

Dubai

Record Towers by Day, Dune Bashing at Sunset — A 5-Day Dubai Itinerary

DURATION

5 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

November – March

FROM

\$460 USD / person

Dubai packs record-breaking skyscrapers, a centuries-old trading creek and a man-made island shaped like a palm tree into one compact five-day loop. This itinerary bases itself in Dubai Marina throughout, with day trips downtown to the Burj Khalifa, across the Creek to Old Dubai's gold souk, out into the desert for a dune-bashing safari and Bedouin camp dinner, and down to Palm Jumeirah's beaches and waterpark.

Day 1

Touchdown in Dubai Marina & the World's Tallest Fountains

Land at Dubai International and settle into the Marina before heading downtown for sunset views from the world's tallest building and its record-setting fountain show.

Transfer — Airport to Dubai Marina

~35 min drive · taxi or Careem from around AED 90 (\$25)

Dubai International sits east of downtown, and a metered taxi or a Careem ride-hail is the easiest way to Dubai Marina on arrival — fares run on the meter, with no need to negotiate.

Check-In — Rove Dubai Marina

Check-in 3pm · rooms from around \$65/night

This no-frills, design-forward hotel chain sits a short walk from Dubai Marina Mall and the Marina Walk promenade, with a rooftop pool and gym — a comfortable, central base for the rest of the trip.

Rove Dubai Marina · rovehotels.com

Evening — Burj Khalifa “At the Top” & the Dubai Fountain

~1.5 hrs · observation deck tickets from around \$50 per adult

Ride the high-speed lift to levels 124 and 125 of the world's tallest building for a skyline view that stretches to the Gulf, then time your descent for one of the evening Dubai Fountain shows on the lake below — choreographed water jets set to music, visible free from the boardwalk.

At the Top, Burj Khalifa · burjkhalifa.ae

Dinner — Pier 7, Dubai Marina

Dinner · \$30–60 per person

A seven-story dining tower overlooking the Marina with a different restaurant on each floor, from casual Asian to white-tablecloth European — an easy first-night option within walking distance of the hotel.

Day 2

Gold Souk, an Abra Ride & Old Dubai

Trade the Marina's glass towers for Dubai's older trading quarter, crossing the Creek the way locals have for a century.

Dubai Gold Souk, Deira

~1 hr · free to browse

Hundreds of jewelry stalls packed into a covered market on the Creek's Deira side, selling gold by the gram at prices pegged to the day's market rate — browsing is free, and haggling is expected if you buy.

Abra Ride — Dubai Creek

~10 min crossing · around AED 1 (\$0.30) per person

Wooden motorized abras have ferried passengers across the Creek between Deira and Bur Dubai for generations, and it's still one of the cheapest, most atmospheric rides in the city — hop on at any public abra station along the waterfront.

Al Fahidi Historic District

~1.5 hrs · free to wander, Dubai Museum admission around \$1

Wind-tower houses and narrow lanes make up Dubai's oldest surviving neighborhood, now home to small galleries, cafes and the Dubai Museum inside the 18th-century Al Fahidi Fort.

Lunch — Arabian Tea House, Al Fahidi

Lunch · \$15–25 per person

A courtyard cafe tucked into the historic district's lanes, serving Emirati classics like machboos and karak tea under shaded seating — a popular break between the souk and the fort.

Day 3

Dune Bashing & a Desert Camp Under the Stars

Spend the evening in the desert outside the city, trading skyscrapers for dunes, a camel ride and a Bedouin-style camp dinner.

Desert Safari — Dune Bashing & Sandboarding

~6 hrs, afternoon pickup · around AED 350 (\$95) per person

A 4x4 convoy heads out to the dunes beyond the city for a bumpy, switchback dune-bashing ride, with stops to try sandboarding down the slopes before sunset.

Platinum Heritage Desert Safaris · platinum-heritage.com

Camel Ride & Bedouin Camp Dinner

Evening · included in most desert safari packages

The convoy ends at a permanent desert camp with a short camel ride, henna painting and shisha, followed by a barbecue buffet dinner and a tanoura and belly-dance show under the open sky.

Return — Rove Dubai Marina

~45 min drive back

Most desert safari operators include round-trip hotel transfers, dropping you back at the Marina late in the evening, sand still in your shoes.

Day 4

Palm Jumeirah & a Day by the Beach

Spend a slower day on Dubai's man-made palm-shaped island, between a famous beach and a sky-high view of its own shape.

The View at The Palm

~45 min · tickets from around \$30 per adult

An observation deck on the 52nd floor of The Palm Tower looks straight down the length of Palm Jumeirah's fronds to the Atlantis resort at its tip — the clearest way to see the island's famous shape.

Beach Day — Palm West Beach

Half-day · free public beach access

A walkable public beachfront runs along part of the Palm's trunk, with sunbeds, cafes and clear water looking back at the Marina skyline — a relaxed counterpoint to the previous day's desert heat.

Aquaventure Waterpark

~3 hrs · day tickets from around \$85 per adult

Atlantis The Palm's waterpark sits at the island's tip, with slides through shark-filled lagoons and a walk-through tunnel beneath a recreated ruins aquarium — a fun half-day, especially if traveling with kids.

Atlantis The Palm · atlantis.com

Dinner — Marina Walk restaurants

Dinner · \$25–50 per person

Dozens of casual-to-midrange restaurants line the pedestrian Marina Walk promenade back near the hotel — an easy, no-reservations option for a last relaxed dinner by the water.

Day 5

The Dubai Mall, the Frame & Departure

Spend the morning at the world's largest mall before a last skyline view and the flight home.

The Dubai Mall & Souk Al Bahar

~2–3 hrs · free to browse, aquarium tickets from around \$30

Beyond the shopping, the mall holds a massive indoor aquarium and a waterfall sculpture; step outside to Souk Al Bahar's old-style arcades for one more fountain-lake view before heading on.

Dubai Frame

~45 min · tickets from around \$15 per adult

A 150-meter picture-frame-shaped observation structure in Zabeel Park frames old Dubai on one side and the new downtown skyline on the other — a quick, photogenic last stop.

Transfer — To the Airport

~25 min drive from downtown · arrive 3+ hrs before an international flight

Dubai International is a short drive from downtown; traffic is the only real variable, so build in extra time if leaving during rush hour.