

**TIME OUT
TRIES OUT**
UberChopper's
Dubai tour



A REAL

HIGH-FLYER



Shitika Anand gives the Metro the day off and takes a private UberChopper for a spin over Dubai



There's this thing about super-rich people. They're a hard-working bunch, but they're also incredibly lucky. Lucky to have someone rub their temples with organic lavender oil whenever the need may arise, and lucky to have someone transport them around in a private helicopter... So, of course, when invited to be *Time Out Dubai's* answer to Kendall Jenner (or Leonardo DiCaprio or whosoever's high-life you deem

most enviable) and take an aerial tour of the city in an UberChopper, cameraman in tow, I didn't hesitate for a second. With an attempt to nail an outfit that said equal parts private-jet-luxury and I'm-not-trying-too-hard, I strut my Dolce & Gabbana stilettos paired with loose jeans towards my Uber car to begin this chopper tour – without realising that I'd inadvertently matched myself with the helipad. Oh. Right. Let's move on, shall we? So how does this service work? If you have the Uber app on your phone, simply request one and the team will take care of the rest for you. UberChopper flies in

conjunction with Alpha Tours (which also offers scenic helicopter rides across the city), but this is a more luxury service and Dubai is the first in the region to get it. An hour before my flight time, an Uber Lexus picks me up and drives me to Atlantis The Palm's helipad. Excellent departure point, I think. After a quick illustration of what Dubai sights my 25-minute ride will cover, I'm taken to a private room to be weighed and briefed. Shamelessly blaming those "extra" two kilos on the heels, I go through a very important (if not quite riveting)





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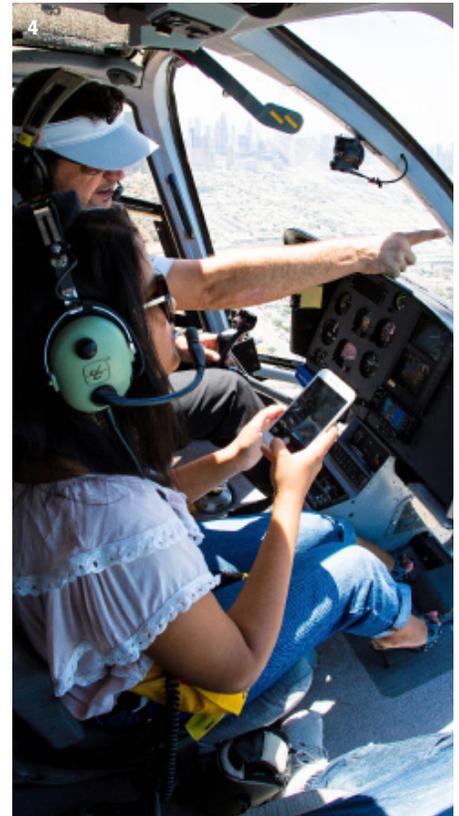


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1 Shitika Anand attempts to look like she's okay with the life jacket killing her style 2 Inspecting the route 3 That bird's-eye view 4 "Can I Snapchat this?"



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4

safety briefing with five of my fellow passengers (not quite as private as your usual drive to brunch). It's followed by wrapping a life jacket around my waist (reassuring), minutes before we board our private chopper. Grace Kelly would be so proud of me, I think, as I'm being fitted with a seat belt and noise-cancellation headphones. "All systems check, lift off!" comes the voice in my ears and we leap up vertically to contend Atlantis' stature.

First up, we cruise along the lush Palm Jumeirah while it dawns on me how hot we all are. It's physically boiling in here. How does Lez Rezende, our pilot, do this every day? "I used to do the rounds of the Grand Canyon before moving here; I can handle heat," he says.

Keeping me distracted from all this small talk is the rolling movie of Dubai happening before me. My first thoughts? Downtown's skyline is more impressive from up above than ground level (the Burj Khalifa is TALL, y'all). But then it happens. I have this emotional moment. A moment that lasts only for a second, but when I look at the panoramic view, beyond Sheikh

“ Downtown's skyline is even more impressive from up above than ground level

Zayed Road and past Sports City, I realise how small Dubai really is. While heading from the Marina to Bur Dubai on a night out might normally feel comparable with Frodo Baggins' mission to Mordor, the familiar congestion looks almost quaint from up in the clouds.

Our pilot's commentary continues as we cross over the Creek into Deira. "See that island, over there? That Seahorse-shaped one? That's where the Bulgari hotel is being built. Come back next year and I'll be able to show it to you," he says.

We then hover over The World islands, which I can't help but think look nothing like those maps in my seventh grade geography book, but it's hard not to marvel at the sheer ambition.

After a stomach-wrenching 180° turn, we cross the mighty Burj Al Arab before heading towards Arabian Ranches, an area that Rezende compares to Los Angeles' Beverly Hills. "Celebrities live here too, don't they?" he says. We take another 180° swing (what's up with these?), and head back towards the glorious Palm Jumeirah, where the aquamarine water kisses the shore of every frond.

I hadn't quite realised just how much shoreline there is in Dubai before boarding this flight. Nor had I appreciated how much of an architectural marvel this emirate really is – or just how hard those catwalk models have to work to avoid matching their transport. It's a tough old life, but if you're partial to a bit of luxury living, at least now you can Uber it. *From Dhs530 per person (15-minute flight). Daily 9am-6pm. Uber is available to download from the Apple, Android and Windows Stores.*

FOUR TO TRY *Rides with aerial views*

SEAWINGS SEAPLANE

For the kind of flyer who needs to feel the wind in their hair and heart in their mouth, the seaplanes operated by Seawings offer all kinds of scenic tours. They depart from Dubai Creek or JA Jebel Ali Golf Resort and cruise along Dubai's coastline boasting an almighty bird's-eye view of the city.
► From Dhs1,695. www.seawings.ae.

PARASAILING

Not quite the same as plummeting towards planet Earth, but it still shows off great views – with splashes of water. Hook yourself onto the back of a speedboat and parasail along the Arabian Gulf. The rugged skyline of Dubai Marina, JBR and JLT (in the distance) at your service.
► Dhs300 (15 minutes). www.arabiahorizons.com.

SKYDIVE DUBAI

There's a saying in this part of the world that goes something like this: you have not really lived in Dubai until you've jumped out of a plane. Tandem skydive with a pro from 13,000ft – with a full minute of free fall – and land at the drop zone in Dubai Marina.
► Dhs1,999. Skydive Dubai, Dubai Marina (056 406 9630).

GYROCOPTER

Why share a flight with others when you can have a gyrocopter all to yourself? Fly above the Palm Jumeirah and Dubai Marina in this two-seater yellow sky taxi and marvel at the great views all around you from its glass roof.
► Dhs999. Skydive Dubai, Dubai Marina (056 406 9630).