A Guide To Dubai As The City Of The Future

With its sci-fi-like cityscape, Dubai is emerging as a desert metropolis well beyond its era. Hollywood filmmakers have wasted no time in getting here, with scenes from future-set blockbusters Independence Day: Resurgence and most recently, Star Trek Beyond, filmed in the emirate over the last year. The city may have a starring role among Hollywood big leagues, but beyond the lights and cameras, Dubai's ground-breaking innovations and plans speak of a city invested in the future.

Space-age architecture

When it comes to architectural icons, there's no denying the world's tallest Burj Khalifa, the Cayan Tower (or 'twisty building' as it's locally known) and the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab are the gleaming symbols of Dubai's skyline. They will eventually share the futuristic landscape with The Tower at Dubai Creek Harbour, a pin-like structure topping the Burj Khalifa in height and due to be built in time for Expo 2020. Plans are also underway for the Dubai Steps, a stairway ascending 100 metres into the clouds, and the world's tallest ferris wheel, Ain Dubai, located at the Bluewaters Island development off JBR. Meanwhile, Aladdin City in Dubai Creek will comprise of three adjoining towers shaped like giant genie lamps.

Infrastructure

Innovations and improvements to Dubai's infrastructure are already underway and the plans are swiftly taking shape. The Dubai Canal project, an extension of Dubai Creek which links Business Bay on Sheikh Zayed Road with the Arabian Gulf, is due to be completed in 2023. It will include 200 water homes built on stilts, marinas as well as floatingrestaurants.

In the wake of Dubai's Expo 2020 win, the emirate announced its Smart City project, with the aim to be one of the world's most connected and sustainable cities. The project will use The Internet of Things, in other words increased communication and intelligent connection with machines, people and data, to develop smart infrastructure across life, society, mobility, environment and economy. Dubai is committed to offering ease of communication, and with that in mind, free Wi-Fi zones have been set up in key locations including shopping malls, government buildings and even the beach.

Technology initiatives

The trick to progress is planning. Dubai is already one step ahead with a number of innovation-led initiatives announced this year. According to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, 25 per cent of Dubai's buildings are to be 3D-printed by 2030. Launched last month, the Dubai Future Accelerators, a programme which will invite the world's top innovators to help develop concepts in the city, will focus on development, research, cutting-edge technologies and start-ups. The first project, Museum of the Future, is due to open in 2018 and will explore advancements in health, science, education, energy and technology.

Innovation hubs

When it's completed in 2021, Dubai Design District, or d3, will be the centre of Dubai's creative community, a hipster hub aimed at fostering the growth of the local design industry. An urban enclave for local artists, architects, designers and musicians to engage with the global design community, in the meantime, they host a number of annual design, fashion and art-related events and exhibitions, including Dubai Design Week and Fashion Forward. Meanwhile, smart technology, robotics and wearable tech are the focus of a new digital innovation centre in Dubai Internet City, an off-shoot of global digital agency Accenture. The Digital Acceleration Centre hosts workshops and seminars for students and professionals and encourages clients to take on ground-breaking new technologies.

Transport

You'd only have to get a glimpse of Dubai's superhero-worthy luxury police fleet to know that the emirate has some grand transport innovations up its sleeve. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed says that 25 percent of transportation trips in Dubai will be smart and driverless by 2030, with a 10-seater driverless car having successfully already completed a test run.