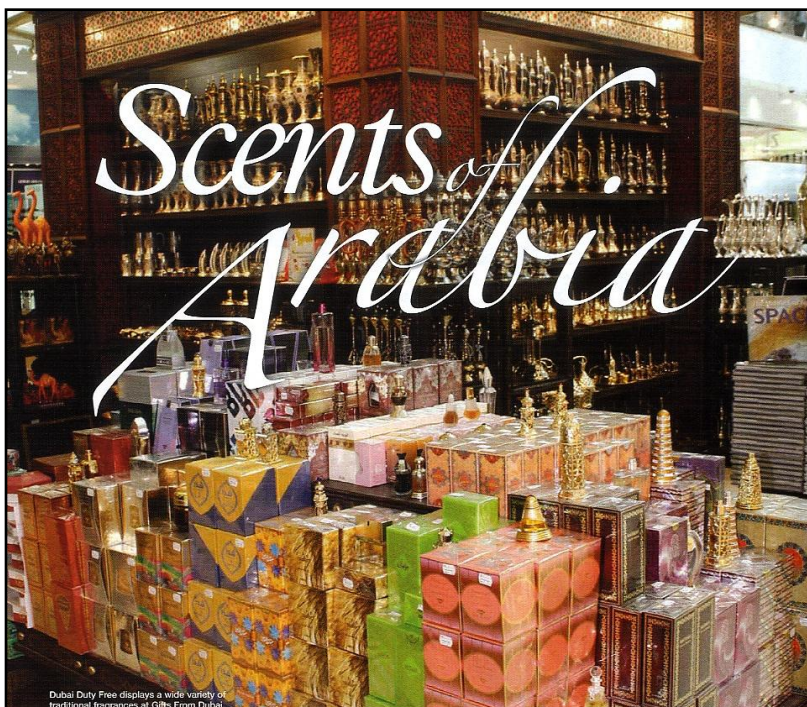


Scents of Arabia

There is no mistaking the sweet, potent and heady fragrance of an Arabian perfume or the glint of its ornamental crystal bottle on store shelves. If you are a tourist in Dubai and have visited the malls and souks, you wouldn't have missed the scented smoke of bukhoor or the oriental fragrance of oudh wafting by. Most of these rich, lingering scents are retailed by top-end brands like Amouage, Ajmal Perfumes, Al Haramain, Arabian Oudh, Designer Shaikh and Anfasic. But the best place to find all of these authentic Arabian fragrances under one roof is Dubai Duty Free, home to some of the most exclusive perfume brands. At the airport, you can find the high-end brands at the perfume and cosmetics stores across all terminals, and at the Dubai Duty Free shops at Al Majlis and Executive Flight Centre. A wide array of fragrances are also available at the Gifts From Dubai shops. Typically, Arabian perfumes are different from other scents as they are stronger, concentrated and long-lasting.

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Dubai Duty Free displays a wide variety of traditional fragrances at Gifts From Dubai



Don't leave Dubai without buying – or at least dabbing on – an authentic Arabian perfume. It evokes delightful olfactory sensations and a bottle of the exotic essence will make an ideal souvenir of your trip

There is no mistaking the sweet, potent and heady fragrance of an Arabian perfume or the glint of its ornamental crystal bottle on store shelves. If you are a tourist in Dubai and have visited the malls and souks, you wouldn't have missed the scented smoke of *bukhoor* or the oriental fragrance of *oudh* wafting by. Most of these rich, lingering scents are retailed by top-end brands like Amouage, Ajmal Perfumes, Al Haramain, Arabian Oudh, Designer Shaikh and Anfasic.

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Saba Tahir, Manager (Acting) of Purchasing and Research at Dubai Duty Free says that most brands, with the exception of Amouage from Oman and Designer Shaikh from Bahrain, are locally sourced, and are bought by airport shoppers as mementoes and

gifts as they truly capture the essence of Arabia. Says Tahir: "The perfumes come in beautiful, ornamental bottles reflective of Arabian culture and traditions. These are in different colours and studded with stones. Many exotic ingredients go into the making of these perfumes." The scents mostly tend to incorporate extracts of flowers such as rose, jasmine, ylang-ylang, violets, cedar, cinnamon, vanilla, patchouli, mimosa, rosewood oil, sandalwood, musk, bergamot, geranium, iris, incense and lavender, sourced from around the world. For example, rose, the most valued among ingredients, is mostly cultivated in Grasse, South of France.

Besides stocking an array of fragrances, Dubai Duty Free also retails *oudh* and *bukhoor*. For the uninitiated, these are two different types of perfumes. *Oudh* is an ingredient in perfumes, and is actually a resin from the Aquilaria tree found in the jungles of Assam in Eastern India. *Oudh* is commonly burned in order to leave a lasting smell on clothes. It's also used to perfume homes. *Bukhoor* is a mixture of wood chips in fragrant oils that resemble round pieces of coal. It is burnt in an incense burner – just shut your eyes and soak in the scent.

"A fragrance is an idea, a thought, a place, a particular frame of mind or moment," explains Abdulla Ajmal, Deputy General Manager of Ajmal Perfumes. "Fragrances have the ability to paint different moods through the sense of smell." He says that the perfume, the branding, the bottle and



packaging should represent a clear coherent thought, and a typical fragrance takes anywhere from 18 months to two years from concept to realisation. The oriental range, Ajmal retails such perfumes as Dahn Oudh Al Shams, and more recently Dahn Al Oudh Lujain. Travel retail exclusives include Unveil, Zeyna, Believe (for him and her), Dahn Al Oudh Platinum and Relentless. Tahir says the most expensive Arabian perfume at Dubai Duty Free is Ajmal's Relentless, a concentrated scent priced at Dhs920 (\$255.55) for 15ml.

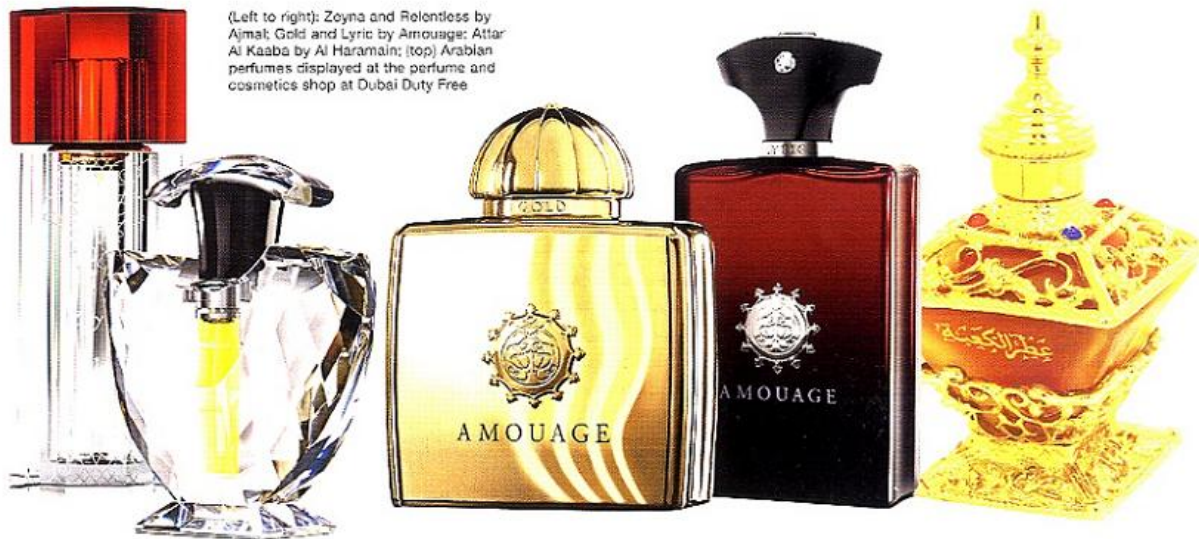
While Arabian perfumery is deeply entrenched in local culture, creating the perfect fragrance is not easy. Explains David Crickmore, CEO of Amouage: "The House of Amouage takes inspiration from music and art. The initial conceptualisation starts with a mood or theme. A story is then created based on it.

We experiment with different blends until the perfect fragrance is created." Amouage scours the globe for unique ingredients to suit its sophisticated and discerning international consumer. "At Amouage, we take the fragrances of the east, including *oudh*, and transpose them into internationally acceptable fragrances. Today, it has a stellar following around the world including royals, global leaders and celebrities," adds Crickmore. In addition to Jubilation, a fragrance inspired by the nocturnal beauty and mystical power of the moon, also worth trying is Amouage's Gold, and its most recent and award-winning fragrance Lyric, which explores the darker side of the rose.

Yet another perfumer, Al Haramain retails perfumes that boast deep and strong base notes that last long, and are made with attention to Arabian culture. Al Haramain's best-selling perfumes include Attar Al Kaaba (pictured below).

Anfasic Dokhoon fragrances, also available locally, are unique in that they do not carry a name, only a date, such as December 2nd and February 29th – to make each day smell special. Their recommendation: add a pinch of Dokhoon Shay to a lit piece of charcoal and enjoy the scented smoke. Burning *oudh* is a mark of hospitality in the Middle East – incense burners are passed around at weddings and festive celebrations as they are often a symbol of wealth, status and refinement.

Clearly, the choices are plenty and the olfactory treats varied, and opening up a bottle of these traditional scents is sure to bring back memories of your trip. **DV**



(Left to right): Zeyna and Relentless by Ajmal; Gold and Lyric by Amouage; Attar Al Kaaba by Al Haramain; (top) Arabian perfumes displayed at the perfume and cosmetics shop at Dubai Duty Free

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