

Factsheet: Zayed National Museum

The Zayed National Museum tells the story of the late Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan

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The museum is set to stand alongside the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Louvre Abu Dhabi amongst the iconic Saadiyat Island Cultural District's institutions.

Overview

- The Zayed National Museum tells the story of the late Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan (1918-2004), his unification of the United Arab Emirates, the long history of the region and its cultural connections across the world.
- Central to the stories told in the Museum are Shaikh Zayed's strongly held values. These encompassed a passionate belief in education, conservation, environmental sustainability, heritage and culture, all underpinned by his humanitarianism and strong faith.
- The Zayed National Museum has been founded in the spirit of Shaikh Zayed's work on behalf of Emiratis and people everywhere.
- The Zayed National Museum is a place for all, reflecting Shaikh Zayed's renowned warmth that he extended to people from all walks of life.
- The Zayed National Museum will be a public and civic building, a centre of learning and discussion.

Visitor Experience/Content

- The visitor experience will begin outside the Museum in the gardens, where landscaping, planting and installations will explore key moments in the life of Shaikh Zayed and his transformation of the UAE.
- The Museum atrium will provide an anchor for every visitor experience; it will provide a starting point for the national story and a meeting point that will guide the visitor experience.
- The Museum atrium will accommodate the needs of an important national building: café, bookstore, information desk, areas to meet and rest, VIP areas, education facilities, conference rooms, a library, and a fine-dining restaurant.
- The heart of the museum lies in the Shaikh Zayed: Life and Times gallery. Here the life story of Shaikh Zayed and his unification of the UAE will be told through film, audio and multimedia with artefacts drawn from collections in Abu Dhabi, the UAE and abroad. Visitors will come to know Shaikh Zayed and experience at first-hand his challenges and triumphs as he successfully worked to forge the nation.
- The Shaikh Zayed Library is the natural complement to the Shaikh Zayed: Life and Times Gallery. The gallery will present the principal narrative of man and state, and the library will enable visitors to learn more about Shaikh Zayed and his transformative role in the history of Abu Dhabi. Research facilities will provide access to original and electronic historical and cultural sources and will link the museum to worldwide research centers.
- A gallery devoted to Falconry and Conservation will focus on Shaikh Zayed's appreciation of the natural world, its conservation and preservation, as well as his passion for falconry. Falconry has been practised for thousands of years, not just in the Middle East but across the world. Arising as a way of hunting in the desert, its popularity brought increasing awareness of the need to manage the natural environment. Shaikh Zayed understood the importance of the conservation of wildlife and the land, which became a central tenet of his philosophy.
- Land and Water: Archaeological, historical material and interactive displays will show how people in the past learned to use, cultivate and trade the region's key resources. The good husbandry of land and water was admired by Shaikh Zayed, and alongside his wise use of oil and water resources, visitors will learn how he built a framework that has established the UAE as a leader in sustainable development.
- People and Heritage: Shaikh Zayed understood the importance of the values and heritage of his people. Traditional values are at the heart of the UAE's political and cultural life. Success in the modern world had been underpinned by an emphasis on human relationships and connections between different groups. Patterns established in the pre-oil era, when lives were closely identified with the seasons and the landscape, have produced a social cohesion that invigorates the country today.
- History and Society: Shaikh Zayed was instrumental in the discovery of major archaeological sites in the UAE that fundamentally rewrote the history of the region and its connections with the wider world. The land that makes up the modern UAE has a long history of human settlement. Home to Stone Age peoples 200,000 years ago, the region eventually saw, around 5000 BC, the emergence of maritime trade with Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) and later with India and Pakistan. Also, Emirati sailors reached China 2000

years ago. Archaeological evidence shows that the region has played a major part in the development of Middle Eastern civilisations. Rich archaeological material and historical documents drawn from across the UAE, and set alongside contextual objects from around the globe, will chart this long history from 200,000 BC to the creation of the modern state by Shaikh Zayed who recognised the importance of such unity. Drawing on model states of the past, he led the UAE to federation and established the country as a significant player on the global stage.

- Science and Learning: Shaikh Zayed was passionate about education; he transformed a society based on traditional learning to a nation where widespread literacy and numeracy lead to a fully fledged contemporary knowledge society. The value of education that inspired him drew on a long tradition of Middle Eastern scholarship. Language and literature, navigation and medicine are among the many disciplines in which knowledge in the Islamic world would revolutionise what we know and the way we think. Visitors to this gallery will encounter fascinating artefacts from the fields of science and learning. Interactive exhibits will also permit them to engage directly with scientific tools and techniques, trying their hand at historical mechanisms for telling the time or using traditional methods to navigate the sea and the desert.
- Faith and Islam: Shaikh Zayed was a profoundly religious leader and his humanitarianism was based on the tenets of Islam. Providing a contemplative space, the displays will encourage visitors to learn not just the meaning of Islam, as conveyed through the life and actions of Shaikh Zayed, but its history, practice and place among the many faiths in the modern UAE. Islam has been an essential element of continuity in a region that has witnessed extraordinarily rapid change.
- Longstanding religious practice will be demonstrated through beautifully calligraphed manuscripts, models of mosques and other honoured objects, while contemporary photography, voices and film will convey the expression of Islam today, where faith infuses every aspect of life in the modern UAE.
- Architectural highlights:
- The design of the museum is a central part of the exhibition itself, and not merely a structure to house its contents. Evoking the symbolism of falconry, the towers draw inspiration from the wings of a falcon, a powerful symbol and rich cultural heritage of the UAE. This design forms the centrepiece of the Saadiyat Island Cultural District, and is a set to become one of the most recognisable buildings in the arts world globally.
- Design of the five towers focused as much on function as it did on form. Working in formation to channel air through the museum, the aerodynamic structures are oriented to take advantage of prevailing breezes, reducing the energy required to mechanically regulate interior temperatures. The wings act as an extraction system and solar thermal chimney: heat builds up in the glazed tip, creating a cycle that drags used air up and out through the façade, aided by negative pressure on the surface, which promotes air flow.
- The supporting steel frames of the wings sit above expressed concrete columns, and internally the museum spaces are housed within suspended pods, enclosed within solid and glazed elements. Entry to the galleries is from a striking ground floor lobby which is dug into the man-made hill and dramatically illuminated from above.

Building the Museum

- Complex geometries of the wings – bending steel elements into the compound curves and intricate connection details are required to create the flowing geometry of each wing. The tallest of the five wings measures 124 meters in height.
- Hanging pods – each of the five main exhibition spaces are contained within pod-shaped structures that are literally suspended from the white concrete building supports by structural socketed anchors.
- Concrete is used extensively throughout the building to sculpt rich interior spaces. Local sand from Saadiyat Island is used to mimic the colour tones of the surrounding natural landscape and to give it a sense that the design is ‘of this place’.
- Entry to the Museum is via either an urban connection to the cultural quarter or through a garden promenade: the former comprises a dramatic bridge and narrow walkway that widens inside the museum.
- The cave-like public lobby beneath the galleries is naturally ventilated by means of air drawn through the feather-like structures, supplemented by a system of buried ducts. A double skin, comprising an outer facade exposed to the elements and an inner skin that encloses the galleries, promotes air flow between the exhibition and circulation spaces, further reducing the energy required.

Sustainability

- The Zayed National Museum has been designed to be at harmony with its surrounding environment not only reflecting the visions of Shaikh Zayed in its content and visual design, but also in its ability to draw on the local elements to its advantage instead of standing against them.
- The use of photo-voltaic panels and strategically positioned heat exchangers are some of the aspects of the building’s sustainability.
- Landscape
- Water Wise Irrigation Strategy - Drought-tolerant, salt tolerant and humidity tolerant plants selected have been selected and are grouped together with plants with similar water requirements.
- The irrigation system penetrates deep into the soil and watering will occur at night (10pm-8am).

Wings

Buffer Zone - The wings provide a buffer zone to reduce the thermal load on the hanging galleries, and act as a wind and solar driven exhaust, releasing hot air from vents -and drawing cooler air into the lobby. They also provide natural light into the lobby below reducing the need for artificial lighting.

Museum

Reduction in Loads - The mound provides shelter and shade from the harsh external environment.

Optimisation of Building Technology - Radiant floor cooling combined with displacement ventilation is used instead of mixed flow ventilation in the lobby. Use of Renewable Energy - Evacuated solar tubes are used to heat water with solar heat.

Construction timeline

- Enabling contract commenced third quarter 2009 – completed first quarter 2010 by Swiss Boring
- Piling contract commenced first quarter 2010 – completed second quarter 2010 by NSCC International
- Substructure contract awarded forth quarter 2010 – anticipated completion second quarter 2011 by Al Habtoor Murray Roberts Joint Venture
- Main construction contract anticipated award second quarter 2011 – completion fourth quarter 2013
- Museum opens fourth quarter 2014.

Breakdown of Museum space

- Total Built-up Area 66,042sqm
- Central Atrium 4,386 sqm
- Meeting Space 340 sqm
- Performance Space 348 sqm
- Retail 340 sqm
- Restaurant and Cafes 980 sqm
- VIP Lounge 219 sqm
- Members Lounge 298 sqm
- Auditorium and Conference Rooms 456 sqm
- Education Facilities 339 sqm
- Total Gallery space 5,764 sqm