



DUBAI DESIGN WEEK
 Staged in partnership with Dubai Design District, Dubai Design Week is the Middle East's largest creative festival covering a range of disciplines including architecture, products, furniture, and interior and graphic design. It acts as a catalyst for the growth of the design scene in Dubai, attracting over 60 000 visitors during the six-day event.
12-17 November 2018 | dubaidesignweek.ae

Spread across 11 low-rise buildings with pedestrianised sidewalks, alleys and boulevards, D3 (as Dubai Design District is called by insiders) has become a hub for regional and international fashion brands, art galleries, media enterprises, star architects, graphic designers, and furniture and interior design companies of the higher-end variety. A collaborative eco-system of sorts, this is where small businesses exist alongside global players in flexible offices and communal co-working spaces, with cutting-edge infrastructure to match.

Exhibitions, talks, events and a series of swanky pop-ups keep visitors to Dubai's trendiest neighbourhood on their toes – be that in the comfort of sneakers when the annual footwear and street culture showdown Sole DXB takes place, or in high heels, strutting their stuff down the catwalk when the fashion pack set up camp during Fashion Forward, arguably the region's most important runway event. There are casual and relaxed street-style eateries aplenty along the district's wide and stylish walkways, a novelty in terms of pedestrian experience in Dubai comparable only with the Financial District's batch-blueprint or City Walk's open-air layout nearby.

During lunch hours, The Lighthouse, with its cool, calm and carefully curated concept store and kitchen, is the hot ticket. Operating a strict walk-in policy, it's the unofficial canteen of the creative set and a firm city favourite for weekend brunch. Half-concept store, half-restaurant, it's also the go-to gift shop for design aficionados looking for swish tabletop accessories, handmade glassware and coffee-table books, while the all-day kitchen offers Mediterranean-inspired dishes and freshly baked *Viennoiserie*. After work, the aperitivo crowd takes over this neighbourhood meet-up to the tune of nu-disco beats. Not that far away, French fare is served at Chez Charles along with a fine selection of wines. It's an ultimate power-lunch destination, where the movers and shakers of the fashion industry come to cook up Dubai's glamorous parties as Chanel, Fendi, Burberry, Hugo Boss and friends entertain their regional HQs in D3. For a more informal dining experience, hungry hearts can head to Akiba Dori, the new-generation resto-bar for lovers of Japanese street food. A food hall-style indoor alleyway presents seven storefronts serving everything from bar food to 'Tokyopolitan' fusion pizzas cooked in wood-fired ovens in less than a minute.

While Dubai's design quarter is definitely not short of dining options, it also delivers on the shopping front. From international furniture-design brands to local fashion and jewellery designers, D3 has it all. Most prominent, perhaps, is the presence of an array of concept stores, a trend that has swept Dubai in recent times. At Selectshop Frame, a Japanese-style culture store, visitors will find a wide

DESIGN CAPITAL

Located in what has come to be known as the Middle East's design capital, Dubai Design District is the undisputed home of the region's creative community and a shrewd coming together of slick shopping venues, zippy eateries and a vibrant mix of businesses in a city that has it all

TEXT **STEFAN HOTTINGER-BEHMER**



range of handcrafted products or ‘timeless items’ curated around the concept of ‘permaculture’. Vintage books, stationery, homeware, apparel, toys, accessories, you name it, and Selectshop Frame will have the hip version of it in store. And what would an authentic concept-store experience be without the appropriate hand-dripped coffee to match? Each cup of Selectshop Frame’s artisanal, ultra-sustainable brew takes three-and-a-half minutes to make and while your ‘Sunny Latte’ is being prepared, a retro selection of vinyls will keep you company. Just next door is Montroi, a concept store with a clear commitment to the needs of frequent travellers, created to ‘celebrate nomadism’ through handmade travel bags and accessories, fragrances, curated city guides, cultural talks and events. It’s the brainchild of mod-nomad Enrique Hormigo, whose offerings are defined by their resistance, with a focus on ageing well and being as light as possible. ‘Our products are designed for longevity and are timeless in style,’ Hormigo explains. ‘There was a time when a bag would last for years and would become more beautiful over time: this is true luxury.’ Unsurprisingly, the handcrafted soft-leather backpacks are a worthy bestseller.

Art-lovers will discover a handful of pop-up galleries around the district, while more permanent addresses are slowly opening their doors. One such gem is East Wing gallery, located on the outer boulevard facing the downtown skyline, with the impressive Burj Khalifa skyscraper poking into the skies. Hailed as one of Dubai’s most promising independent galleries for photo, video and print art, the up-and-coming East Wing promotes international off-the-grid artists and dialogue through photography. Its current exhibition, *Habibi Funk: A Spotlight on Arab Grooves*, runs until late August and ‘traces the steps of a fusion of sounds and artists created in various Arab cities that are geographically distant from one another, yet share a common thread in its vanguard beats’, according to the gallery’s director, Elie Domit.

Due to its mixture of work and play, D3 also caters to the more practical needs of its visitors. Grooming is an essential part of life in Dubai for both men and women, so the neighbourhood includes a healthy dose of well-appointed hairdressers, nail salons, spas and gyms for the essential maintenance routine of any self-respecting hipster. At Chaps & Co, trendy locals and expats come to have their beards perfectly trimmed or to get the latest razor-sharp haircut. The traditional English-style barbershop may have other branches around Dubai, but its D3



YUi restaurant at Selectshop Frame



Chaps & Co



Akiba Dori

DOWNTOWN DESIGN

Downtown Editions is a curated exhibition of bespoke and limited-edition design, providing visitors with the opportunity to buy and commission unique design objects, as well as a rare chance to learn more about the regional design scene. **Part of Dubai Design Week | downtowndesign.com**



TRAVEL

Montroi

outpost is the newest, and is also home to the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE’s) first female barber. Closer to a gentlemen’s club than your standard in-and-out barber, Chaps & Co offers the full palette of grooming services for men, while a women’s salon next door makes sure that no-one misses out on a well-deserved beauty break.

Dubai’s new design epicentre was fashioned after other worldly creative clusters such as London’s Shoreditch, Miami’s Design District and New York City’s Meat Packing District to create a flourishing scene that’s unique in the UAE. ‘We wanted to use the best of everywhere when we began making our own creative hub,’ explains D3’s CEO Mohammad Saeed Al-Shehhi. Phase three will soon boast residential canal-front towers, marinas and a range of painfully cool boutique hotels.

As the district grows and construction around it picks up to deliver luxury housing and five-star accommodation, the foundations for a vibrant community have been set, and D3 is fully operational and a much-loved destination for those in search of a slightly less gentrified Dubai experience. While Dubai Design District follows its inspired ambitions to place itself amongst the world’s leading creative centres, it serves as a charismatic destination for both the local community and its visitors, putting design in Dubai firmly on the map. ■ **dubaidesigndistrict.com**



Fashion Forward



Downtown Design

ADDRESSES

East Wing Gallery
D3 Building 2 | east-wing.org
Instagram | [@eastwingphoto](https://www.instagram.com/eastwingphoto)

Akiba Dori
D3 Building 8 |
Instagram | [@akibadori](https://www.instagram.com/akibadori)

Montroi
D3 Building 7 | montroi.com
Instagram | [@montroi](https://www.instagram.com/montroi)

Selectshop Frame
D3 Building 7 |
selectshopframe.com
Instagram | [@selectshopframe](https://www.instagram.com/selectshopframe)

The Lighthouse
D3 Building 6 | thelighthouse.ae
Instagram | [@thelighthouse_ae](https://www.instagram.com/thelighthouse_ae)

Chaps & Co
D3 Building 6 – Mezzanine Floor |
chapsandco.ae
Instagram | [@chapsandcobarbershop](https://www.instagram.com/chapsandcobarbershop)