

# FULL OF BEANS



Antique coffee storage cans

# BEANS



An antique advertisement for coffee



An exhibit at the museum

It was a rainy afternoon when I arrived at the historical neighborhood of Al Fahidi in Bur Dubai. The entire area has cobbled stone flooring and is home to several interesting spaces, art centers and a few museums. It has an old-world charm that I was exploring, when the fragrance of coffee wafted my way, getting me to knock on the doors of the Dubai Coffee Museum.

## LOOKING BACK

Located in a modest building, the museum is small but encapsulates the journey of the coffee beans. The history of coffee is as fascinating as the drink itself. It is believed to have started in the Ethiopian highlands many hundreds of years ago. According to the legend of Kaldi (an Ethiopian goatherd), coffee was discovered that when his goat ate some strange berries, they remained alert through the night. Worshipers in the local monastery used a drink made with the berries to keep them awake through long nights of prayer.

The wondrous drink reached the Arabian peninsula where the Arabs took coffee around the world. Coffee is now grown all over the world – from the islands of the Caribbean and the Pacific, through the continents of Asia, Africa and South America. But they all can trace their heritage to the ancient coffee plants on an Ethiopian plateau.

## COFFEE TALES

In the museum, I was instantly transported into a land of all things coffee. After paying the entrance fees, I wound my way through this historic Emirati home, seeing the exhibits, all housed in separate rooms.

The ground level of the house has several small rooms detailing various aspects of coffee. One was dedicated to coffee cultures, another to equipment like grinders, pots and roasters, and yet another to Ethiopian coffee-making techniques. Various roasting and brewing styles from various countries are demonstrated live in the space. There are also antiques on display, such as the 'jebenam,' jug-shaped clay coffee pots said to be over 300 years old. Apart from vintage memorabilia, you can also see an replication of how coffee was served and consumed in the past. One room, named Coffee Origins, displays a variety of coffee beans. Another houses Middle Eastern coffee antiques.

Of course, you can also learn about the different kind of coffee available, including Arabian, Egyptian, and Ethiopian.

## CAFFEINE FIX

Along the stairway to the next level, I stopped to admire a series of wall frames housing vintage coffee advertisements. The upper floor has a literature room that displays coffee-related texts, from the eighteenth century to the present.



Dubai Coffee Museum

Pay special attention to Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer's 1784 encyclopedia, believed to be the oldest printed text to discuss coffee in detail. This section also has a wide selection of coffee books to read and coffee documentaries to watch. Large information boards explain differences between Arabica and Robusta coffee. You can also buy a snack and, yes, a cup of coffee at – where else – the coffee lounge. The ticket also includes a coffee. You can choose a Turkish or Emirati one to get your caffeine fix.

Do keep an hour aside for this museum, given that it chronicles the journey of the bean to the cup, one that must be appreciated at leisure. Stop at the museum shop for some coffee souvenirs.

I recommend the unique artworks created using coffee for being both unique and artsy. There are also traditional coffee pots and New Age coffee filters available at the museum. It helps you remember that a lot goes into making the cup that cheers you every morning. If that is in doubt, if you visit Dubai, do do check it out.

## FACT FILE

- Timings: Saturday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Address: Villa 44, Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood, Bur Dubai
- Call: + 971 4 353 8777
- Email: [info@coffeemuseum.ae](mailto:info@coffeemuseum.ae)
- Web: [www.coffeemuseum.ae](http://www.coffeemuseum.ae)

The Dubai's Coffee Museum is redolent of a time a cup of joe was manna indeed

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