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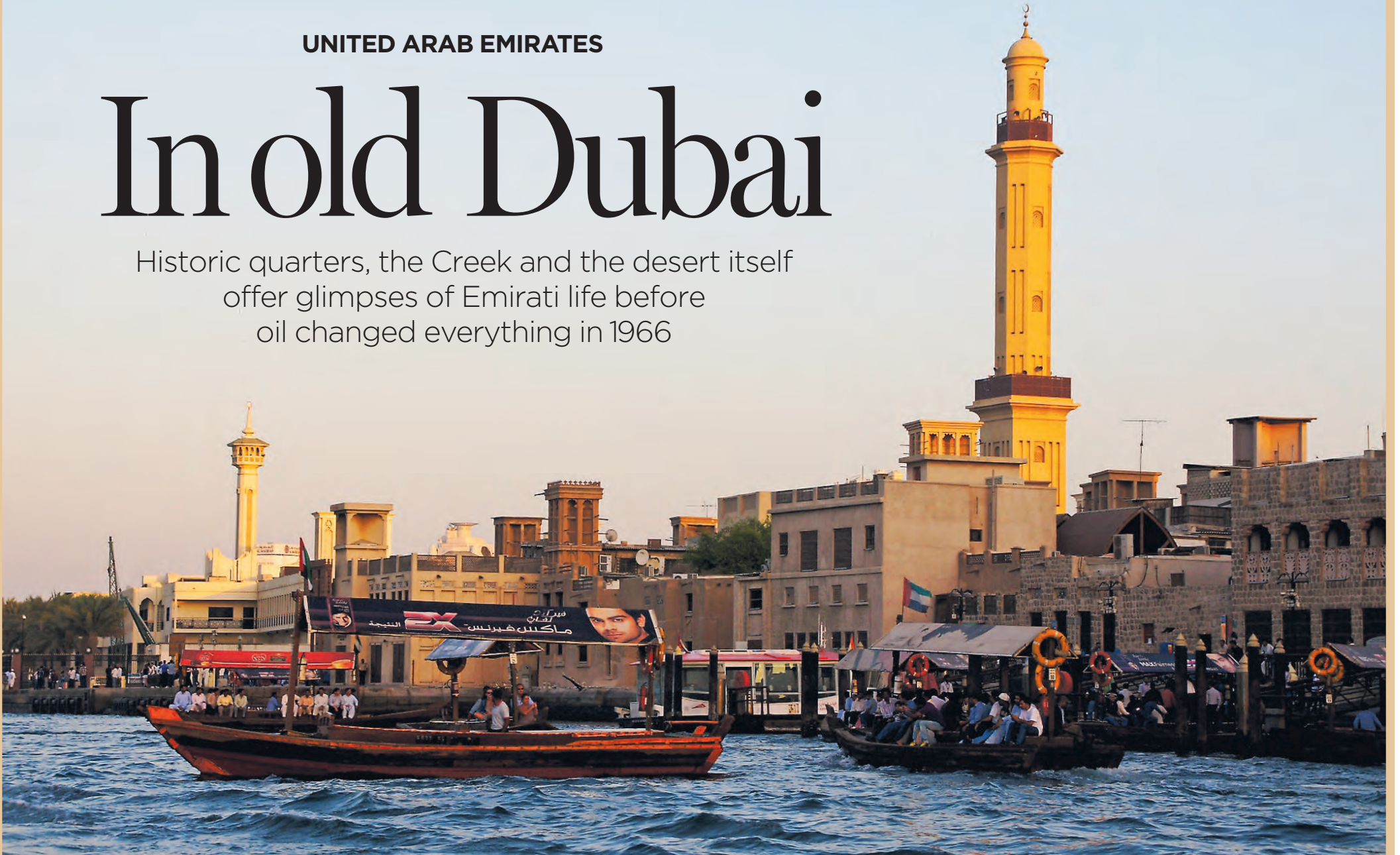
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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In old Dubai

Historic quarters, the Creek and the desert itself offer glimpses of Emirati life before oil changed everything in 1966



Photos by Glen Petrie/Special Contributor

Water buses called abras scamper up and down Dubai Creek (really a harbor) and are a cheap and fun way to get around.



Jumeirah Mosque is one of the few large mosques to welcome non-Muslims and hosts informal Q&A sessions.

By GLEN PETRIE
Special Contributor

DUBAI — I made a surprising discovery in Dubai: history.

The city's reputation as a modern-day megalopolis I knew well, thanks to a powerful publicity machine helped along by stunts such as Tom Cruise climbing on the world's tallest building for *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*. So I was pleased to find that I could leave the malls and towers behind and step into Dubai's authentic past.

In Bur Dubai (Old Dubai), I parted with one dirham, about 28 cents, to board a crowded wooden *abra*, an open-decked ferry, for a ride on Dubai Creek. Breezes swept away the oppressive heat and blissfully lifted my sweaty shirt from my skin.

See **DUBAI'S** Page 5K



The port of Dubai grew as a center for East-West trade. Spices such as these were traditionally a hot commodity.

TEXAS COAST

Reel in Galveston's fun new lures

Attractions grow for spring break and beyond

By HELEN ANDERS
Cox Newspapers

GALVESTON — No doubt about it; this island has its mojo back.

The Strand's shops, ravaged in September 2008 by Hurricane Ike, are now filled with

shoppers, and after a record summer for tourism, Galveston anticipates a busy spring break featuring new attractions and restaurants that capitalize on history, nature and, of course, the treasures of the Gulf of Mexico.

A look at what's new:

A block from the Strand, **Haunted Mayfield Manor** (2313 Harborside Drive, hauntedmayfieldmanor.com, \$10), which opened in September,

offers a 20-minute tour through dark and scary rooms of a building that housed a morgue after the 1900 hurricane.

Apparently there was, indeed, a Dr. Mayfield who did autopsies, so there's some history behind this scary tour, whose posed skeletons are less frightening than the darkness and the constant bumps-in-the-night from banging furniture, rising tomb lids, haunted

vacuum cleaners and such.

Next door, an interactive museum called **Pirates! Legends of the Gulf Coast** (piratesgulfcoast.com), which opens this Friday, explores ever-popular lore about gulf pirate Jean Lafitte and others who say "Arrrrr!" You'll learn the truth about how pirates lived and looted, and kids can play a cannon-shooting game.

See **HAUNTED** Page 5K



Austin American-Statesman

The newly opened Jimmy's on the Pier, part of the rebuilt 89th Street Pier, is drawing raves for its fish tacos.



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Dubai's past as desert crossroad

Continued from Page 1K

Not a creek at all but a slim, serpentine harbor, this is where Dubai began, its reason for being. A branch of the Bedouin tribe Bani Yas settled here in 1833, led by Maktoum bin Butti, founding not only Dubai but the al-Maktoum dynasty that still rules today. Soon it became a busy port of fishers, traders, pearl divers and merchants. Dubai's entrepreneurial spirit arose early: By 1894 it was a free-trade port, stealing business from its neighbors.

Electronics, not pearls

It is still a duty-free port, and the Creek's piers remain crowded with colorful wooden dhows that continue the business of re-export, as they have always done. Today the goods on board are not spices and pearls but TVs, refrigerators and other detritus of modern life, brought to Dubai in containers from the factories of the Far East to be dispersed throughout the region.

I alighted from the abra on the Deira side of the Creek to explore the Dhow Wharfage and its frenetic activity, bantering with Iranian and Afghan crewmen. Then I was swept into the dark channels of Deira's souks. The spice souk is a nose-twitching rabbit warren of tiny shops offering every imaginable dried spice: frankincense, myrrh, cumin, cinna-

mon, tamarind, cardamom and countless others. The stalls are traditionally manned by expatriate Iranians, just as they have been from the beginning. (Nearly 90 percent of Dubai's residents are non-nationals.)

From there I found myself in the gold souk, which is more of a pedestrian mall than the souks of old, with row upon row of glass-fronted shops. When Japan found a way to cultivate pearls in the 1940s, Dubai's pearl industry died and the focus switched to gold, another case of Dubai reinventing itself. It's still one of the best places to buy the yellow metal, competitively priced and strictly regulated.

Taking an abra back to the Bur Dubai side, I walked to the Shindagha area at the mouth of the Creek and visited the restored former home of the royal family, Sheik Saheed al-Maktoum House. It's a traditional though grand example of Arabian housing, with mud plaster over coral limestone bricks. I paused for a refreshing lime juice with mint on a second-floor terrace, watching the harbor traffic. The renovated Shindagha area has become a popular evening hangout, with a host of alfresco restaurants and waterside promenades.

The nearby Bastakia Quarter, once home to wealthy pearl merchants, has been restored in Disneylike perfection, any natural patina it might have had burnished away, but it



Photos by Glen Petrie/Special Contributor

Sheik Saheed al-Maktoum House is the restored former home of Dubai's royal family.

does offer further examples of traditional Emirati architecture. The lanes and alleys were made narrow to provide shade to pedestrians and to speed the velocity of breezes that come off the Creek.

There are several fine wind tower houses here. Long before air conditioning, these courtyard-style homes used towers rising as high as 20 feet to capture winds and funnel them down to the rooms.

I stood under a wind tower and enjoyed its delightful effectiveness at a re-created home in the Dubai Museum. Housed in the Al-Fahidi Fort — Dubai's oldest building, built in 1799 — the museum uses an imaginative walk-through design to step visitors through history.

Black gold

The final chapters are most shocking: Dubai was a small town of mud-walled houses as recently as the 1950s, with few schools or hospitals and an average life expectancy of just 45 years.

Oil was discovered in 1966, and everything changed overnight. Now Dubai nationals enjoy benefits such as free education and health care, and a more modern life expectancy of 72 years.

The history of Dubai is the story of two interdependent peoples: the people of the sea and the people of the desert. Today's Emiratis are thoroughly modern urban dwellers, but they still have a special



Dubai Tourism

You can find good prices on gold jewelry at Dubai's gold souk.

feeling for the desert, and often return to it to reconnect with their roots.

Desert "safaris" and "dune bashing" trips have become the top excursions here. I signed up for a sunset ride over the dunes and rode along with a convoy of large SUVs into a nearby section of the vast and notoriously inhospitable desert known as the Empty Quarter.

With partially deflated tires, we bounded like joy-riding teenagers up and down the dunes, then settled into a desert camp for a traditional feast. As the sky darkened, I lounged on a carpet on the sand and tried smoking apple-infused tobacco in a sheesha pipe. All the lamps were darkened so that we could lie back and watch the profusion of stars and listen only to the silence of this empty place.

I knew that not far away



Dubai sparkled, but for a moment I felt what it must have been like for the Bedouins, living bravely alone and at one with the desert.

Glen Petrie is a Toronto writer and photographer.



Desert safaris, usually involving overnight camping among the dunes, are popular excursions.

Haunted mansion, pirate museum add to Galveston's fun

Tickets: \$10 for adults and \$6.75 for kids.

A couple of blocks away, the popular **Tremont House** hotel (2300 Ships Mechanic Row, 1-877-999-3223, bit.ly/v3AHrp), in an 1879 building, recently opened a comfortably furnished, highly romantic rooftop bar that's open Wednesday through Friday. If it's chilly or foggy, you'll be provided a blanket.

Rates here start at \$159 during spring break — a terrific deal, especially since Tremont guests have signing privileges at sister property Hotel Galvez, which has an elegant spa.

Ever-popular **Moody Gardens** (1 Hope Blvd., moodygardens.com) has reopened its Rainforest Pyramid, now enhanced with a canopy walkway that offers a bird's-eye view from 17 to 35 feet up, as well as a butterfly garden.

You'll see colorful birds, skittering little lizards and, if you're lucky, free-roaming monkeys and a sloth. Anything that might bite, such as an alligator, lives behind glass, obviously. The array of plants is also impressive, from orchids to fragrant cinnamon and cloves.

Giant otters (up to 6 feet long) have a new playground,

and other glassed-in exhibits showcase lorises (an Asian primate), porcupines (they drool), several kinds of bats (including vampires, which feed on cow blood), spiders and snakes.

By March, when most Texans take their spring break, a Bodies Revealed exhibit (one of those fascinating programs that reveal real human bodies and organs) will open, as well as a 4-D version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

A ticket for all Moody Gardens' features, including 3-D and 4-D movies, the Aquarium Pyramid, the Rainforest Pyramid, Discovery Museum and more, is \$49.95. Family passes and other combination tickets are also available.

Next to Moody Gardens, the **Lone Star Flight Museum** (2002 Terminal Drive, lsfm.org), offers not only a look at vintage warbirds (\$8 adult, \$5 child) but the opportunity to fly in aircraft ranging from a B-17 Flying Fortress to an open-cockpit PT-17 Stearman.

The new plane is the P-51 Mustang, a sleek fighter. And this is a trainer version with a full set of controls in the back, so guess what: You get to fly the plane with an instructor on board. It's painted with the colors of Galveston Gal, the plane of local World War II pilot Ray Lancaster.

Museum president Larry Gregory says the rides are crafted to the comfort levels of the fliers, and out of many hundreds of riders, nobody has thrown up yet. The cost starts at \$225 for a half-hour flight and goes up to \$1,995 for the P-51. Ride opportunities start at age 12 for multiseat planes and age 18 for smaller ones.

You'll notice the Flagship Hotel is finally gone from its pier at Seawall Boulevard at 25th Street, and construction equipment is sitting on it. The Landry's empire promises that by sometime this summer, you'll see its new Pleasure Pier, with 16 rides and a restaurant, on this pier.

For new dining, check out **Jimmy's on the Pier**, which opened this fall on the rebuilt 89th Street Pier off Seawall Boulevard, for burgers and fish tacos.

Farther north, the ever-popular Spot (3204 Seawall Blvd.) has grown another bar. **Rum Shack** now sits atop the Tiki Bar, bringing the bar count at this aggregation of food and beverage — known collectively as Island Famous — to four (Drip and Squeeze are the other two). The complex is especially slammed during sports events.

Raw oysters that haven't been pasteurized are still a bit tricky to find, but they do exist.



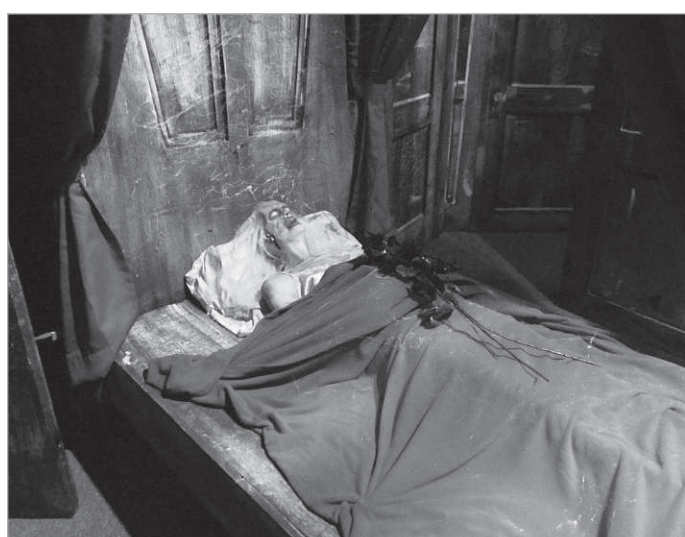
Austin American-Statesman

Rum Shack is the latest addition to the Spot's long-popular collection of bars that overlook the Gulf of Mexico.

A good place to get them: 2-year-old **Gumbo Bar**, 2105 Post Office St. (also called Avenue E), where you can sit outside and people-watch.

Galveston's port is now playing host to more cruise

ships than ever, too. Call a travel agent to get comparisons of their offerings and rates. A few days in Galveston followed by a cruise sounds like a memorable family vacation.



Haunted Mayfield Manor

If you're dying for something different, check out Haunted Mayfield Manor. Shown is a scary bride in a bedroom.