

June to September. From earliest times it was a regional administrative centre.

The collection of seven main villages associated with the date gardens was also a significant trading centre, serving routes from the both east and west coasts and the extensive interior of the country; the sand deserts to the south and west and the mountains to the east and north. Dates and other products were available for trade and supported a resident population of several thousand people. There was an important camel market. The villages had homes and mosques, markets, forts and falaj watchtowers. The palace of His Highness Sheikh Zayed was located on the edge of the Al Ain oasis, which was the most extensive of the oases in the area. The oases have probably supported the economy of Al Ain for the last five thousand years.

The people made their homes in and around the oases in closely united communities. Some homes were permanent constructions of rooms around courtyards. Others were made from materials that could be moved such as **arrish** (palm branch) shelters and tents made from goat hair. Families with flocks of animals had to be able to move to new grazing areas and transport their homes with them. Much of life was lived out in the open as the weather made an enclosed home almost unnecessary and there were few concerns about security within the community.

Each community was protected by one or more forts and there were falaj watchtowers overlooking the underground water channels which brought the water to the oases. Mosques were also constructed and used on a communal basis. An important local family usually sponsored each mosque.

The oases of date palms are still actively cultivated. Around and within them are some of the traditional buildings that have survived from an earlier era. Many have been restored and some of these are open to the public for all to see how people lived in the past. The Al Ain Museum has an excellent display of household goods which people used in their lives. Some items, such as the coffeepot,