

SHOPPING

top picks

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SHOPPING

Dubai loves to shop. With so much money floating around, it only makes sense that there be so many places to spend it. The city has few public spaces; shopping malls are the de facto town commons. Part cultural centre, part entertainment complexes, malls are the primary gathering place in Dubai: when you meet up with friends, you often do so at a mall. And such malls you'll see nowhere else.

The explosion in themed mall architecture took off in 2002 with the opening of Mercato Mall and its preposterous Tuscan-meets-Venice architecture. Now Mercato looks tame. The Souq Madinat Jumeirah reinterprets the classic covered Arabian bazaars of old, with gracefully arching wooden ceilings above a maze of corridors designed to get you lost. Anchoring the complex at either end are two palatial, seaside hotels connected by a series of canals, with the iconic Burj Al Arab hotel looming in the background. Think Disney does Arabia. Nearly 1.5km long, Ibn Battuta Mall is comprised of six interconnected shopping centres, each one styled after a country visited by the eponymous explorer, who travelled from China to Andalusia in the 14th century. Amble beneath faux starry skies, past towering live palms, and into a giant tiled Persian dome with (what else?) a Starbucks at its centre. The China section is the stunner: a life-size junk lies on its side – someone is always posing for pictures in front of it.

The biggest shopping centre in the region until the Dubai Mall opens, Mall of the Emirates and its shiny white-marble corridors, is most famous for its indoor ski slope, Ski Dubai, where snow flies every night. Outside a series of colour-lit fountains blast water into the sky, choreographed to the blaring theme of *Mission Impossible*. The massive Dubai Festival City opened in 2007, with a red-carpet-lined VIP entrance (essentially valet parking). The back of the mall is most impressive: a three-storey-high, origami-inspired marble sculpture, with water running down its faces, doubles as a staircase for shoppers. *Abras* float past on outdoor canals, setting a picturesque if ersatz backdrop for al fresco performances.

With 12 million sq ft of retail, the soon-to-open Dubai Mall will take its place as the world's largest mall, smack dab in the shadow of the Burj Dubai, the world's tallest tower. In true Dubai style – ever in competition with itself – shortly after the Dubai Mall opens in late 2008, the Mall of Arabia will open in 2009 and take the prize as the world's largest. The Guinness judges make a lot of trips to Dubai.

Looked down upon in other parts of the world, air-conditioned malls make sense in Dubai, their trickling fountains and cool marble floors a welcome respite from the oppressive heat. The problem is, every new mall offers more of the same corporate chain stores, repackaged in glitzier format. We've included some of these major style franchises, such as Zara and Marc Jacobs, but have endeavoured to suss out the independent shops, stores like the exotic Mumbai Se and whimsical Ginger and Lace at Ibn Battuta Mall, and the funky Lebanese fashion shop Aizone and Norwegian skincare-shop Pixi at the Mall of the Emirates.

The Dubai shopping scene lacks the dynamism and breadth of major Western cities, such as London and New York, primarily because the city has no significant underground art scene to fuel new ideas. Everything in Dubai is imported, including creativity. That's why you'll be especially happy about two independent boutiques, S*uce and Five Green. While they won't bowl you over if you shop the world, you'll find brands and designs you otherwise wouldn't.

Scouring the souqs (covered outdoor markets) remains the city's quintessential shopping experience and the fastest way to get to the heart of the culture. Nothing compares to the atmosphere and chaos of the souqs – the colours and textures, the cacophony of sounds, the street hawkers barking for customers, and the call to prayer booming down narrow lanes. There's a souq for everything: fish, fruit and vegetables, electronics – there's even a camel souq. But head to sensuous Spice Souq, where you can close your eyes and be carried away by distant culinary memories. Trawl for Bedouin jewellery, Palestinian embroidery, curly-toed Aladdin slippers, Oriental perfumes, frankincense and myrrh, cheap headphones, and camel-shaped clock radios to take home to friends.

Souqs are on either side of Dubai Creek and the backstreets of Karama; malls are scattered about town. Hailing a taxi can take a long time (see p94). Malls have dedicated taxi lines

(though they may be over an hour in length). At the souqs you'll simply have to stand in the street; alternatively head to the nearest main drag, or take a bus or *abra*. All malls have food courts, some remarkably good, especially the Mall of the Emirates; they also boast full-service restaurants, some licensed, and ATMs and foreign-exchange offices. Whether they actually have any bargains is another story. Though there are no duties and taxes (see the boxed text, p99), unless you're buying expensive luxury items such as a Rolex, you'll find prices only a bit cheaper than overseas, depending on your home currency. For the best deals, come during one of the shopping festivals (p88).

OPENING HOURS

Malls in Dubai open from 10am to 10pm Sunday to Wednesday, from 10am to midnight Thursday to Saturday (weekends), and later during Dubai Shopping Festival and Ramadan (often until 1am). Traditionally, souqs and non-mall stores close a few hours during the afternoon for prayer, lunch and rest, and don't open on Fridays until late afternoon, but that's changing. These days many remain open all day. Malls get packed Friday nights: if you hate crowds, stay away. Otherwise, the people-watching is great.

BARGAINING

Bargaining is an obsession for some; others do anything to avoid it, immediately accepting the first offer. If you fall into the latter category, bear in mind that the first price suggested by spruikers in souqs is unrealistic; if you accept, you're overpaying and sending a signal to locals that out-of-towners are easy marks. Here's how to handle it. A counter-offer of half is made. The final figure will usually be somewhere about 20% to 50% lower than the shopkeeper's initial offer. Expect additional discounts for buying more than one piece from a vendor. Once the vendor agrees to your figure, you're expected to pay. Continuing to haggle once you've agreed is an insult. Leaving the store empty-handed after you've bargained is impolite. Remember, you may want to return; leaving on good terms will score you bigger discounts next time.

Confidence comes with practice; having a friend with you helps. Some like to play 'good cop, bad cop', with one feigning disinterest, trying to drag the other away. The shopkeeper will reduce the price rather than lose a sale. You don't typically bargain at chain stores in shopping malls, but at independent stores inside the malls, ask for the 'best price', especially on carpets, perfumes and electronics.

BEST BUYS

Gold & Gems

The City of Gold's glistening reputation grows from low prices and the sheer breadth of selection. There are a whopping 700 jewellery stores in Dubai, with nearly 300 at the Gold Souq and over 100 at the Gold & Diamond Park. Low import duties and no tax mean it's one of the cheapest places in the world at which to buy jewellery. Tradition keeps business booming: in India and the Gulf countries, when you provide gold for a dowry, it must be brand new – and over-the-top, apparently. Windows in the Gold Souq display the ornate necklaces, earrings and headpieces worn by Indian and Arabian brides. This is the jaw-dropping jewellery that you see in tourist-brochure photographs. But the selection inside the stores is significantly more diverse, ranging from intricately patterned pieces to sleek contemporary designs.

Dubai's jewellery shops also carry an impressive array of silver, diamonds, pearls and precious gems. And if you don't find anything you love, have something made. Either way, fear not: what you're buying is authentic. Local laws are very strict. Dubai Municipality makes regular quality checks. Gold traders wouldn't dare risk their reputations in such a competitive environment. Look for the gold-purity hallmark, get a detailed invoice and ask for a Certificate of Authenticity for diamonds and gems. While gold is sold by weight and prices fluctuate, the rate is fixed twice daily, according to international rates, by the Gold and Jewellery Group; check www.dubaicityofgold.com for the current numbers. Prices for

top picks

MALLS

- Dubai Festival City (p102)
- Mall of the Emirates (p101)
- BurJuman Centre (p96)
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- Ibn Battuta Mall (p101)

fashion jewellery vary depending on several factors, including the intricacy of the design, and whether the piece was made by machine or hand. Regardless, prepare to bargain.

Carpets

Dubai is a carpet-lover's paradise. Fine Persian carpets, colourful Turkish and Kurdish kilims, rough-knotted Bedouin rugs – they're all widely available. Dubai has a reputation in the region for having the highest-quality carpets at the best prices. The only problem is, each year the prices creep up as more visitors come to Dubai to shop. Bargaining is the norm. If you can't secure the price you want, head to another store. There are hundreds of 'em. Dubai's malls have the greatest number of carpet shops; the streets around Baniyas Sq (Map pp56–7) and Sharjah souqs also have a good selection. When you buy a carpet ask for a certificate of authentication guaranteed by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry, so you can be sure that the carpet actually comes from where the vendor says it does. For more information and what to look for when shopping for rugs, see p90 and right.

Arabian Handicrafts & Souvenirs

Arabian handicrafts are as popular with Dubai visitors as carpets, gold and perfume. The Oriental décor of the city's top-end hotels and restaurants seems to inspire travellers to pack away little pieces of exotica to recreate their own little

BEST CARPET BUYING BOOKS

- *Oriental Rugs Today*, 2nd edition, by Emmett Eiland
- *Persian Rugs and Carpets: Their History and Symbolism*, by Essie Sakhal
- *Oriental Rugs, A Complete Guide*, by Murray L Eiland Jr and Murray Eiland the Third
- *The Carpets, Rugs and Kilims of the World*, by Enza Milanesi
- *Kilims, a Buyer's Guide*, by Lee Allane
- *Tribal Rugs*, by James Opie

genie bottles back home. Head to the souqs for Moroccan coloured lanterns, Syrian rosewood furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, Arabian brass coffee pots, Turkish miniature paintings, and embroidered Indian wall-hangings and cushion covers dotted with tiny mirrors. If you're on a budget, use your imagination to create fab home furnishings. Colourful Indian saris make sexy curtains, and Kashmiri shawls look great atop tables and sideboards. Add foldable wooden legs to a decorative metal serving platter for a cool coffee table, or stretch a camel bag over cube-shaped ottomans.

Sheesha pipes (aka hubbly bubblys and nargilehs) make memorable souvenirs. Note: the smaller pipes are decorative and don't work. If you intend to use your pipe, buy a complete *sheesha* kit in an easy-to-carry hard case, which includes all the little accessories you'll need. *Sheesha* pipes and the flavoured tobacco are available from souqs, specialist

DUBAI'S SHOPPING FESTIVALS

Every year from mid-January to mid-February, the month-long **Dubai Shopping Festival** (www.mydsf.com) draws hordes of bargain-hunting tourists from around the world. This is the best time to visit Dubai: aside from the huge discounts in the souqs and malls, the weather is gorgeous and the city abuzz. Outdoor souqs, amusement rides and food stalls set up in many neighbourhoods, with the best on the Bur Dubai waterfront across from the British Embassy. There are traditional performances and displays at the Heritage and Diving Villages, family entertainment across the city, concerts and events in the parks, and nightly fireworks, best viewed from Creekside Park. **Dubai Summer Surprises**, a related event, is held during the unbearably hot months of July and August; it mainly attracts visitors from other Gulf countries. NB: For the best bargains at either festival, come during the last week, when retailers slash prices even further to clear out their inventory.

The carnival-like **Global Village** (www.globalvillage.ae; Dubai; adult/family Dh5/15; ☎ 4pm-midnight) runs from December to March in Dubailand (off Map p52). Think of it as a sort of World Fair for shoppers. Each of the 30-something pavilions showcases a specific nation's culture and – of course – products. Some favourites: the Afghanistan pavilion for fretwork-bordered stone pendants and beaded-silver earrings; Palestine for traditional cross-stitch *kandouras* (casual shirt-dresses) and ever-popular cushion covers; Yemen for its authentic *khanjars* (Bedouin daggers); India for spangly fabrics and slippers; and Kenya for its kitsch bottle-top handbags. Dig the earnest entertainment, from Chinese opera to Turkish whirling dervishes. Organizers claim this is to be a permanent installation at Dubailand, but as of this writing it was still seasonal. Check the web.

CLOTHING SIZES

Women's clothing

Aus/UK	8	10	12	14	16	18
Europe	36	38	40	42	44	46
Japan	5	7	9	11	13	15
USA	6	8	10	12	14	16

Women's shoes

Aus/USA	5	6	7	8	9	10
Europe	35	36	37	38	39	40
France only	35	36	38	39	40	42
Japan	22	23	24	25	26	27
UK	3½	4½	5½	6½	7½	8½

Men's clothing

Aus	92	96	100	104	108	112
Europe	46	48	50	52	54	56
Japan	S	M	M	L		
UK/USA	35	36	37	38	39	40

Men's shirts (collar sizes)

Aus/Japan	38	39	40	41	42	43
Europe	38	39	40	41	42	43
UK/USA	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½

Men's shoes

Aus/UK	7	8	9	10	11	12
Europe	41	42	43	44½	46	47
Japan	26	27	27½	28	29	30
USA	7½	8½	9½	10½	11½	12½

Measurements approximate only, try before you buy

stores, tobacconists, supermarkets and souvenir shops. (See p134 for a lesson in how to use your new pipe.)

If you're shopping for family and friends, look for silver prayer holders, inlaid wooden boxes, tinted-glass perfume bottles and kitsch souvenirs (see right). Dad may appreciate a framed *khanjar* or silver gunpowder horn. Mum will definitely love a new pashmina (see p98). Kids will love a cuddly camel; some even play Arabian music when you squeeze them. **Camel Company** (p99) has the best selection of camel toys. For older kids, look for brightly painted pencil holders and boxes with Emirati scenes rendered in naïve style, from Gifts and Souvenirs at **Karama Shopping Centre** (p97). Julia Johnston's illustrated story books also make great gifts; find them at **Magrudy's** (p93).

For the best-quality souvenirs and handicrafts, head to Deira City Centre, Mall of the Emirates and Souq Madinat Jumeirah. For the best prices, head to **Karama Shopping Centre** (aka Karama Souq), Bur Dubai and

Deira Souqs. Also check out the stalls at the **Heritage & Diving Villages** (p67).

Kitsch Souvenirs

The ultimate kitsch souvenir used to be a colourful mosque clock with an irritating call-to-prayer alarm. Now the souqs and souvenir shops overflow with wacky, kitsch gifts – glass Burj Al Arab paperweights, wooden Russian dolls painted as Emiratis, Barbie and Ken dolls in Emirati dress, key rings strung with miniature towers, camel-crossing-sign fridge magnets, and coffee mugs and baseball caps with Sheikh Zayed or Sheikh Mohammed waving to the crowd. **Karama Shopping Centre** (p97) is where you'll find the most bizarre stuff, but it's more fun to wander around Deira, especially at night, near the *abra* station.

Bedouin Jewellery

Bedouin jewellery is brilliant in Dubai and with the rise of bo-ho ethnic chic, it makes a great gift. Look for elaborate silver necklaces and pendants, chunky earrings and rings, and wedding belts, many of which incorporate coral, turquoise and semiprecious stones. Some of the older Bedouin jewellery comes from the Emirates, but most is from Oman, Yemen and Afghanistan. General guidelines are: Omani jewellery is produced with good-quality silver and is more intricate of detail and design; Yemeni jewellery is elaborate and chunkier; Afghani jewellery looks cheap, but it's the most fun and often comes embellished with coloured beads, ribbon and tiny mirrors. Like gold, silver jewellery is sold by weight. You'll pay more for intricate workmanship and quality, but the shopkeeper usually sets a fixed price on these items. There's also a lot of 'Bedouin-inspired' and other ethnic beaded-silver jewellery made in India; you'll pay a lot less for this stuff in Dubai than you will at boutiques in London or New York. Keep an eye out for necklaces, bracelets and earrings embellished with beads, charms and trinkets. You can also buy Bedouin jewellery displayed (a la *khanjars*) in glass-covered picture frames, or frame it yourself when you get home.

Perfume & Incense

Attars (Arabian perfumes) are spicy and strong. Historically this was a necessity: with precious little water, washing was a

CARPET-BUYING 101

Due diligence is essential for prospective carpet-buyers. Though you may only want a piece to match your curtains, you'll save a lot of time and money if you do a little homework. Your first order of business: Read *Oriental Rugs Today* (2nd edition), by Emmett Eiland, an excellent primer on buying new Oriental rugs.

In the early 1900s, rug makers started using fast-acting chemicals and machines to streamline the arduous processes of carding, washing, dyeing, and spinning wool into thread, leaving only the actual weaving to be done by hand. One hundred years later, traditional cultures have been decimated, and the market flooded with bad rugs destined to depreciate in value.

A rug's quality depends entirely on how the wool was processed. It doesn't matter if the rug was hand-knotted if the wool is lousy. The best comes from sheep at high altitudes, which produce impenetrably thick, long-staple fleece, heavy with lanolin. No acids should ever be applied; otherwise the lanolin washes away. Lanolin yields naturally stain-resistant, lustrous fibre that doesn't shed. The dye should be vegetal-based pigment. This guarantees saturated, rich colour tones with a depth and vibrancy unattainable with chemicals.

The dyed wool is hand-spun into thread, which by nature has occasional lumps and challenges the craftsmanship of the weavers, forcing them to compensate for the lumps by occasionally changing the shape, size, or position of a knot. These subtle variations in a finished carpet's pattern – visible only upon close inspection – give the carpet its character, and actually make the rug more valuable.

Dealers will hype knot-density, weave-quality and country of origin, but really, they don't matter. The crucial thing to find out is how the wool was treated. A rug made with acid-treated wool will never look as good as it did the day you bought it. Conversely, a properly made rug will grow more lustrous in colour over time and will last centuries.

Here's a quick test. Stand atop the rug with rubber-soled shoes, and do the twist. Grind the fibres underfoot. If they shed, it's lousy wool. You can also spill water onto the rug. See how fast it absorbs. Ideally it should puddle for an instant, indicating a high presence of lanolin. Best of all, red wine will not stain lanolin-rich wool.

We've endeavoured to list good dealers, but you'll be taking your chances in Dubai if you're looking for an investment piece. But if you're looking for a gorgeous pattern that will look great in your living room, pack a few fabric swatches from your sofa and draperies, and go for it. Patterns range from simple four-colour tribal designs in wool to wildly ornate, lustrous multicoloured silk carpets that shimmer under the light. Look through books before you leave home to get a sense of what you like. Once in the stores, plan to linger long with dealers, slowly sipping tea while they unfurl dozens of carpets. The process is great fun. Just don't get too enthusiastic or the dealer won't as readily bargain.

If you're serious about becoming a collector, hold off. Read Emmett Eiland's book; Google 'DOBAG', a Turkish-rug-making cultural-survival project; and check out www.yayla.com for other reliable background info. Follow links to nonprofit organisations (such as DOBAG) that not only help reconstruct rug-making cultures decimated by modernisation, but also help to educate, house and feed the people of these cultures, giving them a voice in an age of industrial domination. And you'll get a fantastic carpet to boot.

sometimes-thing, so women smothered themselves in *attars* and incense. The tradition continues. As you walk past Emirati women, catch a whiff of their exotic perfume. You can find Arabian-perfume shops in all Dubai's malls, but we highly recommend you visit the [Perfume Souq](#) (p60), a small stretch lined with perfume stores along Sikkat al-Khail St in Deira, just east of the Gold Souq. Shopkeepers will daub you senseless with myriad scents, and if you buy a few (remember to bargain), you'll also receive a bag of tiny samples. Perfume is sold by the *tolah* (12mL or 12g) and prices vary, depending on the perfume. The expensive concentrated scents are made from agar wood from Malaysia. Perfume shops also sell a range of incense in the form of *oud* (wood), rock, crystals or compressed powder. Frankincense (*luban* in Arabic) is the most common form.

Quality varies; the best comes from the Dhofar region of southern Oman.

To burn incense, you have three options: an electric incense burner; heat beads; or a traditional burner and a box of Magic Coal charcoal, a long-lasting Japanese coal sold in a black box. Set charcoal or heat beads over a gas burner or hotplate until they glow red, then put a piece of frankincense on top. Frankincense burned alone may remind you of church, but add *oud* for a sweet, rich, log-fire smell. The colourful burners themselves make great souvenirs, and many shops sell all-inclusive gift sets.

Textiles

Vendors at Bur Dubai Souq and along nearby Al-Fahidi St carry vibrant, colourful textiles

from the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. They're remarkably cheap, but quality varies. Silk, cotton and linen represent the best value. Dubai's tailors work quickly, and their rates are very reasonable. Prices start around Dh35 for a shirt or skirt. Draperies may cost as little as Dh10 apiece.

Exotic Delicacies

Fragrant Iranian and Spanish saffron costs far less than back home. Buy it in the spice souq or supermarkets. Honey from Saudi Arabia and Oman is scrumptious. Look for it in specialty shops in Satwa, in the Spice Souq and in supermarkets. Its colour ranges from light gold to almost black. The most expensive varieties are collected by hand from remote areas in the mountains and deserts of Oman. As much as we love good caviar, because of over fishing and pollution in the Caspian Sea, we cannot advocate the purchase of Iranian roe.

Electronics

If it plugs into a wall you can buy it in Dubai. Because of minimal duties, Dubai is the cheapest place in the region to buy electronics and digital technology. The selection is huge. Research products of interest before hitting the stores; sales staff don't always know enough. For the lowest prices and no-name brands, head to Al-Fahidi St in Bur Dubai and the area around Al-Sabkha and Al-Maktoum Hospital Rds, near Baniyas Sq, known as the Electronics Souq ([Map pp54–5](#); test items before you buy). If you want an international warranty, shell out the extra money and head to a mall, Carrefour or Plug-Ins. Prices on multiregion DVD players, digital cameras, PDAs and mobile phones vary hugely, but will probably be cheaper than back home. For software and hardware, head to Khalid bin al-Waleed Rd (Bank St; aka Computer Street) in Bur Dubai between Al-Mankhool Rd and the Falcon Roundabout.

KHANJARS

Visit the Al-Ain Camel Souq or the bullfights at Fujairah and you'll see old Emirati men wearing *khanjars* over their *dishdashas* (men's shirt-dress). Traditionally, *khanjar* handles were made from rhino horn; today they are often made of wood. Regular *khanjars* have two rings where the belt is attached, and their scabbards are decorated with thin silver wire. The intricacy of the wire thread pattern and its workmanship determine value. Sayidi *khanjars* have five rings and are often covered entirely in silver sheet, with little or no wire, and their quality is assessed by weight and craftsmanship. A *khanjar* ought to feel heavy when you pick it up. Don't believe anyone who tells you a specific *khanjar* is 'very old' – few will be more than 30 to 40 years old. If you're in the market, there's an especially good selection at [Lata's](#) (p100), [Showcase Antiques](#) (p100) and at [Global Village](#) (p88).

Perfume Shopping: Clearing Your Palate

Perfume-shopping can wear out your sense of smell. If you're in the market for Arabian scents, do what top perfumiers do to neutralize their olfactory palate: close your mouth and make three forceful exhalations through your nose. Blast the air hard, in short bursts, using your diaphragm. But be careful, lest boogers come flying out (blow your nose first, if you're worried). Some people incorrectly say to smell coffee grounds, but this numbs your sense of smell, effectively deadening it.

For iPods and other Apple products try the Mac Store (at [Ibn Battuta Mall](#), p101) or Virgin. Compare prices before you buy.

DEIRA

AJMAL [Map pp56–7](#)

Cosmetics

☎ 295 3580; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
The place for traditional Arabian perfumes, Ajmal caters to well-heeled Emirati women. The fancy jewel-encrusted bottles are as impressive as the scents.

AL-GHURAIR CITY [Map pp54–5](#) Shopping Centre

☎ 223 2333; cnr Al-Rigga & Omar ibn al-Khattab Rds; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
If seeing all those flowing robes has made you want your own checked *keffiyah* (or *gutra*, as they're called in the Gulf), grab yours at Al-Ghurair City, the place to shop for national dress, offering stylish *abayas* and *shaylas*, quality leather sandals, and *dishdashas* in chocolate and slate (popular for winter). Be forewarned: the floorplan is confusing.

AMINIAN PERSIAN CARPETS

[Map pp56–7](#)

Carpets

☎ 295 5379; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat

SOUVENIR SUGGESTIONS

Traditional Take-Homes

If you can't resist taking home gold, carpets, perfume and the like, here are some helpful hints:

Carpets Go for Persian; better value and finer quality than anywhere except Iran.

Gold Assuming you don't buy at its peak, you'll feel smug once it's valued back home.

Perfume No tax means French brands are cheaper than in Paris, but check the packaging to make sure they're authentic.

Pashminas Fakes are found all over the world, but in Dubai you'll find bargains on real, silky-soft 100% pashmina shawls. For tips on buying, see p98.

Oriental music Sure, you want to shimmy like a belly dancer on your desert safari, but listen before you buy – some are excruciating.

Cool Keepsakes

These Dubai-designed, home-grown and lesser-known regional products make more original mementos:

Colourful camel bags Make groovy ottoman covers.

Azza Fahmy Jewellery Impress your friends by explaining the Arabic inscriptions and imagery. Be prepared to pay retail.

Arabian attars (essential oils) You can be confident no other woman in the room will be wearing the same scent.

A Pink Sushi piece Funky feminine fashion made from the traditional *gutra* (red-and-white-checked men's head-dress) by an Emirati designer. They may be hard to find; call **Five Green** (p97), **5*uce** (p100) and **Amzaan** (p96).

Lemonada or Blue Bedouin CDs Kick back to Arabian lounge and chill-out music made in Dubai.

This trusted Iranian-carpet specialist offers great service and stocks a wide selection of classic Persian carpets and colourful tribal kilims. Plan to linger long: the collection is far bigger than it first appears.

BOOK CORNER Map pp54–5 Books

☎ 228 2835; Al-Ghurair City, cnr Omar ibn al-Khattab & Al-Rigga Rds; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri

The number of English and Arabic titles is astounding, but the best reason to come is for travel-related and children's products. Look for the 'Quran Challenge Game', a wacky souvenir. NB: if you're buying travel books, check the publication dates (the store stocks out-of-date titles as well as new ones).

top picks

GOLD & JEWELLERY

- Gold Souq (p53)
- Azza Fahmy Jewellery (p98)
- Gold & Diamond Park (p99)
- Damas Jewellery (right)

CARREFOUR Map pp56–7 Supermarket

☎ 295 1010; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Tue, 10am–midnight Wed–Fri

This enormous French hypermarket draws big crowds of Emiratis and European expats for its off-the-jet-fresh seafood, foie gras, stinky cheeses, fresh-baked bread and plump Arabian olives. It also stocks an excellent selection of well-priced mobile phones, digital cameras and electronics.

DAMAS Map pp56–7 Jewellery

☎ 295 3848; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat

Damas may not be the most innovative jeweller in Dubai, but with over 50 stores, it's the most trusted. Among the diamonds and gold, look for classic pieces and big-designer names like Fabergé and Tiffany.

DEIRA CITY CENTRE Map pp56–7 Shopping Centre

☎ 295 1010; Al-Garhoud Rd; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat

Though other malls are bigger and flashier, Deira City Centre remains a stalwart for its logical layout and wide selection of shops, from big-name chain stores like H&M and Zara to independent shops carrying good

SOUQ TO SOUQ

Bur Dubai Souq (Map pp62–3) Scores of stalls carry textiles, souvenir T-shirts, faux antiques and mosque alarm clocks. The selection of shops is nothing remarkable; it's the structure of the souq itself that's cool. Open-sided wooden arcades with graceful archways extend for blocks, just a stone's throw from the Creek. Linger by the *abra* station and strike up conversations with Indian expats, watch the boats load up, then duck up narrow side streets of the adjacent Indian neighbourhood to try on saris, bargain for electronics and browse Bollywood CDs. Don't miss the tiniest, most-atmospheric alley of all, Hindi Lane (p66), between the Hindu and Sikh temples, where you can wander into tiny shops chock-a-block with religious paraphernalia, colourful Buddhas, bindis and incense.

Deira Covered Souq (Map pp54–5) Deira's souqs are the most dynamic and exciting in Dubai, and they're best visited in the evening when buzzing neon signs light up throngs of Indians crowding the busy sidewalks. A labyrinth of sprawling markets and narrow alleyways, Deira's souqs aren't as straightforward as the one in Bur Dubai: plan to get lost. The covered Naif Souq (between Naif South St, 9A St and Deira St) is easier to navigate than the Deira Covered Souq (between Al-Sabkha Rd, 67 St and Naif Rd), which isn't really covered, but consists of warrens of tiny shops on narrow lanes and dead-end arcades. When you get turned around, find your way back to the Creek to get oriented. Even if you're not keen on cheap textiles, knock-off Dior scarves, *kandouras* and kitchenware, you're sure to be wowed by the high-energy street scene.

Deira Gold Souq (Map pp54–5) The most famous of Dubai's souqs is a grimy place, considering the high value of the goods carried in the cheek-by-jowl shops. Giant dust-covered ceiling fans hang from the arching wooden arcades, whirring loudly above mobs of gawkers whose attention is squarely riveted on the spot-lit bling glittering in windows. Though you'll see some impossibly overwrought solid-gold headdresses and medallion-encrusted belts destined for an Indian bride's dowry or the set of a Bollywood musical, most of the stuff is rather ordinary – pins, pendants, earrings and necklaces. You may find something to buy, but really it's the spectacle that's so mesmerising. Keep an eye out for the well-fed wives of Russian oligarchs – their frenzies are highly entertaining.

Deira Spice Souq (Map pp54–5) The narrow alleyways leading to the Spice Souq (aka Deira Old Souq) are lined with the usual made-in-China plastics, polyester and porcelain, but forge ahead and you'll suddenly catch a whiff of pungent spices perfuming the air. Once you glimpse the narrow alleyway and its stalls brimming with giant bags of spices, stop and close your eyes: this is one place in Dubai where vision is a distraction. See if you can't pick out the scents of saffron, rose, cinnamon, cardamom, vanilla and cumin. Even if you don't purchase a pouch of pulverised roots or leaves, do seek out the essential buy: frankincense. If you're not sure what to do with it, pick up a beginner's incense kit, which includes a small burner, *oud* and coal. (Tip: 'Magic Coal' brand lasts longer than others.)

Marina Market, Dubai Marina (Map pp82–3; ☎ 050 244 5795; New Dubai; ☎ 11am–7pm Fri & Sat Oct–Apr, 2–10pm during Ramadan) Marina Market is a crowd-pleaser not so much for its local and international arts and crafts, ethnic jewellery and home-grown fashion, but for its sunny waterside location. Plan to snap pictures as you stroll the promenade. When it's time to buy, Sara Moseley's photographs of Dubai make original souvenirs; market-organiser Roslynn Bargunman's cheeky 'Made in Dubai' and 'Expat Brat' T-shirts sell like beer at a ballgame. Egyptian Rania El-Farouki's textiles resurrect the ancient Nubian art of *talli*, with delicate gold- and silver-threaded kaftans, scarves and shawls; every design tells a story, and your purchase supports a disappearing art form.

carpets, souvenirs and handicrafts. You'll also find the city's best supermarket (Carrefour), good food courts and a cinema. Some say it's the place on a Thursday night. Not true. Crowds are unbearable, rife with screaming teens; the taxi line is over an hour long; and traffic outside is abominable.

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE Map pp56–7 Children's Toys

☎ 295 1548; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat

Parents: if you're travelling with little ones and failed to pack enough toys to keep them entertained, fret not. Early Learning

Centre stocks great games designed to get kids thinking and develop key learning skills. And because they're not always easy to figure out, they'll keep children busy for hours.

MAGRUDY'S Map pp56–7 Books

☎ 295 7744; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat

Of Magrudy's Dubai branches, this one's the best. It stocks a wide selection of English-language books, with a stand-out collection of travel, language and children's titles; intriguing books on Middle East history and politics; and a complete selection

JUMPING THE TAXI QUEUE

Hailing a taxi at a mall on a weekend can take well over an hour. Different malls have different systems. At some, you've no choice but to queue up, as at Deira City Centre – the worst of the lot – where the snaking line of people can easily exceed 200 tired shoppers. To avoid it, wander around the corner to the adjacent Sofitel and tip the doorman Dh5. (Consolidate or hide your shopping bags; the hotel's doormen aren't supposed to hail taxis for shoppers.) At Dubai Festival City, the system is more civilized: the doorman hands you a number telling you where you are in the queue (don't be surprised to learn that 100 people are ahead of you). The upside of this system is that you can plan your shopping around the wait: once you're nearly done, pick up your number, then head back inside and hit the stores near the taxi door. Alternatively, head to the adjacent InterContinental Hotel, at the far end of the mall, where you'll have to pony up extra for a hotel taxi, but will rarely wait. (Again, tip the doorman.) At Mall of the Emirates, avoid the long queue by heading to the front door of the Kempinski Hotel, adjoining Ski Dubai, where there's always a line of non-hotel taxis waiting. If there's a queue at Wafi City, head to Raffles Dubai and pony up the extra cash for a hotel taxi. At other malls, you'll just have to brave the wait. If you're shameless and really pressed, you can cheat and catch an arriving taxi before he pulls into the lot, but the taxi attendant will make a fuss. Be discreet.

of coffee-table books on Dubai. Alas, the magazine selection is weak.

MIKYAJY Map pp56–7 Cosmetics

☎ 295 7844; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
You feel like you're walking into a candy gift-box at tiny Mikyajy, the Gulf's home-grown make-up brand. Developed to suit the colouring of Arabian girls, its popularity now includes foreigners who appreciate vibrant colours like turquoise and tangerine.

PLUG-INS Map pp56–7 Electronics

☎ 295 1010; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
If you left your digital camera on the back seat of a taxi, Plug-Ins carries a big selection of tiny digital cameras, as well as MP3 players, hand-held organizers and home-theatre systems. Prices are competitive, but you may do better at Carrefour.

PRIDE OF KASHMIR Map pp56–7 Carpets & Handicrafts

☎ 295 0655; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
The high-knot-density Kashmiri and Persian silk carpets are lovely, but you'll especially enjoy the selection of silky pashmina shawls and home furnishings like velvet patchwork bedspreads, embroidered throws and sequined cushion covers. Look for branches at [Souq Madinat Jumeirah](#) (p101), [Mall of the Emirates](#) (p101) and [Mercato Mall](#) (p100).

RITUALS Map pp56–7 Cosmetics

☎ 294 1432; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
Rituals' natural products seek to make quotidian chores more sensuous. Though you probably won't want to weigh down your

luggage with minty dishwashing soap, you may appreciate the invigorating mandarin-and-mint shower gel, lotus-flower massage oil, or ginger-and-basil shaving balm, all available in travel sizes.

VIRGIN MEGASTORE Map pp56–7 Music

☎ 295 8599; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
The enthusiastic sales staff is great at suggesting Middle Eastern music to take back home, from traditional oud to Oriental chill-out. The selection is huge. Also check out the Arabian and Iranian DVDs. The Mall of the Emirates store is bigger, but for Middle Eastern tunes, this one's best. Also carries MP3 players.

WOMEN'S SECRET Map pp56–7 Women's Clothing

☎ 295 9665; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
Sun–Wed, 10am–midnight Thu–Sat
This sassy Spanish label thrills girls with its global-pop-art-inspired underwear, swimwear and nightwear. Expect anything from cute Mexican cross-stitched bra and pants sets to Moroccan-style kaftan-like nightdresses. There are other branches, but this is the best.

ZARA Map pp56–7 Clothing

☎ 294 0839; Deira City Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm
Stylish Spain-based Zara has stores all over Dubai, but this is the original and still has the biggest selection of smart-looking affordable clothes and accessories. They never stray from their black, white and grey colour palette, but their cuts and styling feel very now and look expensive – even if the tailoring is cheap.

TOP SHOPPING & EATS STREETS

When it's cool enough to be outdoors, escape the monotony of the shopping malls and hit the street. Though generally grimy, Dubai's commercial streets are chock-a-block with stores and restaurants, and each has its own flavour. Some are specific to a particular type of consumer good, others to a particular culture and its food. Since shopping and eating go hand-in-hand, we've crafted a short-list of our favourite areas to do a bit of both. For the best people-watching and liveliest atmosphere, come in the evening. Note that many shops close in the afternoon.

Khalid bin al-Waleed Rd (Bank St), **Bur Dubai** (Map pp62–3) Nicknamed Computer Street, Bank St's crowded sidewalks are lined with shops selling software, hardware, laptops, personal organisers and computer accessories. (Never mind the occasional hooker.) Go for inexpensive Sri Lankan cooking at [Curry Leaf](#) (p113), inside the computer-mall Al-Mussalla Tower.

Al-Fahidi St, Bur Dubai (Map pp62–3) A bustling Indian 'hood great for textiles, saris, digital cameras and electronics, with myriad tailor shops and luggage dealers; it's also good for snacks at hole-in-the-wall Indian joints that serve strong black tea cut with milk.

Al-Hisn St and 73 St, Bur Dubai (Map pp62–3) Another predominantly Indian area with impossibly narrow sidewalks and buzzing neon, here you'll find sari shops, sequined slippers, and Bollywood music and movies. Head to [Rangoli](#) (p113), which makes great all-veg curries and gooey-delicious sweets.

Al-Rigga Rd, Rigga (Map pp54–5) A wide boulevard with broad sidewalks, Al-Rigga is good for specialist *sheesha* shops, discount gifts, internet cafés and traditional Emirati dress (head to Al-Ghurair City). Stop for Syrian and Iranian sweets along the way, but for a meal walk around the corner to Aroos Damascus (p109).

Al-Dhiyafah, Satwa, between Al-Satwa Rd and Al-Mina Rd (Map pp76–7) A favourite walking street for its wide sidewalks, cultural diversity, and mix of day-to-day and specialty shops, Al-Dhiyafah is good for books, *sheesha*-pipe stores and Syrian handicrafts. But the standout attraction here is the bevy of great Lebanese food. For mezza visit [Sidra](#) (p118); for shawarma, try [Al-Mallah](#) (p113) or [Beirut](#) (p119).

Al-Satwa Rd, Satwa, between Al-Dhiyafah Rd and Al-Hudheiba Rd (Map pp76–7) This thoroughfare feels anonymous but it is the place to buy low-cost luggage, cheap *kandouras* (robes) and textiles. Munch on Indian sweets at little cafés, or follow the Pakistani workers and five-star chefs to [Ravi](#) (p119).

BUR DUBAI

2000 HORIZON ANTIQUES

Map pp64–5 Handicrafts & Souvenirs
☎ 335 3544; Block T, Karama Shopping Centre, Karama; ☎ 9am–10pm Sat–Thu, 9–11am & 4–10pm Fri
These guys offer the best prices in Karama Shopping Centre – and that's before you even start bargaining. The selection may be small, but you'll still find enough Orientalia to recreate the Arabian look at home. The friendly no-nonsense service is a welcome respite from the irritating spruikers outside.

AJMAL Map pp62–3 Cosmetics

☎ 269 0102; BurJuman Centre, cnr Khalid bin al-Waleed (Bank St) & Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Rds; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
The most popular maker of heady Arabian *attars* (perfumes and essential oils) in the region, Ajmal custom-blends its earthy scents. These aren't fancy French colognes – they're woody and pungent perfumes. Look for 'Zikra Al Nawaaem', a spicy sandalwood based scent in an ornate gold bottle.

AL-AIN SHOPPING CENTRE

Map pp62–3 Computers
☎ 351 6914; Al-Mankhool Rd; ☎ 10am–2.30pm & 4.30–10pm Sat–Thu, 4.30–10pm Fri
Jam-packed with small shops selling every kind of software, hardware and accessory for PCs, this computer and electronics mall also has a good range of digital cameras. There is an internet café and fast-food outlets on the ground floor. Across the street, Al-Khaleej Centre has similar (but fewer) stores.

AL-OROoba ORIENTAL Map pp62–3 Carpets

☎ 351 0919; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri

DID YOU KNOW?

It may be pushing 40°C outside, but Dubai's shopping malls are freezing; they're notoriously over air-conditioned. The worst offender? BurJuman Center. If you didn't pack a lightweight wrap for your shoulders, you now have extra incentive to shell out for that new pashmina you've been eyeing.

top picks

HANDICRAFTS & SOUVENIR SHOPS

- Lata's (p100)
- Al-Jaber Gallery (p101)
- Al-Orooba Oriental (p95)
- Gift World (opposite)
- Showcase Antiques, Arts & Frames (p100)

You'll have to decide whether to enjoy the ritual of unfurling fine carpets or combing over the cool collection of Bedouin jewellery, prayer beads, ceramics and *khanjars* – you won't have time for both: this is high-quality stuff that merits careful attention.

AMZAAN Map pp64–5 **Boutique**
 ☎ 324 6754; Wafi City Mall; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 4pm–midnight Fri
 Sharjah princess Sheikha Maisa al-Qassimi's funky little boutique specializes in local and out-of-town designers, with an ever-changing line-up of labels. Ones to look for: Manoush, Free for Humanity, and Dubai brands you won't find anywhere else.

BATEEL Map pp62–3 **Food**
 ☎ 355 2853; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
 Old-style traditional Arabian hospitality meant dates and camel milk. Now Emiratis offer their guests Bateel's scrumptious date chocolates and truffles, made from 120 varieties using European chocolate-making

BATEEL DATES

The de rigeur gift for any proper gourmet, Bateel dates are the ultimate luxury food of Arabia. At first glance, Bateel looks like a jewellery store, with polished-glass display cases and halogen pin spots illuminating the goods. A closer look reveals perfectly aligned pyramids of dates – thousands of them. Bateel plays to its audience with gorgeous packaging that might leave the recipient of your gift expecting gold or silver within: the fancy boxes of lacquered hardwood are worth far more than their contents. Alas, they're manufactured in China, but not the dates. These come from Saudi Arabia, which has the ideal growing conditions: sandy, alkaline soil and extreme heat. Quality control is tight: Bateel has its own farms and production equipment. The dates sold here are big and fat, with gooey-moist centers. Because they have a 70% sugar content, dates technically have unlimited shelf life, but you'll find they taste best around the autumn harvest. If agwa dates are available during your visit, buy them – you may not have another opportunity. Agwa trees only yield every few years, so they're considered a delicacy. Look for them in September; other varieties arrive in November. The stuffed dates make a great gift – love the candied orange peel and caramelized almonds. If you miss your chance in town, you can stock up at the airport as you leave Dubai. A cardboard box will set you back Dh100 per kilo, a fancy box Dh200, and a little beribboned sampler of five or seven perfect dates around Dh25.

techniques. Try the sparkling date drink and take home some date jam. For more on Bateel, see below. Other locations: Deira City Centre and Jumeirah Town Centre.

BURJUMAN CENTRE **Shopping Centre**
 Map pp62–3
 ☎ 352 0222; cnr Khalid bin al-Waleed (Bank St) & Trade Centre Rds; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
 Dubai's answer to Beverly Hills, BurJuman has one of the highest concentrations of high-end labels and an easy-to-navigate floorplan with wide expanses of shiny marble. Too bad it's freezing inside. Max out your credit card at Saks Fifth Avenue, Dolce and Gabbana, Donna Karan, Kenzo, Calvin Klein, Etro, Christian Lacroix, Cartier and Tiffany.

ETRO Map pp62–3 **Women's Clothing**
 ☎ 351 3737; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
 Italian designer Jacopo Etro's exuberant paisley designs are inspired by his travels. Borrowing ideas from around the globe, his exotic collections have featured richly coloured chifon kaftans, Rasta shawls and textured ponchos, patchwork and mirrored skirts, sari-style tops, and embroidered belts and handbags.

FACES Map pp62–3 **Cosmetics**
 ☎ 352 1441; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 2–10pm Fri
 Before Faces opened, women had to fly to Paris to purchase hard-to-find cosmetic and fragrance brands. No more. Sniff out Serge Lutens, L'Artisan Parfumer and Annick Goutal, among others.

SUPERMARKET SOUVENIRS

Happiness is shopping at Spinneys, Carrefour and Choithram (p105) – the shelves are positively packed with international foodstuffs. Here are a few favourites.

Cardamon-flavoured condensed milk Worth weighing down the luggage for, this provides a taste of Arabia when you return home. Great in coffee.

Natco rose syrup Wow your dinner-party guests by pouring rose syrup over sorbet or vanilla ice cream.

Zaatar and sumac Add zaatar (a blend of thyme, sesame, marjoram and oregano) to your soups, salads or stews; add sumac (a sour, cherry-red spice) and lemon to a chopped salad to recall some of the fabulous Lebanese meals you ate in Dubai.

Saffron You won't find cheaper back home. Soak it in hot cooking water or broth to extract its aroma before adding it to the pot.

Indian tea Unlike in the West, Indian tea is powdered and instantly dissolves in hot water. Cut it with full-cream milk to evoke memories of Dubai's Indian-sweets sidewalk bakeries.

FIVE GREEN Map pp64–5 **Boutique**
 ☎ 336 4100; www.fivegreen.com; Garden Home, Oud Metha; ☎ 10am–11pm Sat–Thu, 4–11pm Fri
 You may get lost trying to find the city's leading indie boutique and concept store, but it's worth it to meet the cool kids of Dubai's retail scene. Aside from art installations and kick-ass international magazines, Five Green carries cool unisex labels like Fidel, Paul Frank, BoxFresh, Xlarge, and Upper Playground. It also stocks Pink Sushi, our fave local designer because of its fantastic bags and skirts made from checked *gutrass* (men's headcloths). Check the website for upcoming installations and shows.

GIFT WORLD Map pp64–5 **Handicrafts & Souvenirs**
 ☎ 335 8097; Block T, Karama Shopping Centre; ☎ 9am–10.30pm Sat–Thu, 4–10.30pm Fri
 Imagine yourself in Aladdin's Cave as you bump your head on the hanging Moroccan and Syrian lamps while rummaging through Oriental bric-a-brac, ranging from Bedouin jewellery and beads, to sequined bedspreads and dizzily patterned camel cushion covers. It's around the corner from 2000 Horizon Antique.

INTERNATIONAL ALLADIN SHOES **Handicrafts & Souvenirs**
 Map pp62–3
 ☎ 050-515 4351; Bur Dubai Souq abra station; ☎ 10am–10pm Sat–Thu, 10am–noon & 2–10pm Fri
 Every souvenir shop in Dubai sells colourful sequined slippers and gold-threaded curly-toed shoes from Pakistan and Afghanistan, but Alladin was the first and still has the best quality, selection and prices.

The teeny-tiny slippers are a hit at baby showers.

KARAMA SHOPPING CENTRE **Shopping Centre**
 Map pp64–5
 Karama, Bur Dubai; ☎ 9am–10.30pm Sat–Thu, 9–11am & 4–10.30pm Fri
 An ugly concrete souq, Karama's bustling backstreet shopping area has dozens of little shops selling handicrafts and souvenirs, 'genuine fakes' and cheap clothes. Prices are low, but bargaining lowers them further – be aggressive: the spruikers are accustomed to tourists. Listen for the cries of hucksters hawking pirated copies: 'Dee-vee-dees! Bloo moovees!' The municipality seems to look the other way.

MOTHERCARE Map pp64–5 **Children's Clothing**
 ☎ 335 9999; Lamcy Plaza, Oud Metha, Bur Dubai; ☎ 10am–10pm
 Out of the way, but open Friday mornings, Mothercare is one of the most popular and affordable shops for kid's necessities, from cute clothes and cuddly toys to baby carriers and car seats. There are other branches, but this one's close to several other children's shops at slightly downmarket Lamcy Plaza.

OHM RECORDS Map pp64–5 **Music**
 ☎ 397 3728; just behind Trade Centre Rd, opposite BurJuman Centre; ☎ noon–9pm
 DJs dig Ohm, the first Dubai shop to carry vinyl. There's a discerning selection of house, trance, hip-hop, trip-hop and drum 'n' bass, as well as DJ equipment and accessories. It's been responsible for bringing

PASHMINA: TELLING REAL FROM FAKE

Women around the world adore pashminas, those feather-light cashmere shawls worn by the Middle East's best-dressed ladies. If you're shopping for a girlfriend or your mother, you can never go wrong with a pashmina. They come in hundreds of colours and styles, some beaded and embroidered, others with pompon edging – you'll have no trouble finding one you like. But aside from setting it afire to make sure it doesn't melt (as polyester does), how can you be sure it's real? Here's the trick. Hold the fabric at its corner. Loop your index finger around it and squeeze hard. Now pull the fabric through. If it's polyester, it won't budge. If it's cashmere, it'll pull through – though the friction may give you a mild case of rope burn. Try it at home with a thin piece of polyester before you hit the shops; then try it with cashmere. You'll never be fooled again.

some of the more interesting DJs to Dubai. If you spin, check 'em out.

PRAIAS Map pp62–3 Women's Clothing
☎ 351 1338; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

Emirati women wouldn't be caught dead wearing Praias' skimpy candy-coloured bikinis and swirly-patterned beach dresses in public. Perhaps you shouldn't either, unless you've first gotten a Brazilian wax job.

TAPE À L'OEIL Map pp62–3 Children's Clothing
☎ 352 3223; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

A refreshing alternative to Gap Kids, Tape à l'oeil carries fun kids' clothes that look like miniature adult wear. Denim features prominently, as do skirts and sweaters that look best on kids who keep their hair combed.

TOPSHOP Map pp64–5 Boutique
☎ 327 9929; Wafi City Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu & Fri

The jewel in the crown of British high street fashion, Topshop's snappy ready-to-wear should be your first choice if Emirates lost your luggage in transit. The diverse selection runs from denim and jumpers to handbags and jazzy earrings.

WAFI CITY Map pp64–5 Food
☎ 324 4555; Wafi City Mall, Al-Qataiyat Rd, near Al-Garhoud Bridge; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu & Fri

Westerners mistakenly bypass palatial Wafi in favour of the behemoth shopping malls, which explains why it's so quiet. Their loss. It may have once resembled a third-rate airport terminal, but the new wing's stained-glass pyramids are stunning (come before sunset). Emirati women love Wafi's fancy French stores like Chanel and Givenchy,

but you may well prefer the lesser-known regional designers showcased in smaller boutiques. Come after sunset for great bars and restaurants like *Asha's* (p112), and to snap pix of the entry court's giant illuminated sphinx and brilliant crystal chandeliers. If you're feeling swish and look sharp, head for the grandest pyramid of all, the adjoining *Raffles Dubai* (p156), see its rooftop botanical garden and fantastical poolside water clock, then sip champagne at the top-floor *New Asia Bar* (p127).

WAFI GOURMET Map pp64–5 Food
☎ 324 4555; Wafi City Mall, Al-Qataiyat Rd, near Al-Garhoud Bridge; ☎ 10am-10pm

Dubai's best Arabian deli counter brims with juicy olives, pickles, peppers and cheeses, velvety hummus, *muttabal* and tabouleh, and crispy Lebanese pastries. This is the place to pack a picnic in the cooler months: assemble a mezze plate and head to the Creek. Any of the packaged foods make great gifts, but particularly good to take home are the dried fruits and baklava, which both keep well for several months.

WHISTLES Map pp62–3 Boutique
☎ 351 5070; BurJuman Centre; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

An antidote to Dubai's overly glam-focused shopping scene, Whistles carries smart, understatedly sexy women's wear – think outfits for a girls' night on the town.

SHEIKH ZAYED ROAD

AZZA FAHMY JEWELLERY
Map pp72–3 Jewellery
☎ 330 0346; Blvd at Emirates Towers, Sheikh Zayed Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

Egyptian Azza Fahmy crafts jewellery inlaid with precious gemstones and fine calligraphy of classical Arabic poetry and spiritual

sayings that express core values of Islam. Even if you're not a believer, there's no disputing the elegant simplicity and beauty of these unique pieces.

BOULEVARD AT EMIRATES TOWERS
Map pp72–3 Shopping Centre
☎ 330 0000, 319 8999; Sheikh Zayed Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

If you feel like you're being watched, you are. Emirates Towers is the location of Sheikh Mohammed's office, and the secret police are everywhere. Dress appropriately and keep your voice down as you window-shop exclusive designer boutiques like Bulgari, Cartier, Zegna, Armani, Gucci, Jimmy Choo, Pucci and the fabulous *Boutique 1* (below). Don't miss the wearable art of *Azza Fahmy Jewellery* (opposite). At day's end, sip chardonnay at *Agency* (p127), sing karaoke at *Harry Ghattos* (p128), and refuel at the ever-popular *Noodle House* (p117).

BOUTIQUE 1 Map pp72–3 Designerwear
☎ 330 4555; Blvd at Emirates Towers; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 4-10pm Fri

Ground zero for prêt-à-porter straight off the runways of Paris and Milan, Boutique 1 is the pinnacle of Dubai's fashion scene with designers like Missoni and Yves St Laurent. If you're a fashionista but don't want to drop Dh10,000 on a new outfit, pop in for a preview of next season's new looks, go home and recast them using thrift-shop finds, and you may find yourself featured in the *New York Times* 'On the Street' fashion page.

EMILIO PUCCI Map pp72–3 Designerwear
☎ 330 0660; Blvd at Emirates Towers, Sheikh Zayed Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

Emilio may be dead, but the signature swirly, colour-saturated paisleys he made famous in the 1960s live on. The tailoring is exquisite, the fabric's drape elegant and the psychedelic prints acid-trip ready.

TAX-FREE DUBAI: WHAT IT MEANS

When people talk about Dubai being tax-free, they're referring to personal income tax on wages. There are however import duties. Recently there's been talk of creating a consumer tax, but as of this writing there was still none. Does this mean that a new Donna Karan suit will cost less here than in Milan, New York, or London? Not necessarily. If you're shopping for mid- and low-cost goods, depending on your home currency, you may not see much difference. But you will on luxury goods and cars. If you're in the market for, say, a new Rolex, you'll save a bundle in Dubai. Otherwise don't be lulled by the tax-free promise. Find what you want at home, then price it in Dubai. You may pay more in overweight-luggage charges than you wind up saving in the first place. Caveat emptor.

GOLD & DIAMOND PARK
Map pp72–3 Jewellery

☎ 347 7788; Sheikh Zayed Rd, near Interchange No 4; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 4-10pm Fri

A cooler alternative to the Gold Souq in the hot summer months, the air-conditioned Gold and Diamond Park houses over 30 retailers and 120 manufacturers in a traditional Arabian-style building, and there's a lovely café. Too bad it's in the middle of nowhere. Plan to bargain.

ORGANIC FOODS & CAFÉ Map pp62–3 Food
☎ 398 9410; Al-Mankhool Rd, near Satwa Roundabout, Satwa; ☎ 8am-10pm

Despite the massive amounts of jet fuel required to ship them in, the fruits and veggies are 100% organic at Dubai's first natural supermarket, providing a refreshing, much-needed alternative to the flavourless produce sold elsewhere and in restaurants. Also on offer are an onsite bakery, fresh-roasted coffee and an extensive selection of gluten-free products you won't find anywhere else in town.

JUMEIRAH

BLUE CACTUS Map pp76–7 Boutique
☎ 344 7734; Jumeirah Centre; ☎ 10am-9pm Sat-Thu, 4.30-9pm Fri

The buyer is from Mexico at this upstairs boutique, and boy, does she have an eye for brilliant colour and sexy lines. The va-va-voom fashions are mostly American, and range from sleek long dresses with gorgeous drapings to sassy separates that look hot on a dance floor. NB: the downstairs shop carries cool Mexican silver jewellery.

CAMEL COMPANY
Map pp76–7 Handicrafts & Souvenirs
☎ 368 6048; Souq Madinat Jumeirah, Al-Sufouh Rd, Jumeirah; ☎ 10am-11pm

If you can slap a camel on it, Camel Company has it. This hands-down best spot for camel souvenirs carries plush stuffed camels that sing when you squeeze them, camels in Hawaiian shirts, on T-shirts, coffee cups, mouse-pads, notebooks, greeting cards and of course fridge magnets.

FLEURT Map pp76-7 Boutique

☎ 342 0906; Mercato Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Thu-Sat, 2-10pm Fri

Comb the racks for funky-smart fashions by Betsey Johnson and Soul Revival, among other progressives. The collection is refreshingly offbeat, with spangles and sequins, curve-hugging lines, and cheeky party frocks.

GALLERY ONE FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHS Map pp76-7 Souvenirs

☎ 368 6055; Souq Madinat Jumeirah; ☎ 10am-11pm

For an arty souvenir, consider a colourful Arabian abstract image, pop-art screen print (say, maybe a camel-crossing road sign), or a black-and-white photograph of Dubai's bustling Creek scene or famous wind-towers. The problem will be choosing which you like best.

LATA'S Map pp76-7 Souvenirs

☎ 368 6216; Souq Madinat Jumeirah; ☎ 10am-11pm

Our favourite one-stop shop for Arabian and Middle Eastern souvenirs, such as Moroccan lamps, brass coffee tables, *khanjars*, and silver prayer holders. It also stocks some fabulous silver jewellery, and some not-so-fabulous costume pieces. Tell the staff what you're after, and they'll steer you right.

LE STOCK Map pp76-7 Boutique

☎ 342 0211; Jumeirah Plaza; ☎ 10am-9pm If you're not above wearing last season's fashions, hit this clearinghouse for overstock from Le Stock's main branch (*Wafi City Mall*, p98). Look for designer gear by the likes of Tata-Naka, Juicy Couture and Willow – all marked down 50% to 90%.

MERCATO MALL Map pp76-7 Shopping Centre

☎ 344 4161; Jumeirah Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Thu, 2-10pm Fri

At first glance Mercato looks like a European train station with an arched glass

CAMEL CRAZY

Here are our top five camel gifts:

- Stuffed camels that play Arabic music when cuddled.
- *Camelspotting* CD – cool Mid East music.
- Julia Johnston's *Camel-o-shy* kids books.
- A camel road-crossing-sign fridge magnet.
- Eye-poppingly intricate camel-patterned cushion covers.

ceiling. A closer look reveals fake façades of *palazzos* and soaring murals of Venice, leaving you wondering, why? (Ah, Dubai.) Still it's fun to wander between the brick colonnades, and the compact size makes shopping here easy. The mall offers a good selection of stylish boutiques like *Fleurt* (left), a small Topshop, a Virgin Megastore, and some interesting carpet and curio shops. The taxi line is a nightmare at peak periods; expect to wait.

TEHRAN PERSIAN CARPET HOUSE & ANTIQUES Map pp76-7 Carpets

☎ 345 6687; Mercato Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Thu-Sat, 2-10pm Fri

The largest carpet retailer in the country, Tehran carries a big selection of handmade Persian carpets and Oriental rugs from Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Kashmir. The antiques selection, though small, includes some cool old gramophones, radios and telephones. There's a bigger branch, called Persian Carpet House, on Sheikh Zayed Rd in the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

S*UCE Map pp76-7 Boutique

☎ 344 7270; Village Mall, Jumeirah Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Thu-Sat, 4.30-10pm Fri

S*uce was the first of an increasing number of eclectic, independently owned boutiques in Dubai. Loyal customers flock here for idiosyncratic women's fashion – think skirts trimmed with ribbons and pompons, and bubblegum mini-kaftans – from Nicola Finetti, Third Millenium, Tata-Naka, Sass and Bide, Ashish and local designer Essa. Check out the quirky accessories – funky beads, baubles and crocheted flowers on chains.

SHOWCASE ANTIQUES, ART & FRAMES Map pp76-7 Art & Antiques

☎ 348 8797; Jumeirah Rd, Umm Suqeim; ☎ 9am-8pm Sat-Thu

Browse this three-storey Jumeirah villa for antique *khanjars*, firearms, Arabian coffee pots, Bedouin jewellery and costumes. It's one of few places in Dubai to carry quality collectables and antiques, with certificates of authenticity to back them up.

SOUQ MADINAT JUMEIRAH

Map pp76-7 Shopping Centre

☎ 348 8797; Madinat Jumeirah; ☎ 10am-11pm

The ersatz Arabian architecture with its arched wooden ceilings feel very Disneyesque, but it's entirely worth a look to see how the enormous Madinat Jumeirah fits together. Outside, *abras* float by on man-made canals; dozens of al fresco bars and restaurants overlook the scene. The floorplan is intentionally confusing: the PR people say it's to recreate a real souq, but others think it's to keep you trapped and lull you into emptying your wallet at the overpriced shops. It's chaotic on a weekend night; stay away if you don't like crowds.

NEW DUBAI

AIZONE Map pp82-3 Boutique

☎ 347 9333; Mall of the Emirates; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat

Lose yourself for hours in this enormous Lebanese fashion emporium, with hard-to-find labels and snappy drag for twirling on the dance floor. Prices skew high, but wow, what a collection.

AL-JABER GALLERY

Map pp82-3 Handicrafts & Souvenirs

☎ 341 4103; Mall of the Emirates; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat

Look past the tacky souvenirs to find some quality handicrafts, including colourfully embroidered Indian tapestries spangled with beads and cool hand-of-Fatima mirrors. If you're intrigued by the idea of henna tattoos, pick up a starter kit here and design your own.

CHARLES & KEITH Map pp82-3 Shoes

☎ 341 0408; Mall of the Emirates; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat

Just this side of a discount show boutique, Charles & Keith is a refreshing change from ubiquitous Prada. The girly collection of shoes ranges from easy-wear clogs to strappy sandals ideal for Dubai's heat.

FIDEL Map pp82-3 Boutique

☎ 368 5600; Ibn Battuta Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Tue, 10am-midnight Wed-Fri

Fidel's minimalist flagship Dubai store stocks little else but funky Kid T-shirts, t-shirts, hoodies and club-kid sneakers. The look is very back-to-school in the OC. If you're over 30, you may feel old.

FOREVER 21 Map pp82-3 Boutique

☎ 341 3412; Mall of the Emirates; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat

Cutting in on H&M for affordable style and selection, this is one of Dubai's largest stores, with a big range of youthful, affordable fashion and accessories.

GINGER & LACE Map pp82-3 Boutique

☎ 368 5109; Ibn Battuta Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Tue, 10am-midnight Wed-Fri

Ginger & Lace stocks an eclectic selection of colourful, whimsical fashion by high-spirited New York designers Anna Sui and Betsey Johnson; German-bred Ingwa; Melero – love those sexy halter-top dresses; Tibi for Capri-style chic; Indian cult-label Ananya for signature bejewelled kaftans – a favourite of Madonna; and Australian brands Wheels and Doll Baby for the closest to rocker-bitch drag you'll find in Dubai. There's another at Wafi City.

IBN BATTUTA MALL

Map pp82-3 Shopping Centre

☎ 362 1900; Sheikh Zayed Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Tue, 10am-midnight Wed-Fri

The 14th-century Arab scholar Ibn Battuta travelled 75,000 miles over 30 years. You'll have a better idea how he felt after trekking from one end of this behemoth mall to the other. The architectural theme and decorative elements reflect his trip from China to Andalusia; look for a full-size Chinese junk and a fabulous Persian tiled dome. If you're too exhausted to walk back, hop on the golf-cart shuttle (Dh5). Our hands-down fave shop? *Mumbai Se* (p102). The food courts could be better, but you won't go hungry.

MALL OF THE EMIRATES

Map pp82-3 Shopping Centre

☎ 409 9000; Sheikh Zayed Rd; ☎ 10am-midnight

The most popular mall in Dubai – and formerly the biggest – sprawls with acres of polished white marble. The curiosity of *Ski*

Dubai (p142) is a major draw, as are the remarkably good food court and Dubai's best cinema, **Gold Class** (p135). The major drawback is crowds at peak periods. Along with the usual brands, there's also a Harvey Nichols and a great big Borders with an awesome selection of travel books (be nice and they may show you the banned-book list).

MUMBAI SE Map pp82-3 **Boutique**
☎ 366 9855; Ibn Battuta Mall; ☎ 10am-10pm Sat-Tue, 10am-midnight Wed-Fri

Star in your own Bollywood movie with Mumbai Se's cool Indian-inspired collection. Styles combine contemporary elements with classic designs, like kaftans adorned with Indian beading and seashell trim, bejewelled mandarin tunics, and tiny handcrafted bags embellished with semiprecious stones, spiritual emblems, and engravings.

PIXI Map pp82-3 **Cosmetics**
☎ 341 3833; Mall of the Emirates, Sheikh Zayed Rd, New Dubai; ☎ 10am-midnight

This Swedish make-up and skincare line offers sublime cosmetics and beauty products. Try the honey-almond polish, beauty serum with evening primrose, cucumber-juice toner or the quick-fix mask, a five-minute revival treatment after a night on the town.

RECTANGLE JAUNE Map pp82-3 **Men's Clothing**
☎ 341 0288; Mall of the Emirates; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu-Sat

Finally a store for men, with a terrific selection of dress shirts in snappy stripes and bold patterns by a Lebanese team of fashion-savvy designers. This is the only branch outside Lebanon.

OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS

CONVERSE Map p52 **Shoes**
☎ 232 5906; Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

Stock up on canvas All-Stars in a full palette of colours. Who cares if there's no

arch support when your sneakers just look so cool?

DUBAI FESTIVAL CITY **Shopping Centre**
Map p52
☎ 213 6213; Dubai Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

Billed as an 'urban retail resort', Festival City is so massive that you half expect to see a 747 parked outside. It encompasses a whopping 2.8 million sq ft and includes 600 stores – 25 of them 'anchor stores' – 100 restaurants and cafés, outdoor performance spaces, and three enormous hotels, including an InterContinental and a new Four Seasons golf resort. While the manmade canals and *abra* rides are cute, the real showstopper is the origami-inspired cubist fountain that doubles as a grand staircase. Wear sensible shoes – you're gonna need 'em.

MARC BY MARC JACOBS Map p52 **Boutique**
☎ 232 6118; Dubai Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

The famous designer's diffusion line features downscaled, democratised sportswear by the reigning king of prêt-à-porter. But it ain't cheap: a T-shirt may set you back Dh700.

PAUL & JOE Map p52 **Boutique**
☎ 232 6898; Dubai Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

Named for the proprietor's sons, Paul & Joe's French clothing is playfully post-modern – think coat dresses and flouncy peasant blouses – and a welcome change from standard mall fashions.

TOYS-R-US Map p52 **Toys**
☎ 206 6552; Dubai Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

You won't believe the size of this warehouse-like toy store. But the best reason to come is to see the Burj Al Arab built entirely of Lego.

VINTAGE 55 Map p52 **Boutique**
☎ 232 6616; Dubai Festival City; ☎ 10am-10pm

Dress like dead celebrities in replicas of clothing they made famous. Vintage 55 creates limited-edition sets of drag worn by the likes of Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. Love those vintage Nikes.

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