



RAS AL KHAIMAH: WHERE THE SAND FEELS SMOOTHER THAN SILK

Meytha Almutawaa, Digital and Social Media Advisor for Shell MENA region recently took out time to share some stories from Ras Al Khaimah with us. Read on to find out some little known facts about the Emirate and what to expect when you get there.

Outpost: Tell us something about the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, something that most people don't know.

Meytha: An interesting fact about Ras Al Khaimah that many do not know is that the it was under Portuguese occupation not the British like the rest of the UAE. In 1971, when the UAE was formed and all the Emirates came together, Ras Al-Khaimah only joined the Union on 10 February 1972. Ras Al Khaimah is a mixture of different tribes and different backgrounds. It is a melting pot; of Arabs (including my tribe – *Al Shehhi*, that migrated from the north), as well as *Ajamies* and *Balooshies* (who come from Iranian heritage). Each tribe has different dialects and even amongst the tribes there are subdialects.

RAK also has expats from around the world. However, note that Ras Al Khaimah is probably the second or third most conservative Emirate. I think Fujairah is the most conservative and it may be linked to the fact that it has the least number of expats. While Sharjah has the strictest laws, the people are not as conservative as the ones you will find in Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah and Al Ain. One would find more '*niqabis*' (women wearing traditional veil) in Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah.

Now don't get me wrong, if you stay in the resorts or hotels on the outskirts of RAK you may not feel the conservativeness. However, if you plan to go into town, be respectful and wear modest clothing.



Ras Al Khaimah
Photo credit: rak.ae

Outpost: Ras Al Khaimah literally refers to a 'tent'. What is the relevance of that?

Meytha: The story goes that when sailors where docking in, what is now known as Ras Al Khaimah, the lighthouse they saw used to see a tent with a light at the tip. They called out "Ras Al Khaimah" which translates to "Head of the Tent".



Red sand dunes in Awafi in Ras Al Khaimah
Photo credit: Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA)

Outpost: How different is the natural terrain in Ras Al Khaimah from the rest of the UAE?

Meytha: Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah are the only Emirates with mountains. You will even notice the sand color change when you drive to Ras Al Khaimah, Al Ain and Fujairah, the sand is redder than other places. Abu Dhabi and Dubai were believed to be under the sea before and hence the sand there looks lighter in colour.

Outpost: What other little known facts would you want people to know about Ras Al Khaimah?

Meytha: The UAE was known for pearl diving and the best pearls can be found in Ras Al Khaimah. There is a pearl farm where they fish out pearls and open them in front of you. It is worth checking out during the winters. Another interesting place is Jebel Jais in Ras Al Khaimah which is always cooler than surrounding areas. It rains more often there and that



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is the only place in the UAE where there is a possibility to see snow. Falconry is very popular amongst the Bedouins. Ras Al Khaimah has the same royal family as Sharjah- the Al Qasimi family. Some interesting places to visit are Al Jazirat Al Hamra , Al Dhait, Awafi for sand-dunning. I recommend having a picnic in Awafi in the winter it's a beautiful desert. The traditional golden burqa is more prominently seen in RAK and Al Ain. Another fun fact – Ras Al Khaimah shares borders with Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain, Sharjah and Oman.

Outpost: Tell us about the abandoned town of Al Jazirat Al Hamra and stories and myths surrounding it.

Meytha: In our culture, we believe in Jinn. It is believed that for every person born, there is jinn too. You either believe it or you don't. There are of course good jinn and bad jinn. If you want to experience this, then you must visit Al Jazirat Al Hamra which has a haunted town. The village has an eerie feeling to it as the houses have been abandoned since the past 30 years. There is a beautiful abandoned hilltop house in the middle of RAK that is believed to be haunted. Since the family built it in the late 80's, no one has been able to inhabit it because the jinn keep disturbing the people living there at night. This house has been an attraction for thrill-seekers.



Ruins of abandoned houses at Al Jazirat Al Hamra
Photo credit: Stevenmcombe/CC 4.0



Jebel Jais in Ras Al-Khaimah
Photo credit: Stevenmcombe/CC 4.0

Outpost: What should one expect when visiting Ras Al Khaimah?

Meytha: There is a shooting range, golfing, pearls. Recently hiking in Jebel Jais has picked up as an activity. When you go towards RAK, it is a beautiful drive. You will suddenly start noticing mountains on the horizon and you will see desert trees. A little further you may see goats running around. The place just has a different vibe.

AROUND AJMAN

Outpost Abu Dhabi tells us some facts about Ajman, the smallest emirate in the UAE.

Ajman is located on the coast of the Persian Gulf between the Emirates of Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain. It extends over 16 km and is in terms of area the smallest Emirate, covering about 0.3 percent of the total area of the UAE.

The main landmass of the Emirate is bordered on the north, east, and south by the Emirate of Sharjah. It also controls two small inland exclaves: Manama and Masfout. Manama is in the plains at the foothills of the Hajjar Mountains, some 60 km east of Ajman city, and shares borders with Sharjah and Fujairah, while Masfout is in the mountains, some 110 km south of Ajman City and borders Dubai (the village and exclave of Hatta) and Ras Al Khaimah.



Al Rashidiya district and port in Ajman
Photo credit: Pjsoans/CC 3.0

Both Manama and Masfout are fertile regions and support widespread agricultural development. Acacia and ghaf trees are to be found in abundance in Manama. Date palm groves and fruit tree plantations are characteristic of Masfout. Ajman's creek has been dredged and walled to form a port area and this is the location for the Ajman Port and the Ajman Free Zone. The Ajman economy has traditionally relied on fishing and trade. In recent years the general economic development trend in the U.A.E. has extended to