

Taking Care Of Dubai's Heritage

Late president of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, once famously said, "a country that does not keep a track of its past will neither have any present nor future." He was cautioning against overlooking Dubai's cultural heritage, as the city began experiencing an all around growth. Conservation experts regard heritage sites as one of the key areas for preserving one's cultural heritage. This aspect becomes a lot more significant specially in the case of Dubai, since its landscape has dramatically changed since the 1960s. Interestingly, experts assume Dubai's historical period extending as recently as up to 1960, quite modern by the mark of other nations.

With tourism on Dubai government's top agenda, heritage sites are going to play a crucial role in its further promotion. Tourists flock Dubai with a desire of experiencing the magnificent blend of ethnic Arab and modern day infrastructure they have been witnessing to and listening about from various media outlets. They wish to have the firsthand experience of its cultural diversity now that Dubai has been recognised all over the world for very long. And there is no better a way to offer them what they will be looking forward to by preserving some of Dubai's past as it is. This will also fulfil to the wishes of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, in keeping up Dubai's Arab roots alive.

This exercise is harder accomplishing than said though. Dubai's economic turnaround has ensured, the city will keep experiencing multifaceted growth. It will put immense pressure on the existing infrastructure, as plans for the city's modernization keep unfolding on a regular basis. It will specially endanger some precious blocks of architecture that were built prior to 1960 and are still erected up there. Many of these concrete blocks have a very distinct Arabian flavour, which is what perhaps Sheikh Zayed wanted to speak about. The city of Dubai has dramatically expanded since the 1960s, and most of its previous existence has slowly diminished in the process.

Some observers say that the eye-catching blocks of Bastakia by Dubai Creek have to be thankful to Prince Charles for remaining intact, as the prince had objected to their planned demolition some years ago while being on an official visit to the emirate. Bastakia carries some precious signatures of the past with a plethora of traditional wind-tower houses and shady courtyards. The rest could be called a history in making now, as Bastakia gets renowned for its heritage value. It does not only provide the tourists and filmmakers with an opportunity for getting excited about, but also extends a great deal of information to the historians as well.

The UAE's government is now planning to come up with a law, which once passed will prevent any acts of changes or demolition of historic buildings inside the country. Any buildings constructed prior to 1960 will automatically fall under the "historic" segment. About 1,200 buildings are estimated to be declared protected under the new legislation in the entire of UAE. Some people are demanding for the limit of 1960 to be brought down to 1975, so that more traditional houses could be saved in the due course. This seems to be a little too optimistic demand from the administration however, to have any positive opinion about.

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