



ADVENTURE CHICKS

fitchicksandfastwomen.com



with Tori



ADVENTURE CHICK HITS DESERT RANCH FOR THE RIDE OF HER LIFE!

This month, in my quest for checking out the endless opportunities for adventure in the UAE, I headed to Desert Ranch for a sunset horse ride... and I can safely say that it was one of the top experiences in my three years to date in DXB.

The last time I went horse riding was last Christmas in Scotland ... my nieces are besotted with the Shetland ponies at Gleneagles Hotel and it seemed too lovely to miss the chance for a play in the glistening Winter snow with the frosted-peaks beyond. Needless to say a different experience to a sunset hack in Dubai on the cusp of summer!

But back to Desert Ranch.

For anyone who's been in Dubai a while, you may remember a show called Jumana: Secret of the Desert, entertainment of epic proportions, a spectacular of lights and sights, dazzling dancers and fabulous folklore. Well Desert Ranch is at the same place... Al Sahara Desert Resort and it was established as an ecotourism project; a chance for friends, family, residents and tourists alike to experience the desert environment safely and naturally. It's a vast expanse of silky sand dunes peppered with dramatic ruins and lush greenery.

The place is only ten minutes or so beyond the Outlet Mall (how predictable that I always manage to reference places to a shopping destination!) but as soon as you head up the driveway, you get a true feeling of the expanse of the place.

I had a little wonder around the joint and then met with two of the team, Leah and Mark. Both were enormously welcoming... I felt like we were old friends within minutes. I then met my horse, Hi-ho Silver... an Arabian who started out as an endurance horse then took to the stage before his current life involving hours of play in the desert. Next was a brief intro (from Mark not Silver!) re the differences between the traditional leather reins you would see elsewhere and those used at Desert Ranch... a.k.a head stalls, which are rope head collars with a 12ft line for the reins and which operate on a system of pressure and release. De rigueur for true cowgirls and cowboys!

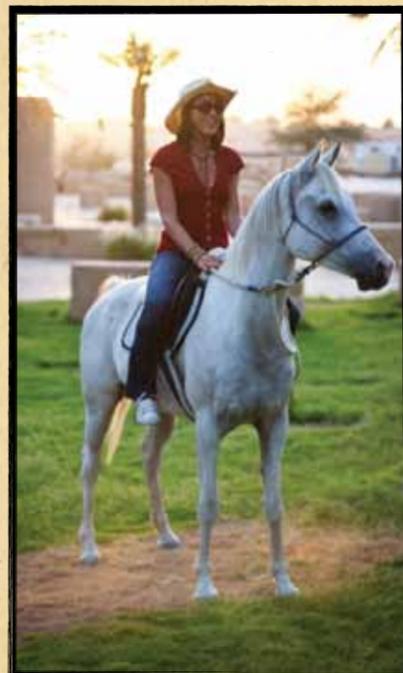
We spent the next hour kicking up the sand to a magnificent sunset, chatting, laughing, exploring and soaking up the incredible colours that we're regularly spoiled with here as night begins to fall. In the far distance you could see the soft glow of lights but the

whole experience seemed a million miles away from the bright lights of the city nights.

And it turns out that a desert hack is just one enticing reason to check out Desert Ranch. From coffee mornings to corporate bonding, paddock lessons to pony club, school outings to summer camp, horse livery to lease, team building to treasure hunts, camel cuddling to campfire nights; it has it all whether you're a little kid, a big kid or somewhere in between. It would even be a truly amazing place to host a party.

If you're wondering about the Camel Cuddling, this, much to my surprise, is quite the afternoon past time! Camels are friendly, personable and oh so cuddly so a Camel Cuddling session enables you to get up close and personal, groom, feed and hug them and then sip on some nutrient-rich and exceedingly delicious camel milk to quench your thirst.

Keeping the horses and camels company is a whole menagerie including goats, donkeys, ducks and tortoises never mind the gazelle, desert leveret and endangered Arabian foxes. There's also a date plantation, Bedouin camp and the amphitheatre itself, reminiscent of ancient Greece but with an Arabian touch.



A further string to Desert Ranch's bow is their teaching the Parelli method of natural horsemanship where the focus is on teaching the human rather than training the horse. The Parelli approach leaves you with so much more than improved communications with the horses alone but rather enhanced relationships with everyone in your life. You learn about yourself, about consequence and responsibility, about leadership and love. Think Robert Redford in the Horse Whisperer except at Desert Ranch, Redford is replaced with a team equally as passionate and charming and Mark I have to admit, is even more handsome than Redford was in his prime and could magically cure any case of equinophobia!

As I left, there was a group of twenty-something girls enjoying a lovely little post-ride picnic, chilling out in the warm breeze and soaking up the beauty of the desert. How civilised I thought; definitely a top option for an evening with the girls.

Desert Ranch is what you envisage the true Arabia to be; rugged, dramatic, raw, romantic and combined, utterly peaceful.

It is classic Marlborough Country in the heart of the UAE. And needless to say, as James, Outdoor UAE's fab photographer, snapped away, I did admittedly fancy myself as quite the Marlborough girl in my cowgirl hat and aviators.

Giddy Up!

LOVE TORI X

PPS. Please feel visit my website www.fitchicksandfastwomen.com for more rambles on all things health, fitness and wellness-related

PPS. My email address is tori@fitchicksandfastwomen.com for thoughts, ideas, and suggestions... or just to say hello!

DESERT RANCH:

Visit: www.desert-ranch.com
E-mail: info@desert-ranch.com
Call: 04 832 7171

