

# Yalla

ABU DHABI LIFE

## The Wild is Waiting

ANANTARA SIR BANI YAS ISLAND RESORTS IS BACK AND IS READY TO BE EXPLORED AGAIN

- SCHOOL JUST GOT COOL WITH MADAR FARMS •
- FOLLOW ABU DHABI'S TURTLES ON THEIR TREMENDOUS JOURNEY •
- FEEL THE LOVE WITH OUR VALENTINE'S STAYCAYS & DINING SPOTS •

INSIDE: THE ANANTARA SIR BANI YAS ISLAND RESORTS' CHEF SHARES HIS INSPIRATION. ABU DHABI'S PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY EXIT IT ON CROSSING BORDERS. TEAM YALLA VISITS FAE CAFE TO FIND OUT WHAT'S COOKIN'. HEAD TO ABU DHABI MALL FOR SOME FABULOUS VALENTINE'S GIFTS

# One Island

an ocean of experiences

**T**he waiting has finally come to an end as Anantara's three luxurious Resorts on the indisputable Sir Bani Yas Islands reopens its magnificent doors to where the wild is waiting just for you. Ready to surrender its secrets to those who care to explore, be it through the gentle whispers of the Bani Yas Tribe that once roamed the island, the memories of ancient pearl divers or from the alter of the 6th century Nestorian Christian monastery, Sir Bani Yas Island invites you to discover its beautiful shores once again.

*Keep up to date with the Resort on Facebook and Instagram:  
@anantarasirbaniyas*

*To discover more about Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island Resorts, visit [anantara.com/en/sir-bani-yas-abu-dhabi](http://anantara.com/en/sir-bani-yas-abu-dhabi)*





PHOTO: COURTESY OF LUXURIOUS RESORTS & CONTEMPORARIES

## THE WILD IS WAITING

Leave the ordinary far behind and sail to the perfect island hideaway where sheer splendor is king. Experience nature as it should be as you safari across the Savannah, catch glimpses of the wild as it wanders unabated across this idyllic, unspoiled nature reserve. Kayak through the mangroves, horse ride along the pristine shoreline, snorkel in the crystal clear ocean, wake up with among gazelle... the list is endless. Soak it all in to your heart's content, for the wild is waiting.

## THE RULE OF THREE

Three fabulous resorts set in three majestic settings where luxury once reserved for royalty is yours for the taking. Choose to stay in what was once conceptualised to be a royal guest house by the late Founding Father of the UAE, His Highness Sheikh Zayed.

**Desert Island Resort & Spa** yields ocean-facing rooms or perhaps you'd prefer a private villa with direct beach access, where you can breathe in the pure sea air. A luxurious spa awaits for those wanting to unpeel the layers to reveal a rejuvenated you before heading off to dine at one of two restaurants, Arabic or seafood, or perhaps both.

Beach barista meet with mangrove views and the azure of the Arabian Gulf at **Anantara Al Yamn Villas**, where the hidden memories of the charms of an ancient Emirati fishing village are stored. Stay postcards, if you wish or for the energetic, kayak the clear waters or ride horseback across the island, then snorkel among protected reefs before heading back to this stunning all-villa sanctuary.

Room free in **Anantara Al Sahel Villas** and share your stay in African-inspired villas with the wildlife of the lush savannah. Dusty desert drives lead you deep into wildlife territory. Lose yourself in luxury and wake up in your own luxurious pool villa in the very heart of nature and wake to the stunning sight of gazelles as they graze. An African restaurant serves dishes to remember and the spa cabana promises sheer relaxation.

## SAVOUR EVERY MOMENT

Exploring Sir Bani Yas Island is rewarding yet hungry work. From **Amwaj**, a nautic, beachside seafood restaurant to the wild setting of **Savannah Grill** where the authentic flavours of Africa are served, you are promised tantalising dishes set in cosmopolitan venues. **The Palm** dishes up breakfast delights from around the world, including themed evenings when flavours transport guests across Arabia and beyond. **Al Shams** is all about pool-side mezze that meld into an evening of mixes and shisha in air-con, indoor climates of the restaurant. Head to the beachfront to dine in style at **Oto**, where classic Italian recipes are given contemporary flair at this breezy Italian lounge where a fine collection of Italian grape awaits.

## ADVENTURES GALORE

Glomp under the moonlight at a luxurious campsite, feast to your heart's delight and head into the wilderness as night falls and by day join the thrilling **Nature & Wildlife Drive** and discover the island's indigenous wildlife. Other activities include Culture & History Tour, Archery, Wadi Walk, Discover Conservation and so much more!





# The flavour of LOVE

Romance is in the air so Yalla rounds up some spectacular spots where you can woo the one you love with a Valentine's evening to remember



## CONRAD ABU DHABI ETIHAD TOWERS

This romantic dining adventure at the Towers promises a memorable gourmet journey of international taste. Whether contemporary Lebanese dishes, authentic Italian flavours, or the vibrant aroma of Latin cuisine, this specially curated four-course Valentine's menu from the hotel's four award-winning dining destinations - Observation Deck at 300, Li Beirut, SOLE and VaKaVa promises to woo.

### DINE UNDER THE MOONLIGHT

Sweep your beloved off their feet... go the extra mile this Valentine's Day and book an exclusive dining experience under the stars with a private romantic set up on the beach, complete with a four-course set menu.

**To book any of the above, call 02 811 5666**

## JUMEIRAH AT SAADIYAT ISLAND RESORT

Fall in love over scenic views at Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort and make lasting memories this Valentine's Day at this stunning Island destination.

### LOBSTER LOUNGE - ROSES ARE RED

Lovers, enjoy an intimate dinner in a bustling setting of this fifth floor venue that surrenders dramatic views of the pristine sands and azure waters but we know you will only have eyes for the one you love... and the delectable lobster dish of course.

### SEAVIEW LOUNGE

Celebrate Valentine's Day in style in a romantic outdoor seating area whilst you listen to smooth, live guitar music.

### MARE MARE - BELLA SAN VALENTINES

With your loved one, dine by the pristine sands of the Resort's beach with superb views of the azure waters and rugged island scenery while enjoying home-cooked flavours of coastal Italy to a guitarist's romantic refrains.

**To book any of the above, visit [www.jumeirah.com](http://www.jumeirah.com)**

## ANANTARA SIR BANI YAS ISLAND RESORTS

### ALL INCLUSIVE ROMANTIC ESCAPE

Escape to a true romantic getaway this Valentine's Day and indulge in All Inclusive Anantara Luxury in a unique setting with Anantara luxury accommodation for two adults, daily breakfast, lunch and dinner (a la carte set menus, one complimentary activity per adult per stay from a selected choice of archery, nature walk, wildlife drive, kayaking or a culture & history tour).

### THE ISLAND LOVE STORY

Go on a romantic culinary journeys and embrace true island romance with an exclusive, candlelit evening in the wadi, savannah or beach with a menu tailored to you and your loved one's palate, butler service, bonfire, star-studded sky, the exquisite Dining by Design Valentine's Day experiences are joined by set menus at our three restaurants, Savannah Grill, Ohio and Al Shams.

**Find out more, visit [anantara.com](http://anantara.com)**

## THE ABU DHABI EDITION

### DARLING STAY WITH ME

The Abu Dhabi EDITION invites you and your loved one to get all loved up at this fabulous night stay that includes award-winning dining, Chef Tom Aikens' 5-course curated set menu at Oak Room, Alba Terrace limitless breakfast for two, and a signature EDITION Spa couple's massage. Or just spend the evening of love at Valentine's Day at Oak Room, starting with a signature Oak Room red rose and complimentary glass of bubbly before devouring Chef Tom Aikens' set menu of finest flavours, lovingly curated for the occasion.

**To book any of the above, call 02 208 0000 or visit [editionhotels.com/abu-dhabi/](http://editionhotels.com/abu-dhabi/)**

## THE WESTIN ABU DHABI GOLF RESORT & SPA

Three-course menus, relaxing staycations, an invigorating spa experience and exciting surprises await. Book a romantic staycay and receive a Complimentary Upgrade if you book between 11-16 February. Continue the love and book into Me Monday at The Heavenly Spa, and experience tasty bites and a choice of treatments to recuperate and recharge. Don't miss Dinner at Sacci and fall in love again over a superb Italian dinner, whether you're dining al fresco or in the classic stylish setting indoors. There is also a unique staycation called Shoponous. You get an AED 300 gift voucher when you tap into this particular staycation deal. So, treat yourself to a wonderful hotel stay inclusive of a breakfast spread at Fair ways and then go spend your voucher at Yas Mall, WTC Mall or Jimi Mall.

**To book, call 02 616 9999**

## CHEF TALK

# Mahmoud Elshahidi

Executive Sous Chef, Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island Resorts

A veteran of the industry with 20 years experience, Egyptian Chef Mahmoud oversees five different restaurants within the three Anantara Sir Bani Yas Island properties. Team Yalla finds out more

#### What inspired you to become a chef?

As a child, I always watched cooking programmes with Mum and would note the ingredients down. I would then tell her what ingredients we had at home and what we needed to buy. Depending on the cost, she would buy them so I was able to cook the dishes I had watched being prepared on TV.

#### Five restaurants are a lot to oversee. What skills do you require to ensure everything runs smoothly?

The way to achieve the smooth running of five outlets is by implementing one system for the different elements needed to run the restaurants, such as ordering, receiving, inventory, production, menu costing, waste, training team members as well as ensuring day to day consistency in terms of operations. Also, guiding restaurant managers and chefs to help maintain a positive attitude and good communication between the team in each outlet.

#### Team Yalla heard your favourite dish is Surf and Turf, but as an Egyptian, what Egyptian dish should everybody try at some point?

I love all Egyptian food but the most favourite dish for me is one of the most famous dishes found in Egypt. Koshary is a mix of rice, pasta, chickpeas, lentil, fried onions, garlic, tomato sauce, making it a nutritious meal that is complete with nutrients that benefits the body greatly, because it contains protein, carbohydrates, antioxidants, vitamins. Everybody should try it; I am sure they'll love it.

#### What is it that makes Savannah Grill at Al Sahel Resort your favourite restaurant?

It's one of the first restaurants that I supervised during the planning, construction, hiring, and menu engineering stages prior to it opening. I learned a lot during this time, and it still remains my favourite African restaurant.

#### If you weren't a chef, what profession would you have chosen?

I chose my present career when I was 19 years old, so it's difficult to answer this question. However, if I wasn't a chef, I would have liked to have been a nutritionist.

#### Yalla, it's revelation time. As a chef what's the biggest mistake you've made?

Once I was working in a Chinese kitchen for the first time and a senior chef asked me if I knew how to use the wok, to which I replied yes, not expecting him to ask me to use it at the same time. I took another wok and followed the chef's instructions. I noticed the flames on his wok were higher than mine, so I added some extra oil and water to create a Flambé, but unfortunately the flames set off the fire sensor, triggering fire alarms all over the hotel.

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