



The Beachcomber is an out-of-the-way tapas bar sited on the faux beachside around the back of the Sheraton Abu Dhabi. But as Abu Dhabi Week discovered, it's a great not-so-secret-after-all hideaway, and it's the perfect place to kick back and relax away from the hubbub of the city

The chilled out ambience, evocative of a typical local bar in Spain, provides the right environment for post-work refreshment, a romantic rendezvous over candlelight or even a game of cards (in which the older clientele was partaking).

A real variety of people frequent The Beachcomber – mainly to smoke shisha, apparently, but also to try the flavoursome tapas, paella and Spanish-lite main dishes. With an Arabic twist the menu includes a number of tasty options including the croquetas de pollo (chicken and mint croquettes – an interesting combination) and flamenquines, slices of beef roulade. The portions are generous; we made the mistake of ordering five tapas dishes between two, and there was plenty left over for a doggy bag. The special that night was a dish of prawns with mushroom, a little bland perhaps; but the chorizo fritto made up for it, as did the excellent grilled calamari.

It wouldn't be a fair just to review the tapas, so we also ordered a lamb dish and plumped for rice and salad over chips. We prefer our lamb a little pinker, but it was a tasty cut of meat. Our waiter Vivik was also great, with plenty of suggestions for dishes in our more indecisive moments.

A pleasant evening all round, then; the faint traffic buzz from the Corniche soon disappeared as we sat back and listened to the Cuban beats coming from the sociable bar.

However – non-meat eaters beware – the menu has a misleading vegetarian icon against the panma con queso jambon con manzanas. This is toasted bread topped with caramelised apples, authentic Spanish ham and melted goats cheese. It's delicious.

The only other issue is that you need to get to The Beachcomber early: all the tables at this sociable hotspot are regularly snapped up before 9pm as the aroma of shisha fills the air every evening.

What? Beachcomber

Where? Sheraton Hotel and Resort Abu Dhabi

Cost: Average AED 80 per person

Why? Happy hour until 8pm and large tapas portions

Why not? The "Special" wasn't so special

We say: A surprisingly good little food spot – perfect for light-bites and a chilled ambience

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