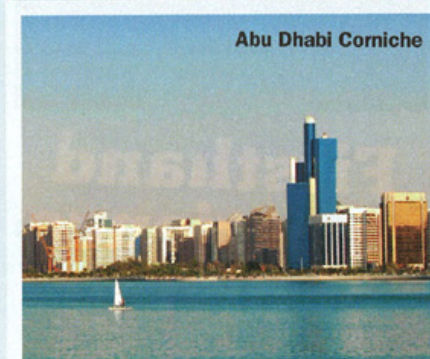


# HOWA

With summer well and truly on its way, thoughts drift toward cooling off in the sea, hanging out at beach clubs, diving into pools and maybe even succumbing to some water sports. So here's the complete all-you-need-to-know guide to everything aquatic in Abu Dhabi



Monte-Carlo Beach Club



Abu Dhabi Corniche

Abu Dhabi is an archipelago; it's made up of a series of islands, which means there are miles of breathtaking beaches and stunning coastline to enjoy. It also means there's lots of water to explore, either by boat, by Jet Ski, by kayak or just good, old-fashioned swimming.

Alternatively, if you prefer to plonk yourself in a pool or by the beach, then there's plenty of options for that too. Or perhaps you choose to simply soak each other at home as a tried and tested method of keeping cool. Either way, this is all the information you need.

## BEACHES

### Public Beach

The Abu Dhabi Corniche is without a doubt one of the highlights of any visit to the United Arab Emirates. The 6km-long sandy beach along the northwest edge of the capital has played host to a number of significant entertainment, music, art and film events and festivals over the last few years, including the Red Bull Air Race, Yasalam, WOMAD, Formula One powerboat racing and recently the Volvo Ocean Race.

The Corniche, which receives anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 visitors each month, has been undergoing an extensive renovation programme, transforming it into a sun-soaked fun zone for tourists and residents alike. It also provides a welcome alternative to paying some extortionate fees for the privilege of using a private beach area belonging to one of the many hotel complexes.

It is also one of 3,550 beaches worldwide that have met stringent international standards. Back in June of last year, the capital's beach was awarded the coveted Blue Flag, the first time this has been awarded to any country in the GCC. Based on compliance with 32 strict criteria, including environmental management, information and education, public safety and services and water quality, the Blue Flag certification is only awarded to beaches that meet all of these standards.

The beach has three separate sections, one for ladies and families, one for singles and one for the public – effectively a common space. The family beach and Al Sahil beach are open from 7am to 10pm with valid entry tickets. The public beach, walkways and gardens are open to the public 24 hours a day. However, the food and beverage outlets are only operational from 10am to 10pm.

Entry is charged at Dhs10 for adults and children over 12, Dhs5 for children over five years of age and free for children under five. Entry to the public beach is free.

### Monte-Carlo Beach Club

Looking for an excuse to dress chic at the beach? This luxurious beach club makes the point of steering clear of the in-your-face opulence that's present in many of the city's most famous venues: think clean lines, high ceilings and beautiful timber features. The decor aims to reflect that of its sister hotels and clubs in Monaco, albeit with an Arabian feel. The very cool beach bar, Sea Lounge, and its contemporary design is modeled on that of its Monaco counterpart and is a great place to enjoy a blend while looking out to the sea.

The beach is pristine with beautiful white sand and you can really enjoy kicking back on a sun lounger and simply watching the waves roll in if you don't want to get your feet wet. Once you've had enough beach time, head to the amazing pool for a dip or enjoy sitting in one of the many cabanas.

Check out Bubbles Bar, which looks out on to the sparkling pool. It is also worth a visit for a more laid-back night out. Make sure you dress to the nines because this is a very sophisticated swimming spot, and you don't want to feel left out.

Monte-Carlo Beach Club, Saadiyat Island, [www.montecarlobeachclub.ae](http://www.montecarlobeachclub.ae) (02 656 3500)

### Breeze Lounge

Set between the shiny pool and the pretty beach, Breeze Lounge is not just visually stunning but feels both oh-so-stylish and relaxed at the same time. You get the feeling that the place will enhance your mocktail sipping experience, taking it to a whole new level. And what better backdrop than the Emirates Palace?

The service at Breeze Lounge is flawless, with attentive waiters dressed in their beach-wear uniforms catering to your every need. You get the refreshing sea breeze for free, shisha is available and there are plenty of drinks and blends to choose from the beverage menu at this trendy new venue.

The atmosphere is serene at Breeze Lounge and the place already drags in Abu Dhabi's cool crowd every Thursday. All in all, this is an impressive addition to the Emirates Palace portfolio. So if you are looking for that drink in hand, toes in the sand kind of feel then give Breeze Lounge a go. It doesn't get much more relaxing than this.

Breeze Lounge, Emirates Palace Hotel, (02 690 7920) [www.emiratespalace.ae](http://www.emiratespalace.ae)





Sheraton Abu Dhabi Hotel & Resort

## POOLS

### Poolside Bars

**Shams Pool Bar:** Watch the skies while sipping a cool drink as the day winds down at the Shams Pool Bar. Stop by this bar throughout the day to grab a snack while soaking up the glorious Abu Dhabi weather and watch the amazing sunset in the late afternoon. With a casual but stylish ambience you can unwind while listening to the beats of the DJ and enjoy everything this pool bar has to offer.

*Radisson Blu Hotel, Yas Island (02 656 2000)*

**Sheraton Pool Bar:** Savor the true pool bar experience at the Sheraton's sit-in bar, as you are served your blends and other beverages right in the pool. The atmosphere is lounge-like, with soft music and a holiday feeling, surrounded by lush palm trees. Order from a large variety of international hot and cold dishes à la carte and eat at the cozy eating areas around the pool. The adult's pool is upstairs with the pool bar, and a waterfall leads to the lower family pool with slides.

*Sheraton Hotel Abu Dhabi, (02 697 0257)*

**Shangri-La Pool Bar:** Perfect for lounging and enjoying the breathtaking view of the infinity pool, the Pool Bar at the Shangri-La is one classy joint. Soak up the warm Middle Eastern sun, enjoy a great selection of blends and mocktails and sample superb snacks from a varied menu. There are few bigger symbols of nouveau-riche ostentation than having an infinity pool in your back garden. If you can't quite afford this ultimate status symbol yet, spend the day at the Shangri-La's amenity then rock up to the poolside bar and at least live the dream until it's time to return to your hovel.

*Shangri-La, (02 509 8888)*

**Maï Café:** Head to Maï Café at the Aloft Hotel for the ultimate chill-out spot on the fifth floor rooftop. Expect oversized beach chairs and lounge pods, complemented by an eclectic mix of laid-back tunes and sunny grooves. As evening falls Maï Café turns into one of the finest rooftop lounges in Abu Dhabi. Experience the unique cosmopolitan atmosphere created by the creative design full of ultra-comfy sofa's, beanbags and romantic hideaways surrounding the amazing infinity Splash pool. Regular DJs and theme night's vibe up your evening even further and create the ultimate backdrop for a stunning evening.

*Aloft Hotel, (02 654 5000)*



## Firsthand experience of diving

Our Action & Adventure Editor, **Scott Snowden**, recently undertook the first of the PADI open water dive courses, as he continues his attempts to become Captain Nemo

'The course is split into theory and practical, with two afternoons of a weekend spent in a classroom-like environment, then two more in a swimming pool and finally two more out in the open water. A few years ago I'd taken part in 'fun dives' down to about 15 metres off the coast of Easter Island and the Great Barrier Reef, but I was always under close supervision and had never really understood how anything worked. Now, having finished the basic open water PADI Scuba diving course at the Al Mahara Dive Centre, I'm qualified to operate the equipment and, more importantly, know what to do in case any problems arise. It is, however, an equipment-intensive hobby; so you do get to play with some very cool new toys, but they're expensive. It's easy to get swept up in the excitement and spend a whole year's salary on stuff like a top-of-the-range dive mask incorporating a digital head's up display (oh yes) but it's worth holding on and first waiting to see if you embrace the experience; it requires patience, some effort and a strong stomach when it comes to surging seas.'





## ACTIVITIES

### Diving

If you fancy yourself as the Man from Atlantis or perhaps a budding Jacques Cousteau, you can dive beneath the waves of the Arabian Gulf and explore a whole new world under water with the Al Mahara Dive Centre. Here, the complete range of PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) courses are on offer, from an introductory level that emphasises practical knowledge, safety and underwater skills all the way to advanced adventure diving, master diver and ultimately instructor level. The Dive Centre also offers kayaking trips and a whole bunch of environmentally friendly and nature associated excursions, from the scientific study of coral reefs to rescuing endangered wildlife.

Al Mahara Dive Centre (02 643 7377) shop M4, mezzanine floor, Muroor Street  
[www.divemahara.com](http://www.divemahara.com)



### Kayaking

You can take Jet Skis into the mangrove forests of Abu Dhabi if you really want to, but if you're environmentally conscious (and you should be) this is a very bad idea. The mangroves are actually an extremely fragile ecosystem and home to many species of wildlife. Instead, what you should do is book a kayaking tour with Noukhada Adventure Company, which includes an hour and a half of guided paddling through the mangrove forest by the Eastern Ring Road. For a more spectacular experience you can go at sunrise or by moonlight with torches and you will witness a totally different side of Abu Dhabi. Tours are dependent on tides and weather, so check availability at [www.noukhada.ae](http://www.noukhada.ae) Dhs150 per person.



### Jet Skis

Tourists used to be regularly terrorised in the waters along the Corniche beach by riders on Jet Skis and WetBikes, buzzing around each other like angry hornets. Though those days are, thankfully, long gone you'd be forgiven for thinking that these petrol-powered marine machines are purely for the insane and irresponsible. However, we can assure you that this is not the case. Just five minutes after you've mastered how to steer these things and how to control your drift, you'll realise that they are not only very simple to operate, but also immense fun. A variety of different 'personal watercraft' exist (a Jet Ski is actually a specific brand, as is a WetBike) but chances are you'll end up on what's called a Waverunner. There's a green button to switch it on, a red button to turn it off and a throttle lever that makes it go faster. Easy. Empros at Al Meena has over ten years of experience and offers a range of water sports. Open from 10am-sunset all week, it provides life jackets and waterproof boxes. Riders aged 16-18 must be signed for by a parent, under-16s can be accompanying passengers with a parent and you will need a valid form of ID.

## Super Soakers

As the blurb on the packaging says, wetter is most certainly better. This is an ideal way to spend those hot summer evenings after a hard day in the office and also provides hilarious entertainment for guests after a delicious barbecue. Ten paces, turn and soak. These are available from Toys R Us in Mina Port.



#### Thunderstorm

A typical special forces-style weapon, the Thunderstorm is battery operated, with a range of 25 feet, making it ideal for an urban combat environment. Extra magazines are available and come with handy belt clips enabling rapid ammunition exchange.



Rubber duck rating: 4/5  
 Price: Dhs169



#### Scatter Blast

A more traditional Super Soaker, this is best suited to close quarters combat. As the name suggests, it offers a wide field of fire and light-armour piercing capability. However, the high pump-to-squirt ratio means repetitive trigger action is a little limited.



Rubber duck rating: 3/5  
 Price: Dhs89



#### Point Break

The standard issue side-arm of Super Soakers. The one squirt setting is a little disappointing, but it is lightweight and offers some accuracy over distance. Useful as a last resort weapon. It's small calibre disadvantage is offset by the low pump-to-squirt ratio.



Rubber duck rating: 2/5  
 Price: Dhs59



### Catch a barracuda

Or a king fish, or a queen fish, a cobia or any other of a number of deep sea-dwelling big-game marine life on a guided off-shore fishing trip. An escorted day on the water costs around Dhs750 (depending on the boat) and all fishing equipment and a few refreshments are thrown in. Of course, a fishing trip with no fish is a disappointing day out, which is why the Hiltonia's boats are fitted with GPS devices to help track the scaly blighters down. And if they still don't feel like playing ball, there's a fairly good chance you'll run into some dolphins. Not for catching obviously, but good for boasting about on Facebook.

Hiltonia Beach Club (02 681 1900)

### Surf with a kite

Just like bungee chess and freerunning, some sports and activities are simply begging to be combined with others, thus capturing the world's attention and creating a whole new trend. Kitesurfing mixes (yup, you guessed it) kite flying and surfing and sits very much at the gnarlier end of the water-sports spectrum with fanatics hitting the waves strapped into large, sail-like kites with the aim of catching some serious air. While you can find lessons near the public beach, Abu Dhabi's serious kitesurfers head to Dabbayah in the western region, or a secluded stretch of beach between Saadiyat and Yas Island.

To find out more visit [www.kitepro.ae](http://www.kitepro.ae) where you can discover more about the sport and, if you're feeling bold, book yourself some lessons so you can look like a pro.



### Try stand-up paddle boarding

It's a weird one this. Some say it's a bit like surfing, only with an oar in your hands, while others liken it to canoeing, except that you're standing up. Considering how gentle the waters are here in Abu Dhabi, we'd side with the latter – but don't let that fool you into thinking stand-up paddle boarding is a breeze. The capital's waters can still get pretty choppy when the wind picks up, and with your centre of gravity so high, expect to be taking a few trips into the drink during your first hour or so. But once you've got the hang of constantly correcting your balance (which is a killer on those core muscles) the feeling of bobbing along through the sea is surprisingly thrilling, especially once you pull a u-turn and ride the waves back to shore. Of course, the real fun comes when you've got a paddle pal to race with, plus you can always try nudge them into the water with your oar. Abu Dhabi Stand-Up Paddle Club provides 45-minute lessons for Dhs200 (050 905 9743) [www.abudhabisup.com](http://www.abudhabisup.com).