

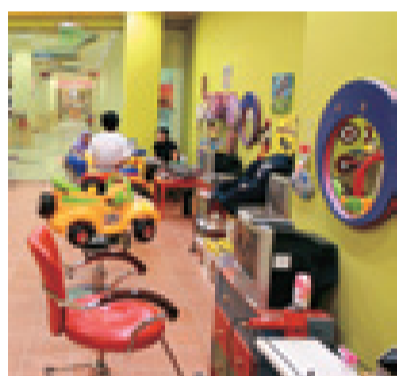


BOBS AND CREWCUTS: A little boy enjoys his haircut at the Charms Kids Salon at Safer Mall, Sharjah. —KT photographs by Rahul Gajjar



CATERING

to KID CUTS



Specialty baby/ child-friendly salons sporting race-car chairs and funky shampoo stations are targeted towards high-maintenance young ones

Raziqeh Hussain

If you've ever had to hold down a bawling kid while a frustrated hair stylist tried unsuccessfully to cut his hair, then you understand the need for kids' hair salons. Regular hair care centres are just not geared towards kids. With their plain white walls, tall chairs, impatient hairstylists and quiet atmospheres, these shops are boring and intimidating for children.

Kids' hair salons are a growing trend, and they offer movies, video games, books and toys to keep kids entertained — and still — while stylists who are specially trained to deal with them do haircutting and styling. Some salons even cater to

kids' spa adventures and offer manicures, pedicures, highlights, and formal hair-dos. And there are some who offer additional services, such as birthday parties and ear-piercing. Many offer their own kids' hair care products.

A few kids' hair salons are franchises with shops open in most of the Emirates, like Just 4 Kids which is there at Karama, Deira City Centre and City Center Ajman. Others are smaller shops with only one location available, mostly in malls.

Charms Kids Salon, at Safer Mall, Sharjah, offers a fun environment for kids' haircuts. Kids sit in racecars, airplanes, and fire engines while stylists cut and style their hair. Television sets abound on the brightly coloured walls and toys are scattered around the floor.

This salon also offers nail painting, hair accessories, and free service every four visits. "We put on their favourite cartoons, and the kids tell us what they want us to do with their hair. I have little girls asking for Dora (cartoon character) haircuts and boys wanting Pokemon spikes!" chuckles Elisa Rajaa El, the owner. "Tattoos and henna are also the 'in'

we give him the Mickey Mouse cut! He wanted those same ears, too. Finally, we had to quieten him down with his favourite cartoons and his mother had to buy him a Disney shampoo from the store next door. That's when we started storing kiddies shampoos and lotions," says Doris.

Color Nail, a beauty lounge at Times Square Centre, is a salon, spa and party place, specialising in girls' celebrations. Services include haircuts, specialty up-dos, manicures, pedicures, spa gift packages, and a selection of signature parties. Owner Dolly Smayra reveals she was the first to start all-out spa parties for kids. "Young girls always want to copy their moms so we thought why not have something special for them too? We do a total makeover from head to toe including nail polish, hair colour and pedicure," says Dolly. For Dh\$130 per child, a team of therapists will be at the party-goers' beck and call for two hours. They can also have their hair braided and get glittering temporary tattoos while watching *High School Musical*.

Julie, a mother from Palm Jumeirah, says, "When my daughter was invited to a manicure party, I nearly died. In the end, I let her go. Now, every time we walk past the salon, she asks to go in there — and she's five!" Rebic, a stylist from Sweet Cut Kids Salon in Abu Dhabi, feels that business is growing very fast. "Actually, the idea is thrilling for the parents because anyway the child has to cut his/her hair, so isn't it more interesting if he/she is entertained at the same time?"

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We have little girls asking for Dora haircuts and boys who want Pokemon spikes! Tattoos and henna are also the 'in' thing

The Garage Museum's Zoom Factor

The personal cars collection of HH Shaikh Hamad bin Hamdan Al Nahyan is one of Abu Dhabi's best-kept secrets

Brian Salter

The Emirates can hardly be accused of holding back when it comes to superlatives. Everyone knows about the world's tallest building, and the two 7-star hotels. But the world's largest pickup? The world's largest recreational vehicle? The world's largest mobile home?

If you have just a whiff of petrol coursing through your veins, you will surely want to make a pilgrimage to one of Abu Dhabi's best-kept secrets — the personal cars collection of HH Shaikh Hamad bin Hamdan Al Nahyan, more popularly known as the 'Rainbow Shaikh'. It's not a museum you will find listed in the official Abu Dhabi tourism list. But don't let that put you off.

Although officially a museum, it is in reality a warehouse, in the shape of a pyramid, housing some 200-plus cars. Don't expect to find any signs giving details of the automobiles themselves. This is very much a do-it-yourself, take-it-as-you-find-it display into which His Highness generously allows the public to enter. Do, however, expect to have your socks blown off by the amazing collection that is as unique as it is quirky. Pride of place goes to an enormous



FOUR-WHEELED VARIETY: The Rainbow Shaikh's warehouse is a treasure trove. Photos/Brian Salter

replica of a 1950s Dodge Pickup — only this one is eight times the size of a normal Dodge and is reported to weigh over 50 tonnes. Inside are four bedrooms and all conveniences for luxury living.

It is said that its size was purely limited by the size of the wheels that the Shaikh could get hold of — wheels off an oil rig transporter. At one time it could even drive under its own power (which assured it of a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*); but sadly the drive shaft broke after 26kms and so it remains to this day the cen-

trepiece of a collection of cars you are unlikely to find together anywhere else on the planet.

Outside, in the car park, you will find the world's largest recreational vehicle in the shape of planet Earth. It is said to be exactly one millionth the size of the real thing. Inside there are 10 bedrooms set on three levels. But this itself is dwarfed by the largest caravan in the world parked just a few metres away. With 14 bedrooms and even car parking space incorporated into its enormous frame, this could well be one of the reasons the mu-

seum is located way out in the desert, simply so that traffic in downtown Abu Dhabi doesn't come to a grinding halt if, as and when the Shaikh decides to take it for a spin!

Within the collection are the seven special Mercedes 500 SELs that earned the Shaikh his nickname. The story goes that Shaikh Hamad called Mercedes-Benz in Germany requiring them to construct seven cars in each of the colours of the rainbow with matching interiors, including dashboard, rearview mirror, steering wheel and gear lever; and so seven

cars in Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange and Red were duly shipped out to Abu Dhabi — one for each day of the week.

Apart from that, you can ogle at vehicles from all over the globe, including a very detailed replica of an 1890s Benz 3-wheeler, a collection of 4-wheel drive vehicles, American and European limousines of varying vintage, racing cars, military vehicles ... and each turn leads you to something else to be discovered.

There is a workshop located behind the building, ensuring that all exhibits are kept in excellent condition. Some 80 of them are still roadworthy and there are often empty spaces indicating where some of the exhibits are normally kept when not in use.

Outside, there is a coffee shop that charges prices reflecting the remote location; and a "heritage village" is currently under construction. Camel rides are also available.

To get to the collection, take the Abu Dhabi road from Dubai but stay on the E11 at the turn off to Abu Dhabi Island (E10). Follow signs for Al Ghweifat which is the road to the Saudi border. (From Abu Dhabi take the Mussafah-Al Ain Truck Rd and turn onto the E11, following signs for Tarif/Al Ghweifat.) Take exit 306 onto the

E65, signposted to Hameem; 13kms later you will see a giant Land Rover parked facing the road, and behind it the pyramid housing the collection.

For those with a GPS, the museum is located at 24° 05D 54"N, 54° 25D 08"E. After visiting the museum, you could drive a further 140km to reach the beautiful Liwa oasis and some of the largest sand dunes on earth at Tal Moreeb.

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