

“Everything is possible if you do it well and have good people around.”
— MOHAMMED ALI ALABBAR, CHAIRMAN, EMAAR PROPERTIES

BURJ KHALIFA



A panoramic view of Dubai from ‘At The Top’, the observatory on 124th floor of Burj Khalifa, after the opening of the world’s tallest building on Monday. — KT photos by Rahul Gajjar

Adam Zacharias

DUBAI — “They could have at least washed the windows!” moaned one journalist stood on the 124th-storey observation deck of Burj Khalifa.

Apparently it can get dusty when you’re half a kilometre in the air. Only very slightly though – and you’d have to be an epic grinch to let this taint your experience of the world’s tallest building. Ignoring this glass-half-empty simpton, the rest of us took advantage of Monday’s press preview to get a sterling view of – and from – the Dh5.5 billion (\$1.5 billion) superstructure.

Even at 8.30am on a murky Monday morning, floor 124 offers a cornucopia of sights. The circular gallery offers a 360-degree panoramic view of the city, allowing visitors to take in landmarks such as the Burj Al Arab, Wafi and The World archipelago in under a minute if they so desire.

Tours depart from Dubai Mall at 30-minute intervals. Guests enter a ground floor lobby situated between More Café and a Burj souvenir store (so if you want to buy T-shirts, photo frames or a Dh5299 commemorative crystal bottle of water afterwards, you know where to go).

“Get ready to enter the record books,” pronounces a sign at the entrance. The lobby itself contains a softly-lit replica of the tower, along with “a story in numbers” (12,000 people worked on the Burj at one time or another, and it’s visible from up to 95 kilometres away apparently).

There’s also a quote from His Highness Shaikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, who vis-

It’s People’s Tower: Emaar CEO

DUBAI — “I take a look at the Burj and I smile,” declared Emaar Properties chairman Mohamed Ali Alabbar from the tower’s 124th floor.

Local and international media flooded into the more than 160-storey edifice on Monday morning, before being whisked up to the world’s highest observation deck for a preview.

“We wanted to achieve something more. Everything is possible if you do it well and have good people around,” added Alabbar during the raucous press conference.

The Burj Khalifa officially opened for business on Monday to coincide with fourth anniversary of the Accession Day of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

Excavation work began in January 2004. Even before its opening, the Burj has managed to shatter 10 world records – including the world’s highest swimming pool at 260 metres and the highest installation of glass in an aluminium façade.

More importantly, however, the tower has dwarfed the world’s previous tallest building, the 508-metre

high Taipei 101 in Taiwan.

Nonetheless, developers remain tight-lipped as to the building’s exact height, simply stating that it exceeds 800 metres.

“I’m very proud of this iconic building,” said Issam Galadari, CEO of Emaar Properties, while flanked by a throng of reporters and photographers. “We have used the most advanced technology in our design and we believe it’s the safest building in the world. It is the people’s tower.”

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Mohammed Ali Alabbar talks to mediapersons on the opening day of Burj Khalifa on Monday

The tour itself edges into sci-fi territory at times, especially with the elevators (TV screens and the nightclub-esque décor aside).

The lifts are a speedy proposition indeed – racing up and down the tower at an astonishing 10 metres per second, al-

though you may not even realise you’re moving until your ears begin to pop. Now if only I could get some installed in my Al Barsha tower block...

For those of you wishing to be educated as well as wowed, moving diagrams and interactive displays explain the story of how the Burj was built, before you enter the iconic edifice itself.

Upon reaching the viewing deck, visitors are free to wander around the floor, which comes equipped with high-tech digital telescopes.

There is even an outside platform, which was unfortunately shut yesterday for the fireworks display but will be open to the public as of today.

Going back to the view, I found the sheer scale of the Burj forced home by its monstrous shadow – slicing through Dubai and almost touching the coast.

And if you get bored of likening the people below to ants, or the vehicles on Shaikh Zayed Road to Micro Machines, there’s always a gift shop to peruse on the way out.

That said, the sights (and subsequent big-small analogy discussions) will undoubtedly sustain the interest of daydreamers and eagle-eyed sightseers alike.

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For more coverage of Burj Khalifa and videos online visit khaleejtimes.com.

How do they wash the windows of Burj Khalifa?

In case you were wondering, we discovered how you go about cleaning a building with 1.59 million cubic feet of concrete and 28,601 glass panels.

Window washing and façade maintenance are carried out by 18 permanently installed telescopic units. These manned cradles, installed in garages within the structure, are not visible when in use, and can access the entire façade from the seventh floor to the peak of the building.

Window washing is a vertical operation, and it takes roughly four months to clean the building top to toe.

Clinton
Congratulates
Mohammed

Staff reporter

DUBAI — The US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has sent a letter of felicitation to His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, on the occasion of Burj Khalifa’s inauguration.

Clinton also congratulated Shaikh Mohammed for using the world’s tallest tower as a platform for discussing sustainable development at the Dubai Forum which begins today.

“Your efforts to create international cooperation in our global economy are an important endeavour. I applaud your commitment to sustainable development,” Clinton said.

A statement by Clinton will be presented today at the forum being held at the Address Hotel.

Bringing together more than 50 leading architects, architectural critics and foreign media from 15 countries, the event will open with a session on ‘Architecture and Sustainable Societies’ before discussing other pressing issues.

The Dubai Forum aims to organise several sessions during the year and their outcomes compiled in an anthology.

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World’s First
Armani Hotel to
open on March 18

Staff reporter

DUBAI — Armani Hotel Dubai, which calls the world’s tallest building, Burj Khalifa, home, will open its doors to guests on March 18.

It is distinguished by being the first of the 10 hotels, resorts and residences, planned to come up across the world, to mark fashion maestro Giorgio Armani’s first foray into the world of hospitality.

Online bookings will go live late in January and prospective visitors can register online at www.armanihotels.com for further details.

Armani Hotels and Resorts was established in 2005 under an agreement between Giorgio Armani S.p.A. and Emaar Properties with the objective to develop, own and operate an exclusive collection of hotels, resorts and residences in the world’s most important cities and holiday destinations.

The opening of the Armani Hotel in Dubai will be followed by the launch of the Armani Hotel Milano.

Other properties being developed include the Armani Resort planned for Marrakech, Armani Residences villas for Marassi in Egypt.

More Armani hotels, resorts and residences will open subsequently in key international destinations such as New York, Tokyo, Shanghai and London.

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A young girl at the venue gazes at the tower on Monday. — KT photos by Shihab



Emirati folk dancers perform at the venue of the opening day ceremony of Burj Khalifa on Monday.