eastern modern art was launched recently by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, ruler of Dubai and vice president/prime minister of

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the UAE. Situated at 40 million square-foot Culture Village, the new museum's striking design highlights elements of the sea, and Dubai's seafaring tradition. The museum's designers, Netherlands-based UN Studio, have also designed Hartford, CT's Wadsworth Atheneum; the Mercedes-Benz Museum, Stuttgart; and the renovation and extension of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

The \$13.6 billion Culture Village will also house an amphitheatre for live performances and international cultural festivals, an exhibition hall and smaller museums displaying local and international art, as well as a shipyard for traditional dhow builders.

#### Visionary Hotels Opening

While the first of three "Palms," Palm Jumeirah, has already opened several apartment and hotel facilities, more are to come later this year and next. Well-known to many via several hour-long television specials tracking the amazing engineering challenges overcome during its constructions – and the smallest of the three – Palm Jumeirah will soon add:

- **Atlantis Hotel** will include two towers with a total of 2,000 rooms, and two monorail stations linking it to the main stalk of the Palm Jumeirah, as well as a

40 acre water-theme park, various water attractions, 86 thousand square foot two-story conference center, 20,000 square feet of retail space, and an archeological attraction entitled The Dig. It is scheduled to be completed by November of 2008. [www.atlantis.com](http://www.atlantis.com)

- **Palm Trump International Hotel and Tower**, also referred to as Trump Tower Dubai, will be the luxury centerpiece building of the Palm Golden Mile, located on the trunk of the Palm Jumeirah. Including a 300 room five-star hotel and 360 residential apartments, amenities include exclusive access to a private beach and yacht club with tennis courts, gymnasium and fitness centre, stylized pools and gardens. It is scheduled for completion in early 2009. [http://trumpinternationalpalmbeaches.com/Trump\\_Portfolio/trump\\_portfolio.asp](http://trumpinternationalpalmbeaches.com/Trump_Portfolio/trump_portfolio.asp)

- **The Palm Grandeur** includes the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa and The Grandeur Residences, both modeled as the archetypal palaces of Rajasthan, and built on the crescent of the Palm Jumeirah, to be completed by October 2009. [www.realestate.themiratesnetwork.com/developments/dubai/palm\\_islands/palmgrandeur.php](http://www.realestate.themiratesnetwork.com/developments/dubai/palm_islands/palmgrandeur.php)

All the action is NOT at The Palm, however. One of the most exciting real estate projects in Dubai is the construction of the \$500 million underwater **Hydropolis Hotel**. This hotel will resemble a giant submarine anchored in the Gulf, and will be accessed only by a tunnel via a waterside reception area. Completion is scheduled for late 2008. [www.hydropolis.com](http://www.hydropolis.com)

**Palazzo Versace Dubai**, also opening this year, this is a landmark project of the new Culture Village master development on Dubai Creek, a premium waterfront location with unobstructed views of the Creek. It will include 215 suites, restaurants, and a day spa, all furnished with an exclusive line of products from the Versace Home Collection. The Palazzo Versace is the world's first fashion-branded hotel. [www.palazzoversace.ae](http://www.palazzoversace.ae)

## Green Hospitality

Situated in a desert environment by the sea, Dubai must grapple with the same constraints on water and energy that face most of the world.

Hotels have been asked to reduce their carbon footprint by 20% as soon as 2011, in a voluntary campaign to preserve precious natural resources. Properties are being urged to cover swimming pools to reduce evaporation; installing solar panels to capture the powerful Dubai sunshine to heat water; using reflective coatings to cool exterior walls, and energy-saving modules to operate air conditioners. Such simple tactics as turning off lights when rooms are unoccupied will add to the savings.

## Shopping, Anyone? Everyone?

The shopping hub of the Middle East does not disappoint: from the traditional gold and spice souks to state-of-the-shopping-art high-end malls, Dubai's retail opportunities satisfy all tastes. Mall of the Emirates, just named 'Best in Dubai,' offers 466 stores to choose from.

And for those who need to "chill," the world-famous Ski Dubai, with a quad chairlift, five indoor slopes and "Magic Carpet" slides. Eight other top malls throughout the city add to the entertainment and relaxation with spa services readily available for those tired of trekking with their shopping bags at Wafi Mall and others.

And just wait until later this year, when The Dubai Mall, one of the largest malls in the world, located in the heart of the prestigious Downtown Burj Dubai, will open, intending to be the premier lifestyle destination for shopping and entertainment. It is a shopper's paradise featuring 1,200 retail outlets, two anchor department stores, a 220-store Gold Souk (the world's largest indoor gold souk) and more than 150 food and beverage outlets – all spread over an astonishing area totaling 12.1 million square feet. Need a break? Visit the world's largest single volume Aquarium featuring a

180-degree walkthrough tunnel, take in a flick out one of 22 movie screens in the Cineplex, or a spin on the Olympic-sized indoor ice rink.

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## World-Class Golf in the Desert

Joining already excellent golf courses in Dubai are three developments eagerly anticipated by the world's top golf talent:

- **The Tiger Woods Dubai**, a private residential community and resort will include the world's first golf course designed by Tiger Woods. The course will be a 7,800 yard, par 72, 18-hole championship course with dramatic elevation changes. It is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2008. [www.tigerwoodsduhai.com](http://www.tigerwoodsduhai.com)
- **The Dunes Golf Course**, just opened in March 2008, is Ernie Els signature golf course, described as a 'desert links' course with a natural look and feel about it, with its broad and gently rolling fairways, located within the Dubai Sports City.
- **Jumeirah Golf Estates** is set to

become one of the world's most prestigious residential golfing communities. Inspired by the natural elements of Fire, Earth, Wind and Water, the compound draws on the talents of some of the game's most famous names: Greg Norman, the 'Great White Shark'; former world number one Vijay Singh; European Ryder Cup hero Sergio Garcia; and the father of modern course design, the legendary Pete Dye.

## Airlines Expanding Service

Nonstop flights from the US and Canada on both Delta and Emirates have expanded in the last two years to include Toronto, Houston and Los Angeles, as well as New York and Atlanta.

Dubai's recently launched low-cost airline FlyDubai has announced an order for 50 Next-Generation 737-800s at the Farnborough Airshow. The order is valued at approximately \$4 billion and marks the biggest single order by a Gulf-based low cost carrier for the Boeing aircraft. FlyDubai has substitution rights to convert its 737-800 orders to 737-900ERs (extended range) in the future.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Chairman of FlyDubai, who signed the deal said, "This aircraft is ideally suited to our core business, which is providing affordable, efficient and flexible options for people wishing to travel to and from Dubai."

"FlyDubai will be the first step for a new set of passengers seeking out high-demand tourist destinations in the Gulf States and surrounding countries, while bringing connectivity to all parts of the globe," he added. ■

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*For more information on Dubai, go to [dubaitourism.ae](http://dubaitourism.ae).*