



Making a splash

A MULTITUDE OF RIDES AND SLIDES AND SUMMER SUN MAKE YAS WATERWORLD THE PERFECT DAY OUT. COMBINE IT WITH A NIGHT IN AT THE YAS VICEROY ABU DHABI AND A SESSION AT THE HOTEL'S SPA AND YOU HAVE THE IDEAL STAYCATION

WORDS & IMAGE | GISELLE WHITEAKER

“Let’s do that one,” says Bakr, pointing to the enclosed tube of the Liwa Loop. “I think not,” I reply, watching a human-shaped shadow shoot down the tube, whip around a gravity-defying loop and swish to a halt in a gush of water. Bakr sighs, leading me toward the more sedate Slithers Slides. We are at Yas Waterworld. With 43 rides, slides and attractions, it’s going to be a big day.

Bakr snatches a two-man tube and we race up the stairs, bypassing the queue, our premium passes proving their worth. We bounce through the belly of the snake, ejected from the viper’s mouth into a refreshing pool. “Again, again!” I shout as we race to be consumed by another of the snake slides.

We giggle as we slip, slide, splash and paddle. “Food,” says Bakr as we stand under the dumping bucket with a group of three year olds. “One more ride,” I counter as gallons of water crash down in an almighty torrent. Falcon’s Falaj is our pre-lunch finale. We plonk into a huge tube with three teens and hurtle over twists, rapids and drops.

We need the energy that only fast food can bring. While we wait for the soft drink

sugar high to hit, we roll onto tubes, drifting around Al Raha River. “Ready for the roller coaster?” Bakr asks. The Bandit Bomber, a suspended coaster dangling 550 metres below the tracks, whizzes us round a circuit.

“Dawwama,” I intone, pointing to the enormous funnel as a tube skids across the face, threatening to plunge over the lip. “Done,” agrees Bakr, instead leading me the wrong way to a super-steep slide. I roll my eyes and push past him, launching before I can back out. I skid to a halt and scramble inelegantly out of the landing zone. Next up, Dawwama spins us around like tops.

“Now?” asks Bakr back at the Liwa Loop. “I’ll walk up with you,” I compromise. A rider clammers into the upright capsule. After a countdown the floor drops out, sending him into oblivion. It’s my turn. I scramble inside, standing in coffin pose and leave the rest to gravity. “More!” I yell as I emerge.

Exhausted, we check into the nearby Yas Viceroy. From the Grand Suite the wrap-around balcony peeks out under the LED canopy onto the F1 race track. I know where I want to be, come the Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

We settle on Amici for an unpretentious Italian dinner, and park ourselves at a table outside, a light breeze stirring the warm night air. The lobster bisque is a gently-seasoned delight, and the grilled Angus beef medallion is tender. The tangy sorbet trio and a shared gooey chocolate fondant leave us replete, and we stagger to the Skylite lounge on the rooftop to recover.

Crispy from the sun, in the morning I head to the Viceroy’s ESPA. An Instant Brightener facial is in order. Therapist Mae cleanses my skin with gentle swirls and shows me my face under the Wood’s Lamp. “It’s like the light they use in *CSI* for a crime scene,” she giggles. My face is a canvas of blotches and shadows. “The dark patches are dehydrated and the white sections are healthy skin,” Mae says, as I search optimistically, finding only tiny white lines. “Repair me,” I wail. The next hour is filled with lotions, potions, and pure bliss as Mae does as asked. “It’s time,” she whispers, as I stretch back into consciousness.

I exit the weekend somehow younger. Yas Waterworld released my inner child and the ESPA has made me look the part. 🧖‍♀️