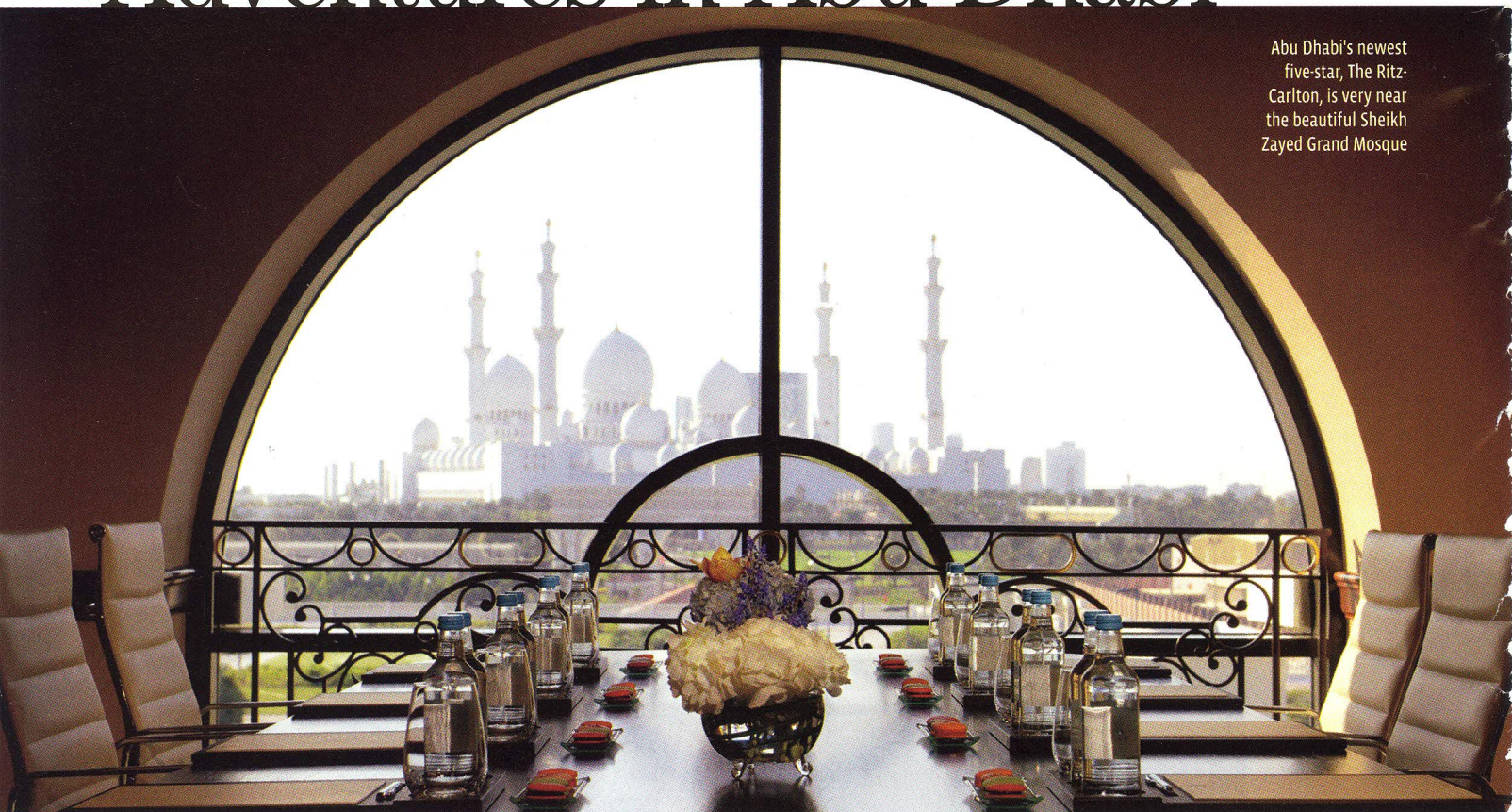


# Adventures in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi's newest five-star, The Ritz-Carlton, is very near the beautiful Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque



What lured Tiger Woods to Abu Dhabi last January and caused him to miss the Farmers Insurance Tournament at Torrey Pines? Golf, of course. He made his debut at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship, a PGA European Tour Event.

Beautiful golf courses are just one reason increasing numbers of Americans are traveling to Abu Dhabi. The Emirate's 400-mile coastline on the Persian Gulf, an inland playground of enormous sand dunes, and legendary Arabian hospitality are other significant factors. Until now, neighboring Dubai has been the tourism star of the United Arab Emirates, but that may soon be changing.

Abu Dhabi's big plans include the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi designed by Frank Gehry (Walt Disney Concert

Hall) due to open in 2017 in the new Saadiyat Island Cultural District. The island will also be home to the Zayed National Museum designed by Lord Norman Foster, opening in 2016, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi, 2015. The Louvre is developing its own permanent collection, which will be enriched by loans from 12 French museums including Musée du Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, and the Centre Pompidou.

Open since 2007, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque is one of the world's largest — with a capacity for 40,000 worshippers. An architectural work of art featuring 80 domes and 24 gold-plated chandeliers, the mosque welcomes visitors daily and offers complimentary tours. Sheikh Zayed was the father of the UAE and a respected international statesman.

In addition to golf, Abu Dhabi's

recreation options include sand boarding and skiing, camel racing, and falconry — the sport of sheikhs. Did you know that falcons travel in first class on the UAE's two international airlines — Etihad and Emirates? The world-class Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital offers tours and a chance to learn about this aristocratic desert sport.

Other fun stuff? Ferrari World, the largest indoor theme park on the planet, is great for kids and car guys, who might also enjoy the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix (November 1-3, 2013). Sailors should be in town for the Volvo Ocean Race Abu Dhabi Stopover, December 17, 2014 to January 3, 2015.

Of the many options for bedding down in Abu Dhabi, Emirates Palace is the best known. The opulent hotel, managed by Kempinski, occupies a beautiful stretch of private beach in

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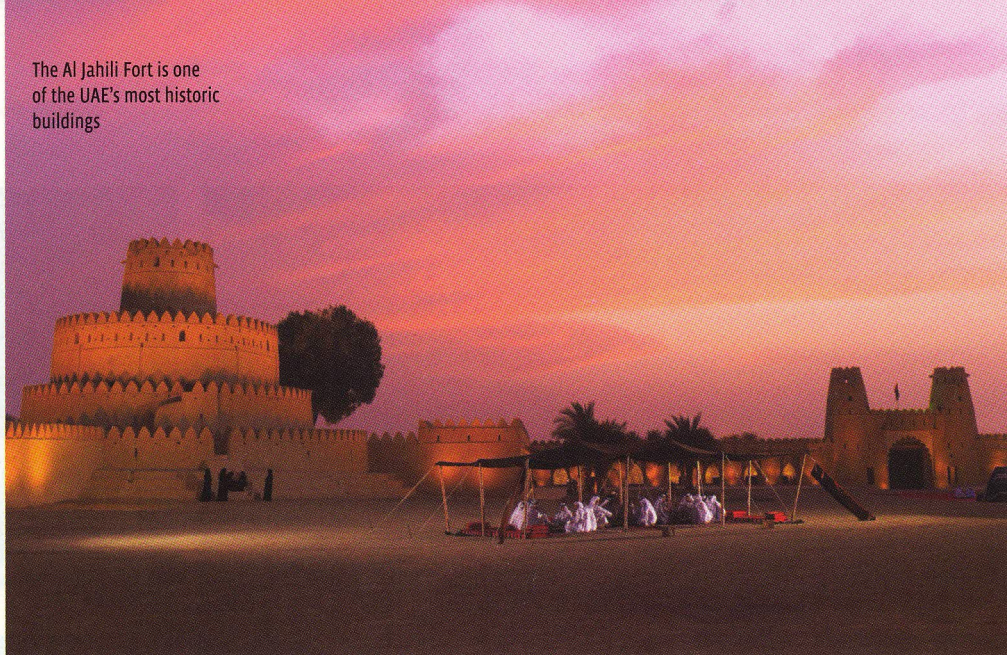
the heart of Abu Dhabi and is adorned with copious amounts of gold and marble. Guests enjoy two lushly landscaped swimming pools, a lavish Moroccan-style spa, restaurants ranging from international to Emirati, and the view of luxury yachts in the hotel's marina.

The Park Hyatt Hotel and the St. Regis Hotel — both five-stars — are located on Saadiyat Island. In March, The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal opened in close proximity to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. Inspired by Renaissance architecture and the city of Venice, the hotel is located on the waterfront and boasts a sandy beach and a 60-yard pool, one of the largest in the UAE.

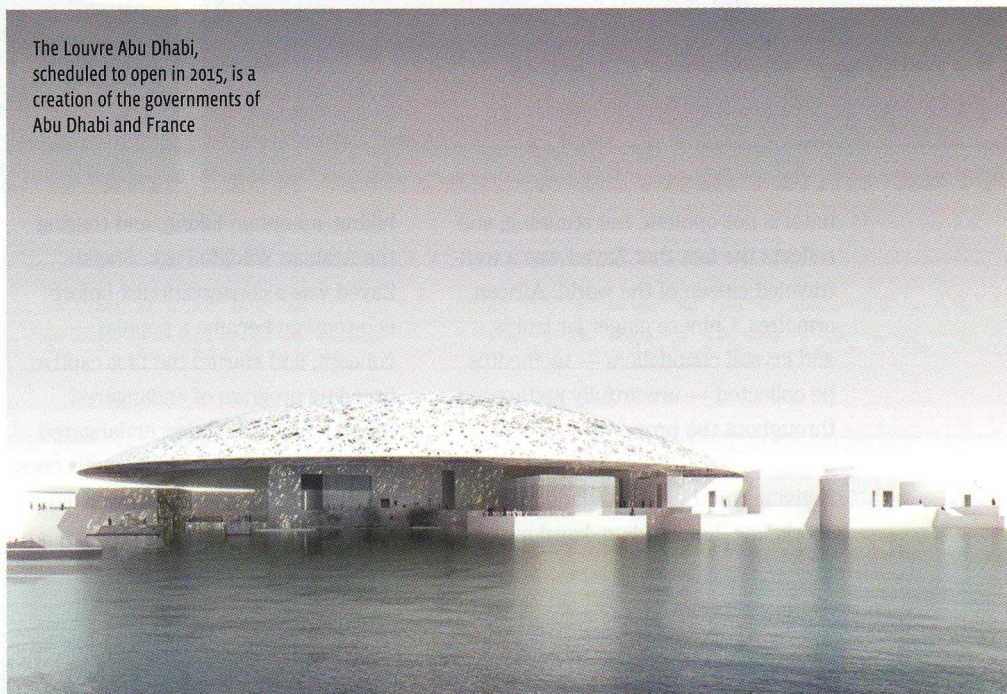
There's plenty to do in the city of Abu Dhabi, but if you'd like to explore the emirate (think San Diego city and county), Desert Islands Resort & Spa by Anantara, located on Sir Bani Yas Island about 150 miles out of town, is a great side trip for two or three days.

The island was the private retreat of Sheikh Zayed, and his guesthouse is now a hotel with 64 rooms and suites — all with sea views and balconies. The interior design of the >>

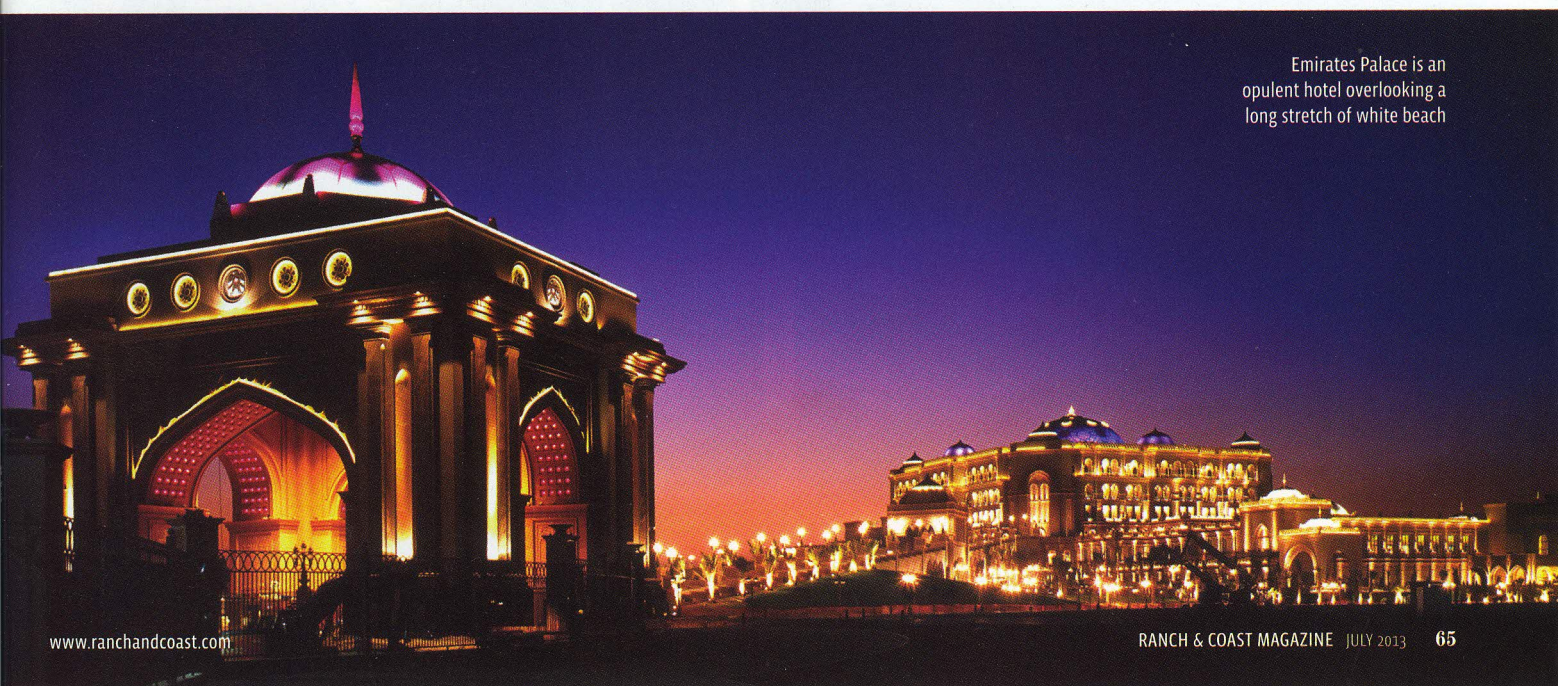
The Al Jahili Fort is one of the UAE's most historic buildings



The Louvre Abu Dhabi, scheduled to open in 2015, is a creation of the governments of Abu Dhabi and France



Emirates Palace is an opulent hotel overlooking a long stretch of white beach







Skateboarding legend Tony Hawk is pictured here sandboarding the dunes of Abu Dhabi



Only in Abu Dhabi: an indoor Ferrari theme park

« hotel is not opulent, but stunning, and reflects the fact that Zayed was a well-traveled citizen of the world. African armoires, Chinese ginger jar lamps, and crystal chandeliers — mementos he collected — are artfully juxtaposed throughout the property.

Activities on the resort island include snorkeling, horse riding, kayaking,

hiking, mountain biking, and touring the Arabian Wildlife Park. Sheikh Zayed was a conservationist before eco-tourism became a popular concept, and started the first captive breeding program of endangered Arabian animals. Today, endangered African cheetahs (the indigenous ones are extinct in the UAE), as well as Asiatic sand gazelles, Arabian

Mountain gazelles, striped hyenas, and Arabian oryx thrive in this location.

And one last thought: Woods visited Abu Dhabi in January — and so should you. Abu Dhabi is not only a hot new destination — it's also one of the warmest. Plan to be there between November and March.

([www.visitabudhabi.ae](http://www.visitabudhabi.ae)) ELIZABETH HANSEN



Abu Dhabi's pristine Corniche beachfront is popular with local families and international visitors