

DUBAI BEYOND THE GLITZ

There's more to Dubai than the largest malls and the tallest skyscrapers. **Veathika Jain** shares an insider's glimpse into the lesser known treats of the city.



Apart from being close to home, Dubai is full of glitz and glamour. The umpteen number of malls, restaurants and seven-star style hotels will keep any tourist on his/her toes. Most people have been to Dubai once or twice and done all the tourist attractions – Dubai Mall, Fountain, Burj Khalifa, Atlantis, The Palm. Here's an attempt to go off the beaten path and experience some of the hidden gems.

For adventure junkies

Head to Kite Beach near Burj Al Arab Hotel to experience some paddle boarding, beach yoga and kite surfing. There are lessons available to learn how to balance on the paddleboard or kite surfing, though some of them need prior booking. Great way to learn something new as well as keep fit during your holiday.

Another must-do is a one-hour session at Bounce – a trampoline park with free jumping area, dodge ball court, giant airbags, slam dunk and stunts space. 10 minutes of jumping is equivalent to 30 minutes at the treadmill, and at Bounce once you start the session, the smile doesn't leave your face. It's suitable for kids and adults. You can take a pass of five sessions depending on the number of people.

If you happen to visit from October to May, then XLine, which is a Zip Line over the Dubai Mall fountain overlooking the Burj Khalifa, is a great experience to do. Usually the invite is through their social media channels, so do take a look as to how you can book yourself in.



For the shopaholics

As for shopping, Dragon Mart specializing in goods from China has an array of unique and different items that are affordable. Be ready to walk for hours as it offers furniture, clothes, and accessories to almost anything under the sun. It has some weird and wonderful stuff like authentic green tea, shoes with lights etc. Lamcy Plaza in the heart of the city is another place if you are looking for reasonably priced clothes and accessories.

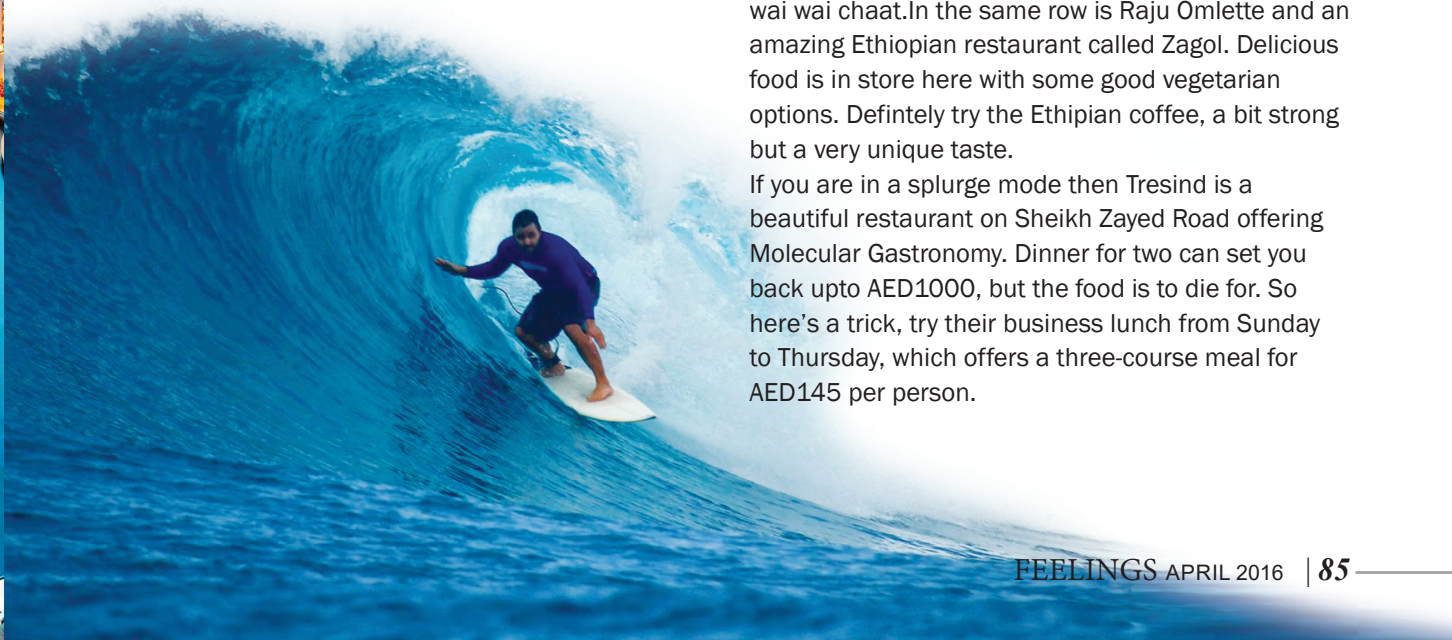
If you go to Dubai Mall, definitely head to the Candylicious store and make your own 3D printed candy on an edible paper. You can choose your flavor and design to custom make your gluten-free and vegan gummy candies.

Take an Abra trip (a wooden boat) from Bur Dubai to Diera or to Gold Souk. Gold Souk is where all the gold traders sit. It's definitely worth visiting whether you want to buy the metal or not.

For the Foodies

There's plenty on offer for all types of cuisines and budgets. Head to Karama where there are plenty of restaurants to choose from which are budget friendly. Yalla Momos is great offering a variety of momos and wai wai chaat. In the same row is Raju Omlette and an amazing Ethiopian restaurant called Zagol. Delicious food is in store here with some good vegetarian options. Definitely try the Ethiopian coffee, a bit strong but a very unique taste.

If you are in a splurge mode then Tresind is a beautiful restaurant on Sheikh Zayed Road offering Molecular Gastronomy. Dinner for two can set you back upto AED1000, but the food is to die for. So here's a trick, try their business lunch from Sunday to Thursday, which offers a three-course meal for AED145 per person.





As for Michelin star restaurants, Dubai is full of them – Toro Toro, Nobu, Indego by Vineet, Pots, pans and Boards, Rang Mahal are a few to name. Pick any and you won't go wrong.

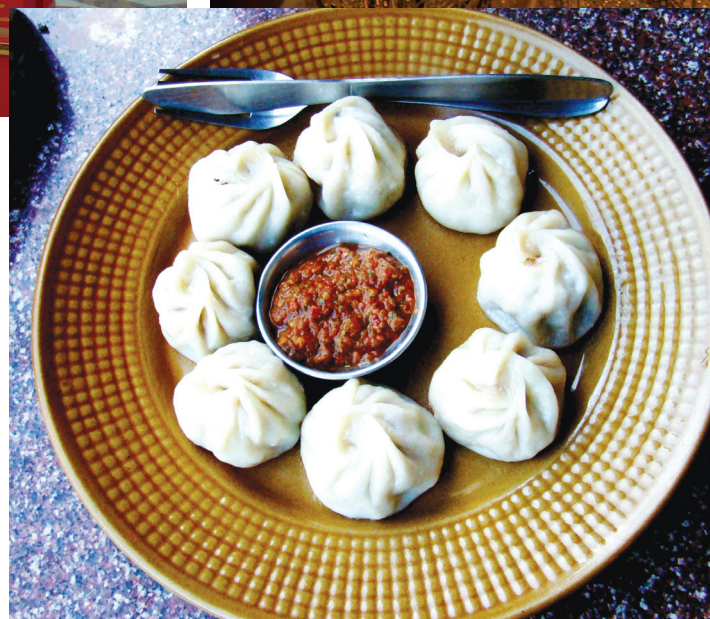
One must eat Middle Eastern cuisine while in Dubai, if you are in Jumeirah Beach Residences (JBR), head to Seven Sands, a fancy Emirati cuisine restaurant with great food options.

For pocket friendly places that don't compromise the taste are Al Mallah on 2nd December Street – order Hummus, Shawarma or Falafel, they are all good. Arooj Damascus in Diera is the place for an authentic middle-eastern food experience. Be it salad, vine leaves, kababs - everything you order is delicious. This place is value for money.

There are a few food tours as well, which take you to a few restaurants in a particular area of Dubai. Try Frying Pan Adventures to explore the food trail. There are lots of culinary classes that can be done in Dubai these days. Jamie's Italian has a Saturday class for making pasta from scratch.

For the partygoers

Dubai has an enthralling nightlife with the bars and night clubs shutting down only after 4-5 am. Barasti is a great chilled out place. The only draw back in the summer months is that it's open air. A great place to hang out from early evening as it has various levels where one can sit and chill. There's a beach area, a deck to an indoor area.



Another great lounge is Siddharta Lounge in Grosvenor House Hotel. A rooftop lounge offering Asian food and great beverage mixes. The step-seating overlooking the pool has a certain serenity to it, overlooking the splendid Dubai Marina skyline.

For hard core dancing, salsa fans can head to Malacon for a great night with live band. A desi night is good at Pulse at the Movenpick Hotel where they have various DJs and RJs from Dubai playing Bollywood mix.

And for a taste of Ibiza, Madinat Jumeirah's Pacha Ibiza is the place to be. Great vibe and music guaranteed here.

Every few months Dubai gets something new and exciting, the hidden gems keep on increasing! ■