

# What's On Abu Dhabi

## February 25, 2014 – Part 1

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# DELVE INTO THE PAST

A festival of tradition at Abu Dhabi's oldest building, Qasr Al Hosn

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## February 25, 2014 – Part 2

مهرجان قصر الحصن  
Qasr al Hosn Festival

QASR AL HOSN

**P**eek into the past and the traditions of Emirati culture at the Qasr Al Hosn Festival this month. The centrepiece of the festival is, of course, the 250-year old Qasr Al Hosn itself. As well as exhibitions and shows, visitors can see the restoration work being done on the building.

Perhaps the star of the festival will be *Cavalía*, a unique theatre production featuring 41 horses galloping across a stage while acrobats and aerialists perform in front of a giant video screen. Cirque du Soleil's co-founder Normand Latourelle says, "People have felt a connection to horses for thousands of years and we still feel it today. *Cavalía* combines acrobatics and performers with horses, and many of them will be moving freely across the stage."

### There are four main sections explored at the Qasr Al Hosn Festival

01

#### Marine

The sea was central to the development of local heritage and played a huge part in the economy. This section will introduce visitors to maritime activities such as the techniques of casting nets. **Dhow building:** large wooden vessels were paramount to the



pearl and fishing industries **Al Shashah building:** smaller boats made for fishing closer to the shore. **Fish net making:** they might all look the same to us, but there were different kinds of knots used, depending on what kind of catch you were after. **Al Gargor making:** small fish traps that resembled baskets. **Fish salting:** visitors can learn how the older tribes preserved fish. **Pearling:** this trade brought early wealth to the region.

02

#### Abu Dhabi Island

Visitors can see aspects of older Emirati culture on the main Abu Dhabi Island. Many of these elements have survived and are still present in modern day life. **Traditional games:** pastimes used to entertain the young ones such as Arabat Al Hadid, Gabbah and Al Hobail. **Arabian Horses:** an iconic part of Arabian culture,

equestrian lovers will get to ride and meet some of the animals. **Henna:** this skin painting art has become popular with the expat community.

### THE VENUE

Sheikh Dhiyab Bin Isa, who led the Bani Yas tribes, built Qasr Al Hosn in 1761. It was a watchtower to protect the most valuable of finds back then: fresh water. Fast forward to 2014 and under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces, the slow restoration of this piece of history is being undertaken. The annual festival is meant to show the public this old relic, as well as introduce expats to elements of Emirati life.

**Al Bokhor:** the popular and strong smelling incense. **Al Sadoo:** handicrafts made by local women, usually using wool or cotton. **Abu Dhabi Island souk:** spectators can purchase authentic and traditional hand-made crafts.

03

#### Desert

Being surrounded by desert moulded many aspects of Emirati culture. **Chami and chabab:** traditional dishes that could survive the environment. **Camels:** one of the most iconic UAE symbols and vital to crossing the terrain. **Bedouin etiquette:** visitors will learn important social rules adhered to by locals. **Arabic coffee:** saffron infused java. **Falconry:** these beautiful birds helped tribes survive by allowing them to hunt in the desert – they remain a status symbol to this day. **Salouki:** these dogs were used for hunting and protection.

04

#### Oasis

Watering holes in the desert quickly became hubs for farmers and settlers. **Falaj:** old techniques for finding water. **Khos:** handicrafts made by Emirati ladies, using material from palm trees. **Dates:** a prime source of nutrition found everywhere. **Palm tree climbing:** palm trees need to be stripped down to keep bearing fruit and the locals developed ways to climb and tend to them.

February 20 to March 1

📍 Qasr Al Hosn, opposite Al Muhairiy Centre, Khalidiya, Abu Dhabi, free, Cavalía Dhs250. Taxi: Qasr Al Hosn. [facebook.com/QasrAlHosnFestival](https://www.facebook.com/QasrAlHosnFestival)