



This weekend, I spent about three hundred dirhams on taxis. It's not easy shopping for an apartment load of new furniture when you don't have a car, and Dubai's home furnishing stores are spread all over the city.

Every week, someone else tells me I need to get a car. I know this. I've known this since I arrived last June and found myself stranded in 98 degree heat in the middle of Karama, during prayer time. I can't remember ever being so miserable in my entire life.

A couple of weeks ago, I arrived at the airport with a suitcase and a headache and found the line for taxis was over two hours long. All manner of queue jumping irritants were pushing in front of me. At that point, at one o'clock in the morning, I walked into the car park and started bawling like a baby, until an Austrian couple who'd just arrived on their holidays took pity on me and offered to drop me home en route to their hotel. I had to travel with them all the way from Garhoud to the Ritz in the marina, before the driver took me back to Satwa (I know! So inconvenient); but as I found myself reclining in the plush confines of a convertible, I admitted I was actually quite lucky to live here, after all.

I can't see myself getting a car here, though. Not only do the roads in Dubai terrify me, but I got my handbag nicked in Shoreditch, two weeks before I Left London and never got my license renewed. The process of trying to order it from abroad, and then converting it, and then re-learning how to drive

in a city full of speeding, treacherous road-fools stretches out before me like an endless battle; and I really can't be bothered to fight it. Besides, the last time I actually drove a car, I was 18 and crashed into a lamppost whilst pulling up in an empty supermarket car park. The one time I tried to leave my hometown in mom's Peugeot 205, the engine made a funny noise and smoke started pouring out of the hood. I was forced to pull up by a roundabout until dad came to rescue me. He towed me home in a drive of shame and I never attempted it again.

My boyfriend told me the other week he'll never use Dubai's Metro, once it opens. "I've got a Porsche, babe," was his reason. I called him a snob but I still don't think he gets why I was offended. To him, it's logical. He's one of thousands here, who's lucky enough to own a nice/big/sporty/fast/uber-expensive and entirely unnecessary car. Is he suddenly expected to ditch it, just because there's an air-conditioned cabin moving up and down Sheikh Zayed road, stopping 10 minutes away by foot from where he actually needs to be?

The future of traveling around Dubai, for all of us, is pretty unpredictable. Furniture shopping by taxi hasn't been too bad. However, thanks to the cost, I now can't really afford the removal van, and I'm not sure a cab driver would be too enthusiastic about me trying to shove three cases, nine boxes and an aquarium into the back of his car.

I'll guess I'll find out next week. **b**

1 MARK IT IN THE DIARY

It's a little home comfort for a lot of us over here. In fact, at times, just perusing the panty aisle for half an hour or so is enough to cheer us up when we're having a bad day; if only the shop assistant wouldn't look at us so strangely. Marks and Spencers in Festival City has now opened The Lounge – a cute café offering wholesome all-day dining. Think yummy wraps, sarnies, salads and the ever-essential jacket spuds. There's no place like home.

For more information:
+9714.213.6213

2 BON JOVI MANIA!

You'd better get in ASAP for your tickets, even though Sambora's just been charged with driving under the influence and will face charges in a US court just two weeks before the band's scheduled gig on May 20. Cutting it a bit fine, isn't it! Still, it all adds a bit more excitement to the prospect of belting out 'Aaaaaalways' whilst waving our lighters ... in a palace. That's something we never thought we'd be doing as we jumped on our beds with those air-guitars, all those years ago.

For more information:
www.timeouttickets.com

3 ESSENTIAL OPERATICS

There we were thinking there was no decent opera in Dubai ... or any at all for that matter, and then the Madinat goes and gives us 20 opera evenings in one night (May 7-10). It's an operatic banquet, we tell you! Six of Opera UK's talented soloists are flying over to perform pieces from faves such as La Boheme, Madame Butterfly and Mozart's Cosi fan tutte. We reckon it's a 'date night' waiting to happen. Well, it's an excuse to dress up in those fancy items you bought in the sale and never thought you'd wear, at least.

Ticket prices: AED 150 to 300. **b**

For more information:
Madinat Theatre on +9714.366.6546