



AlUla, Saudi Arabia

Habitas AlUla

Story by Sarah Reid

“Welcome home,” says Anas AlMughamisi with a disarming smile. The greeting from the front office supervisor is a Habitas signature but it’s especially comforting at the eco-resort group’s newest outpost, in the desert oases region of AlUla in north-west Saudi Arabia.

Less than two hours by plane from Riyadh and nestled in a spectacular sandstone canyon, Habitas AlUla (ourhabitas.com) is vast; 96 spacious villas branch off a private, central road that snakes gently uphill from reception to Tama, the resort’s glass-walled restaurant, perched at the top of the valley. Filled with locally made furniture and textiles – much like the Bedouin-tent-inspired villas – and spilling out onto the deck of an infinity pool, it’s a space made for lingering.

“Tama is the heart of Habitas,” says AlMughamisi. “You can come up at any time of the day to eat, relax or connect with other guests.” After a busy morning touring the area’s famed archaeological sites, it’s pure bliss to recline on a sun lounger by the pool with a freshly pressed juice – the resort works closely with local farmers in this surprisingly fertile district.

Electric buggies manned by a small army of friendly drivers can shuttle you up to Tama or to yoga classes at the Thuraya Wellness centre but the best way to navigate the resort is on your complimentary e-bike. Ask the reception staff where to find ancient petroglyphs and a superb collection of modern art on the property, including a series of trampolines embedded in the desert, which illuminate at night. Bouncing away in this corner of the canyon, sculpted by the elements over millennia, it’s easy to imagine you’re on the moon.

This interactive art installation is just one form of after-dinner entertainment at Habitas AlUla. If you’re staying in one of the Celestial villas, you can spend a memorable night gazing at the night sky through your in-villa telescope. Or head next door to AlUla’s sister property, Caravan by Habitas, and catch a film (typically a family-friendly English-language flick) projected onto a sheer canyon wall. Kick off your shoes, stick your toes in the sand, order a sweet treat from the ice-cream truck (try the local date flavour) and settle into the cushion-seats for an only-in-Saudi outdoor cinema experience.

