

AN ENRICHING GUIDE TO THE EMIRATI TRADITIONS

“What makes us proud is not the height of our buildings, but rather the openness and tolerance of our nation.”

Sheikh Mohammed truly summarised the essence of United Arab Emirates and of its people. Home to the world’s tallest building, UAE holds its head high in fascinating the world with its engraved and prosperous culture and traditions carried out since generations with utmost respect:



Traditional Clothing of UAE

The clothing since the beginning of the development of these lands had loose silhouettes keeping in mind the weather conditions and warm winds.

Traditional Clothing for Women

Usually seen in black fabrics, Emirati women have many elements in their traditional attire. Each element not only have their own functionality but also religious and traditional significance:

Abaya: An *Abaya* is a loose garment worn over clothes like a robe. The Abaya covers the female from head to toe. It is the women’s choice to wear what she likes underneath the Abaya.

Shayla: *Shayla* is a cloth wrapped around the head, covering the shoulders. The fabric is light and see-through. However, draping it over the head makes it opaque enough to cover the head.

Covering hair is a common religious belief amongst the Emiratis and is followed respectfully by almost all women belonging to UAE.

Burqa: A face mask worn underneath the Hijab is the *Burqa*. This eases breathing, blocking the blowing hot winds. A burqa covers the nose and the cheek area, which is the first to come in contact to the sun. Thus, it also helps in preventing sunburns on the skin.

Niqab: A small garment covering the face of the woman is also worn called *Niqab*, which saves her from the dust and the heat. However, wearing a niqab is completely the woman's decision, and is not a compulsion.

Traditional Clothing for Men

Kandura: Similar to the Abaya, Kandura is a stitched to fit gown for men made out of cotton fabric.

Guthrah: A scarf-like cloth covering the head from the heat, a *Guthrah* is a clothing item of political importance. A government official wears a Guthrah dyed red and white, often in a check design, while a common citizen is supposed to wear a plain white one.

Although this isn't an obligation today, the colour of the Guthrah helped in distinguishing the authorities from the commoners in earlier days.

Headgears: Youngsters wear the headgears in a rather sporty fashion, the drape being called *Handaniyah*. The traditional headgear is known as *Agal*, which is made out of sheep and goats wool. The headgear keeps the Guthrah at its designated place.



Image courtesy: Google

Speciality Clothing:

Taqiyah: This anti-slip hat is specially worn during prayers conducted by the Emiratis on Fridays.

Tarboosh: At first, this looks like a rope used as a tie. However, the Tarboosh has its own enriching history.

Men were majorly involved in the earl trade and business, and thus had to travel long distances. Females of the house dipped the tarboosh into a scent familiar and important to the family. Not being home for months on end, the tarboosh acted as a cure for homesickness though the sense of smell.

Food of the Emiratis

Celebration and food go hand in hand for Emiratis. Famous for its spicy taste, Emirati food mimics its regional differences as well. Some famous dishes of the UAE are:

Fattoush

Starting it with the impeccable salad, *Fattoush* is a traditional vegan one. Fresh lettuce, diced tomatoes, cucumbers and onions topped with mint leaves, lemon juice and olive oil makes it a tangy delight.



Image courtesy: jcooks

Khuzi

Also written as *Ghuzi*, this is the National Dish of United Arab Emirates. A Khuzi is usually served as the main course dish.



Image courtesy: gultakeout

A complete dish in itself, Khuzi is filling and a one-pot dish. Roasted lamb or mutton is placed on a bed of rice, topped with vegetables and assorted nuts. A pure balance of the entire nutrients required, Khuzi is an all-time favourite of ever Emirati.

Balaleat



Image courtesy: Pinterest, eatyourworld.com

The sweetness of the Emirates is perfectly depicted in the *Balaleat*. Having the perfect combination of sweet and saltiness, the Balaleat is a breakfast as well as a dessert to the Emiratis. Vermicelli and eggs are the main ingredients used to create this guilt-free indulgence.

Dance and Music

Dances of the desert lands are highly influenced by trade and business with foreign lands. Intermingling of cultures is an important factor when it comes to the origin of Emirati Dances:

Liwa: A dance meant to be performed during wedding processions, Liwa is a dance form brought by African traders when they came for trading purposes to Arab.

Mizmar: Mizmar is a dance form which is incomplete without its music. A percussion instrument resembling a flute, along with three drums (*Jabwah*, *Shindo* and *Jasser*) is used to create melodies.

Mated: Performed specifically for religious purposes, the word Mated originates from 'Mawlid' meaning 'Birthday of the Prophet', which traces back to the era of Sufis.

Nuban: A dance done to eradicate the presence of jinn, Nuban relates to the practices of exorcism. Religious verses are chanted while performing the gestures of Nuban as well.

Sports of the Emiratis

Camel Racing

A traditional sport of the Emiratis, this race ranges from 4 to 10kms long and is conducted usually in the mornings and evenings.

Two types of camels: *Omani* and *Sudania*, are used for the race. These camels mainly differ in colour. Currently replaced by robots, traditionally underage boys were used as human jockeys for the races.

Falconry



Image courtesy: Google, euronews

This 2000 years old sport requires patience and perseverance in training the falcon and enhancing its skills as well. Originally enjoyed as a sport only by the rich Sheikhs, Falconry continues to be a famous sport of the UAE.

Dhow Sailing

Earlier use for fishing, dhow is a wooden boat now used as a memoir of the trading times. Annually, dhow sailing competitions are held in winters in remembrance of the pearl traders.

Having a brief knowledge about the traditions of the lands one is going to visit makes the travel ever more exciting and a great memory for a lifetime. With Unite Arab Emirates, one remembers to respect their traditions and to never let go of their cultural values.