

V. Timeline

Select Cultural-related Events and Developments across the GCC since 2008

2008

Dubai's Technology and Media Free Zone Authority (TECOM) introduces the Gulf Film Festival and Competition

March 31: The al Dhafra Festival happens for the first time; the festival holds a camel pageant and other events and activities known to the region for centuries.

October: Qatar releases its Qatar National Vision 2030 program outlining goals to increase cultural awareness, gender parity, youth participation, and introduce Qatarization quotas.

November 22: Museum of Islamic Art in Doha opens showcasing Islamic art and architecture, the first of its kind in the Arab World.

2009

December 31: Construction of the Burj Khalifa is completed. The structure has become a symbol of Dubai and the emirate's modernity.

2010

May: Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, ruler of Sharjah, approves the Heart of Sharjah project, the largest heritage project to date in the Gulf that will highlight the historic transformation of the emirate.

November 25: Plans for Sheikh Zayed National Museum unveiled.

December: 'Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art' opens in Doha. It serves as Qatar's centerpiece for modern and contemporary art and is now holding over 9,000 works, making it the world's largest specialized collection of its kind.

2011

December 21: King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia proposes that all six GCC member states transition from cooperation into a union, and Gulf Arab leaders adopt the Riyadh Declaration calling for a "single entity."

December: GCC adopts ID card as proof of identity for GCC citizens in both public and private sectors.

2012

Manama, Bahrain designated "Arab Capital of Culture" for the year 2012 by the Arab League and under UNESCO.

May 24: Dubai government sets an agenda to preserve national identity.

June 30: Bahrain's Pearling Trail is inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage site, the second such site in the country.

November 28: UAE releases national charter outlining a code of values and conduct for Emirati citizens in an effort to define Emirati character and culture.

2013

Dubai Museum records over 1 million visitors for the first time.

Qatar-UK 2013's year of culture celebrated the long-standing relationship between Qatar and the UK. The bilateral cultural exchange program was an initiative of the Qatar Museums Authority, developed in partnership with the British Council, Qatar's Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

April 1: Saudi Arabia begins construction on the tallest structure in the world, the Jeddah Tower, which is planned to reach over one kilometer in height.

July 8: Qatar's al Zubarah archaeological site is inaugurated as the country's first UNESCO world heritage site.

2014

Sharjah, UAE designated as a "Capital of Islamic Culture" for the year 2014 by the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

Historic Jeddah is inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage site, commemorating the city's multicultural role as a major Red Sea port and as the historic gate to Mecca for Hajj pilgrims.

January 27: Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed sets up global tourism body to market 'Brand Dubai,' an initiative aiming to boost the emirate's global image and bring in more visitors and tourists.

December: Kuwait's Abraj Al-Kuwait is nominated as a UNESCO world heritage site for the tower's representation of Kuwait national identity.

December: Qatar opens Al-Wakra Heritage Village, a replica of a traditional Qatari village designed to blend traditional aesthetic with modern society.

December 1: UAE National Archives partners with Google for digital exhibition on the foundation of the country.

2015

February 10: Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid forms the Gender Balance Council to show Dubai's keenness to increase the roles of young Emirati women in the nation's progress.

March 3: Saudi Arabia's Art Council creates an exhibition to explore the history of the country's contemporary arts scene.

March 17: Dubai hosts the Arab Social Media Influencers Summit, emphasizing ideas that connect people in innovative ways.

March 19: Bahrain pushes for a pan-GCC media strategy in line with the region's traditions and principles

September 14: GCC Undersecretaries of Culture underscore the importance of strengthening a Gulf identity through joint activities and events.

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2016

Kuwait designated as a “Capital of Islamic Culture” for the year 2016 by the Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers.

February 3: Saudi Arabia marks the Al-Janadriyah Festival’s 30th anniversary as a key mechanism for preserving culture and a traditional Saudi national identity.

February 8: The UAE transforms the Ministry of Culture into the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development and creates a mixed-gender Youth National Council to advise the government.

April 7: Saudi Arabia announces a plan to introduce permanent residence for foreigners.

April 20: The UAE’s Federal National Council forms a special committee to address the rising trend of mixed-marriages in the country, a phenomenon the Council says may impact national identity.

April 26: Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 identifies national identity and pride as a major theme, and calls to strengthen and preserve ancient cultural sites and traditional practices while working to integrate the nation into global cultural circuits.

April 30: UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge announces workers’ day tribute in nod to the country’s large expatriate workforce.

July 30: Oman opens its National Museum, an institution that aims to preserve the components of Omani cultural heritage by supporting research and scientific and historical studies, and heritage conservation plans.

August 31: The 2,000-seat Dubai Opera opens.

September 13: The UAE announces the World’s First Global Cultural Leadership Summit for April 2017.