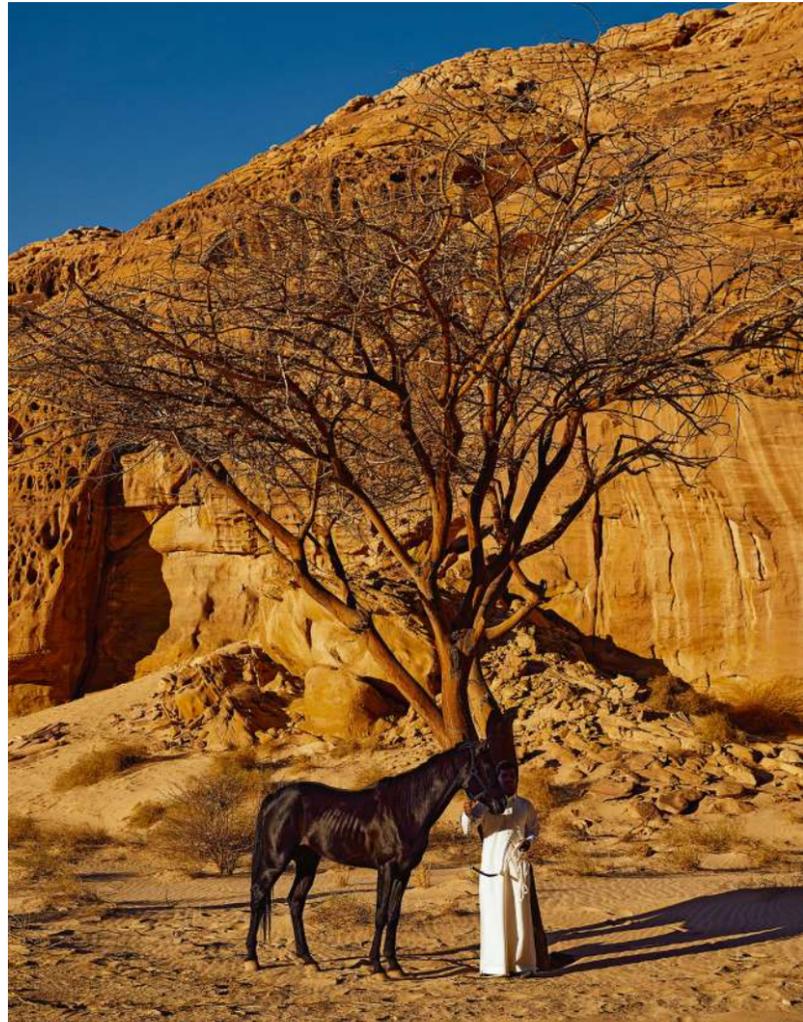


ANOTHER WORLD

THE ANCIENT LANDSCAPE OF ALULA
SETS THE SCENE FOR BANYAN TREE'S
SAUDI ARABIAN DEBUT

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In the hour before sunset and after sunrise, the entire valley of AlUla turns golden. The light dances off the ancient rock and illuminates the vast tawny-hued expanse, creating an almost otherworldly feeling. For thousands of years, this desert kingdom, located in the western reaches of Saudi Arabia, has remained relatively untouched and unseen by the eyes of the world, once home to the ancient Nabataean civilisation – of Petra fame – who left their ruins and carvings scattered across the hauntingly beautiful landscape. Until the Eighties, Bedouins also dwelled in the vicinity, occupying a maze of mudbrick buildings now known as AlUla Old Town. But a new dawn has broken in this patchwork of golden valleys and green desert wadis, and now AlUla is fast becoming one of the world's most enticing tourism destinations. Today, near ruins of ancient civilisations, a giant mirrored concert hall hosts global superstars and the greatest artists in the region build installations on storied sands and rock.

Previous page: Banyan Tree AlUla This page: natural wonders of the Ashar Valley Facing page: the Moke, an eco-friendly mode of resort transportation





THE RESORT ITSELF TAKES GUESTS ON A JOURNEY BY EMBRACING THREE CONCEPTS; 'IN-VILLA, IN-VALLEY AND EN-VOYAGE' TO IMMERSE THEM IN A MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCE ACROSS BOTH THE PROPERTY AND ITS MAGNIFICENT SURROUNDINGS

Inviting the world to lay eyes on this lunar-like backdrop is Banyan Tree AlUla, a new luxury resort in the desert kingdom. Opening this October, Banyan Tree AlUla is the latest in the wellness-orientated hotel group's 30-strong property portfolio, shining a light on the mystical and largely untouched landscape while embodying its pillars of sustainability, dedication to the locale and protecting its home. Reinventing tourism in the region, the tented resort has just 79 tented villas, most with private pools, peppered across the Ashar Valley in a way reminiscent of a space camp. The resort itself takes guests on a journey by embracing three concepts; 'In-Villa, In-Valley and En-Voyage' to immerse them in a multi-sensory experience across both the property and its magnificent surroundings.

In many ways, AlUla itself embodies the ethos of Banyan Tree: beautiful, peaceful, enthralling, but also exciting, pioneering and thriving with life. Each year, AlUla hosts festivals, sporting events and international pop-ups, all of which blend seamlessly with the protected surroundings. You'll find the largest mirrored building anywhere,

Maraya, and outdoor activities like hiking and ziplining, not to mention the area is known as the world's largest living museum. Reachable from Banyan Tree, travellers will find the ruined ancient city of Hegra, carved into the rock, testament to the power of the Nabataean kingdom.

In-Villa

The modern traveller is looking for privacy and peace, but to also connect with the environment and locale, not simply look upon it. Banyan Tree AlUla's villas blend in seamlessly with the UNESCO-protected Ashar Valley. Tented roofs are scarcely visible against the golden canyon and many of its villas come with a private pool positioned to look onto the mountains, valley itself, and out onto Maraya in the distance. Ranging from one- to three-bedroom villas, design elements take inspiration from the Nabataeans and Bedouins, albeit, more luxurious: high, canopied ceilings protect authentic Arabian design touches and desert tones, plush king-sized beds and bathrooms spilling outdoors.

All villas have terraces with fire pits and valley views with pool villas becoming their own desert oases. The pinnacle of desert luxury, the Dune two- and three-bedroom pool villas come with living areas, outdoor dining areas, and the latter are also equipped with a dedicated room for guests' personal staff. Villas are serviced by Banyan Tree's world-class team of hosts, on-hand to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences from in-villa dining to nomadic chef's tables.

In-Valley

Outside of the villas, a world awaits connecting Banyan Tree guests with the ancient valley and AlUla. The most enticing form of connection comes through food, with guests able to enjoy Banyan Tree's signature restaurant – the first of its kind in Saudi Arabia – and curate unique dining experiences across the resort in the shadows of the world's largest living museum. Found in exclusive destinations across the globe, Banyan Tree's signature restaurant Saffron serves Thai cuisine prepared by Thai chefs, where the scent of lemongrass, coconut and

Facing page: endless views of the Ashar Valley and Maraya concert hall





AS WITH ALL BANYAN TREE RESORTS, WELLNESS REACHES FAR BEYOND THE SPA, AND OPEN-AIR TREATMENTS LIKE SOOTHING MESSAGES IN A HIDDEN CAVE ARE AVAILABLE, ACCOMPANIED BY INCENSE AND SCENTED CANDLES

spices dance on the warm desert breeze. However, to truly make the most of AlUla's ethereal setting and most famous landmarks, there's Destination Dining. Guests can enjoy dinner under the endless starry desert skies or canapés on a hot air balloon high above the valley.

Land excursions are also set to become a popular pursuit at Banyan Tree AlUla. Experiences seamlessly marry adventure and immersion with nature, allowing guests to truly get to the heart of this millennia-old region, exploring Nabataean tombs on a made-to-measure trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hegra, ending with a sophisticated outdoor dining experience, or embarking on a thrilling helicopter or vintage plane tour above AlUla's skies – travelling out as far as the Red Sea. More active guests can explore the storied landscape by horseback or by gazing up at the stars – stars which tell a thousand tales. An iteration of the world-famous Banyan Tree Spa concept is now also found in AlUla. In true Banyan Tree style, a brand revered for its wellness concept, the spa is a desert sanctuary for the senses, offering a holistic healing approach based on a fusion of traditional local and eastern rituals. Resort guests are also free to unwind in the rock pool, carved into the mountain, or energise in the ultra-modern gym. But, as with all Banyan Tree resorts, wellness reaches far beyond the spa. Open-air treatments like soothing massages in a hidden cave are available, accompanied by incense and scented candles, and workshops by visiting masters in their fields.

Previous page: Banyan Tree AlUla's Infinity Rock Pool *This page, from top:* falconry, a deep-rooted part of Saudi Arabia's culture; *views from the villa terrace* *Facing page:* Immersive wellness experiences at Banyan Tree AlUla





En-Voyage

Banyan Tree AlUla itself sits hidden within the Ashar Valley, lorded over by ancient rocks and appearing to almost perch on the desert dunes. The nature of the resort, spaciouly spread across the canyon, means inviting methods for getting around are imperative. Among the most enticing – on top of zooming past the stunning rock formations on the resort's fleet of buggies – is the Moke. Channelling Banyan Tree's sustainable ethos, Moke trucks – which emit zero emissions – are the pinnacle of eco-cool: a modern military-esque version of the classic Sixties British Mini with open roofs and sides and clad in bright colours.

The third pillar itself, En-Voyage, connects Banyan Tree AlUla guests with the wonders of the landscape and helps them to unlock new facets of the ancient civilisation's rich heritage. Days at Banyan Tree AlUla are not only spent enjoying the surroundings, the private pools, immersive experiences and dining options but voyaging out into AlUla itself. Through the resort's own carefully curated relationships and programmes, guests can enjoy bespoke experiences like crafts with local people, deeply connecting themselves with the locale. For thousands of years, AlUla lay hidden from the world, but now, all eyes are on this magical and mystical destination, and there's nowhere better to enjoy sublime luxury with respect for tradition, heritage and the previous environment than Banyan Tree AlUla. 📍

Direct flights to AlUla from Riyadh, Jeddah and Dubai;
banyantree.com

In-villa breakfast with a view