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A fascinating museum in Abu Dhabi to celebrate Sheikh Zayed's legacy and love of nature

Saadiyat Island is poised to become the United Arab Emirates' cultural hub, and more widely of the Middle East. The ambition of Abu Dhabi leaves little doubt about this. The Louvre Abu Dhabi, inaugurated in 2017 with French President Emmanuel Macron, will soon be joined by two brand-new museums of exceptional architecture. The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the largest of the four Guggenheim museums, and the Zayed National Museum. These two stunning buildings have in common that they are both constructed by Six Construct, BESIX Group's subsidiary in the Middle East. Let us take a closer look at the Zayed National Museum.

The project is composed of 3 parts

- The Museum with 5 wings and 4 pods harbouring the galleries
- The Mound with the main atrium and no less than 2 km of walkways
- The Timeline Garden with 40,250 m² of landscaping with fountains and kiosks







Zaved National Museum

Location

Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi (UAE)

Abu Dhabi Department of **Culture and Tourism**

Trojan General Contracting LLC

Contract type

Construction period 2021 - 2023

Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority and is a tribute to the country's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It will showcase the life and legacy of Sheikh Zayed and the history of the United Arab Emirates. The museum will feature interactive and immersive exhibits, multimedia presentations, and historical artifacts that illustrate the cultural, social, and political transformation of the country over the past several decades. The building will also serve as a cultural and educational hub, hosting events, workshops, and programmes that promote Emirati culture and heritage.

The Zayed National Museum is being developed by the Abu

Unique design

Its breathtaking design is a reflection of the heritage and cultural identity of the United Arab Emirates, and incorporates elements of traditional Emirati architecture. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Lord Norman Foster, of Foster + Partners, the museum combines a highly efficient, contemporary form with elements of traditional Arabic design and hospitality to create a museum that is sustainable, welcoming and culturally of its place.

The narrow glass atriums evoke the wing tips of the falcon, a national symbol and emblem of Emirati heritage. The galleries are inspired by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's values and beliefs in education, conservation, the environment, sustainability, heritage and culture, as well as his humanitarianism and strong faith. The galleries are nested within a mound, whose form is an abstraction of the topography of the Emirates. Above this rise the five lightweight steel structures, sculpted aerodynamically to act as solar thermal towers. Balancing the lightweight steel structures with a more monumental interior experience, the four pod-shaped galleries are suspended over a central lobby, which give the impression of being dug into the earth to exploit its thermal properties and brings together shops, cafes and informal venues for performances.

Highly complex works

The teams from Six Construct and their local partner Trojan General Contracting took over works from the previous contractor in March 2021.

"We at Six Construct and BESIX have been very honoured by the trust placed in us by the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. The Sheikh Zayed Museum will be a world-class museum and we are proud to take over the construction process from the previous situation. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi can count on our extensive engineering and construction expertise, combined with Trojan's knowledge, to successfully complete this extraordinary museum, which will further enhance the Emirates' global standing", explains David De Visscher, Project Director.

"Taking over this project was a challenge, adding to the already intrinsic complexity of such a unique building. But our design office experts and operational teams have excelled in conducting exceptional preparatory work, in methods and engineering, which have enabled us to best address the construction challenges", says Santanu Chattopadhyay, Technical Director.

The achievements of the operations team since then are indeed remarkable. Works have progressed immensely in 2022. At museum level, all five wings steel structure are rising up and the full steel arch of wing five (culminating at 123 metres) is in place. At the end of the year, close to 30 % of the cladding of the pods (which contain the galleries) had been realised, and the final concrete of the conical wall over the main lobby was finished. Last but not least, the first trees have been planted in the Timeline Garden!

Norman Foster and BESIX

Norman Foster is amongst the 'starchitects' who have shaped architecture in recent decades. The National Zayed Museum is not the only work by Foster + Partners, built by BESIX Group. The Group has recently delivered the Icône office building in Luxembourg and is currently winding up the Lusail Plaza towers in Qatar. It is unlikely that any construction company has ever worked on three Norman Foster projects simultaneously. Except for BESIX, of course!

More about Saadiyat Island

Saadiyat Island is a man-made island located off the coast of Abu Dhabi, UAE. It is one of the largest cultural, residential, and tourism projects in the world and is being developed as a premier destination for arts, culture, and tourism. The island is home to a number of major cultural institutions, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum. The island is a symbol of the country's commitment to cultural development and exchange and is destined to play a major role in shaping the cultural landscape of the region for generations to come.

