



A Ras Al Khaimah trek and (opposite) Pantelleria in bloom.

RAS AL KHAIMAH

It's high time to explore the United Arab Emirates' capital of adventure.

Skip the glitz and head straight to the desert – before everyone else does. Ras Al Khaimah (or RAK, as it's known by locals) is the northernmost of the seven United Arab Emirates, and with its pristine beaches, terra-cotta dunes, and rugged mountains, it's become the go-to emirate for adventure. Hiking, mountain biking, and zip-lining options abound, and each adrenaline-packed endeavor has its own exhilarating payoff. One option: a zigzagging drive to the top of 6,345-foot Jebel Jais Mountain and a Jais Sunrise cocktail at 1484 by Puro, the UAE's highest restaurant. On another day, travelers can dive deeper into RAK's mountainous backcountry at Wadi Shawka, where a narrow chasm between limestone ridges (it's often filled with shallow rainwater in the winter) leads to a palm-filled oasis.

GET THERE: Most of Ras Al Khaimah's high-end accommodations front the Persian Gulf, including Hayat Island's 351-room **InterContinental Ras Al Khaimah Mina Al Arab Resort and Spa**. The resort has its own beach, and concierges can arrange desert safaris, jaunts to Jebel Jais, and tours of the Suwaidi Pearls farm. *Doubles from \$368, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.* – Andrew Tarica

FYI

"In Ras Al Khaimah, travelers can learn about the emirate's pearling tradition and gain insight into the lives of divers. Boat through mangroves to reach a floating pearl farm and open oysters for a chance of finding pearls."

– Zeina Zuaiter, Virtuoso travel advisor, New York City



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