

COMMON GROUND

GREAT COFFEE IS SOMETHING WE CAN ALL AGREE ON. FORGET STARBUCKS, TOAD SPILLS THE BEANS ON THE BEST BARISTAS IN TOWN



WIN FREE COFFEE!
Fancy a coffee scavenger hunt? On Sundays, the St. Regis Abu Dhabi posts a snap of the week's 'latte' taken in one of the hotel's restaurants – and you have to guess where it is shot. All you have to do is head to the St. Regis, show staff the exact location of where the photo was taken and then enjoy the beverage on the house!
Follow the St Regis Abu Dhabi on Instagram @stregisabudhabi to participate.

The capital's emerging landscape of cafés is so vast it's hard to know which to fraternise. It's enough to drive a person to the back of that interminable queue of teenage girls in Starbucks all ordering pink frozen drinks.

Don't do that! TOAD jumped in a fleet of Careem taxis and cut through the noise of espresso machines to produce our ultimate guide to the best coffee shops in Abu Dhabi. From killer cappuccinos at Lavazza and Leopolds of London to cosy espresso bars like Vasa Vasa and the Living Room, here are 19 (tweet us @TimeOutAbuDhabi if you have the magic 20th) of our favourite spots to sip coffee across the city.



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THE 'BUCKET LIST' COFFEE:

Pull on your purse strings for the most expensive cup of coffee not only in Abu Dhabi, but the entire world. This Kopi Luwak coffee is produced by the most, shall we say, 'unusual methods.' The reason it's so costly is that Indonesians feed the ripest coffee fruit – known as 'cherries' – to wild cat-like animals called Luwak, collect their faeces and then pick out the beans. It is argued that the beans taste better because of the unique digestive process inside the moggy, or possibly because civets pick only the plummiest fruit. Being wild and hard to collect, only about half a ton of civet coffee is produced each year – so rare that it was featured in Hollywood film, The Bucket List, as something Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman must try before they die. The cost of a small cup is a dear Dhs180. *Open daily 8am-midnight. Vertigo Café, Liwa Street (under the Eclipse Hotel), Al Markaziyah (02 626 1884).*

Girliest Coffee to come from Liz

most attractive cup of coffee in town, head over to the Crystal Lounge to try their new layered strawberry flavoured latte served with colourful macaroons. *Open 5pm-2am. Crystal Lounge, Nation Towers. St Regis Abu Dhabi. Corniche West (02 694 4444)*

BEST LATTE ART:

If you have friends or family visiting, break the bank and take them to Emirates Palace for the 24K gold cappuccino. The Palace is an institution and a visit to its famed Le Café is de rigueur. While you daintily dab away at your cappuccino moustache check out the elegant latte art. Every baristas rendition of the Grand Mosque in chocolate syrup and sprinkled with real gold leaf flakes is a work of art. And, after the Kopi Luwak, a Dhs45 gold coffee won't seem too dear. *Open daily 6.30am-1am. Le Café, Emirates Palace, Ras Al Akhdar (02 690 7999).*

BEST NO-FRILLS COFFEE:

Don't expect coffee syrups or flavourings at Lavazza—in fact you won't even spot an iced mocha on this menu. What you will find is flawlessly executed espresso. Lavazza is for coffee purists. *Open Sun-Thu 7am-midnight, Fri-Sat 8am-midnight. Lavazza Espresso. Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 665 5021).*

GIRLIEST COFFEE:

If you're feeling girly and want to sample the

BEST BREAKFAST COFFEE:

Nolu's Café in Al Bandar has the perfect organic coffee to complement its range of clean and lean breakfast staples, not to mention a lovely view. If you are keen on having a quiet cappuccino and Spanish omelette without being rushed, this is great place to park yourself. *Open 8am-11pm. Nolu's Café. Al Bandar, Al Raha Beach. Khalifa City. (02 557 9500).*

MOST UNUSUAL BREWING METHODS:

How do you like your coffee? Machine brewed, pour over, Chemex, siphon, cold



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BEST BAGELS + BREW:



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It's easy to find decent cups of coffee or bagels independent of one another in the capital, but finding the two together can be a challenge. Enter the Bees Knees in the Nation Galleria Mall, which serves up fine coffee and espresso drinks alongside toasted toothsome delights delivered fresh from New York City. *Open Sun-Wed 8am-midnight; Thu-Sat 8am-1am. Bees Knees, Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 447 9102).*



in some art next door before or after your coffee break. *Open Sat-Thu from 10.30am-11.30pm and Fri from 3.30pm-11.30pm. Arthouse Café, Next to Etihad Modern Gallery, Al Bateen. (04 440 9322 ext: 125).*

GEEKIEST COFFEE:

Leopolds of London's (LOL) Coffee Lab looks more like a chemistry lab but each delicious sip satisfies the inner coffee geek in us all. LOL's baristas are dressed to the nines and know a lot about your favourite caffeinated beverage with its stylish display of antique coffee brewing, grinding and roasting methods. But the Coffee Lab display at LOL is not only for show. The fedora and braces-wearing baristas can be counted upon to create a tasty cup of coffee that is made to suit your palate. They have been known to convert even non-coffee drinkers. Give the Coffee Lab a try for an informative coffee date and a perfect cuppa Joe every time. *Open 9am-midnight. Leopolds of London, Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 665 4776).*

FUNKIEST COFFEE:

Visit the Arthouse café adjacent to the Etihad Modern Gallery in Al Bateen. Their standard Americano is unexpectedly mild and smooth. The best part of having a coffee here is the funky, artsy décor and friendly service. Take



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This is Helina. Say hi Helina...

ASK A BARISTA:

How to make the perfect cup of coffee at home.

There are a million ways to brew coffee, so TOAD asks Barista Helina, from Jones the Grocer Khalidiyah, how to perform the simple 'pour over' method at home.

Use the right equipment

As basic as it is, the pour-over has become popular at local coffee shops. Just as important as the brewing method and the beans is the right filters for the cone. Your best bet is the Hario V60 filters which you can purchase at Jones.

USE THE RIGHT WATER

Use bottled water in Abu Dhabi for the best flavour.

FRESH COFFEE GROUNDS

A great cup of coffee made at home depends entirely on the freshness of the beans. Make sure they are ground minutes before preparation.

DON'T FORGET TO MEASURE!

The pour over method requires a medium grind (5.5) and my favourite coffee for the pour over is our Ethiopia Lekemti of which you need 16g per 250ml.

HOW TO POUR OVER

Brewing time is three to five minutes

1. As your water boils, place your dripper lined with a Hario V60 filter on your mug.
2. Place your measured ground coffee into the filter.
3. After the water boils, slowly pour just enough hot water to saturate all the grounds.
4. Pause 30 seconds to let the coffee grounds soften.
5. Once the water has passed through the grounds, pour again, raising the water level to about an inch above the grounds. Wait a few moments until the water trickles through the dripper. Repeat this process pouring until you



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Khalidiyah Village, Al Khalidiyah, www.thelivingroomcaféabudhabi.com (02 639 6654).

BEST POST-DINNER COFFEE:

Vasa Vasa is a Sicilian-inspired coffee bar boasting unusual and sweet coffee offerings. The owner, Silvia Martinelli, is often there

and she knows coffee, but many people don't know that she also knows her ice cream and gelato. Silvia makes everything by hand in her small shop that has a fantastic view of Yas Island. It is the perfect spot to get a sweet fix and little energy boost pre or post evening out. Try her affogato, which is a classic doppio ristretto espresso with a dollop of homemade premium ice-cream and hot fudge.



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You can thank TOAD later. Open daily 10am-10.30pm. Vasa Vasa. Al Muneera. Al Raha Beach (02 555 6484).

BEST MOCHA:

Teuscher from Switzerland brews their espresso drinks with the finest chocolate in all the world. Their mocha is made from the finest, rich Swiss chocolate.

If the mocha doesn't satisfy your sweet tooth, the champagne truffle will. Sample it on the side.

Open daily 8am-11.30pm. Teuscher. Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 681 1108).

CLEVEREST COLD-BREW:

Again, this can be found at Leopolds of London. Its cold brew is unique in Abu Dhabi, made using a Kyoto cold-drip technique that takes eight hours to brew with cold water and ice. The result is a delicious cup of smooth and refreshing coffee. If you like your brew cold and simple, this is the one to try.

Open 9am-midnight. Leopolds of London, Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 665 4776).

BEST LOCAL FLAVOUR:

Café Arabia has been an institution in the capital for decades. With art exhibitions, a small library and crafts for sale, this café definitely has a laid-back atmosphere. The café has served its coffee to a long list of foreign dignitaries and artists whose pictures paper the walls beside the art. The Arabiaccino is a must try if you want to sample the local flavours of coffee plus slightly spicy cardamom.

Open daily 8am-10.30pm. 15th Street, Al Mushrif (02 643 9699).

BEST COFFEE AND PEOPLE-WATCHING:

Grab a Turkish coffee, sit outside and enjoy. Almaz by Momo offers fantastic views of the Arabian Sea and of its diverse clientele all enjoying coffee and often shisha in the manner of their country people. The food is always excellent. The wait staff are courteous, knowledgeable and prompt. Open 10am-1am. Almaz by Momo. Galleria Mall, Sowwah Square (02 676 7702).

BEST FLAT WHITE:

Situated just off the lobby of Le Royal Meridien, WhEAT café has a minimalistic and chic décor. Most diners come for the venue's selection of bread, but what you may not know is that whEAT makes a superior flat white that will satisfy even the most discerning coffee aficionado.

Open daily 6am-10pm. Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi, Khalifa Bin Zayed Street (02 674 2020).

BEST LONG BLACK:

The Australian chain, The Coffee Club, has a new location in Yas Mall and boasts the best Long Black in town. Their version of the classic long black coffee is made with with The Coffee Club's Signature Blend. As you'd expect, it's topped with the smoothest espresso crema around guaranteed to wake you up.

Open 8.30am-10pm. The Coffee Club. Yas Mall. Yas Island (800 927 6255).

BEST ANTI-WIFI COFFEE:

This is a tie between the Shabby Chic Café and the Third Place café. Both café's offer the option of plugging in to wifi but most customers distracted by chatting over the yummy coffee instead. You won't find customers on their phones in these places! Open 8am-10pm. Shabby Chic Café. Golden Tower Building, Near Al Mamoura Building, Al Muroor Road, Al Nahyan (02 643 7497). Open 8am-11pm. The Third Place Café. Corniche road, Villa T3 (02 681 1877).

BEST COMMUTER CUP:

Urban Bites offers a premium blend of coffee called Harrar, which is made of a wild and exotic Arabica beans from the South Eastern part of Ethiopia, which is home to the finest coffees in the world. The gourmet coffee is roasted medium with a full-body, blueberry



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WHERE TO BUY BEANS AND BREWERS:

LOCALLY ROASTED BEANS:

Coffee Planet strives to produce 100 percent Arabica coffee roasted locally in Dubai. It took years of expertise, to find the right people, equipment and green coffee beans to create perfectly roasted beans for your morning sips. From fantastic blends to single origin beans, there's a bean to suit every palate, and who doesn't love to shop locally? Coffee Planet coffee can be found in such markets are Lulus and Souq Planet.



ORGANIC BEANS:

A fantastic selection of organic coffee beans can be found at Organics Café in the Nation Galleria Mall. They carry everything from organic whole beans to chlorine-free coffee filters to coffee granules for the lazier coffee lovers amongst us.

Organic Foods and Café, Nation Galleria Mall, Nation Towers (02 616 6999).

BEANS THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK:

Lulus Hypermarket in Mushrif mall has an amazing array of coffee blends and they are not very inexpensive – bit of a surprise eh? The Ethiopian Sidamo and Java Estate come highly recommended and are worth a try if you are looking for new beans in a convenient setting. These two blends are sold at Dhs99 per kilo. Lulus Hypermarket Roastery. Mushrif Mall. Mushrif (02 690 4422).

BREWERS:

Jones the Grocer and Leopolds of



London sell a range of fine brewing machines from the Chemex, the simple pour over to the Manual one shot and even a small version of the enormous Kyoto drip machine.

JONES:

Dhs ___ for a pour over
Dhs ___ for a Chemex
Dhs ___ for Hario V60 filters

LEOPOLDS:

The Syphon, Dhs950
The Chemex (sm) Dhs695, (lg) Dhs750
The Manual One shot, Dhs2500
The Kyoto drip machine (sm), Dhs2500

TOAD's coffee pilgrimage was made

This is Fred. Say hi Fred...



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COFFEE LAB

Leopold's of London is Abu Dhabi's new oasis for that perfect cup of coffee, once an elusive find in the city. This newest hip café and braserie brewed its first cup in August 2014 at the Nation Galleria and has been an instant success with capital residents.

Leopold's draw is the coffee lab, where baristas brew coffee from Ethiopia and Kenya via many unique methods. Their famously smooth cold brew is made using a Kyoto cold-drip technique that takes eight hours to brew with cold water and ice, which result is a outstanding cup of cold coffee.

For traditionalists looking for a steaming brew, try a cup of Joe brewed with one of the various techniques available; from their traditional pour over to the chemex technique to the manual shot to get the perfect espresso. If you have deprived of a good cup of coffee since your arrival to the city, Leopold's can quench your thirst. *TOAD* sat down with



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Leopold's senior barista, Fred Owino, to learn about the Coffee Lab.

Tell us about the coffee lab?

We roast our own beans and create blends that are perfect for the right use. For example, we have 80 per cent/20 per cent Arabica – Robusta blend for our milky coffee such as lattes and cappuccinos. Then we have a 100 per cent Arabica for our black coffee's and single origin beans for our speciality coffees. But as we roast we can change these up as we want. Then we have seven methods of preparation that are quite impressive.

What is the significance of having so many?

We have seven different methods of brewing coffee. The always favourite Italian espresso; Chemex which is a pour over method and perfect for sharing; manual shot at table side espresso experience; syphon, a vacuum method that gives a true lab experience and lastly Kyoto, a cold drip method from Japan. These are complemented by two traditional methods, Turkish and Arabic. The significance of having so many is that we aim to keep our guests engaged and to get them in to coffee outside of their morning cappuccino. It's working, our specialty brewing methods are becoming hugely popular.

Tell me about your famous 'cold brew'?

Our Kyoto coffee is so named because the method was developed in Kyoto, Japan. Cold brew in general has been around a little while longer, but it was the Japanese that crafted these stunning machines that dedicated their lives to cold brew perfection. It's a process of brewing light, refreshing and deeply flavoured coffee but allowing single drops of ice cold triple filtered water pass through course ground fresh coffee beans. It takes eight hours and gives a stunning flavour profile unattainable in hot brew methods.

Why do we still use antique brewing methods over more technologically advanced methods?

Well, Turkish and Arabic I would say are old methods and they remain prevalent due to their quality and cultural significance. The Syphon was developed in 1930's Germany so it's quite old, but never really became popular till the early 2000s when Japan started making the units for a more progressive purpose, nowadays though people think it's very modern. Chemex is a pour over filter coffee so the process is antique, but the method of doing it table side in a wood wrapped glass science beaker is quite new. I actually think the most modern methods are the oldest, just being reinvented and made cool again.

How do you help a customer find the right cup of coffee?

Firstly our menu is quite creative, so that's a good ice breaker which gets the guest's asking questions. Once they do it's a simple process of asking what they look for in a coffee and then pairing that with a brewing method. If they say they like a light black coffee we suggest a single origin bean from Kenya which we roast very lightly in a Chemex method. If they are looking for an intense espresso we suggest our super premium 100 per cent Arabica in the Manual shot.

What would you say to someone who doesn't like coffee?

"Not all coffee is the same, what do you like?" is often the first comment we get. Then we can discuss the process which gets them at least interested to give something new a try.

How might you convince them to try