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It only takes seven hours to fly from Glasgow to Dubai but when you arrive, you'll feel like you've travelled far into the future.

The chrome-covered arrivals terminal is so shiny, you have to tread carefully to avoid slipping. At many airports, all you get when your passport is handed back is a steely stare. Not here. Immigration staff hand you a complimentary 5G sim card with 1Gb of data on it in case Dubai isn't covered by your data plan. It soon comes in handy.

The city looks like it was made for Instagram and it's hard to resist snapping away before you've even set foot in it.

As our taxi leaves the airport it looks like we are heading towards a backdrop from Blade Runner. Some skyscrapers are lined with LED lights allowing adverts to stream down their sides while the bulbs on others are arranged like a maze. The towers are so tall their tips are in the clouds and the lights give the haze a golden glow, just like in sci-fi movies. This futuristic feeling is more than skin deep.

It's hazy because the weather is so balmy. Even in winter, the mercury soars past 30 in the day and doesn't dip below 20 at night. In summer, the temperature climbs beyond 40.

It rarely rains so you don't have to worry about being cooped up with crowds indoors. The cloudless skies give a crystal-clear view of the landscape during the day and you'll soon find your neck aches from spending so much time looking up at it.

Skyscrapers in Dubai don't just soar, they twist and turn in intricate shapes which seem to defy physics. One is shaped like a helter skelter, another looks like a teardrop and there's even a giant picture frame, which makes a fancy border for photos of the skyline.

The highlight is the Burj Khalifa, a syringe-like skyscraper which at nearly a kilometre high, is the world's tallest tower. Just looking up at it is dizzying enough but the sights in the plaza down below are equally mesmerising as a series of fountains dance in time to rock ballads when the sun goes down. It's synchronised with psychedelic scenes on the tower but you need to nab a place well in advance of the first performance at 6pm.

For more intelligent thrills, head to Expo City, which opened in October. Home to the best bits of the recent Dubai Expo, it will be instantly familiar to anyone who has been to Disney's science-themed Epcot park in Orlando.

Avant-garde architecture is dotted around the sprawling site. There's a cavernous cream-coloured dome, a pavilion that looks like an upturned satellite dish and another that resembles a giant fidget-spinner. Soaring silvery umbrellas are scattered around

beautifully landscaped grounds. There is a charge to enter the pavilions and although they are all worth a visit, the one themed to transport is best of the bunch. It starts with a trip on the world's largest elevator, which doesn't sound thrilling but is the closest you'll get to a Disney ride without being in the house of the Mouse.

It takes place in a dark circular room with seats around the edge. As the room rises, the roar of car engines and horses echo from hidden speakers in time with a light show on multi-colour LED strips.

When you get out you're met with galloping horses projected on to a curved wall. They symbolise the first form of transport and set the scene for the rest of the pavilion. There are eerily lifelike soaring statues, rugs projected inside mock-ups of ancient Arabic houses and a replica of mission control for a space shuttle. Ironically, Expo

City's most breathtaking attractions are free. The horseshoe-shaped waterfall is a must-see. Water cascades down, seemingly out of nowhere, in time to music written by the composer of Marvel's Iron Man movie theme. It is the perfect place to cool off as the breeze blows spray off the water.

At night, head to the centrepiece dome for a son-et-Lumière show like no other. One show turns the dome into a giant planetarium whilst another makes it seem like it is taking off as buildings scroll down the sides at speed. It makes you feel like the giant steel structure is spinning even though it doesn't move an inch. Tiny multicolour LEDs set into the struts flash in time with the scenes and look like a star field when it finally goes dark.

If you aren't ready to come back down to Earth, the place to stay is Anantara The Palm. Just a 20-minute drive from downtown

Dubai, it feels like you're in another country. Many of its rooms are set inside clusters of coral-coloured chalets on the shores of a sprawling lagoon. Brightly coloured urns stand outside and wooden "welcome home" signs hang on the doors.

It was made for Instagram and that's before you get to the over-water villas. They look like little temples with sharply sloping tiled roofs and dark wooden decking. Glass-bottomed viewing windows are set into it inside the villas and are even illuminated so you can keep tabs on the marine life at night.

If that doesn't satisfy your appetite for adventure, then take a short cab ride to the Motiongate theme park, home to one of the world's most immersive lands.

Based on the Dreamworks animated films, it's entirely indoors which means the scenery can be more elaborate as it isn't exposed to the elements. Shrek's swamp

is covered with exotic reeds, garlands, ornately wrapped gifts and cooking utensils.

The rides are hidden in adjacent buildings so they can't be seen as you walk around. It adds to the anticipation and if you think you know what you're in for because you've been on Dreamworks rides at Universal parks, think again.

The Shrek ride is a new take on the tale as it weaves through a giant puppet show. There's also a high-tech roller-coaster which spins in all directions to face scenes from the movie How to Train Your Dragon. The highlight comes when it bursts out of the ride building and soars around the land inside with full-size Viking village.

Theme parks are still a relatively new phenomenon in the Middle East so crowds are thankfully light. It means you can see all the rides without being crammed into queues – that really is a fairytale ending.

High-tech Middle Eastern city is an Insta hit for luxury and thrill seekers

HIGH LIFE
Adventure Park in Dubai Hills Mall, aerial view of the harbour and skyscrapers, below

Dubai into this futuristic land

