

FANTASTIC

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT WAS A MERE 44 YEARS AGO THAT OUR COUNTRY'S FOUNDING FATHERS HOISTED THE UAE FLAG FOR THE FIRST TIME. WITH SPIRIT OF THE UNION AS THE OFFICIAL THEME FOR THE UAE'S 44TH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS ON DECEMBER 2, *EMIRATES WOMAN* GETS INTO THE COMMEMORATIVE MOOD BY ASKING 44 INSPIRING RESIDENTS WHAT THEY LOVE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN THE UAE. PREPARE TO FEEL ALL WARM AND FUZZY INSIDE

COMPILED BY: LYNDSY STEVEN



KATHERINE RASO, 40
CO-FOUNDER OF GLOBAL
COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY,
CANADIAN

"Outdoor living for most of the year is a huge benefit, as are great events such as F1, the Dubai Film Festival and Art Dubai. Since I moved here seven years ago from Canada the UAE has introduced so many new things such as Art Abu Dhabi, Fashion Forward, Skydive Dubai, ComiCon and now D3. It is a place that's constantly evolving which keeps it exciting for all who live and visit."



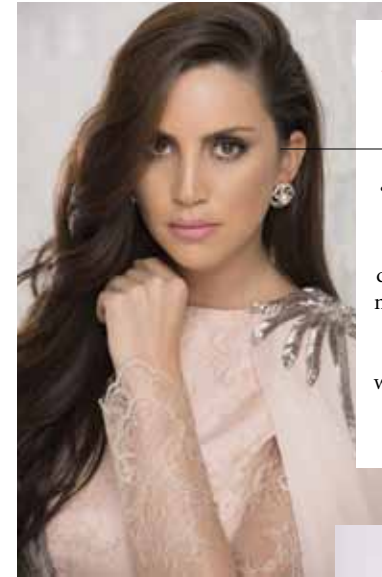
SUMATI MENDA, 33
FOUNDER & EDITOR,
VEGGIEBUZZ.COM, INDIAN

"People from over 170 different countries can call the UAE home. People are friendly, it is relatively safe, and the infrastructure is first class. Emirates Airlines has done such a great job of making Dubai a hub, which makes it so easy to travel to any city in the world. I particularly love Dubai's proximity to India, where I have lots of family and travel to often."



ABBY WILKS, 34
MANAGING PARTNER AT
HOUSE OF COMMS,
BRITISH

"When I moved to Dubai from the UK eight years ago I never imagined I would start a family or set up a business here and now I can't imagine being anywhere else. When I first arrived I found that there were lots of people who took the UAE and all it offers for granted. These days everyone who is here knows how lucky they are and appreciates all it has to offer."



JELENA BIN DRAÏ, 36
ENTREPRENEUR,
EMIRATI (BORN
SERBIAN)

"There is no place on earth that can offer such quality of lifestyle. I get my daily dose of a super hectic, crazy new Dubai every day during the week and then a dose of old, calm Dubai every weekend on our family farm in Al Awir. Balance is the key to happiness."



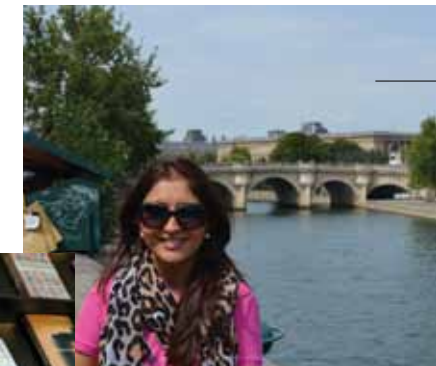
AMY SESSIONS, 32
PERSONAL SHOPPER &
STYLE CONSULTANT,
BRITISH

"The bar has been raised when it comes to talent - the UAE is an option that's on par with that of other major global cities. The warmth and hospitality embedded in Middle Eastern culture make it easy to feel at home - it's a joy to be part of such a mutually supportive and proactive network of women."



JOSEFINE WALLSTROMER, 26
CLUB MANAGER AT BARE
AND PROFESSIONAL
FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER,
SWEDISH

"I love the weather! Growing up in Sweden we have such long winters and short summers. I'm a total beach bum and can't get enough of the sunshine and sea. Every day I catch myself saying, 'It's Dubai..!' meaning there's no knowing what the next extravagant project will be. All I know is that there are no limits here."



HARSHITA KHATRI SINGH, 35
ART DESIGNER, INDIAN

"Dubai is home for me, I was born here. My parents moved here 45 years ago and my grandfather tailored clothes for the sheikhs. The UAE has a fast-growing economy, there's a new skyline every few years and now we have the Dubai Expo 2020 to look forward to."



SARAH DAMICHI, 42
HAIR AND MAKEUP ARTIST,
AUSTRALIAN

"I really like the diversity of cultures and living in a central hub bursting with entertainment, fashion, and hospitality. Having kids I also feel it is very well equipped for fun with a huge variety of theme parks and attractions for the whole family to enjoy."



CYNTHIA PENNIKIAN, 27
CREATIVE DESIGNER
AND FOUNDER AT
CEECODE HANDBAGS &
ACCESSORIES, LEBANESE

"I decided to move to the UAE as I was eager to launch my brand in a cosmopolitan city in the heart of the GCC. Now the UAE has become my second home where I feel stable, safe and ambitious. I look forward to building my future here. Through my lens, I believe UAE will be next fashion city following the footsteps of Paris, London and New York."



CATHY LEIBMAN, 50
CO-FOUNDER OF
ETHICAL MUSE,
AUSTRALIAN

"Being an expat has been an unique experience for my family. I continually feel like a tourist here in Dubai as the city evolves so rapidly. Having friends who have experienced first-hand heartache and political turmoil in neighbouring home countries only allows us to become more empathetic to their situation. The UAE has the uncanny ability to make things happen. The future for the UAE can be expressed in line with the theme for Dubai's World Expo in 2020. It will be a catalyst to connect minds and share challenges under the themes of mobility, sustainability and opportunity."

EMANUELLE SAWKO, 46
CO-OWNER OF
COMPTOIR 102 AND
FOUNDER OF WILD & THE
MOON, FRENCH

"The city used to be very business-oriented but now it seems that a lot of people move here to start families and establish the city as their home and that is wonderful. Coming from Paris and New York, I had a hard time adjusting when I moved here. But Dubai is a city that you miss when you are away for too long. I also believe it is blissful to live in a city that has the sea at its core; it gives you so much energy!"



NERRY TOLEDO, 30 SOMETHING
PR CONSULTANT
FILIPINO

"The UAE's imagination and vision for the future knows no bounds. Living here you become a part of a history in the making. Some things happen overnight and we are right in the middle of it, living is as it happens."

TASH HATHERAIL, 38
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF
TISHTASH PUBLIC RELATIONS AND
TISHTASH TALENT, BRITISH

"I love the optimism and 'can do' attitude here. People encourage you to live your dreams, take a risk and think big. When I told people in the UK I was planning to set up my own business here most had 10 reasons why I should not. In the UAE the support has been phenomenal and everyone gave me 10 reasons why I should! One thing I've witnessed which I love is the boom in entrepreneurship from women in the past five years- there's been an explosion of women led start-ups who've all gone from strength to strength."



NATASHA ROCKSTROM, 32
FOUNDER INJOY GIVING,
INDIAN

"There is an energy as soon as you touch down in Dubai that 'anything is possible.' Your childhood imagination opens up as your dreams start to take shape. The UAE has shaped peoples lives in ways they never knew could be possible that to me is a marker of how influential this city can be."

YANA KALWANI, 35
CO-FOUNDER PANTRY
CAFÉ, INDIAN

"I love how cosmopolitan the UAE is and yet at the same time it allows one to be rooted to their traditions. I was brought up here so to see how Dubai has evolved over the years - and to be part of such a change - gives me a sense of belonging and pride. Growing up, when I would travel and tell people I lived in the UAE, they seemed confused - not many people knew where it was. Now reactions are very different and people are excited when I tell them where I live. It's a great country to raise children in too because of the safe environment. There are so many opportunities for my kids to learn and develop themselves here. The F&B scene in the region is also developing at a fast pace and it is exciting to be part of it."



MINA LICCIONE, 30 SOMETHING
PERFORMING ARTIST
CO-FOUNDER DUBOMÉDY
AND CLOWNS WHO CARE
PROJECT, ADJUNCT ARTS
PROFESSOR, AMERICAN

"I love how safe I feel here. I can take a late night walk along the Marina walk and feel completely secure. My mom once left her purse on the water boat and the gentleman turned the boat around to come back and find her. I also love Arabic food and spices, trying to learn the Arabic language, the serenity of the call for prayer, the lack of snowstorms and cleanliness. I love that at any given time you can be in a room with no single person from the same country. As a comedian I never know who will be in the audience so it keeps each show fresh. Lastly, it's where my husband and in-laws are from."



AISHWARYA AJIT GORDON, 29

TV PRESENTER, BEAUTY VLOGGER, FOUNDER OF LOCKSTRESS HAIR EXTENSIONS, INDIAN

"I have lived in Dubai for over 25 years and the city never ceases to amaze me. The fact that it is a tax-free country doesn't hurt either. If you're bored in the UAE then you're doing it wrong and you need to get out more. I was raised in Dubai in a very small, conservative Indian community and my husband grew up in a small rural town in England. We met here in 2013 and got married the following year. If it wasn't for such a culturally diverse place like the UAE we may never have met!"



HAYA AKHDAR, 31

FASHION PR FOR LOUIS VUITTON MIDDLE EAST, SAUDI ARABIAN

"The UAE is becoming a destination for fashion, art and culture. It changes every day and I'm so glad to be a part of this movement."



LOUISE HARRISON, 40 SOMETHING

OWNER/DESIGNER AT LOUISEHARRISONCOUTURE.COM, BRITISH

"The UAE is the proverbial melting pot of nationalities; you have so many things to do, there's not enough time to do it all. I especially love the contrast between new and old Dubai where you can find such hidden treasures as well as the constant changing of the city."



SHEREEN MITWALLI BUTLER, 33

INTERNATIONAL PRESENTER, AUSTRALIAN

"It's clear the world is fascinated by the Emirates. I work with many celebrities who love coming here and end up coming back many times over because they fall in love with its hospitable culture and innovation. I have never seen a more advanced country when it comes to technology and infrastructure development."



SHAMIRA MITHA, 50

FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR OF VERVE MARKETING & COMMUNICATION, PAKISTANI

"When I arrived here 27 years ago, the UAE was in its embryonic stages. To see it grow so beautifully into this perfect and most loved country feels like a living dream. The UAE offers you ease in settling in, it is an extremely tolerant country and you have the best of all worlds here. If you are starting a business here (which my husband, my son and myself have done), it is easy for you to do so."

EDWINA VIEL, 37

MUMMY BLOGGER FOR SEASHELLSONTHEPALM.COM, SINGAPOREAN

"I don't think there's anywhere else in the world where you can sit down at dinner with each person at the table holding a different passport. It's great to learn the culture from the locals as well as the many international people that live here from so many destinations like Brazil, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, India, Pakistan..."



TAMARA KING, 26

MEDIA / ACCOUNT MANAGER, INDIAN

"I came here five years ago because I wanted change and the UAE offered me that, from the variety of cultures to the different mentalities. It caters to people from all around the world making it such a versatile place."



TALEEN KHANOYAN, 28

SINGER/SONGWRITER AND FITNESS ENTREPRENEUR, AMERICAN

"I feel this constant excitement and energy in the air. I love how I can be sitting at a table surrounded by beautiful people from all over the world. It never makes for a dull conversation or moment. Some of the most interesting people are the ones I have met in the UAE."



ZENNY HIRJI, 72

CHARITY CHAIRPERSON, BRITISH

"I moved to Dubai with my family in 1990 and we lived in a little neighbourhood called Al Shaab colony located in Hor Al Anz which I am sure is a name most newbies in Dubai may not have heard of. I am one of the privileged few expats to have experienced both old and new Dubai equally."

The health facilities provided make UAE one of the best places to live. The education facilities have seen an explosion of schools and universities, making good education easier for everyone. Living here also allows access to the most luxurious lifestyle."



RASHMI KUMARI AHMAD, 49

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND OWNER OF COUTURE LABEL C'EST MOI, INDIAN

"The UAE has a wonderful ability to take all into its fold and embrace it whole heartedly. In spite of being a Muslim country, it allows you the freedom to choose your own path and to celebrate and enjoy all that each culture has to offer."

I moved here from New York which is super chaotic and a bit impersonal. Dubai has taught me to do things at my own pace and has shown me how to be professional, yet compassionate and to have time to savour all that life has to offer. It's taught me how to balance being a working mother. Last, but not least, Dubai has played a huge role in me being where I am as a designer." ➤



KRITIKA RAWAT, 35
RADIO AND MEDIA
PERSONALITY AND CEO
OF K KOMpany, INDIAN

"The Dubai I was born in pretty much ended at the World Trade Centre. People always talk about how the UAE has changed but I'd like to touch on some things that haven't changed. The people here still go out of their way to help you when your car breaks down in the scorching heat, the cab drivers still come home to drop off a phone left in their taxi, the police officials still calm you down if you've been in a road accident and people still smile at each other in the elevators. Thankfully not everything in life changes."

EMAN SAYED FATHY, 28
SOCIAL MEDIA
MANAGER, EGYPTIAN

"We currently live in a world where 'No Country For Women' is a very common phrase, when it comes to safety and equality. But in the UAE I found security, success, independence, and a community that takes pride in their women. They used to say that America is where dreams come true; for me, today it's the UAE."

VERA FUTORJANSKI, 35
MD AND CO-FOUNDER OF VANIDAY
MIDDLE EAST, GERMAN

"I moved to Dubai earlier this year for the opportunity to build up a company and can only say it's the best thing I could have done! Against all clichés I actually think the UAE is a very encouraging and supportive country for female entrepreneurs – I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world right now."



INGE VAN WEERT, 33
DIRECTOR OF
OPERATIONS, DUTCH

"Dubai is the ultimate destination to work in for a hotelier like myself. I have previously lived in London, Brussels, Paris and Shanghai and am impressed with the fabulous hotels, the concepts and the UAE's focus on hospitality in general. You can experience true five-star service across the country."



RANIA KANA'AN, 28
CO-FOUNDER AND
OPERATIONS MANAGER
AT CHARICYCLES AND
ANANASA.COM,
PALESTINIAN CANADIAN

"Ambition runs through this country's veins from the top down and that is both inspiring and contagious. Since I arrived six years ago it's grown an urban culture which we're happy to be a part of."



MAÏA BASSAL, 27
GROUP MANAGER,
PUBLIC RELATIONS,
LEBANESE

"I'm very happy to be part of Dubai's many significant milestones like winning the Expo 2020, which will definitely translate into exponential growth across a wide array of sectors."



SAMANTHA FRANCIS, 27
FASHION STYLIST / SET
DESIGNER / BLOGGER,
DUTCH

"It's so unique to be able to chat with a taxi driver about restaurant recommendations and an hour later to talk to a businessman on how to make it in life. Everyone shares their stories and their culture which makes Dubai expats a funny metropolitan mix."



REBECCA TRESTON, 38
FOUNDER AND MANAGER
OF REBECCA TRESTON AT
EUROMED, BRITISH

"When I arrived the UAE aesthetics industry was in its infancy but this has grown rapidly to become an established, respected global entity – a trend that has been common for many industries here and something that is really unique to the UAE."

CLARITA ATALLAH, 40 SOMETHING
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF
KAREN MILLEN, LEBANESE

"Being in the UAE for 22 years, I've been lucky enough to witness the demographical growth, to experience the transformation of the retail landscape and to feel the vibrant drive of this cosmopolitan society. We used to visit the same places and see familiar faces; nowadays, our options are wide and you hardly bump into people you know." ➤



CHLOE WALSH, 27
COSMETIC MAKE UP
ARTIST, BRITISH

"From a personal level most of my closest friends have moved over here, which is amazing. I've also noticed more of a push for healthy living with a variety of healthy cafes opening and organic produce being readily available, which I think is fantastic."



MAYASSA AL TAJIR, 35
BUSINESS OWNER,
EMIRATI

"I can sum up the UAE's greatness in five words: Diversity, Loyalty, Quality and Security. The fifth word – my favourite – would be Charity. Here in Dubai one can join many communities and volunteer to help in many sectors.

I especially love this during the month of Ramadan where one can feel part of a real supportive community – it's such a beautiful thing. The UAE has definitely taught me to be truly grateful.

Consumerism is always high here, but that is not necessarily a bad thing, it just means that we are blessed with abundant tourism and more sophisticated buyers.

Dubai is very well equipped to provide all these needs, be it niche or otherwise, and I believe that this only stimulates our society to develop faster and better."



JESSICA HUDSON, 35
FOUNDER, HUDSONS
TRAVEL, THE LEADING LUXURY
TRAVEL SPECIALIST, BRITISH

"I grew up in the UAE – my nickname was Jessica Jumeirah. I spent my toddler years on the beach at Dubai Offshore Sailing Club where my parents are still members and where we now bring my daughters to play, 35 years later! It still feels like old Dubai. My husband and I moved back in 2006 and have had the most exciting, fun-filled years of our lives living in this vibrant, multi-cultural, fast-paced country that we are proud to call home."



LEILA NAJJAR, 27
SENIOR PR AND
EVENTS MANAGER,
DUTCH/PALESTINIAN

"The UAE feels like home. It has a perfect mix of the Arab and Western culture. My family lived in Dubai in the 80s and it looked nothing like it does now. I've been here four years now and there have been quite a few changes. I try to make it a must to explore the new areas and to try out the cultural experiences that have been developed – there is always something new to do."



LESLIE MALLART, 36
FOUNDER OF
DUBAICONFIDENTIAL.COM,
FRENCH

"Everything moves fast in Dubai – it is a buzzing city that keeps reinventing itself. It's the outcome of a man turning his vision into reality and that is truly inspiring. The more you dig through the city, the more gems you find which is why we started Dubai Confidential four years ago."



CAMILLA MAX LARSEN, 40
OWNER TALES OF REBELS
AND OWNER OF CONCEPT
STORE CLOWN IN LOS
ANGELES, DANISH

"I love to be in Satwa and Deira – those areas have soul. I was surprised to discover that many of my friends who've been here for years have never been there. Since moving to Dubai I can never wait to get back here from vacations – I've never had that that feeling before. It's my happy place. Plus nowhere else in the world has cleaner public toilets!"



CELAJANE UKWENYA, 29
FASHION STYLIST AND
FOUNDER OF FASHION
SWAP NIGHT MARKET,
BRITISH

"Life here always feels optimistic. The sun is always shining and life generally seems to be brighter. There is always something to do. As much as I love living here I also love escaping and the UAE is practically in the middle of the world so getting away is easy. I travel every two to three months to recharge my batteries and come back for a renewed love for the country."

LUCY BRUCE, 37
FOUNDER – HOME GROWN NURSERY,
FOUNDER – HARMONY HOUSE,
DIRECTOR – INSIGNIA WORLD WIDE, BRITISH

"I love that my children are living in a diverse community and are surrounded by friends who come from all corners of the world. With its changing landscape and progressive vision, the UAE is set to achieve unimaginable success for its people. What continues to inspire me are the leaders' efforts and plans for a greener and more sustainable future for the UAE. The UAE has actively recognised, embraced, and created initiatives that we can all get involved in to help reduce and minimise the environmental impact. The future is bright for the UAE and its children."



KIM JAMES, 43
HR DIRECTOR,
SOUTH AFRICAN

"As a South African, having lived and worked in the UK and Asia before moving to Dubai, to me the UAE is like an excitable teenager with all the brilliance, new ideas and fearless ambition, yet it has a lot more to learn, perfect and develop. It has vibrancy and glamour, a fantastic outdoor lifestyle and, in my opinion, great weather. Blue skies and sunshine are the best medicine. The UAE also has the unique opportunity to do things right from the get go when it comes to addressing global topics like green energy, smarter cities, sustainable development, local and organic farming and education. sustainable future." ■