



Ask-Ali?
You ask and I'll answer

ADTA goes Down Under

Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) has opened a representation office in Sydney, Australia to build awareness among the country's increasing number of overseas travellers.

ADTA's representative office network already includes the UK, Germany and France – and is set to expand to China and Italy by the end of this year as it builds international awareness of its standing as a world-class tourism destination.

"The decision to open this office reflects the growing air traffic from Australia to the UAE, with our national carrier, Etihad Airways planning to increase its services from Sydney to Abu Dhabi from seven to 11 weekly flights from November this year," says HE Mubarak Al Muhairi, director general, ADTA.

"Abu Dhabi is very much a new proposition for travellers from Australia but one which we believe has much to entice a people noted for



Above: Sydney Opera House, Australia

their love of nature, adventure and the great outdoors," he adds.

"This emirate's great natural assets – desert landscapes, warm, clean seas, picturesque oases and stunning islands – are attractions which will resonate well with the Australian adventurer."

Al Ain blueprint

The desert oasis of Al Ain looks set to become the latest region in the emirate of Abu Dhabi to be redeveloped. While exact plans are due to be revealed soon, it is thought the blueprint will feature guidelines on how Al Ain's infrastructure should be improved while preserving the unique character of the city. Known as 'the garden city', Al Ain is one of the main date producing areas in the region and is home to lush oases and numerous historical forts.



Al Jahli Fort,
Al Ain

If you are a visitor in the UAE during Ramadan, what cultural considerations should you bear in mind?

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU ACT

normally. Don't feel ashamed if you're thirsty and need to drink water during daylight hours - we won't be offended. We appreciate it though when non-Muslims refrain from eating, drinking and smoking in front of us. It's a matter of being ethical, that's all. Don't assume there is a rule or a law that will land you in jail if we see you eating or drinking (however being overly amorous in a public place will do).

Also, remember that what you wear during Ramadan is as important as any other month in our daily life in the UAE. Wearing modest attire means covering your body but does not necessarily mean wearing an *abaya* (the black robe that many local women wear). Modesty means covering your chest, wearing longer skirts for women and avoiding clingy, tight clothing.

You're likely to see fewer people around during the daylight hours of Ramadan as everything shifts to the nighttime. In the evening you'll often see residents gathering in hotels, restaurants and shopping malls. You're also likely to notice the big Arabian tents that are set up in hotels and large venues such as shopping malls, where many friends and families spend their evening. In these tents you can smoke *shisha* (hubbly bubbly) and sample traditional Ramadan food and beverages.

Happy Ramadan or as we say in Arabic, *Ramadan Kareem*.

Ali Alsloom is the founder of www.ask-ali.com, an online portal for asking questions relating to many aspects of life in the UAE.