

## TRAVEL

## Modern Abu Dhabi rises on ancient Arab site

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

Evelyn Forrest admits that English is the only language she knows and probably the only one she wants to know.

She can't explain why her sons Richard and Chuck have adapted so well to other languages and other cultures. Richard works with the National Wildlife Federation in Japan and speaks fluent Japanese. Chuck works for a British law firm in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and speaks fluent Arabic.

Her globe-trotting children have allowed Forrest, owner of Help-U-Sell South Oakland and a resident of Birmingham, to see places she'd never ventured to otherwise.

In December of 1996, she joined Chuck in Abu Dhabi on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the United Arab Emirates and was surprised to find an ultra modern city with all the comforts of home and then some.

Though she had been to Egypt to visit Chuck in the past, Abu Dhabi sounded a little remote, a little more like those adventure

movies with dusty open market places and jostling crowds.

"I thought it would be dirty, but it wasn't," she said. "Abu Dhabi is very clean."

Her son's interest in the Middle East began in college. "He went to Yale as an undergraduate and went on a dig to Syria with a professor, where they thought the Ark might have been, if it existed at all," she said. "He got to know the people there in the desert small towns. Anyway, he likes the warm weather."

Following law school at the University of Michigan and momentary notoriety for winning \$172,800 on "Jeopardy" in 1990, Chuck Forrest began working with the U.S. Foreign Service in Dubai. He was also stationed for a summer in Egypt. He now handles contract law for the British firm.

"I had gone to Egypt to visit him and he said, you should come here, it's great," Forrest said. "I was impressed by the place. Until recently they wouldn't allow tourists. Now they're building huge hotels and they have beautiful beaches."

The United Arab Emirates, with a population of 1,206,000 is on the south shore of the Persian Gulf and has become prosperous because of oil.

Forrest displays magazine pictures of the city from just 26 years ago that show a scattering of buildings on a bare desertlike landscape. Today the city (347,000 population) is a glowing vision of white skyscrapers, clean streets and an attractively developed waterfront. Many of the buildings, including some spectacular private residences, have been designed by world-famous architects.

The UAE is not as religiously conservative as Saudi Arabia, its neighbor.

"Saudi Arabia is strictly Muslim and the women cover themselves," Forrest said. "But in the Arab Emirates, foreigners don't have to do that. You have to be sensitive to their religious, but it's not religious like Saudi Arabia or Iran just across the gulf."

Forrest said the Arab women were covered in their robes at the market. "But underneath I could see cowboy boots and jeans."

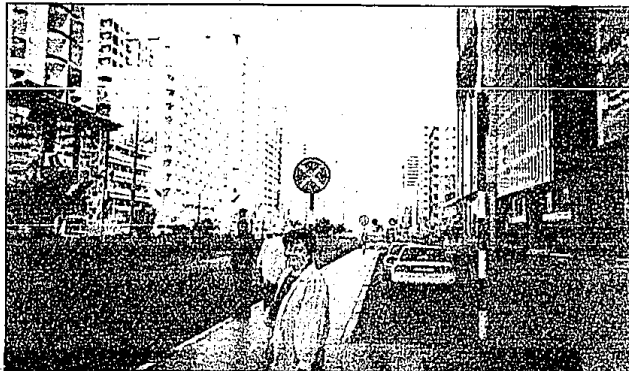
The market in the city is not the open air market usually associated with Arab countries. It is another modern low-rise across from a mosque and surrounded by high-rise office buildings. And it isn't the only place to shop.

"Shoppers can get anything you can get at Somerset, New York City or Beverly Hills, in fact they have more than we have here," Forrest said.

And, though the cities outside of Abu Dhabi have traditional markets and more traditional ways, they also have McDonald's.

"It's kind of sad that everywhere is getting to be like us," Forrest said.

Chuck Forrest lives in a modern high rise apartment house with a beautiful view of the gulf from his window.



Abu Dhabi: Evelyn Forrest found the streets of this United Arab Emirate city bright and modern.

But not everything has changed.

Forrest said men and women dance, separately, in the street to traditional goat-skin bagpipes and drums.

"Camels walk around like cows here, outside the city limits," she said.

She wasn't tempted to try camel riding.

"You have to have them lie down before you get on them and they spit, so I didn't think I'd want to do that," she said.

The people are friendly, Forrest said, though when she and her son encountered a man with two hatchets in Oman, she wasn't too sure. It turned out he just wanted to sell the hatchets.

To top off an interesting visit, Forrest helped Abu Dhabi celebrate the birthday of the sheik and the 25th anniversary of the UAE with fabulous fireworks.



Catching a ride: Usually camels do the carrying in the Middle East, but in this case the camels caught a ride.

Hatchet man: Chuck Forrest discusses buying a hatchet from a man in Oman.



## GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

## TELL US YOUR STORY

We want to hear from you! Have you been someone interesting? Have you had a special adventure? Is there a quiet island you'd like to recommend or a highly promoted place you'd like to warn against? Do you have special tips for other travelers to make their journey easier? Have you met some interesting people in other countries that you'd like others to know about? We want to share your stories and your color pictures on our travel page. Call Hugh Gallagher at 734-953-2118, or fax him at 734-591-7279 or e-mail him at hgallagher@oe.hometecomm.net.

## GO DUTCH

The West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring a trip to Holland, Mich., Wednesday, May 13, for

the annual Holland Tulip Festival.

The trip departs from the West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Center at 7 a.m. The visit will include bleacher seats for the Tulip Festival Parade and a visit to Windmill Island. Cost of the trip is \$65 for West Bloomfield residents and \$80 for non-residents and includes lunch in the Dutch Village at the Queen's Inn. Registration deadline is April 29. Call (248) 738-2500.

## B&amp;B GUIDE

The 1998 Michigan Lake to Lake Bed & Breakfast guide is now available in booklet form and on the Internet website [www.laketolake.com](http://www.laketolake.com).

The Michigan Lake to Lake Association adopted standards and mandatory B&B/Inn inspections for all members in professionalism, hospitality, cleanliness and safety. All listings in the 1998 directory have been inspected and approved and meet these standards.

The directory offers detailed descriptions of B&B/Inns listed by location throughout Michigan. The directory is available for purchase for \$4 check or money

order to Michigan B&B Directory, 3143 Logan Valley Road, Traverse City, MI 49684.

## ENTERTAINMENT '98

The Entertainment '98 city editions are now available offering discounts for hotels, restaurants, sports and cultural attractions. The Entertainment Hotel and Travel Ultimate Savings directory features 60 percent discounts at 5,500 hotels throughout the world.

For more information or to order, call (800) 445-4137 or write 2125 Butterfield Road, Troy, MI 48064.

## CEDAR POINT

Andy Pargh, the "Gadget Guru" or the Today show and USA Today, has named Cedar Point the best roller coaster thrill park in America in his recently published book, "The Gadget Guru's Guide to the Best."

Opened in 1870, Cedar Point is the second oldest operating amusement park in the United States and is home to the largest collection of rides, 60, and roller coasters, 12, in the world.

This summer Cedar Point will

open Power Tower, a 300-foot tall tower that features four 240-foot steel towers and two ride experiences, one going up the tower and the other going down.

## BICYCLE REPAIRS

Ken Kalousek will demonstrate "The Five Most Common Repairs," 10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 11, at REL 17559 Haggerty Road, Northville at Six Mile. Kalousek has been a bicycle technician for 11 years. He will discuss flat tire repair, simple brake and derailleur adjustment, chain repair, minor wheel truing and handlebar adjustment. The program is free.

## WHITE WATER RAFTING

The Edgerunner Ski Club is sponsoring a white water rafting trip to West Virginia, May 20-31. Downpayment is \$50 per person and due on or before Thursday, April 19. Trip includes all-day rafting on Saturday; two-nights camping; buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner Saturday; and an

after-rafting party on Saturday night. Ski Club members pay \$95, non-members pay \$110. Trip is open to anyone older than 18. For more information, contact Schoolcraft College Student Activities Office at (734) 462-4422.

## BOYNE BROCHURE AVAILABLE

The Petoskey-Harbor Springs-Boyne Country Visitors Bureau in northern Michigan is offering a free brochure featuring both weekend and midweek golf packages. Weekend rates start at \$68 per person, double occupancy and include one night's lodging and 18 holes of championship golf with cart. Golfers can choose from 13 world-class courses and 17 places to stay. Courses include seven Boyne USA courses, Dunmaglas and two of the area's newest, Chestnut Valley and Hidden River Golf and Casting Club. For more information, visit the bureau's web site at [www.boynecountry.com](http://www.boynecountry.com) or call toll-free 1-888-31-NORTH for a

free brochure. A brochure on activities in the area for the coming year, including calendar of events highlighting more than 90 festivals from May through October is also available. For this brochure, call the Visitors Bureau at 1-800-845-2828.

## FOUR DIAMONDS

Three restaurants and nine lodging establishments have been awarded AAA's Four Diamond rating for hospitality.

The lodgings are McCamly Plaza Hotel, Battle Creek; The Townsend, Birmingham; The Dearborn Inn and Ritz Carlton, Dearborn; The Athenum Suite Hotel, Detroit; Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids; Radisson Plaza Hotel, Kalamazoo; the Garland, Lewiston; and the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island.

The restaurants are Tribute, Farmington Hills; Webster's, Kalamazoo; and The Lark, West Bloomfield.

## HEY KIDS

The Somerset Collection Invites You To Meet Nestor Fairweather

Come visit Nestor Fairweather, the gentleman rabbit, in the Somerset Garden Village this spring. Nestor will be in his beautiful garden gazebo in the North Grand Court of the Somerset Collection from March 28th to April 11th. It will be a whole lot of fun for everyone. Plus, all the boys and girls who come to see Nestor will receive a special surprise!

To remember this wonderful occasion with Nestor, you can have your picture taken with him! The two of you can remember how much fun you had this spring with a Polaroid picture for only \$10.

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