

Shining a light on Manar Abu Dhabi: Dates, locations and how to attend

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Translation Island by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer was part of the first Manar Abu Dhabi event. Photo: DCT Abu Dhabi

Outdoor art exhibition returns for a second time, with installations across the capital and Al Ain

Abu Dhabi will once again come alive with light this winter as [Manar Abu Dhabi](#), the public art exhibition that made its debut from 2023 to 2024, is set to return for a second time. Expanding its reach across Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, the large-scale showcase will feature newly commissioned light installations that blend creativity, technology and Emirati heritage.

Organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi, the event runs from November to January and will transform mangroves, islands and desert oases into open-air galleries. This year's theme, The Light Compass, explores light as a guide and a metaphor – a bridge between the emirate's natural beauty and its cultural identity.

What is Manar Abu Dhabi?



Manar Abu Dhabi is a public light art exhibition that turns the emirate's landscapes, coastlines, mangroves and oases into immersive experiences. Organised by DCT Abu Dhabi as part of its Public Art Abu Dhabi initiative, the exhibition aims to make art accessible to everyone by transforming familiar public spaces into sites of reflection and discovery.

After the success of its inaugural event, held from November 2023 until January 2024, this year will feature more than 19 newly commissioned artworks including light sculptures, projections and large-scale installations created by Emirati and international artists. Together, these works will explore the many ways that light functions – as a source of knowledge, a tool for navigation and a symbol of connection between people and places.



The curatorial team, led by artistic director Khai Hori, aims to offer a global perspective rooted in local inspiration. Hori, who has previously worked with the Palais de Tokyo in Paris and the Singapore Art Museum, is joined by curators Alia Zaal Lootah and Munira Al Sayegh, as well as assistant curator Mariam Alshehhi.

“Manar Abu Dhabi brings audiences and artists into imaginative encounters shaped by Emirati traditional knowledge and contemporary experience,” says Hori. “This edition becomes a journey of navigation and discovery, inviting us to see, sense and connect with the landscapes and stories that light reveals.”

Where will it take place?

For the 2025-2026 event, Manar Abu Dhabi will expand across Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, showcasing artworks that interact with natural and urban areas.

The exhibition’s main site will be [Jubail Island](#), a haven of mangroves and waterways that reflects the event’s focus on nature and sustainability. Al Ain will host installations across [Al Qattara](#) and Al Jimi oases, settings defined by their greenery and ancient [aflaj irrigation systems](#).

When will Manar Abu Dhabi 2025-2026 be held?



The exhibition will unfold over two stages – in Al Ain from November 1 to January 1, 2026, and in Abu Dhabi from November 15 to January 4, 2026.

Al Ain's installations will coincide with the city's Traditional Handicrafts Festival, offering visitors a chance to experience events and deepening the link between heritage and contemporary creativity.

How to attend

Manar Abu Dhabi is a free, public event, inviting residents and visitors to explore landscapes through art. Visitors can experience the installations by walking through the various outdoor locations, each offering a unique interaction with light, sound and nature.

A public programme will run alongside the main exhibition, featuring talks, workshops and performances designed to engage audiences of all ages. These events will provide opportunities to meet artists, learn about the creative process, and reflect on the themes behind the works.

Full details on locations, access points and transport options will be announced closer to the opening date through the official DCT Abu Dhabi and Public Art Abu Dhabi platforms.