

Chip off the old block!



FANTASY WORLD: A Lego Dragon guards the entrance to Legoland Dubai and below the waterpark

Josie Clarke and son Arthur road test the new Legoland which has opened in Dubai

LEGO has expanded its empire into the Dubai desert with the opening of its latest theme park - and my five-year-old son could not be happier about it.

Like most children, little Arthur loves Lego, playing outside in the sunshine and a water park. So when the chance comes to escape the British winter for Dubai to immerse ourselves in all three - at once - there's no turning it down.

The world's newest Legoland has recently opened within a huge

development about a 30-minute drive from downtown Dubai, and is attempting to corner the market for young children - two to 12-year-olds specifically - in a city already boasting more than its fair share of theme and water parks.

In true Dubai fashion, it has cherry-picked all the best rides and attractions from the other Legolands around the world.

This means your visit can combine Legoland Windsor's fantastic Submarine Adventure with its up-close views of stingrays and sharks - which in our opinion

is the best child's ride anywhere, ever - with Legoland Florida's speciality Granny's Apple Fries, which taste even better than they sound.

There are five zones - Adventure, Imagination, Miniland, Kingdoms and City - within a compact layout that makes the entire park very doable within a single day.

But the wow factor is its incredible Miniland housed within a giant air-conditioned dome.

I'm walking a few steps behind Arthur as the glass doors slide open and he sets eyes on it for the

first time. He shouts in amazement as towering, illuminated replicas of the Middle East's most recognisable buildings and landmarks stretch out before him - made with a combined total of 20 million Lego bricks.

Even by Dubai's standards it's an extraordinary sight. Arthur happily spends a full hour running back and forth alongside a replica of the city's train system as it weaves around skyscrapers; he's amazed by the attention to detail.

We could stay here all day but I insist we head outside to make the most of the longed-for 25C temperatures.



We make a beeline for the "big boys" Driving School where Arthur is measured up and hears the joyous news that he is finally tall enough to go for his licence. We listen carefully to the safety briefing.

Admittedly, I'm a little concerned that this experience could either go very well or very badly, but happily the little drivers put their parents to shame with their courtesy,

helped by the odd toot of their mini horns.

The cost of his licence is an exorbitant 100 dirhams - around £25 - and I baulk at the price, but Arthur's face lights up when he finally receives it, complete with his photo, and it's a great memento of Legoland Dubai.

He's never happier than when he's using bricks to build his own creations, so we set off to find the

FACT FILE

Josie Clarke was a guest of Emirates (www.emirates.com) who operates 126 non-stop flights per week to Dubai from Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Newcastle. Economy return flights from London Gatwick to Dubai cost £599.

A one-day ticket for Legoland costs £50; combined tickets with the water park costs £90. Visit www.legoland.com/dubai

Hotel and theme park packages can be booked via www.lapitadubaihotel.com or www.dubaiparksandresorts.com

Build & Test site in the Imagination zone, where children - and plenty of parents - are building their own Lego racing cars and sending them speeding down a track.

Again, we could spend hours here, and nearly do - breaking away only to grab some of those apple fries with a huge dollop of sweet

cream, just to give us enough energy for the short stroll back to the hotel.

We head off the next day for the Legoland Water Park, which is part of the main park, but has its own entrance and entry fee.

The weather is making headlines for being overcast rather than the usual "guaranteed" sunshine - although it's still beautifully warm - but we are stunned to find we have the park entirely to ourselves.

We probably ride the slides 30 times - at a conservative count. I keep telling Arthur to remember this day and that he will never again have an entire water park entirely to himself.

Eventually he needs a rest, so we seek out an area where he can build his own Lego ships and send them into a water race at the pull of a lever. It's the equivalent of pooh sticks, Lego style.

On our final day, we meet up with Legoland master builder Muhammad Zahid, who has a surprise special treat in store for us. He helps us make mini figures of ourselves - surprisingly tricky - and leads us back into Miniland where he places them at the main doors of the Burj Khalifa. Arthur can't believe it - especially when we are told they'll be staying there forever.

If you visit the park, check us out. We're pretty lifelike - except for the pink rah-rah skirt I'm wearing. Oh - and the yellow faces. In real life, ours have the start of a tan.

HOT DEALS

CYPRUS: Sovereign (01293 765 003; www.sovereign.com) offers seven nights at the five-star [Anabelle Hotel](#) (half-board) from £1,045pp - saving up to £729 per couple. Includes airport security fast pass and access to UK airport lounges (where available), transfers and flights from Manchester on April 12.

TURKEY: Thomas Cook (www.thomascook.com; 0844 412 5970) offers seven nights at the five-star SENTIDO Perissia (all-inclusive) from £375pp (two sharing) - saving £350 (48%). Includes transfers and flights from Manchester on April

GOA: Away Holidays (www.awayholidays.co.uk; 020 8705 0107) offers seven nights at the four-star Golden Tulip Hotel (B&B) from £737pp (two sharing). Includes flights from Manchester on April 4.