


The Telegraph

ultratrade

YOUR GUIDE TO HEAVEN ON EARTH SUMMER 2016



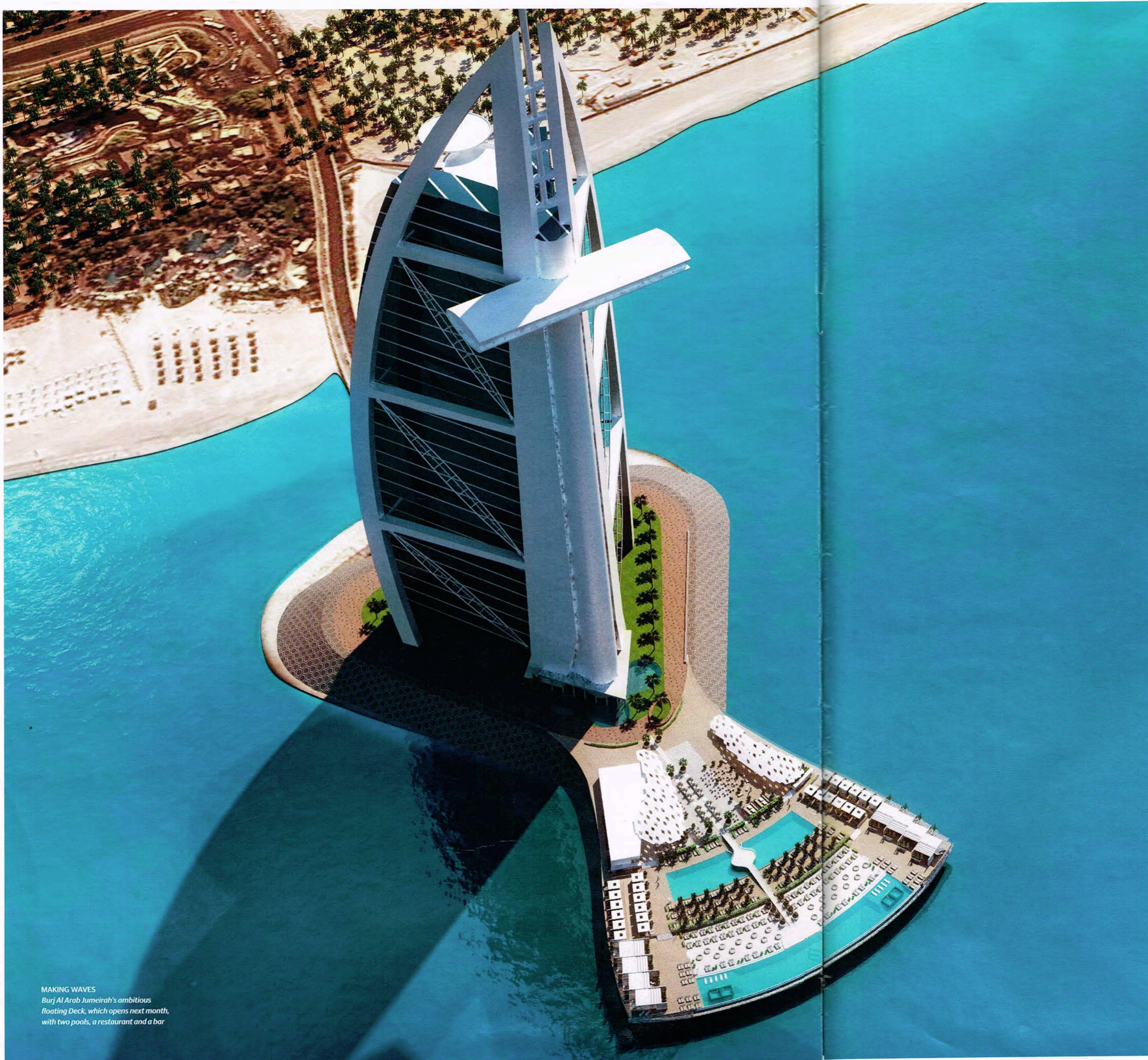
The GOLD STANDARD

TREASURES OF BRAZIL PALATIAL SPAIN THE ULTRA 100

JOHN SIMPSON
A tear-jerking tale of
romance in China

CELIA WALDEN
Channelling her inner guru in
a Californian chakra garden

ELENA ARZAK
Around the world in search
of weird and wonderful flavours



MAKING WAVES
Burj Al Arab Jumeirah's ambitious floating Deck, which opens next month, with two pools, a restaurant and a bar

A SECOND WIND for DUBAI

Burj Al Arab Jumeirah once again emerged as our readers' favourite luxury hotel in the Ultras, with Emirates winning the title of the world's best airline. But, as *John O'Ceallaigh* reveals, Dubai's spirit of restless innovation goes far beyond these emblems of style and service. New cultural, design and gastronomic ventures should ensure the plaudits just keep on coming. Plus, overleaf, we reveal the list of all this year's winners

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST

Voted the Best Hotel in the Middle East
and the Best Hotel in the World by
Ultratravel readers.



For inquiries and reservations please contact:
Tel: +971 4 301 7400
Email: BAAreservations@jumeirah.com
burjalarab.com

THE ULTRAS

It's late April and another predictably hot day in Dubai, but unlike every other visitor to the city's Burj Al Arab Jumeirah hotel, the sunburned Scandinavians standing next to me are disinclined to take things easy. Employees from Admares, a Finnish company that specialises in the construction of floating buildings, they are staying at the hotel to oversee the installation of The Deck, a 108,000sq ft outdoor space that will spread fan-like over the Persian Gulf.

Shipped in six prefabricated units from Finland, assembled on site and opening in June, the North Deck will radically expand the outdoor space and amenities available to the hotel's guests. Under the palms I saw being hoisted into place will lie 32 discreet cabanas, a new restaurant and bar, a freshwater pool and a curved saltwater infinity pool perched on the lip of the structure. Just as significantly, it will dramatically alter the silhouette of the Burj Al Arab, an enduringly striking landmark that has again this year been voted by *Ultratravel* readers as the world's best hotel, and which has served as a symbol of Dubai's ambition and architectural audacity since its opening in 1999.

Though change is constant in Dubai – which last year was the world's fourth most visited city – this reconfiguration of its most recognisable building comes at a time when concerted efforts are being made to ensure that people's perceptions of the destination go beyond the obvious superlatives – the tallest building, biggest mall, world's most expensive cupcake.

Chief among them is Dubai Design District, or d3 (dubaidesigndistrict.com). Proposed in 2013 as a "creative ecosystem" for the region's hitherto itinerant designers and artists, and now slowly coming to life, it is a purpose-built spider's web of galleries, design and artists' studios, one-off restaurants and affordable office space for the creative industries. As we examined her geometric handbags made with iridescent mother-of-pearl, Lebanese designer Nathalie Trad told

DUBAI OPERA OPENS IN THE AUTUMN, A £187-MILLION LIBRARY IN 2017, AND THE WORLD EXPO IN 2020

me about the proliferation of collaborative opportunities that now surrounds her. With everyone working in complementary industries, she said, networking possibilities abound, even when picking up a lavender lemonade from d3's popular Craft Café.

A similar energy pervades Alserkal Avenue (alserkalavenue.ae), located in the outlying Al Quoz neighbourhood and surrounded by supermarket warehouses. This cultural quarter's collection of independent galleries is interspersed with redundant storage units and dingy-looking auto-repair shops (though here they have Rolls-Royces parked outside). A £9.3-million expansion announced last year will see the area extended by some 250,000sq ft, with new tenants including Dubai's first black-box theatre, The Junction. While the more provocative works that one might encounter in Europe are unlikely to be shown in the district, art has become key in attracting visitors to Dubai; indeed,

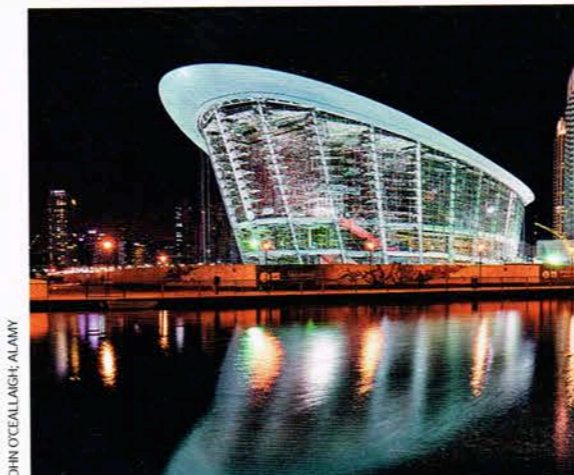
a recently opened Alserkal outpost of New York's long-established Leila Heller Gallery already enjoys a greater footfall than the original. Jasper Hope, the British chief executive of Dubai Opera, which is set to open in autumn, says that the country's ambition, drive "and inherent pride in what can still be achieved – along with a determination and a vision to make it happen" are key reasons for the emirate's rapid growth. Next year will also see the opening of the £187-million, book-shaped Mohammed bin Rashid Library. The following year sees the arrival of the technological Museum of the Future and, in 2020, the World Expo, on a 494-acre site. Imminent, too, are attractions such as the Dubai Eye, the world's largest Ferris wheel; a skyscraper that will be the emirate's tallest; The Heart of Europe, six artificial islands based on different European destinations (with more than 100 "Floating Seahorse" villas, hotels, restaurants and boutiques); and Mohammed Bin Rashid City, whose 40-acre pool will be the world's largest.

Dubai's position as a major global aviation hub – passenger numbers recently overtook those passing through Heathrow – has benefited its tourism sector, too. Last year, more than 78 million passengers passed through Dubai International Airport (65 per cent flying with Emirates, voted the world's best airline by *Ultratravel* readers), with 14.2 million staying overnight. This will soon increase substantially; Dubai's secondary Al Maktoum International airport will be able to accommodate more than 200 million passengers annually after a £22.1-billion expansion programme is complete in the mid-2020s.

Alongside this expansion of culture and infrastructure, of course, will be new places to stay. Some 62,000 additional hotel bedrooms will be added to the city's inventory by 2020, including developments by Viceroy Hotels, Langham Hotels and Jumeirah Al Naseem, the last a future new neighbour for the Burj Al Arab. Recent additions have included the city's first St Regis, the Palazzo Versace (whose Enigma restaurant hosts Michelin-starred chefs from "the world's 50 finest"), and the Four Seasons Hotel DIFC. The latter is undoubtedly one of the most sophisticated places to stay, with just 106 pale-gold bedrooms – making it almost a boutique hotel in comparison with the hulking properties that predominate – a seventh-floor spa and glass-walled rooftop pool.

For those keen to venture beyond their hotels, Frying Pan Adventures (fryingpanadventures.com) organises food tours in Old Dubai's most impressive Middle Eastern eateries, stopping to sample traditional food as well as specialities from the various diasporas that have made Dubai their home. Barefoot and seated on the floor, sampling goat and salted tuna with my hands, I was reminded how rapidly things can change in Dubai.

John O'Ceallaigh flew with Qantas (0845 774 7767; qantas.com) and stayed at the Burj Al Arab Jumeirah (00971 4301 7777; jumeirah.com); doubles from £1,010, b&b) and the Four Seasons Hotel DIFC (00971 4506 0000; fourseasons.com/dubaidifc; doubles from £417, b&b), and dined at Enigma (enigmadx.com). Qantas economy fares from Heathrow to Dubai cost from £347 and business-class fares from £1,792.



JOHN O'CEALLAIGH/ALAMY



DESERT BLOOMS
The Dubai Opera (far left), due to open in 2017; a savoury meringue platter by chef Quique Dacosta at Enigma; handbag designer Nathalie Trad