

Zayed National Museum Set to Further Raise UAE's Profile on the World's Cultural Map

- *In memory of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the museum will reflect his life and work as well as the rich history of the UAE*
- *Design of UAE's first major national cultural institution unveiled.*
- *Zayed National Museum is part of the Saadiyat Island Cultural District, central to the plan to build Abu Dhabi's reputation as an international centre of culture.*
- *A narrative that presents the life of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, his achievements and core values, in the context of the rich history of the UAE and the connections of the nation to the wider world.*
- *Environmental sustainability, a key element in the Museum's design and architecture.*
- *Construction of the museum is scheduled for completion in 2014 (2015 by other accounts).*

Abu Dhabi, 25 November 2010 - Today, the design and program of the Zayed National Museum was presented in Abu Dhabi. This is the UAE's first national museum that will feature the life and achievements of the founding President of the United Arab Emirates, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The museum, which will bring to life the UAE's rich history, will also serve as a memorial to Sheikh Zayed and is set to stand alongside the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and the Louvre Abu Dhabi amongst the iconic Saadiyat Island Cultural District's institutions.

The design for the Zayed National Museum was officially unveiled today by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. Set amongst lush gardens, the design features five soaring pavilions, representing the feathers of a falcon's wing, reaching a height of 124 metres, towering over the glittering waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Commenting on the launch, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE said: "The Zayed National Museum is destined to become an inspiring permanent reminder of the vision handed down to us from the father of our nation, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan to unite all Emiratis and build a strong and prosperous nation. As a fitting memorial and a national institution, the museum will serve as a symbol of our historic cultural roots and of the many achievements of our country, providing us with an incentive to continue building our country with the same will and determination."

Scheduled for completion in 2014, the Zayed National Museum also stands as a symbol of the modernity of the UAE, and its rapid progression over the past forty years. The spirit of excellence and endeavour and great faith in the future of the Emirati people has been behind the fundamental growth in economic, social, education and health sectors, and the museum will help ensure that future generations can appreciate the enormity of these changes.

<http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidZAWYA20101125080550/Zayed%20National%20Museum%20Set%20to%20Further%20Raise%20UAE%27s%20Profile%20on%20the%20World%27s%20Cultural%20Map>

At the unveiling today, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai stated: "The Zayed National Museum, named after our beloved leader, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, will be a template of the UAE's cultural traditions, set in the midst of our nation's glorious heritage. It is with great pride that we keep his memory alive and close to our hearts."

The museum will showcase Sheikh Zayed's story and the lasting influence of his reforms. Sheikh Zayed's concept of a modernised nation determined by strong guiding principles of education, culture, faith and the protection of the environment made him one of the world's most respected leaders.

Commenting on the museum His Highness General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces said: "The Zayed National Museum will serve as an educational testimonial for generations to come, enlightening many of our rich and varied past, and providing a glimpse to our future prospects, to be achieved through wise leadership that will hold a strong will and vision. Sheikh Zayed was a father, a leader and an inspiration to the people of the UAE and the world, and here lies the importance of the 'Zayed National Museum' which will not only represent a reference and testament to these achievements but also an incentive towards further prosperity and progress to the people of the UAE and the world. His Highness added that every visitor of the museum will carry the unique attributes of Sheikh Zayed's values that inspired the entire humanity through his kindness and forgiveness as well as his achievements."

The museum, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect, Lord Norman Foster of Foster + Partners, following an international competition, is being developed by Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC), the master developer of Saadiyat Island. The Zayed National Museum utilises sophisticated architectural techniques with a special focus on environmental sustainability, which was an essential element of Sheikh Zayed's worldview.

The museum emerges from a landscaped oasis, which celebrates Sheikh Zayed's legacy of 'greening the desert'. While it is designed in harmony with its surrounding environment it is indeed an iconic reflection of Sheikh Zayed's powerful vision.

The design of the museum draws inspiration from falconry, a powerful symbol in the UAE and part of its cultural heritage and way of life, with five towers reminiscent of the wing tips of the birds. The design also serves to deliver environmental advantages, as the buildings are positioned to channel air through the museum, reducing the energy demands required to cool the complex. The towers are also designed to take advantage of the regions constant sunshine, with carefully positioned openings drawing light in to illuminate the interior spaces in a creative manner.

In 2009, TDIC also signed an agreement with the British Museum to provide expert advice and counsel on the development of the Zayed National Museum and help realise the vision of this museum in translating the values of Sheikh Zayed in an interpretive plan that will enhance the core messages of a national museum.

The visitor experience will begin outside the Museum in the gardens, where landscaping, planting and installations will translate the timeline and key moments in the life of Sheikh Zayed and his transformation of Abu Dhabi and the UAE. The Museum atrium will provide an anchor for every visitor experience, as it will be a starting point for the national story and a meeting point that will guide the visitor experience.

The heart of the museum lies in the Sheikh Zayed: Life and Times gallery. Here the life story of Sheikh 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 Sheikh Zayed and experience at first-hand his challenges and triumphs as he successfully worked to forge the nation.

The Sheikh Zayed Library is the natural complement to the Sheikh 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 Sheikh 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 centres.

A gallery devoted to Falconry and Conservation will focus on Sheikh 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, it eventually evolved into a pastime enjoyed by many. Its popularity brought increasing awareness of the need to manage the natural environment.

Sheikh Zayed understood the importance of the conservation of wildlife and the land, which became a central tenet of his philosophy.

The core values of Sheikh Zayed introduced in the narrative of the lower floor galleries will be carried through in more detail in the upper floor galleries:

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 Sheikh 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: Sheikh 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: Sheikh 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 Sheikh 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: Sheikh 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: Sheikh 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 Sheikh 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.

The Zayed National Museum has been founded in the spirit of Sheikh Zayed's work on behalf of Emiratis and people everywhere. It will be a place for all, reflecting Sheikh Zayed's renowned warmth that he extended to people from all walks of life.

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