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## The UAE and Ireland



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# Building towards the future

The UAE Ambassador, **Khaled Nasser Rashid Lootah** is keen to build on UAE and Ireland's friendship to develop even stronger links between the nations

**Q:** Your embassy in Dublin has been open almost five years; how do you see how relations between Ireland and the UAE have developed in that time?

**A:** The leaders of both countries have shown commitment to enhance the bilateral relations and cooperation between our two nations. I have been honoured to meet His Excellency President Michael D Higgins on numerous occasions and to convey to His Excellency and to the friendly Irish people the good wishes of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. I have been honoured as well to meet with His Excellency the Taoiseach Enda Kenny and members of his Government on a number of occasions in our continuous efforts to boost the relations between the two countries and improve bilateral co-operation. In this regard, the Taoiseach Enda Kenny made a successful visit to the UAE earlier this year. The visit of the Taoiseach came less than two months from another successful visit by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Dublin. We look forward to building on the outcome of those visits and the numerous ministerial visits from both sides to further develop UAE relations with Ireland.

**Q:** Are you happy with how trade is growing?

**A:** The UAE is Ireland's second biggest trading partner in the Arab world. Ireland's exports to the UAE reached €289m in 2013 compared to €16m in 1986. UAE imports from Ireland reached around €17m in 2013. Ireland imports from the UAE are steadily growing. Ireland's imports from the UAE in the same sector reached €99m in 2011 compared to €49m in 2003.

In the aviation sector, the Emirates Airlines has recently doubled its flights between Dubai and Dublin, not to mention that the Etihad Airways, since July of this year, has also increased its flights between Abu Dhabi and Dublin by 100%.

In the business sector, number of Irish owned businesses operating in the UAE is growing and more than 7,000 Irish living happily and working there. In the tourism sector, the UAE is now an established holiday destination for Irish tourists, and there are growing numbers of UAE citizens visiting Ireland for leisure, business or study. Ireland and the UAE also enjoy good business relations in the medical, education, agri-food, cultural, sporting



**At his post:** Ambassador Khalid Nasser Rashid Lootah at his desk in the Embassy of UAE in Dublin

and hospitality sectors. There are many opportunities for Irish companies looking for expansion in many business sectors in the UAE including the Free Zone Areas. There are benefits for doing business in the Free Zone Areas such as tax exemptions, repatriation of capital and profits, corporate tax exemptions, and there is no tax on personal income

**Q:** Ireland has been a strong support of Arab issues at the EU and United Nations. Is that widely recognised in UAE?

**A:** Ireland has been very supportive of Arab issues at the EU and the UN. Ireland's position is well-recognised and highly respected and appreciated not only in the UAE, but also throughout the Arab world.

Ireland's distinct and respected role within the EU in actively seeking the promotion of the Two-State solution to the Middle East conflict is well known. Ireland was the first EU country to declare that the solution has to be based on a fully sovereign State of Palestine, independent of, and co-existing with Israel. Since 1980, every Irish Government has given a high priority to the Middle East conflict and the achievement of a Two-State solution, which is now the aspiration of the international community. The Middle East Peace

Process remains a key foreign policy priority for the Irish Government.

Along with its EU partners, Ireland supports all efforts to restart negotiations that could lead to a comprehensive peace settlement. Charlie Flanagan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, reiterated Ireland's strong position during the recent conflict in Gaza. Along with the UN, the Irish Government has been committed to the humanitarian relief efforts in the occupied territories, and for this reason Ireland has been praised by all Arab countries for its direct financial support to the Palestinian people that currently exceeds €10million per annum.

**Q:** The visit of UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan last year centred on the importance of mutual co-operation in economic, energy and investment issues. How has that impacted on relations since?

**A:** In November 2013, we were very much honoured by the important visit of His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. His Highness met President Michael D. Higgins, the Taoiseach Enda Kenny and former Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Eamon Gilmore. The two parties discussed issues of mutual in-

terest and underlined the importance of cooperation in the fields of economics, energy, investment and tourism. Soon after this visit, the Taoiseach led a large trade mission to the UAE where he had a series of political and business engagements. He had productive meetings with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and His Highness Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Investment Authority.

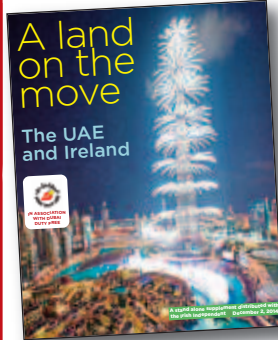
The UAE leadership has welcomed any positive steps towards building a wider partnership between the UAE and Ireland to serve the higher interests of both peoples. I am confident that we are on the right track.

**Q:** One area you were involved in facilitating was the establishment of the UAE-Ireland Business Council. How has that developed?

**A:** Last April, an official trade mission of about 70 companies and organisations visited Ireland, led by HE Khalfan Saeed Jumaa Al Kaabi, the Vice Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The delegation represented the Abu Dhabi business community and comprised members that came from different backgrounds such as oil, gas, construction, financial services, food, healthcare, IT, travel, tourism, consultancy, education, media and aviation. They had productive meetings with the Taoiseach and several ministers, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA, the Irish Food Board and Tourism Ireland. The objective of the trade mission was to identify and explore business and investment opportunities in Ireland. The delegation was impressed by what they learned during the visit.

We also had a successful visit from His Excellency Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoury, the Minister of Economy in 2012. We will build on the success of these visits and on the success of the trade mission to the UAE in January of this year led by Taoiseach Enda Kenny to establish a strong UAE-Irish Business Council. This way we can help business entrepreneurs in both countries to have an advanced level of co-operation and coordination in trade and investment both in the UAE and here in Ireland. We will coordinate all efforts to help businesses explore opportunities, develop partnerships and consider initiatives that can boost the future UAE Irish business relations.



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## Credits

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**VIPs:** Colm McLoughlin, Executive Vice Chairman of Dubai Duty Free receives the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award from President of Ireland Michael D Higgins and, seated, Taoiseach Enda Kenny

# DDF on top of the world

A six-month posting in 1983 turned into a career which saw him build up Dubai Duty Free to be the world's largest airport retailer with annual sales heading for \$1.9billion. Now **Colm McLoughlin** has been honoured in his native land with the President's Distinguished Service Award

**C**OLM McLoughlin is internationally recognised as one of the world's leading businessmen. The story of how he arrived in the UAE to help set up Dubai Duty Free on a six-month posting and turned it into the biggest and best in the world is well-known across the globe.

"There was something distinctly exciting about Dubai even at that time", Colm explains. "I like to think it was the sense that anything is possible and I think that feeling still permeates Dubai."

His lifetime of achievement was recently recognised in the homeland he left behind more than three decades ago. At a ceremony held at Áras an Uachtaráin in October, President Michael D Higgins presented Dubai Duty Free's Executive Vice Chairman with the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Awards for the Irish abroad.

Colm is the first Irish person living in the UAE to be recognised by the Irish government for his outstanding contri-

bution to Irish business and communities overseas.

Following the news of his nomination, Colm said: "I am absolutely thrilled and honoured to be selected for this award. Although it is designated as a personal award, I recognise that it belongs equally to many Irish people in the UAE, both past and present, who have supported the Irish community here. I am also delighted that the UAE is being recognised in this way."

Jimmy Deenihan TD, the Minister for Diaspora Affairs, praised Colm and the nine other recipients of the award: "These ten people show the remarkable

diversity of Ireland's reach in the world. For the first time, there are awardees from the UAE, Korea and Russia, in addition to the more expected locations of Britain, the US, Canada and Australia.

"The nominations are made in different categories, but there is enormous overlap. For example, Colm McLoughlin is, deservedly, nominated for his business successes, and using that success to support Ireland's reputation; but he is equally an unstinting supporter of the Irish community in Dubai. I want to congratulate them all and look forward to meeting them when they come over to Ireland."

After that first posting to Dubai in July 1983 as part of a 10 man team from Aer Rianta, then the Irish airport authority, McLoughlin remained on as head of the operation and has helped drive Dubai Duty Free to become the US\$1.9billion business it is today. The Irish Village in Dubai, which is part of Dubai Duty Free's leisure division, is also hugely successful and employs 22 Irish staff.

"I think a very successful part of our

**Colm is an unstinting supporter of the Irish community in Dubai**

Minister Jimmy Deenihan



business has been the development of our staff," says McLoughlin. "Many years ago we introduced an internal promotion policy. We haven't recruited a senior person in Dubai Duty Free for the past 14 years. All managers and supervisors are people who started with us from operative level and worked their way up."

One thing that is undeniable is the success of McLoughlin's methods and his 6,000-strong staff which have once again returned Dubai Duty Free to its position as No.1 airport retailer in the world, for the fourth time in six years.

Analysis by Generation Research, the industry's independent researchers, highlights that Dubai Duty Free has regained its position as the largest single airport retail operation in the world, based on sales figures of US\$1.8 billion in 2013. This is the fourth time (2008, 2009, 2010 and 2013), that the airport operator has taken first place, this time ahead of Seoul Incheon, Singapore Changi and London Heathrow airport.

Based on 2013 figures, Dubai Duty Free accounts for 5.19% of global airport duty free business and almost 3% of the wider duty free and travel retail global business.

McLoughlin said "We are obviously delighted to regain the No. 1 spot for the fourth time and to note that our business, along with the duty free business across the Middle East, continues to grow significantly.

"This is a dynamic part of the world in terms of airport retail and the continued investment in airport infrastructure reflects that. At Dubai Duty Free, our expansion plans continue in line with the development at Dubai International Airport, where our retail operation will reach 33,000 square metres with the opening of Concourse D next year. Meanwhile at Al Maktoum International, our operation of 2,500 square metres will grow in line with the massive development plans of Dubai World Central."

Besides the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award made to Colm McLoughlin, it has been a glittering year for DDF and its Executive Vice Chairman



**Honoured:** H.H. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of Dubai Duty Free is pictured with Colm McLoughlin and the Frontier Airport Retailer of the Year in Single Location award; below, DDF officials with the Frontier Award in Cannes

as their achievements were hailed by many organisations.

- Dubai Duty Free was named Airport Retailer of the Year - Single Location at the prestigious Frontier Awards Gala Dinner held in the Hotel Martinez in Cannes;
- Dubai Duty Free was awarded the Most Admired Marketing Campaign of the Year at the Images Retail ME Awards held at the Conrad Hotel, Dubai;
- At the fourth Asian Leadership Awards held in Taj Palace, Dubai, Colm McLoughlin was inducted into the Asian Leadership Awards Hall of Fame while

DDF won the Marketing Campaign of the Year Award;

- McLoughlin was presented with an award for Outstanding Contribution to Business at the fifth edition of the CEO Middle East Awards at Jumeirah Emirates Tower, Dubai;
- Dubai Duty Free was named Retail Company of the Year and UAE Company of the Year at the Gulf Business Industry Awards in the Westin Mina Seyahi hotel, Dubai.

On 20 December last year Dubai Duty Free celebrated the 30th birthday of its first day's in business, a day when sales receipts totalled \$44,000.

"That was quite promising", recalls McLoughlin. "In our first full year (1984), our sales reached \$20million, which was a terrific result by any measure.

"As the contract came to an end, I was asked to stay on and head up the duty free, and George Horan has also stayed on and he is now President of Dubai Duty Free."

That award-winning marketing campaign to mark the 30th Anniversary culminated on 20 December 2013, when Dubai Duty Free customers received a special 30% discount – which resulted in a new daily sales record of US\$30.65 million.

"Dubai Duty Free is widely regarded for

having set the benchmark for the duty free industry in the region," says Colm. "Its founding principle of offering international travellers a wide range of quality merchandise, value for money and a first-class retail experience in a shopper-friendly environment holds true to this day.

"I honestly believe we have the best team in the industry anywhere in the world. If somebody is in charge of one

**We change our product range all the time**

Colm McLoughlin

functional area, operations for example, and sees a problem elsewhere they flag it up. Every night we have a senior manager on duty, and we always have senior representation on weekends and public holidays. We are all here and accessible. It's part and parcel of the job."

That type of commitment can be seen in the company's sales figures.

"In 1984 our average sales per head was US\$5. Last year it was US\$48, and we don't think all of that is attributable to inflation. Last year we sold to 49% of departing passengers. At Heathrow, Singapore and Hong Kong airports, the figure is more like 20%, so Dubai Duty Free is considerably higher.

"Of course to some extent, our sales figures grow in relation to Dubai's own passenger traffic. Emirates Airlines is now the world's fourth largest carrier with 48million passengers per year and fly-dubai has become the second biggest carrier into Dubai.

"But our aim is to have our sales ahead of passenger traffic and through the 30 years we have been good at that."

Advanced point of sale systems feed daily sales information back to head office to be analysed at daily morning strategy meetings. "We change our product range all the time, taking into account the change of traffic through the airport and shifting customer needs," said McLoughlin.

"Twenty-five years ago during the Iran-Iraq war, Iranian passengers wanted to buy a US-made fleece-lined anorak. When Russians started coming they wanted fax machines and car accessories, so in Terminal 2 where Aeroflot flew from at the time, we sold car kits, jacks and things like that.

"Nowadays it's all talk of the Chinese and we've conducted studies and surveys on what kind of products they like – certain brands of watches, luxury liquor and perfumes. We have 450 Chinese staff as that is what's needed, and we've installed



**Stylish:** The Fashion Boulevard at Concourse A, Dubai International Airport

Please turn to the next page >>





**Welcome:** The staff of Dubai Duty Free turned out to congratulate Colm on receiving the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award; right, the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel



» Continued from page 5

dual language as required. Although Chinese passengers currently make up just 4% of Dubai's airport traffic, they account for 12% of our business."

Concourse D is scheduled to open at Dubai International Airport early in 2015. This terminal will cater all non-Emirates flights and will mark an important development for the entire airport. Dubai Duty Free will operate around 7,000 square metres of retail space in the new con-

course which is mainly located around a central atrium.

And while the enormous growth of the airport is naturally good for Dubai Duty Free sales, it is not quite as simple as that. In a 2012 study the Emirates Competitiveness Council found that, over 28 years, traffic through Dubai International Airport had grown by 1,700% – but Dubai Duty Free business had grown by a stunning 8,200%.

Dubai Duty Free's Leisure Division is constantly developing its impressive offering which includes The Irish Village,

**I am very proud to have seen been here to see the emergence of Dubai and UAE as a global player**

Colm McLoughlin

The Century Village and the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Stadium; home to the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships. Located

on the same site in Garhoud, the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel is owned and developed by Dubai Duty Free and is managed by the Jumeirah Group.

In the 30 years Colm has spent in Dubai, the emirate has changed enormously and he is delighted that Dubai Duty Free has played a part in that progress and through its commercial success and marketing prowess, has helped to put Dubai on the map.

"I am very proud to have been here to see the emergence of Dubai and the UAE as a global player.

"The Government has done, and continue to do, a fantastic job in investing in the infrastructure of the country and helping it attain this position.

"My own boss, His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Chairman of Dubai Duty Free, has been a fantastic supporter of the operation and has always been open to any proposals.

"I love living and working in Dubai. There is a great sense of community, although it is rapidly growing. There is a great sense of achievement in your working life and a lot to do in your free time."

As a proud Irishman, one delighted to have been honoured by his fellow Galwayman, President Michael D Higgins, Colm McLoughlin still keeps in touch with "home". He comes to The Curragh every year for the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby, and sees a great future for tourism between Ireland and the United Arab Emirates.

"A few good things have happened – Ireland opened an embassy here, and the UAE dedicated an ambassador to Dublin which had previously been shared with London. Emirates launched a very successful daily flight from Dublin to Dubai and has since introduced a second daily flight while Etihad are up to 10 flights a week.

"There's a lot happening with tourism both ways and that will continue to increase."

## DDF has strong commitment to philanthropy all over the world

DDF is also known for its philanthropy. From funding education for children to delivering healthcare services to the underprivileged in the developing world to its support for the Jack and Jill Foundation in Ireland. To date, DDF has supported 34 local and 49 overseas charities through its Dubai Duty Free Foundation.

As part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives, DDF donated Dh3 million to support the Ramadan campaign launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to provide safe drinking water for the five million people who suffer from a shortage of potable water worldwide. Dubai Duty Free also launched its Plastic Recycling Drive recently, which



aims to encourage staff members to recycle plastic waste and turn it into useful products, therefore collectively focusing on the 4R's: Reduce, Re-use, Reinvent and Recycle.

The DDF management and staff took part in a two-day 7k walk and run for charity to support The Moodie Report Great Travel Retail Educathlon (above left).

Other initiatives supported by Dubai Duty Free include the industry-based charity, Hand in Hand for Haiti, which saw the construction of the Lycée Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable in Haiti, and the official opening of the US\$1.5m Dubai Duty Free Sports Complex in the same facility which was inaugurated by the President of Haiti Michel



Martelly (above right).

Following the devastating typhoon 'Haiyan' that struck the province of Leyte in the Philippines in November 2013, Dubai Duty Free in partnership with 'Gawad Kalinga' funded one village to build 32 houses in Bino-tong Alangalang, Leyte which is expected to be completed this year.





# McGettigan's

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# Dining in Dubai will delight all

WITH its confirmed status as a world city, there are many options for dining in Dubai for visitors of all budgets. The migrant communities from Asia have brought their exciting cuisines and a banquet can be had for as little as €10 but some exploration can give you a memorable meal without breaking the bank. Many restaurants have special deals for lunch or midweek, while the Friday brunch is a Dubai tradition. All-you-can-eat brunches can make it hard on the figure, but do take care as many restaurants offer cheap drink too. Here is a selection of some of the best dining experiences to be had for all pockets in the thriving city.

## Rhodes Mezzanine

The popular TV chef Gary Rhodes has done much to modernise British cooking and won a Michelin star for his efforts. His restaurant at the Grosvenor House Hotel in the Dubai Marina is extremely popular and advance booking is essential. With

main courses between €40-50 it won't be your dining spot every night on a trip, but there are delicious fillet steak, slow-roasted pork belly, rack of lamb or many varieties of seafood on the menu.

## The Irish Village

This lively spot is a must-visit for the Irish traveller. Got up to look like an old-style Irish main street, it has a range of friendly bars and restaurants and plenty of live music. Popular with Irish people working in UAE, it can satisfy your hankering for the mixed-grill, boiled ham and cabbage, Irish stew or Bailey's cheesecake. There is a wide range of tasty items to suit snackers or diners - Roast of the day with all the trimmings comes in around €15 while a 400g T-bone steak will set you back €36.

## Asha's

Named after Bollywood legend Asha Bhosle ('Brimful of Asha' and all that), this is a trendy spot



**Lively:** The Irish Village is a great night out with a great range of tasty food on offer

for a young Indian set in Dubai. Food is playful and exotic - try the white curry (almond, yogurt and chili seeds) or the spicy-ginger-garlic marinated prawns. The main dining room is a gloriously vivid tandoori orange but you'll be fine if you leave on your shades. Main courses start from €15.

## Pierchic

This is gloriously set on a pier jutting out into the Arabian Gulf at Al Qasr, Madinat Jumeirah and inspired by the signature style of three Michelin-starred French chef Laurent Gras. Pierchic offers some of Dubai's finest seafood, and has been named as Dubai's Best Seafood Restaurant on several occasions, and recently was named Most Romantic Restaurant in the Time Out Awards. Main courses range from €40-80.

## Majlis Al Bahar

This restaurant also has a magnificent setting on the Burj Al Arab's private island beach. Uniquely, this restaurant has no décor - it simply consists of a table set on a carpet laid on the white sand. There you can feast on a sumptuous menu of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes. It offers a brilliant view of the city at night, with the iconic sail-shaped hotel close by.

## McGettigan's

The dynamic Irish chain has burst onto the scene in UAE and already has five restaurant/bars around the emirates, with three in Dubai and one each in Abu Dhabi and Fujairah. The branch at Jumeirah Lakes Towers in the Bonnington Hotel complex has become a popular spot with visits by the likes of The Coronas, Paddy Casey, Paul



**Romantic:** the stunning view at Majlis Al Bahar; below, Nobu sushi



Brady and Jason Byrne. Its menu was recently named top Pub Grub in the What's On Dubai awards and there is something there for all palates from €8-10 from burgers, wraps, salads, steaks and seafood. A current promotion offers any item on the menu plus three beverages for AE129 (€28).

## Nobu

Based at the Atlantis Hotel at the Jumeirah Palm, Nobu bring its usual cutting-edge Japanese style to bear in an Arabian setting, a mix reflected on the menu. Nobu's world-famous classics such as seared black cod served with sweet miso, and yellowtail topped with thin slices of jalapeño. Nobu Matsuhisa has spearheaded a redefinition of Japan-

ese cuisine and his menu here has an emirati tinge. Open for lunch and dinner, a good way to sample Nobu is through its lunchtime Bento box which offers a variety of tastes for €10 or €14.

## Noodle House

Be warned - this restaurant is always packed! Close to the Emirates Towers metro stop on Sheikh Zayed Road, you sit at long communal tables and order by ticking off your choice on a menu pad. Main courses range from €6.50 to €14.50 and covers a wide variety of Asian cuisines from spicy Pakistani curry to fragrant Thai. Noodle House has become so popular that it has branched out and four new branches have opened this year including the Dubai Mall.



**Popular:** McGettigan's at the Jumeirah Lakes Towers has a unique atmosphere; below, the lively Indian restaurant Asha's





# Man with a golden touch

The Jumeirah Group runs the world's most luxurious hotels, including the iconic Burj Al-Arab. Group CEO and President, **Gerald Lawless** talks about the group's astonishing growth

**T**HE Jumeirah brand is a watchword for luxury in any of the cities in which it operates. Its icon is the stunning hotel on the shoreline of Dubai, the Burj Al-Arab.

Gerald Lawless, President and Group CEO of the Jumeirah Group, is conscious how the building – just 15 years old – has now become an icon of the city in the same way that the Opera House or the Eiffel Tower have become symbols of the great cities of Sydney and Paris.

"We are all extremely honoured – and just a little bit proud – at that," he said this week. "I travel a lot and meet people all over the world. Some aren't quite where Dubai is but when they realise it is 'the place with the sail-shaped hotel' it comes back to them. We are delighted that Jumeirah has been able to have achieved that for Dubai."

The hotel itself has gone from strength to strength, and was recently voted No.1 in the region by Condé Nast Traveller magazine – and has also proved a commercial success.

"The Burj Al-Arab is unique", Gerald adds. "It is renowned for its opulence. It is a suites-only hotel, and the smallest of the 202 suites is 1,750 square feet."

Mr Lawless's favourite story about the hotel in his 14 years overseeing Jumeirah came early in its existence when it had several members of staff dedicated just to showing people around.

"One of these employees was a man from India called Cedric who had already conducted ten tours that day, and probably had been asked the same questions each time," he recalled. "One gentlemen kept enquiring about the wall-coverings, the artefacts and the various features in each of the suites."

"Is that gold", the visitor would ask.

Cedric eventually pointed out politely, "In the Burj, if it looks like gold, it is gold!"

Close by the Burj Al-Arab, on a glorious 2km stretch of private beach which also encompasses the Palm Jumeirah, the Wild Wadi Water Park and Jumeirah Beach Hotel, lies the magnificent Madinat Jumeirah.

"When we were first instructed to come up with a concept by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, Ruler of Dubai, we briefed the architects on how we wanted it to be reflective of the soul of Dubai. They came up with this wonderful tribute to Dubai's heritage."

Taking its name from the Arabic for 'city', the Madinat combines Arabian themes with modern luxury and comfort, with a few of the flourishes for which the Jumeirah brand is famous.

"We took inspiration from the famous Creek-side of Dubai, where in olden times before air conditioning the wind towers kept the streets cool. There is also a fully authentic souk within the complex and the stalls are very popular."

"We have four kilometres of sea water canals and have borrowed the idea of the Abra, the water taxis that work in the Dubai Creek. We used the same boat builder but use electric engines instead of diesel."

Over the three hotels in the Madinat there are 874 rooms, all 55 to 65 square metres and with access to the 2km private beach.

The group's expansion continues at a fast pace – in 2011 it ran just 11 hotels, a number that has



**Luxury:** Gerald Lawless of the Jumeirah Group and, right, the Madinat Jumeirah with the Burj Al-Arab behind; the Abras



doubled in the past three years. "We have at least another 26 hotels in the pipeline," Mr Lawless explains. "We recently signed three management agreements in China, and will be opening one hotel there this year and another eight over the next three or four years. By the end of 2017 we expect to have another 20 hotels under the Jumeirah flag."

This year hotels were opened in Bali, Muscat, Jordan and Abu Dhabi, while the stylish gold livery of Jumeirah already flies over Istanbul, Frankfurt, Majorca, Rome and over three hotels in London.

"We also hope to open within the next two years in St Petersburg, while we are working towards signing for five more hotels in Dubai."

Jumeirah has also recently launched a second hotel brand, VENU, and will open its first VENU hotel next year.

"It will be a contemporary lifestyle brand," Mr Lawless explains. "It will be informal and good fun. The most important thing of course is comfort, and we will deliver that in a modern, stylish way. There has been a very good reaction to that and we will first open in Dubai and once that is performing others will follow."

The Galway native has kept a strong association with his old school, the Shannon College of Hotel Management, and there are now 30 Irish employees in the Jumeirah group.

"I've very involved with the Irish Business Network in UAE. It has been very successful in connecting people and getting various business interests together. We meet for breakfast once a month and have 120-150 people attending where we have guest speakers, visitors explaining why they are in UAE and various 'elevator pitches'."

**We have at least twenty-six new hotels in the pipeline**

Gerald Lawless

He also retains a keen interest in how Ireland Inc is performing and has taken part in various important think-tanks such as the Farmleigh Forum and the Global Irish Initiative to help repair and build the Irish economy.

"They have been a huge success in reconnecting a lot of people with Ireland," adds Mr Lawless.

There were an impressive 55,000 visitors from UAE to Ireland last year and it is a sector which is continuing to grow.

"The expansion of services from Etihad and Emirates to two flights a day each has been fantastic for UAE. It's so good to see Ireland get so much attention over here with the various visits of ministers and the Taoiseach. That makes a big difference for trade and tourism between the countries."

With overseas visitors spending €4billion in Ireland last year, the tourism sector is becoming more important and also has a strong record in providing young people with entry-level jobs.

"I have been involved in helping persuade governments to become more logical with travel visa arrangements. One of the things we are proposing is a common travel area between Ireland and the UK which would mean visitors to either could travel to the other on the same visa. The governments are piloting this with China and if it is successful it will roll out. This is a significant breakthrough in encouraging tourism to Ireland."

In Dubai, and in the world beyond, Gerald Lawless and the Jumeirah group are breaking new ground in what defines a luxury hotel, and their website will show you more – as well as giving you the best available offer for that very special trip.



# Australia is a great champion for Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby



Prize presentation at the DDF Irish Derby

AIDAN O'Brien has been synonymous with the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby. His remarkable seven-year streak came to an end last year when Kevin Manning rode Jim Bolger's Trading Leather to victory.

But the Ballydoyle men and women won't be kept down for long and O'Brien was back with wonderhorse Australia with his son Joseph O'Brien in the saddle.

Owned by the Coolmore Stud of John Magnier, Australia came to The Curragh with the Epsom Derby under his belt, ensuring a second Derby double in three years for Aidan and Joseph after Camelot in 2012.



Winners: Joseph O'Brien crosses the line in the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby

It climaxed a fabulous weekend in which the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby Ball raised €120,000 for the Jack & Jill Foundation.

Next year's Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby promises to be a very special occasion with the 150th running of the great race.

The Ultimate Summer Festival at the Curragh takes place from Friday 26th June to Sunday 28th June 2015.



Champion: Lewis Hamilton wins the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix and world championship last week

## Hamilton a winner fit for a stunning circuit

BRITON Lewis Hamilton won his second world title by winning the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix ten days ago. It was an exciting last race when Hamilton fought off several challenges to finally take the chequered flag — his 11th of the season — and

finish streets ahead of his Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg.

This was the fifth time the Abu Dhabi grand prix was held, and was Hamilton's second time to win — his previous win was in 2011. That was one of only two occasions the race

was won by a driver who didn't win that year's championship, the other being by Kimi Raikkonen in 2012. The other three GPs in were won by German ace Sebastian Vettel.

The Yas Marina circuit is 5.5km and was designed by Herman Tulke.



## Soccer is most popular sport in emirates

THE beautiful game is on the rise in UAE, with ex-Sunderland striker Asamoah Gyan (left) the biggest star playing in the Arabian

Gulf Premier League. The Ghanaian turns out for Al-Ain and has been leading scorer in each of the last three seasons with 82 goals.

Gyan helped his club to the title in his first two seasons but Dubai's Al-Ahli re-gained the title this May. Each club is re-

stricted to four foreign players, mostly Brazilian or Argentine, but include ex-Aston Villa Australian midfielder Brett Holman.

## Major sporting links through Irish cricket

WHILE Ireland and the UAE have yet to meet in rugby or soccer, one Irish team is a regular visitor to the emirates.

The Irish cricket team are in Dubai this week to play a two match series against New Zealand as part of their build up to the World Cup. And they expect to be back again in January to complete their preparations.

You might think players from a cold, wet land in northern Europe might find conditions alien in the gulf, but you would be very wrong — this desert nation is Irish cricket's second home.

Dubai is home to the International Cricket Council, and the game's governing body is keen to host games in the Emirates.

The sports-fanatic rulers have invested heavily in infrastructure and alongside the amazing golf courses, training facilities and race tracks are two state-of-the-art cricket stadiums — the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi and the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Sports City, Dubai.

Ireland and UAE have met 16 times — Ireland lost the first two, at the World Cup qualifiers in 1994 and 2001, but have won 12 and drawn two since. Both nations have qualified for the World Cup Down Under this spring, and meet in the famous Gabba in Brisbane on February 25th.



# Flying high on both wings

Irish exports to the UAE are not just high, but drawn from both 'wings' of the Irish economy, writes **Ahmad Younis**, CEO and Secretary General of the Arab Irish Chamber of Commerce

ABOUT the same size as Ireland, the UAE also shares with us a vital and strategic location, a dynamic globalised economy and a growing population. With 9.4 million souls it makes up 2.5% of the Arab world's population. But with Irish exports of €289m, this accounts for over three times the share (almost 8%) of Irish exports to the Arab world where the UAE is Ireland's second largest trading partner.

And these exports are well spread across both "wings" of the Irish economy: A regular concern about Irish exports is that they are driven by the multinational sector. But as far as the Arab world is concerned both the multinational and more jobs-rich indigenous sectors are equally important. And Ireland's huge trade surplus with the UAE (at €16m a year Ireland's imports from the UAE are less than one tenth of its exports) reflects the enormous potential of the entire region for Irish growth and jobs.

Since opening an embassy in Dublin in 2010 the UAE strengthened its ties and commercial links with Ireland. This is a tribute to the good work done by the Ambassador, His Excellency Khalid Lootah as well as by Enterprise Ireland and An Bord Bia whose offices in the UAE give Irish companies an excellent network of support and advice. Likewise the Arab Irish Chamber of Commerce provides strong support to Irish firms in the region across a variety of busi-

ness sectors including food and consumer goods, healthcare, construction, oil, water, financial services tourism, ICT and aviation.

To describe the AICC as a mere facilitator, however, is to downplay its significance. Its various services include providing advice regarding legal and documentary requirements for exporting to each of the Arab countries; translation of official documents to and from Arabic and assistance with visas and introductions.

The success of this work has many examples. That two of the world's leading airlines, Emirates and Etihad, maintain over a dozen flights a day to Dublin is one of them. The 6,000 or more Irish emigrants who have been attracted to the UAE by huge opportunities in construction, medicine and teaching are another.

Of course business is always a challenge. Less predictable and sometimes volatile, the multi-

national sector has seen reductions in exports last year. But in high jobs rich sectors like food and oils, perfumes and toiletries exports are holding steady. And there are good reasons why the outlook for the future is strong:

Firstly with a population roughly equal to that of Ireland a decade ago, the population of the UAE has pole vaulted to 9.4m now.

Secondly, the concentration of this growth in world cities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai make this country a logistically easy to target for smaller exporters.

Thirdly with low unemployment (just over 2%) and low government debt, the UAE is also a safe springboard to explore the vast potential of the Arab world.

Having the world's busiest airport also makes it an essential hub for the Middle East and indeed the whole of Asia.

Little wonder trade relations are deepening. In January Taoiseach Enda Kenny visited both the UAE and Qatar on a highly successful trade mission. Last April over 38 trade representatives from Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce paid a return visit. Both small but strategically located with great potential for the future, Ireland and the United Arab Emirates have much to gain from each other. As it draws to a close, the year 2014 has been a good one for advancing that relationship.

**Ireland and the UAE have much to gain from each other**

Ahmad Younis



**Relations:** Ahmad Younis of the AICC

# Abu Dhabi is deliciously different

ABU Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates and is rapidly becoming a popular destination for tourists – even more so since Etihad Airlines now flies there out of Dublin twice a day, or 9,000 seats a week.

It is by far the biggest of the emirates, and with 621,000 residents the city is the second most populous after Dubai.

Being the seat of the president and the federal cabinet of the UAE, there is a bustling administration in the city which also hosts many international embassies, oil companies and multi-national businesses.

According to Fortune magazine and CNN, Abu Dhabi is the richest city in the world.

In Arabic, Abu Dhabi means Father of Deer, but there are few stags or does to be seen romping through this modern city with broad boulevards, tall office and apartment buildings, and busy shopping malls.

Good weather is guaranteed, but is best from October to May. It can get very hot (43°C plus) from June to September, when sandstorms can also strike.

The oasis city of Al Ain, about



150km away, bordering Oman, regularly records the highest summer temperatures in the country, however the dry desert air and cooler evenings make it a traditional retreat from the intense summer heat and year round humidity of the capital city.

If you have won the lotto for a few weeks running you may like to stay at the Emirates Palace, which offers a \$1million tailored holiday package.

The hotel was opened in 2005, and cost a reputed €5billion to

build. It is owned by the Abu Dhabi government, and is managed by the Kempinski Group.

It is opulent on a grand scale, with 850,000m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, underground parking for 2,500 vehicles, two swimming pools and spas, marina and helipad.

Several of the suites are furnished in gold and marble, while its Christmas tree last year was valued at \$11million.

The cost of staying begins around €300 per night for the Coral Room, and the hotel set in



**Capital:** The enormous Sheikh Zayed Mosque; downtown Abu Dhabi

over 100 hectares of landscaped gardens with 1.3km of exclusive beach.

In recent years many other hotels have opened to suit every pocket, and the Abu Dhabi tourist board (visitabudhabi.ae) will help you find your accommodation.

A visit to Abu Dhabi is incomplete without seeing the stunning Sheikh Zayed Mosque, which can accommodate 41,000 worshippers. Its skyline includes 82 domes and over 1,000

columns and the world's largest hand-knotted carpet.

The main prayer hall is dominated by one of the world's largest chandeliers – 10 metres in diameter, 15 metres in height and weighing 12 tonnes. The mosque's first ceremony was the funeral of its namesake, Sheikh Zayed, who is buried at the site.

A good tip is to arrive around 4.30pm for the 'Sunset Tour' at 5pm. It's a good time to take photos and chill out in afternoon breeze.

Another excellent attraction is the Abu Dhabi Falcon Hospital is the world's largest, and most advanced, falcon hospital. Its highlight is a falcon display museum as well as a facility with free-flying falcons.

Other typical, if less mobile, creatures from this part of the world are on sale in Al Ain, at the last souk of its kind in the UAE, east of Jebel Hafeet. Here you can see camels up close, and see and hear traders discussing the price and merits of their animals. There are some excellent photo opportunities, but be careful where you point your lens and always ask permission first.





**Expansion:** Dennis McGettigan has this year opened new Irish pubs in Abu Dhabi (pictured) and Fujairah



# Hospitality in a modern Irish style

McGettigan's bar, has provided a real slice of Irish life for expats in Dubai since it opened in 2010. But chief executive **Dennis McGettigan** has taken the idea to Abu Dhabi, Fujairah... and New York!

**T**HERE is a small corner of the UAE where, late on Friday nights, if you close your eyes, you can dream of home. You can only capture that buzz in a few of the many Irish bars the world over, but McGettigan's has got it just right.

Their flagship bar at Jumeirah Lakes Towers recently celebrated its fourth birthday with a spectacular party and a series of free concerts featuring BellX1 and Ruaile Buaille, while the Bonnington Hotel and McGettigan's also hosted their Brand Ambassador, Shane Lowry, who played a stormer at the Dubai DP World Tour Championship.

It all capped a breathless 12

months for the group which has taken both Ireland and the UAE by storm.

No less than four McGettigan's bars were opened, starting with Letterkenny before Christmas, and followed by Abu Dhabi (May 2014) Limerick (June) and Fujairah (October).

The group's dynamic CEO Dennis McGettigan also confirmed that bars will open next year in Singapore (Clarke Quay) and New York (70 W36th St).

Dennis insists that the company's global proposition will remain The Modern Irish Experience, with award-winning food, great entertainment and the best of international sports available to be seen on giant TV screens around the bars.

It all started just four years ago when Dennis looked out the window of his office at the Bonnington Hotel. "I would often look out that window and ask myself what I was going to do with the patch of sand we owned beyond the car park.

"I know", he said to himself one day, "I'll try a pub".



**Brand ambassador:** Shane Lowry at the Bonnington Hotel

His vision avoided the clichés of the Irish bar abroad.

"I decided I wouldn't do the diddley-eye thing because it drives me

mad and doesn't represent what Ireland is today. I came up with the idea of McGettigan's, got it open, made sure the food was just right, the drink was just right, and there was lots of sport on TV at all times.

"I wanted music and entertainment to be a fundamental part of McGettigan's and I decided we would bring Irish acts over at least once a month and from the beginning we worked on bringing some of the best names in Irish music and entertainment to the McGettigan's stage."

Since then the venue has played host to Paul Brady, Damien Dempsey, The Coronas, Mary Black, Paddy Casey, Mundy and Aslan, most returning time after time.

It has also become a coveted stop on the comedy tour with visits from funnymen Jason Byrne, PJ Gallagher and Dave McSavage among others.

The McGettigan family are not resting on their laurels here, and once the pub took off, other opportunities arose.

"We're the biggest seller of Guin-

ness in Dubai and we sell more Magners than any pub outside Ireland – or the whole of Cyprus as the lady from Magners told me!", says Dennis.

"After we had been open seven months, the main distributor of alcohol here, African & Eastern, asked me to consider putting a McGettigan's in the airport. We went into the airport as a franchise arrangement, and the same year we opened another McGettigan's at the Dubai World Trade Centre downtown."

This year the McGettigan's name was raised once more, this time over the door of the bar at the Al Raha Beach Hotel in Abu Dhabi, which is on the highway close to the international airport.

"With the McGettigan's brand, and the Bonnington's brand, we want to get it out there, to expand it", says Dennis. "It's working here, it's working at the airport, it's working in Abu Dhabi. I'd love to have one in Dublin and in the next couple years I'd love to expand in the Middle East and Asia, so I'm looking at Doha in Qatar, and at Bahrain."

McGettigan's has won huge support from the large and growing Irish community in the UAE, and besides the regular events it has provided a focus for Irish people with activities such as its popular golf society.

"The Irish community wrap themselves around the bar. McGettigan's is a complete hub. They really love it."

"I recognise nothing happens on its own, hard work and dedication are high on the agenda but I am blessed and grateful to be surrounded by a wonderful family and such a great team of people who together are key to our continued success and evolution."

From Letterkenny to the Arabian Gulf, a night with the McGettigans is a night you'll remember.

**Diddley-eye doesn't represent what Ireland is today**

Dennis McGettigan





ALTHOUGH it just over 40 years old, the United Arab Emirates takes great pride in its heritage and makes great efforts to preserve it. Its leaders recognise the need to maintain the link between their ancestral past and present and future development. There are many museums and heritage villages around the emirates which showcase different aspects of its culture and display important and interesting archaeological artefacts. To give you a flavour of the range of heritage sites to visit, here is just one from each of the seven emirates.

# Young nation in touch with its past

## ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi has a number of forts that represent a living picture of the region's culture and heritage.

A visitor approaching Abu Dhabi through Al Maqta bridge will be impressed by the Amaqta Fort, which was built 200 years



ago, and which was a monitoring point for the military in order to protect the city's boundaries from aggressors. Almaqta Fort has undergone renovation works and improvement to welcome visitors.

## SHARJAH

The first evidence of human existence in the UAE was found on Al-faya Mountain, dating back to around 8500 BC. Before excavations began in UAE in 1950 Sharjah's history was not known. Some discoveries dating back to Stone Age are displayed in Sharjah Museum.



## FUJAIRAH

Awhala Fort was built in the 8th century BC, and has a huge entrance, control point and monitoring tower. It is the largest fort discovered in the south east region of the Arabian Peninsula and has walls 2.4m thick. Its design suggests that it was modeled on the Ashurite walled cities in Northern Iraq, such as Nineveh and Nimrod, perhaps confirming a relationship with the ancient Iraqi civilization.



## DUBAI

Almost 4,000 years ago, Dubai coast was a small fishing village. Archaeologists have recently discovered hundreds of items made by man such as pottery, weapons and coins which date back to the third millennium BC. These items and much more are displayed in Dubai Museum.



## UMM AL QUWAIN

The Al Quwain ancient fort dates back to 1768, and was transformed into a museum in 2000. Its collection includes items that date back to the first and second millennium BC and the advent of Islam. The statues of two headless falcons, discovered in ed-Dur and Tul Abraq, are unique archaeological items on display in the Umm al Quwain Museum.

## AJMAN

Ajman Fort, dating from the end of the 18th century, is one of the important monuments in the emirates, reflecting the process of human development over the years in the area. HH Sheikh Humaid Bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, ruler of Ajman, transformed it into an all-inclusive museum containing some ancient archaeological personal effects as well as showcasing crafts, traditional professions and old photos of life in Ajman.



## RAS AL-KHAIMAH

Because of its environmental diversity – fertile village valleys, coastal area, mountainous area and desert – Ras al-Khaimah has been a prized location since ancient times. Its his-

tory dates back to 5000BC with pottery, items made from flint and burial sites among the discoveries discovered near Alhamra'a island. All these items are displayed in Ras al-Khaimah National Museum.



# We are studying here in Ireland because it's the best in the world

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland has an excellent global reputation for the quality of its teaching, drawing to Dublin students from all over the world – including an increasing number from the United Arab Emirates

**T**HE Royal College of Surgeons is Ireland's largest dedicated medical school. It offers courses in medicine, pharmacy and physiotherapy, including undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Medicine is the largest and most popular choice among undergraduates.

There are currently more than 70 Emirati undergraduates among the 60-plus nationalities that make up the 3,500-strong student body at RCSI.

Hamdan Al Awadhi and Abdulla Abdelreda Alameeri are both first year medical students at RCSI and enthuse about their new life in Ireland.

"Ireland is a very popular destination to study medicine in the Middle East", explains Hamdan. "There are lots of prestigious colleges here, such as the Royal College of Surgeons and it was recommended highly to me. Ireland is also popular because of the low level of distractions which means you can focus on your study."

When planning his education Abdulla took advice from his sister, who is a doctor:

"She hadn't been here before but knows many others who have and they all say Ireland is the best foundation for a medical degree. She insisted I came here!"

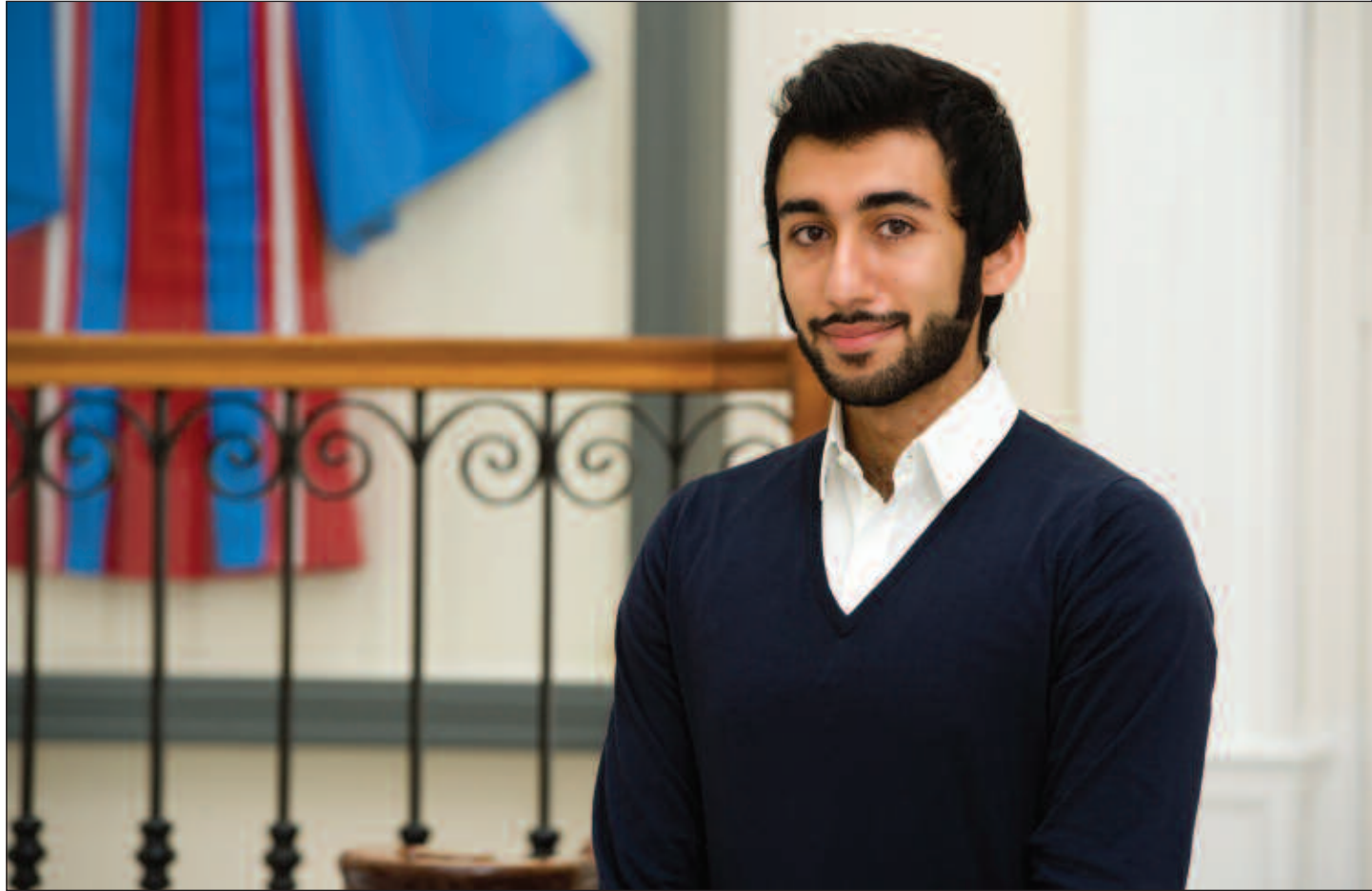
Both men spent a year in Tralee where RCSI runs a preparatory course for overseas students. "That was a lovely year", recalled Hamdan. "It was different to Dublin as it's a small town and it kept you focused on what you had to do."

Abdulla adds, "I remember thinking after a few days 'what am I doing here?' It was quite weird, and hard to come to a place where you don't know anyone at all. But Tralee is a lovely place and I settled in quickly. The college is great at making sure everything is OK and that you have the right environment to study."

The pair have settled in well to their courses and are making good progress.

Hamdan explains, "My course is very enjoyable and interesting. It's great too because there are lots of electives outside the theoretical academic classes such as anatomy which makes the life of the college very interesting."

Hamdan is from Dubai and notices great differences between his homeland and Ireland.



**Students:** Hamdan (top) and Abdulla are enjoying life at RCSI in Dublin

"The main difference between Dubai and Dublin is the weather, of course. We also notice the different times things happen – shops in Dubai open very late while in Dublin everything is closed by 8pm. We start school in UAE

at 7am while here our classes don't start till 8 or 9am.

"The people here are really very friendly which makes it easy to settle in. They speak English too, which helps, but it's easy to feel part of the community as people make you feel like you're one of them."

Abdulla is from Sharjah, a smaller emirate just north of Dubai and 15 minutes away by road.

"Sharjah is a bit more strict than Dubai on things such as alcohol, but I have been to Dubai quite a lot and I find it very similar to Dublin. I know lots of people of different nationalities so it is not such a shock."

Hamdan explains how the overseas students at RCSI have settled in.

"There are lots of students from GCC countries like Oman, Qatar here, and at least fifty from UAE. We usually meet every Friday to have lunch and then we stay in one person's house and talk about what we did during the week.

"I would recommend studying at RCSI to anyone. Coming to study here gets you out of your comfort zone and you get to meet people from lots of different backgrounds. That is the real meaning of independence. In Ireland you feel part of the community."

Abdulla points out that although there are quite a lot of Emiratis at RCSI, the cohort is dwarfed by those from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait among the Gulf countries.

"We are small but increasing all the time," he explains. "In my batch there were five or six

of us from UAE, and the following year there are 10 or 12."

The students have developed a good social network to help each other out. "We used What's App so if anyone needs help with anything we can do so," says Abdulla.

New technology has enabled RCSI to extend its reach. It has a university in Bahrain, two medical schools in Malaysia and an institute in Dubai. On the ground teaching is supplemented by "a virtual learning environment".

"New technology allows us to standardise the courses regardless of where the student is: our ethos is to bring the education to the student 24/7 regardless of location," Philip Curtis, Associate Director of Admissions and Student Services, explains.

"The curriculum is the same, there is external marking and the times of the exams are even synchronised so that when you open an examination paper in Dublin at say 9am, that paper is being opened simultaneously by students in the other countries."

New technology has also revolutionised the learning experience for foreign students, including those from UAE.

"RCSI students graduate as competent healthcare professionals ready to begin their medical careers in whatever speciality they choose. The international recognition of their RCSI degrees enables them to practice in whatever Country they choose and they join our 20,000 Alumni network who are delivering healthcare in over 70 Countries on a daily basis," Mr Curtis adds.





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