

# Call of the mall

The Dubai Summer Surprises festival sees the emirate's malls come alive with a series of fun events and activities for the entire family. Here, **Joanne Bladd** looks ahead to this year's bonanza, which promises shopping discounts, competitions and a whole lot more



Summer once heralded the onset of Dubai's low season, as soaring temperatures thinned the tourist crowd. Not any more. Last year the city-state welcomed in excess of four million visitors during its hottest months. Nearly all had come to shop.

The lure is the Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) bonanza, one of the biggest annual fixtures in the emirate's calendar, and one that contributes millions of dollars in retail sales to Dubai's economy. The months-long festival sees the city's vast malls, retailers and opulent hotels join forces to offer steep discounts and cut-price hotel deals, held against

a backdrop of competitions, live entertainment and events. Raffle prizes last year ranged from top-of-the-range cars, to cash payouts, to an all-expenses-paid trip around the world.

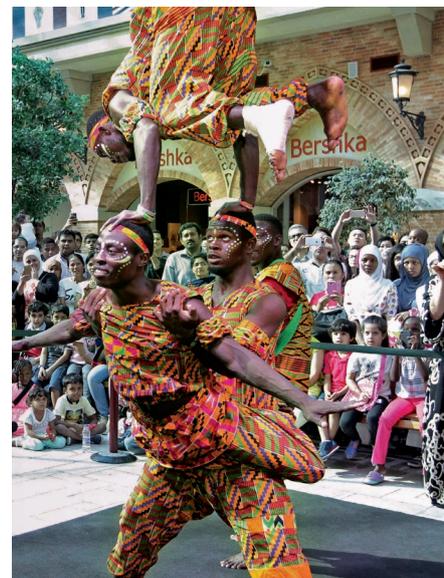
"It's a citywide effort," says Suhaila Ghubash, director of festivals and events, Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment. "It's really helped to establish Dubai as a summer destination – and it provides significant boost to the economy."

Now in its 19th edition, DSS has become a hotly-anticipated attraction both for UAE residents, and for those living in nearby GCC states. In recent years, says Ghubash, its appeal has

**Above: The colossal Dubai Mall hosts a wide range of events during the months-long festival**  
**Right: Performers entertain the DSS crowds at the mall**

stretched even further afield, with a rising number of global tourists flying in to snap up the heavily discounted goods that are a staple feature of the festival. Emirates Airline – the city's flagship carrier – last year reported a six per cent hike in traffic during the two-month event.

"A lot of shoppers consider the summer sales an even better deal than [January's annual] shopping festival," Ghubash says. "They're looking at it from a value >



Portfolio  
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Left: Dubai Mall provides a superb setting for the festival  
Below: Events at indoor play centre Modhesh World keep the kids entertained (top), while others take advantage of the huge retail discounts on offer

perspective, and there really is a huge reduction in prices.”

For retailers, DSS has morphed what was traditionally a quiet season into one of their busiest. Mohammed Abdul Rahim Al Fahim, CEO of Paris Gallery Group, a purveyor of high-end fashion, fragrances and cosmetics, said last year the chain had “broken every sales record in the history of the company”. A 10-day ‘Big Summer Sale’ meanwhile, which was newly introduced in 2015, saw brands open pop-up stores in the city’s World Trade Centre. More than 110,000 visitors toured the event, giving rise to a shopping frenzy that raked in nearly US\$4.1 million in sales.

Retail has long been a cornerstone of Dubai’s tourism offering, with the city’s glittering malls generating nearly a third of GDP. The tax-free emirate is a magnet for luxury fashion brands, and is second only to London in terms of its appeal. The Dubai Mall alone – whose stores range from Louis Vuitton and Prada, to high-street names such as Zara and Marks & Spencer’s – played host to some 80 million visitors in 2015.

A new, planned shopping destination, Mall of the World, goes a step further. Unveiled in 2014, the plans call for an indoor city; a climate-controlled cluster of shops, hotels and entertainment centres, featuring replica districts from cities from around the world. New York’s Broadway and London’s West End both appear in the innovative plans, to be accessible all-year-around thanks to a temperature-controlled environment.

“Our ambitions are higher than having seasonal tourism,” Dubai’s ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said at the project’s launch. “We aim to make the UAE an attractive destination all year-long.”

With this in mind, DSS has widened its scope to offer more than just shopping. Younger visitors can tour Modhesh World – an indoor extravaganza with attractions last year ranging from zombie adventure games to a 5D motion theatre – take part in workshops, or even indulge in some star spotting. Attendees at last year’s DSS included famous siblings Jaden and Willow Smith and Disney stars Zendaya and Laura Marano. Adults can catch

live concerts and fashion shows, or take a shot at winning any of the dozens of cars, holidays and cash prizes on offer to shoppers in citywide promotions.

Though full details and dates of this year’s DSS have not yet been released, Ghubash confirms the festival will run through July and August, beginning once the month of Ramadan ends. Visitors can expect the usual robust line-up of bargain deals, rewards and gifts, alongside a slew of new features and events set to be unveiled closer to the time.

“We’ll have something from the whole family from an event



perspective, along with better offers, better value for money, and city-wide promotions,” promises Ghubash. “DSS gets bigger and better every year.” ■

For more information, visit:

[www.visitdubai.com/en/discover/festivals/dubai-summer-surprises](http://www.visitdubai.com/en/discover/festivals/dubai-summer-surprises)

