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MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF DUBAI

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Modern architecture has flourished in the Gulf, and the speed at which Dubai has grown has resulted in one of the most spectacular building booms of modern times – at one point in the mid-noughties it was estimated that, astonishingly, a quarter of all the world's construction cranes could be found in Dubai alone.

Building site. The exploding real-estate market, ready supplies of apparently limitless finance and widespread availability of large plots of unused land all conspired to turn Dubai into an enormous building site, further heated by a general absence of the sort of zoning rules, planning permissions and conservation issues which so often haunt major new constructions in the West.

The wide open desert spaces of Dubai thus provided a kind of tabula rasa on which architects could doodle – and then see their doodles take shape with lightning speed. The results are inevitably mixed. Some of the modern architecture in the Gulf is spectacularly ugly, some is notable as much for its sheer quirkiness as for its ultimate success, although the region also boasts a clutch of undoubted modernist masterpieces, as well as some superb urban architectural ensembles, such as the teetering high-rises of Sheikh Zayed Road.

Dubai's best buildings. Almost all the region's finest modernist icons can be found in Dubai, a veritable encyclopedia of contemporary design ranging from the good through to the bad, the mad and the downright ugly. Some of Dubai's most memorable buildings are decidedly quirky in inspiration: the strange Dusit Thani hotel, for example, inspired by the traditional Thai *wai* greeting, with hands placed together in welcome (although it actually looks more like an enormous upside-down tuning fork), or the landmark Etisalat Building, topped by what looks like a vast golf ball (a design now copied in other Etisalat buildings in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and elsewhere).

Many of the city's finest buildings pay oblique homage to the emirate's former maritime traditions, with various sail-shaped architectural motifs, exemplified by the celebrated clubhouse of the Dubai Creek Golf Club (1993), a fascinating sculptural creation whose instantly recognizable outline (like a kind of Dubai remake of the Sydney Opera House) is inspired by the triangular shapes of the traditional *lateen* sail. The sail motif is invoked again in the superb National Bank of Dubai (designed by Carlos Ott, 1998), its towering Creek side facade comprising a single enormous "sail" surrounded by highly reflective aluminum cladding, mirroring boats on the waters below. Best of all, however, is the superlative Burj al Arab (Tom Wright, 1999), whose land-facing side provides Dubai with its largest and most magnificent architectural sail, memorably illuminated at night (and juxtaposed against the rollercoaster shape of the wonderful Jumeirah Beach Hotel next door, inspired by the shape of a breaking wave).

Burj Khalifa, by Adrian Smith. The tallest building in the world, at 829.8 meters (2722ft), the Burj Khalifa began its construction on 21 September 2004 and was completed on 1 October 2009. Previous to its inauguration on the 4 January 2010, the building was known as Burj Dubai. We're told all the steel used to build it would stretch from Dubai to Melbourne if end to end!

Adrian Smith, an American, is the chief architect of this construction. He is known for designing various skyscrapers all over the world, such as Jin Mao Tower and Trump International Hotel & Tower and is now involved in the construction of Kingdom Tower, an expensive (provisionally \$1.23 bn) and hugely high tower in Saudi Arabia.

It has notched up records including:

- Tallest building in the world;
- Tallest free-standing structure in the world;
- Highest number of storeys in the world;
- Highest outdoor observation deck in the world;
- Elevator with the longest travel distance in the world.

The Burj Khalifa receives an average of 4000 visitors daily to its viewing deck and houses the Armani Hotel, occupying a whopping 15 floors!

Burj Al Arab, by Tom Wright. Tom Wright, a British architect working for Atkins construction, designed the incredible Burj Al Arab, the fourth tallest hotel in the world at 321 meters.

The 5* hotel is built on an artificial island and construction began in 1994, with the hotel opening to the public in December 1999.

Dubai's most iconic hotel, the Burj Al Arab soars skywards like a huge sail from its private island. If you're after glitz, bling and exceptional butler service, you won't be disappointed. Drink Champagne on the rooftop terrace, soaking in views of the cityscape; and dine on seafood at Al Mahara, where you'll take a simulated submarine ride into the magical aquarium restaurant.

The hotel offers 202 luxurious duplex suites, a decadent spa, nine world-class restaurants (six are award-winning) and complimentary access to Wild Wadi water park during your stay.

Emirates Towers by Hazel W.S. Wong. Emirates Towers were constructed in 2000 by Hazel Wong (Norr Group), a Chinese-Canadian architect known for her work in North America and the Middle-East.

The construction complex, located on the Sheik Zayed Road in Dubai, contains the Emirates Office Tower and the 5* Jumeirah at Emirates Towers hotel. The first tower rises 355 meters and the second rises 309 meters, connected by a retail boulevard.

Jumeirah at Emirates Tower hotel is one of the most stunning architectural highlights on the Dubai skyline. It has 400 luxurious rooms and suites and offers extraordinary dining and nightlife venues, a luxurious spa and incredible service.

Dubai's skyline is filled with iconic landmarks, including the instantly recognizable sail of the Burj Al Arab, the wave-like Jumeirah Beach Hotel and the triangular tips of the Jumeirah Emirates Towers. Already home to the world's tallest building and the world's largest shopping mall, the city continues to astound with twisting towers, majestic mosques and lavish modern souks.

REFERENCES

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