

## Blog guide to the UAE:

From thought-provoking citizen journalism to meandering rants, there are plenty of local blogs offering different perspectives on life in the Emirates. The problem, which holds true across the blogosphere, is that many are rarely updated and often abandoned – very frustrating to the average web surfer. Below is a list of a few blogs, gushing diary sites excluded, most of which are frequently updated.

### UAE COMMUNITY BLOG www.uaecommunity.blogspot.com

A meeting point for the country's blog writers, this site talks about relevant news events and obscure happenings. The real action takes place in the comments section, where discussions often become heated and "comment deleted" is frequently found. It also links to other blogs from the region.

### THE EMIRATES ECONOMIST www.emirateseconomist.blogspot.com

While it can get lean towards dry, John B Chilton updates his blog at least daily, combing the internet for interesting stories about the UAE and the economy (with a regional perspective). It has become increasingly informative given the current economic climate.

### GRAPESHISHA www.grapeshisha.blogspot.com

A blog attached to the information site www.grapeshisha.com, it frequently picks up on quiet trends gaining force in the Emirates. This includes its own data analysis topics such as the cost of living in the UAE compared to other countries. Recently, it has focused on Dubai's challenges, especially with – wait for it – the current economic climate.

### AN EMIRATI'S THOUGHTS www.aethoughts.blogspot.com

The Emirati behind this blog doesn't contribute much any more. As he said in a post in May: "I have just not seen the point in blogging... after all, blogging seems to be in a recession to the idiocies of Facebook." When he does write, the posts are always insightful and provide intelligent, local comment on the UAE, which is rare.

## TEST DRIVE: Facial reflexology

**WHAT WE TRIED:** This practice, developed out of the traditional method of foot reflexology, involves a therapist gently stimulating 35 acupuncture points on the face, not to mention your blood vessels, tissue and the 2,500 nerve endings. The belief is that because your face is closer to your brain, the treatment is more effective at stimulating the body's natural healing processes than your feet are. Until recently, Julie Greenhalgh has been the only woman trained and qualified to perform facial reflexology in the UAE. She learned the skill directly from Denmark's Lone Sorensen, a reflexologist who developed the treatment herself over the past 25 years and has even used it to help children and adults with inherited or acquired damage to their nervous systems. Facial reflexology is still at a grassroots stage, but word has been spreading in the last decade as Sorensen learned to speak English and began to promote her concept. She visited the Emirates for a training session with Greenhalgh last year and has another scheduled soon, so expect to hear more about the treatment, and gradually more certified practitioners offering their services here.

**WHAT WE HOPED FOR:** Very few massage therapists have ever turned their skilled fingertips to my face, and I have always thought that was a crying shame. The one time that one did, I found it to be a near ecstatic experience. "Why does that feel so good?" I asked. There are so many more muscles and nerve endings concentrated in the face, the therapist replied, and they are always working and tired. Ah, I remember thinking, only to move away and never see her again. It was that faint memory of the pure comfort associated that drew my eye to Greenhalgh's brochure hanging in my local yoga studio. An hour of one of my favourite things? Sign me up.

**WHAT WE EXPERIENCED:** Greenhalgh is a busy mother who works her magic out of a serene room in her family's peaceful villa near Al Wahda Mall. When I met her, I determined that she was quite possibly one of the most calming people I had ever met. She did a short consultation, asking about my health, lifestyle and what I wanted from the treatment. Then I lay down, and for the next hour, blissed out as she proceeded to perform a series of very gentle pressing motions and light, sweeping touches to my face, using a combination of rose oil and light cream. I fell asleep for part of the session, and fretted a little when I woke that I'd missed some of the benefits. Not to worry, she explained, you do not have to be awake for that. I left feeling more peaceful and centred than I had in quite some time. I had just tackled a day at the

office with an unaccustomed feeling of Zen, when, without any prompting, a friend asked, "what have you done to your face – you are glowing!" So in addition to feeling great, a softer complexion can be counted among the benefits of an hour of micro-circulation

of the face. Another side effect that was not so pleasant: a treatment during one particularly unhealthy and harried period in the summer left me feeling sluggish, tired and a little ill. That is also normal, I was told, as the work helps the detoxification process, which can make you feel worse before you feel better. Greenhalgh charges Dh280 for an hour's treatment.

**THE FINAL VERDICT:** Even if you do not buy into the concept of meridians and energy pathways, facial reflexology is worth the hourly fee. In addition to the immediate effects – you just feel better – I have felt generally healthier, less stressed and more at peace since my first visit. For more information, visit www.lonesorensen.com, www.juliegreenhalgh.com, or call Julie Greenhalgh on 050 732 0551.

Ann Marie McQueen



## HOW TO: Make the most of the Dubai Shopping Festival

Shopping is our job, but it is also our recreational sport. We think it's fabulous that Dubai celebrates it with a festival of sales. We spent the first week of the shopping festival casing out some of the major malls – BurJuman Centre, the Dubai Mall and Mall of the Emirates – to help you become a stealth shopper from now until February 15. You might have your own plan of attack, but here are the general rules we follow:

• **Decide what you want before you enter the shop:** This rule applies to any sale. It is easy to get carried away with a good bargain, but don't let it blind you. A deal is only a deal if it is something you need or desire. You can, of course, adjust your plan if you discover something you really love, but keep your wits about you when you do.

• **Survey the territory:** Do not dive into the first shop you see. Walk around. Look in the shop windows first: some have huge signs offering 50 to 70 per cent off; some have small plaques that modestly announce "DSF discounts"; some higher-end stores have no sales advertised at all. If it is not clear, do not be shy to walk in and ask, "What is on sale for the shopping festival?" Once you have decided what is worth your time, descend.

• **Walk away from token sales:** Watch out for stores that are not offering big bargains. This is a shopping festival, after all, not some mere sale sideshow, so leave behind shops that

are not seriously stepping up to the plate. If you spot a small, picked-over rack of clothes from two seasons ago at the back of the shop, or if you are offered a pseudo "promotion" instead of an actual discount, turn on your heel and walk out. You will find better.

• **Ask questions:** Chat up the salesperson. To make sure you are not buying something that is more worthy of an outlet sale, ask "What season is this from?" or, "How long has this been on sale?" To find out whether there could be a deeper discount in your future, ask "Is this the lowest price it will be?"

• **Be decisive:** When you have found the item you want and the bargain is fair, do not leave it behind. Here's a helpful exercise: imagine returning to the shop, only to find that what you wanted is gone. Do you feel devastated? If so, buy it. If not, let fate be the judge.

• **Take breaks:** Fatigue is the enemy of the smart shopper. You will find yourself buying shoes just to relieve your feet or making irrational decisions to get out of the shop. Go for coffee or dinner, and wear flats so you can go the distance.

• **Do not forget about the promotions:** Many of the malls will enter you in raffles for big prizes if you buy a certain amount at their shops. Keep your receipts, and check with the information desk before you leave.

For more information on the shopping festival, go to [www.mydsf.com](http://www.mydsf.com)

## Things to do in a traffic jam

### Part 10: memorise the five longest English words

The longest word in the English language is a subject up for debate. In chemistry circles, the protein titin's technical name is 189,819 characters long, but it is constructed from a series of chemical compounds and disregarded as too formulaic and technical by the language police working for dictionaries. Then there is the 2,087,214-character word invented by Nigel Tomm for the 10th volume of *The Blah Story*, which was generated by an algorithm. But again, since it's invented, it's ignored by dictionaries. So, to submit to the will of word nerds, we find our authority in the complete Oxford English Dictionary. Their list is available at [www.askoxford.com](http://www.askoxford.com). We recommend breaking down each word into its component parts. For instance, with the word **floccinaucinihilipilification**, which at 29 letters is the second longest word in the Oxford, the natural breaks are: floccin – au – cini – hili – pili – fication. Read this over 10 or 15 times and you should have nailed it. (By the way it is a noun that means "the action or habit of estimating something as worthless".)

Here are the rest:

- **Pseudopseudohypoparathyroidism** (30 letters, a genetic disorder)
- **Antidisestablishmentarianism** (28 letters, meaning "oppositions to the disestablishment of the Church of England")
- **Spectrophotofluorometrically** (28 letters, an adverb derived from spectrophotometer, an apparatus for measuring the intensity of light)
- **Hepaticocholangiostomy** (28 letters, we couldn't find the exact meaning, but it seems to be some sort of medical procedure)

## Eco tip

The Abu Dhabi Environment Agency has a long list of eco-tips available online at [www.ead.ad/en/](http://www.ead.ad/en/). One of the most interesting suggestions involves recycling the dirty water in your fish tank for your plants. "The water is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, providing you with a free and effective fertiliser."