

RETAIL THERAPY



In a city buzzing with life, you can shop almost 24 hours a day and buy everything and anything from Oriental carpets to tropical fruits, gold and jewellery, gifts and handcrafted souvenirs, designer fashions, delicious Middle Eastern sweets, the latest in electronics and so much more.

Sharjah offers something for everyone in its myriad of shopping malls, department stores, stylish boutiques and outlet shops, traditional souqs, markets and bazaars. The selection is staggering and prices are competitive so come, shop, spend and soak up the atmosphere - you won't be disappointed and you'll be back for more!

Shopping in the UAE is tax-free so retail prices tend to be reasonable for both brand name products and handicrafts sold in the souqs. Prices are fixed in malls and department stores, but bargaining is a time-honoured tradition in the souqs. As a rule all major credit cards and US dollars are accepted. Smaller traders may only take cash.

Whether you are looking for an exotic fragrance, a piece of furniture, the latest digital camera, a gold necklace or a diamond ring the choice is impressive so shop around for the right shape, size, colour and price.

Shopping areas are spread out and varied. Al Nadha District to Al Khan is an expanding shopping and entertainment destination with Al Taawun Mall, Ansar Mall, Safer Mall and Sahara Centre. Qanat Al Qasba, alongside the canal is a growing community with a vibrant atmosphere combining trendy restaurants and cafés with open air terraces, boutiques and cultural events. Al Buheirah Corniche is known for the famous Central Souq, coffee shops overlooking the panoramic Khaled Lagoon and Al Fardan Centre and Crystal Plaza shopping centres. Further along the Creek you will find the traditional shopping areas of Souq Al Arsah and Souq Al Bahar. Al Wahda Road, 'The High Street' of Sharjah, has Sharjah City Centre mall, shoe shops, boutiques, department stores, large furniture showrooms, car showrooms and popular family restaurants and fast food outlets. King Faisal Road offers banks, fast food outlets, supermarkets, furniture showrooms, stationers, outlet stores and Emax Big Box, one of the largest electronics stores in the UAE.

King Abdul Aziz Road is a popular destination for showrooms selling furniture, household items and children's clothes. Mobile phone shops are dotted around Al Estiqlal Square and Jamal Abdel Nasser Street and in Abu Shagara, Sharjah Mega Mall provides shopping thrills for 'fashionistas', family entertainment and food courts. Explore Al Arouba Road and Al Ghuwair, an interesting and busy area with the Rolla Gold Centre, Rolla Mall, Lulu Centre and a variety of outlets selling reasonably priced household appliances, electrical goods and hardware items.

Several shopping festivals and fairs are organised during the Holy Month of Ramadan and along with the Spring and Summer Promotions you can find fantastic discounts and good bargains throughout the year.

Spread around town, the ultra-modern shopping malls offer cool, safe and convenient shopping bursting with activity and the latest in-house entertainment, all year round.

Shoppers will find a wide range of international designer labels to regional and local brand stores, boutiques, state-of-the-art electronics, computer goods and home appliances, toyshops, bookshops, furniture and household products, as well as supermarkets. The malls are also a great family destination with international food courts, restaurants, cafés and coffee shops, children's entertainment centres, promotions, recreational activities and cinemas. All the malls have ample parking for the convenience of customers and taxis are readily available at the main entrances. Malls are open daily from 10 am to 10 pm, or later at the weekends and on Fridays from 2 pm till late.

Enter the leading and largest shopping malls and find select family shopping and indoor leisure activities set within spacious comfortable surroundings. Shop till you drop in Sahara Centre, Sharjah City Centre, Sharjah Mega Mall, and Safer Mall as well as in the established smaller malls and centres like Al Fardan Centre, Al Taawun, Ansar Mall, Crystal Plaza, and Sarah Shopping Centre.

New stores and attractions open all the time keeping customers, visitors and bargain hunters on their toes and endlessly spoil for choice.

Popular stand alone department stores with plenty more purchasing opportunities are Adidas Factory Outlet, Al Falah Plaza, Avenue, Al Maya Lals – Bhs Centre, E-Max Big Box, Home Centre, Homes R Us, Pan Emirates Furniture, Jamil Fashions, Lulu Centre, Max Retail, Mona Lisa, Rolla Market, Sana Fashions, Tanagra & Allied Factory Outlet, The Baby Shop and countless others.

Loose yourself in the traditional souqs: a cultural and shopping experience not to be missed.



Above Sharjah City Centre
Right Sahara Centre

Come and be captivated by the contrasts, colours and aromas to be found in Sharjah's traditional souqs and bazaars. Renovated in the traditional style, combining the comforts of modern life with the old custom of Arabic hospitality, they create the ultimate retail thrill for sightseers, shoppers and photographers alike.

Souqs, boutiques and department stores are open in the morning from 9.30/10 am to 1 pm and in the afternoon from 4.30 pm to 9/10 pm sometimes even later. Although the prices can vary according to the quality, bargaining is recommended.

Central Souq (Souq Al Markazi), Khaled Lagoon Constructed in 1979, the Central Souq also known as the Blue Souq is the most famous market in Sharjah and is a definite shopping destination for all visitors to the Emirates. Discover an extraordinary collection of handicrafts, brilliant in colours and magnetic in appeal. Delve into a maze of more than 600 exciting shops split between two levels with spacious corridors that take you from store to store to uncover unusual treasures and the latest bargains. You will find a mixture of shops selling almost anything from gold, silver, Bedouin jewellery, precious stones, beautiful modern and ethnic jewellery to Oriental carpets and rugs; arts, crafts and curios; music CDs; attractive ornaments; cameras & other photographic material; models of traditional Arab dhows in silver and brass; Indian, Pakistani, Indonesian and African hand-carved furniture and products; perfumes and cosmetics; textiles, bridal items, beaded bags, Rajasthan embroideries, shawls and pashminas in brilliant colours; embroidered Syrian table cloths; throws and colourful patchwork bed covers; handbags; new crafts; leather jackets; antiques and pseudo antiques; candelabras and

lanterns; brass and copper trays in all sizes and much more. After you have spent all your money and bought an extra suitcase, relax and enjoy a snack or sip a freshly squeezed fruit juice in the cafés followed by a walk around the panoramic Khaled Lagoon.

Gold Centre, Intersection of Al Wahda & Al Qassimi Roads The Gold Centre is a local shopping landmark. It unites the best of the gold shops in the country for selection, design and standard. You will find all kinds of high quality jewellery as well as made-to-order platinum jewellery, gold coins, watches and precious stones.

Souq Al Arsah, Corniche Road *Arsah* means a large open space. This is probably the oldest market place in the UAE and was the meeting place for the Bedouins and their camels in the old days. Charcoal from the desert was traded here for rice and materials brought by the seafaring merchants of Iran and India. Set in the Heritage Area, it is today an enclave of serenity. Step back in time and visit the peaceful air-conditioned alleyways of the covered market designed with solid wooden doors, beautiful coral brick walls and hanging lanterns. The shopkeepers are friendly, helpful and more than happy to relate stories about their particular craft or business whilst sharing a glass of *suleimani* tea (spicy tea with a delicious sweet flavour). The souq offers a number of small stores selling local, new and antique handicrafts, wooden Arabic bridal and pearl chests, copper coffee pots, ethnic and hand-made jewellery, perfume bottles and incense, hand made woven garments, palm-leaf baskets, medicinal herbs, carpets, shawls and novelties. The retailers and their assistants rely on the tourist trade so don't be offended if they follow you around; they are keen to welcome, to serve and to sell!

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Souq Al Bahar, along the Creek This authentic old bazaar also known as Souq Mohammed bin Saqr, runs parallel to the creek and traded in clothes and gold in the past. Stroll amid the hustle and bustle along the waterfront, admiring the moored dhows laden with goods destined for Iran, Pakistan and India. Explore the shops offering an assortment of products: spices and herbs, henna, clothes and textiles, *abayas* (black local dresses), *serwals* (loose trousers) with embroidered anklets, textile shops, perfumes and oils, frankincense and incense burners, spices and fragrances, palm leaf baskets, metal trunks, *sheesha* (water pipes) and flavoured tobaccos. This area is also particularly photogenic and ideal for those in search of an authentic ambience.

Even if you don't want to make a purchase, the souqs specialising in vegetables and fish are well worth a visit to view the enormous selection of produce and to enjoy the atmosphere of the bustling marketplace.

Fish Souq Visit this lively souq and discover a variety of fish caught in Gulf waters: Hamour (similar to Cod), Hamra (red snapper), Zubeidi (Pomfret), Jodar (Tuna), Sigalees (similar to Crayfish), prawns and even shark are some of the varieties on offer. It is a 'must visit' destination for cooks, shoppers and photographers. Fresh fish from Gulf waters are landed in the early morning and late at night. The fish souq is busiest at the weekends and on public holidays.

Fruit & Vegetable Souq An explosion of colour awaits you! Fruit and vegetables are both imported and home grown. Wander through the nearby Plant & Pot Souq bursting with an extensive array of outdoor and indoor plants and look out for the round clay moneyboxes, a fun gift for children.

THINGS TO BUY

1001 Fabrics From exclusive beaded material, heavy lace, the finest saris and silks to any 'designer' fabrics, there is a treasure trove of high quality textiles from all over the world, available in various designs and colours and sold at reasonable prices. Material shops worth investigating can be found alongside the Creek, Rolla Square, in the Central Souq as well as in all the shopping centres and in Souq Al Soor textile centre opposite King Faisal Mosque.

Carpets, Kilims & Rugs Sharjah's Central Souq is the place to visit. It has one of the best selections in the UAE of ancient and modern oriental carpets, kilims, carpetbags and cotton dhurries. The carpets come in all sorts of colours, materials and weaves from Afghanistan, India, Iran, Kashmir, Pakistan, Turkey and anywhere between Central Asia and China.

Clothes, Shoes & Accessories The malls are overflowing with designer stores selling the trendiest looks and labels from around the world, casual attire as well as smart, shoes, bags and accessories, at prices to suit all tastes and budgets. There



The city's shopping centres and souqs offer private prayer areas, entertainment and play centres for children, money changers and a choice of eating outlets.



Central Souq

are many garment and textile outlets in the souqs, as well as a variety of sports shops. A wide selection of *abayas* (traditional woman's black robe), *dishdashas* (traditional man's shirt-dress), headgear, scarves and interesting embroidered dresses are also readily available, especially along the creek, in Sarah Shopping Centre and Souq Al Bahar Bazaar.

Electronic Goods, Computers, Cameras & Household Appliances You can find just about everything in Sharjah that plugs in and plays. Computer products and electronics are generally good value. Shops are stacked ceiling-high with the newest attractions from the world's leading manufacturers. Whatever it is you are looking for - from the latest i-pods to cameras and television sets - the chances are you will find the right product to suit your needs. Don't miss Emax Big Box with over 300 brands of consumer electronics and home appliances.

Embroidered Treasures These traditional skills are still practised amongst the national women. Various forms of sewing are used for dress decoration and date palm fibres are woven to produce mats, baskets, bags and bowls. Such crafts are sold in Souq Al Arsah, in the Islamic Handicrafts Centre and in the surrounding areas of Souq Al Bahar along the creek.

Ethnic Jewellery A fabulous range of intricate fashionable Indian, Nepalese, Thai and Afghani silver and semi-precious jewellery, amber and coral necklaces, rings, earrings, bracelets and belts can be found in the souqs. Traditional, genuine Bedouin silver jewellery mainly from Oman and Yemen is available, but becoming harder to find.

Exotic Aromas In the souqs, shopping malls and department stores you will find an enticing choice of perfumes, oils and fragrances from around the world and an array of traditional Arabian incense, hand-blown glass perfume bottles and atomisers. Explore the area between Al Boorj Avenue and the Arts Square, the nearby Iranian Bazaar and the Central Souq. Ideal presents to take home, the souqs and bazaars sell the wooden incense chips and burners made of clay and metal.

Bukhoor is the name given to woodchips soaked in fragrant oils using various ingredients such as rosewater, sandalwood, sugar, ambergris, frankincense or myrrh; these chips are burned in incense burners to perfume the home and clothing on special occasions like weddings or on Fridays. *Mabkhara* is the traditional incense burner made from clay, porcelain or silver. *Maamool* is a lighter, fragrant incense, which is used to scent one's home or linens. *Oudh* is a very expensive musky-smelling wood, usually imported from Cambodia, India and Malaysia. The wood is either burnt or the oil extracted and used for incense.

Gourmet Delights The choice is tempting and very Middle Eastern - spices from the Orient are sold in the souqs, dates from Saudi Arabia, chocolates from Lebanon, sweets and nuts from Iran and genuine Arabic coffee. One of the greatest pleasures is the perfect packaging making even a modest purchase look regal.





Fun Stuff Inexpensive and interesting items like fridge magnets, brass camels, silver key rings, flags, sequined and gilded outfits, fossils, seashells, exquisite slippers, old stamps and coins, decorative tissue box covers, stickers and T-shirts can be bought in all the souqs and in the greeting card shops found in the larger malls.

Gold, Silver & Precious Stones The variety is dazzling, the temptation irresistible and the rates competitive. You will find goldsmiths and all kinds of exquisite jewellery in every conceivable design and purity from 18, 21 to 22 and even 24 karat in the Gold Centre, Rolla Gold Market and the gold shops of the Central Souq. Precious gems and pearls are also available. Check the gold prices in the local press before making a purchase.

Handicrafts Visit the Central Souq and Souq Al Arsah, where the handicrafts are varied, beautiful and interesting. These 'antiquities' and their reproductions make popular gifts and come from all over the Middle East, Africa, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Far East. Local ethnic items include hand-beaten copper *dallahs* (coffee pots), silver, brass and wooden Arab *dhow*s (traditional sailing vessels), ornamental silver *khanjars* (daggers) mostly from Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman, 'old' rifles, miniature wood or leather camels, frames with silver items representing symbols of the Emirates or the seven sands of the UAE, beautiful lanterns from Turkey, intricate jewellery boxes, silver ornaments, *misbahahs* (prayer beads), inlaid rosewood items and chess and backgammon boards.

Herbs & Spices Explore the old hessian sacks found in the souqs brimming over with every kind of shape, size and

colour of fresh and dried spices, herbs and pulses. Paid for by the weight you can purchase small quantities of *loumi* (dried lime), rose petals, saffron (considered to be the most expensive spice in the world), cinnamon sticks, cardamom, dried garlic and chilli powder, red beans, brown lentils, fresh cloves, turmeric, rosewater and orange blossom water and other exotic ingredients.

Linens Embroidered cotton and silk tablecloths from Damascus, Asian tapestries, table runners, beaded curtains, cushions and bedspreads are widely found in the Central Souq. At bargain prices, they add a touch of luxury to all interiors. Modern throws can be found in the malls.

Toys & Children's Games The largest choice is found in the malls. In Sahara Centre Toys-R-us caters to all children and the young at heart.

Unlimited Shawls Beaded, plain, checked, striped, shaded or embroidered, these popular shawls are for sale in the Central Souq and Souq Al Arsah, in a wide range of colours and weights, to suit all seasons and all occasions.

Worry Beads *Misbaha* is the Arabic name for a string of prayer beads which many Muslims carry around daily, wrapped around their wrist. They are made from a variety of materials ranging from exotic hardwoods, mother-of-pearl, amber, coral, plastic, glass to semi-precious stones but always either 33 or 99 in number.

Watches All sorts, sizes and shapes of watches are on sale in the malls and the souqs. The variety is infinite and the prices are good.

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