



اللوفر أبوظبي  
LOUVRE ABU DHABI



# ROADS OF ARABIA

**Archaeological Treasures of Saudi Arabia**

Hosted by Louvre Abu Dhabi, with artifacts from the United Arab Emirates

**ACTIVITY BOOKLET**

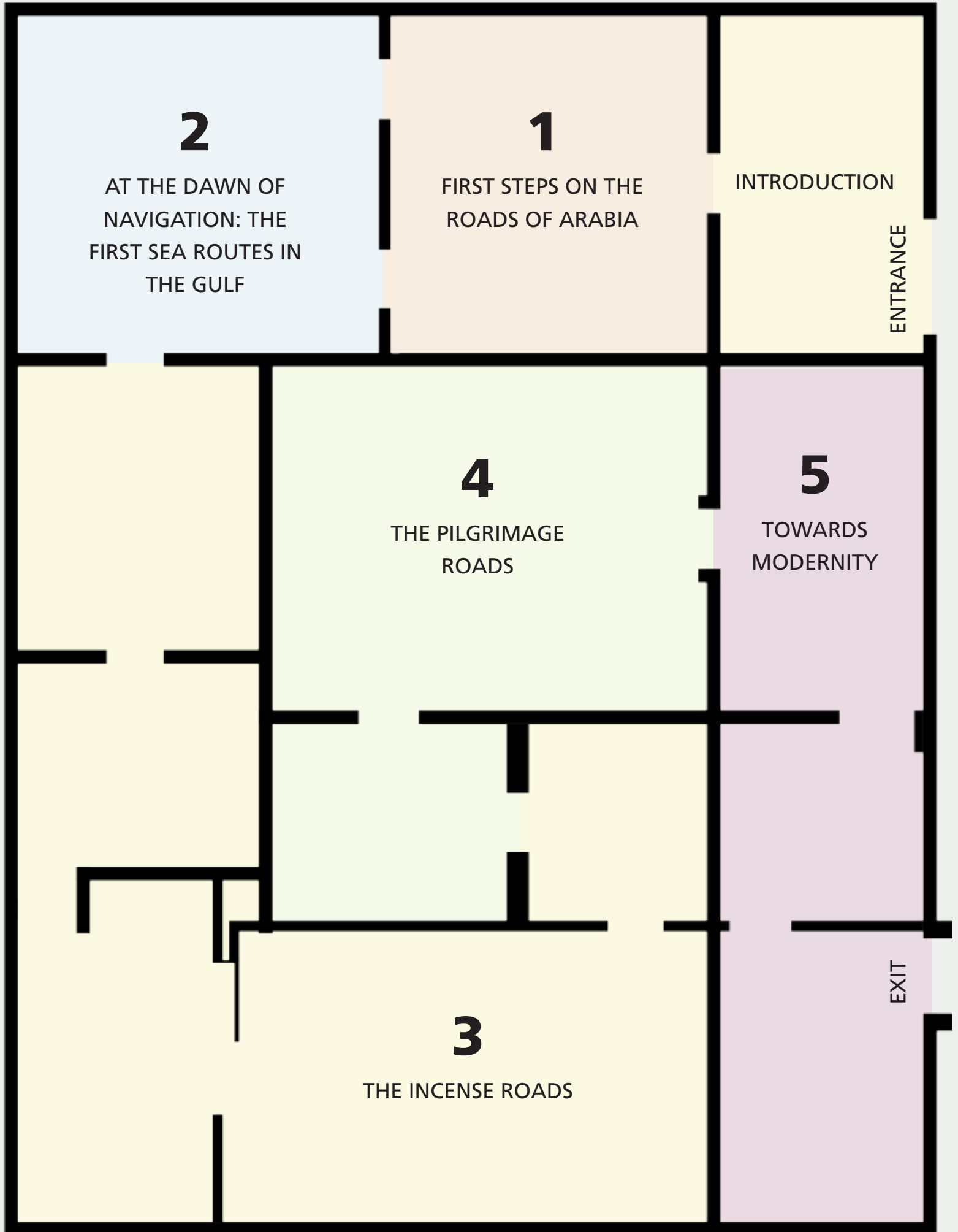


## **Welcome Adventurers to the Roads of Arabia!**

Together we will travel throughout the Arabian Peninsula following the footsteps of merchants, pilgrims, and travellers to see how the roads they took transformed and developed this fascinating place of exchange for goods and ideas since early times.

We will explore and discover works in the exhibition, from Saudi Arabia and a selection of works from the United Arab Emirates with the help of this activity booklet that contains activities you can complete in the museum or at home.

# EXHIBITION MAP



# CHAPTER 1: FIRST STEPS ON THE ROADS OF ARABIA

Our journey begins very early in history, when the first human beings settled in the Arabian Peninsula. Go and look for the exhibited work in this chapter to learn about how people used to live.



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

*Funerary stele with male figure*  
4000-3000 BCE  
Saudi Arabia, Qaryat al-Kaafa, near Ha'il  
Sandstone  
Riyadh, National Museum

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## THE ARTWORK

This finely carved **stele\*** is one of the earliest human representations known in the Peninsula. The face is featured with eyes set close together and a straight nose which gives the figure a mysterious expression. Note the elements: the necklace on the figure's chest and the two cords that run diagonally across the body. The hips are emphasised by a belt and a hanging double-bladed dagger. The double-edged dagger in this sculpture helps us to identify the figure as a warrior. It also allows us to date the object to the transition from the **Neolithic period\*** to the Bronze Age, when metal production developed and the first weapons of bronze appeared in the Arabian Peninsula.

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## SMART FACTS

The first men and women arrived in Arabia more than one million years ago. They left from Africa and probably travelled overland but it is also possible they crossed the Red Sea. The first societies that settled were **nomadic\*** and lived from hunting animals and gathering plants and berries. However, the population who created the stelae became semi-nomadic herders.

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## KEYWORDS

**Neolithic period:** A period about 9000 -3000 BCE when major social and technological developments occurred linked to new ways of living: agriculture and animal breeding. It is also the period in which populations became sedentary, meaning their way of life was centred on one place and with few journeys.

**Nomadic:** this word describes peoples and societies whose way of life is based on continual movement. It is the opposite of "sedentary", meaning a way of life centred on one place and with few journeys.

**Stele:** A slab of standing stone used in ancient world primarily as a grave marker bust and also for dedication.

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## CHAPTER 2: AT THE DAWN OF NAVIGATION: THE FIRST SEA ROUTES IN THE GULF

After having travelled the peninsula, would you like to continue your journey? The land routes are not the only ones that can be used.

Let's go to the sea to visit our distant neighbours!

### THE ARTWORK

This vase has a high neck and a rounded **belly\***, it is made using a **clay coil\***, with complex decorations, showing bands of triangles on the neck and zig-zags and dots on the belly. These decorative motifs suggest that the vase comes from Obeid culture which flourished in southern Mesopotamia (present day Iraq).

The vase was discovered in a house of a Neolithic village located on Marawah island, about 100 kilometers west of the city of Abu Dhabi. Its place of origin indicates that around 7500 years ago, people of the region were navigating the Gulf and trading with Mesopotamia.



© Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi

*Vase with geometric decoration imported from Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq)*

5500 BCE

United Arab Emirates, Marawah Island

Painted terracotta

Abu Dhabi, Department of Culture & Tourism

# SMART FACTS

In the United Arab Emirates, archaeological sites such as Marawah and Akab in Umm al-Quwain show how marine resources were part of the local communities' way of life.

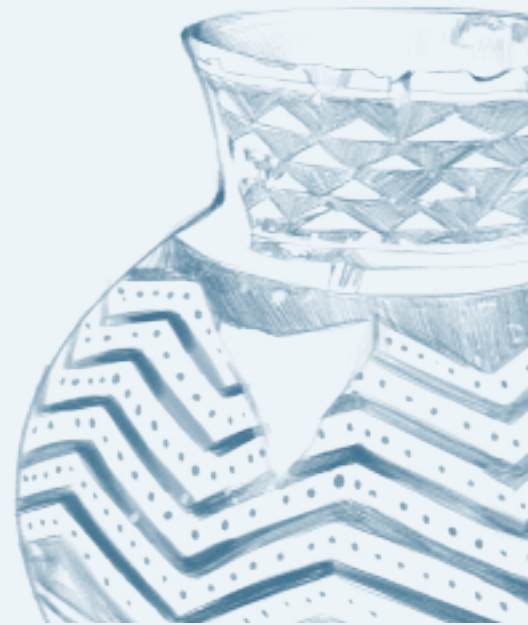
A major example is pearl-fishing which existed in Arabia for a very long time. The people of early communities on the shores of the Gulf during the Neolithic period were very fond of pearls; some were found in the graves of fishermen as part of ancient burial rituals.

**Can you spot any pearls that are displayed in this exhibition?** They come from Umm al-Quwain in the UAE and from Dosariyah archaeological site in KSA.

## KEYWORDS

**Belly:** The rounded section of a pot.

**Clay coil:** A technique for creating pottery through making long rolls of soft clay and arranging them together to create a ceramic form. This method was used by all civilisations before the invention of the potter's wheel.



# LET'S PLAY

The decoration on the vase from Marawah Island is quite unique compared to the other potteries found in this exhibition.

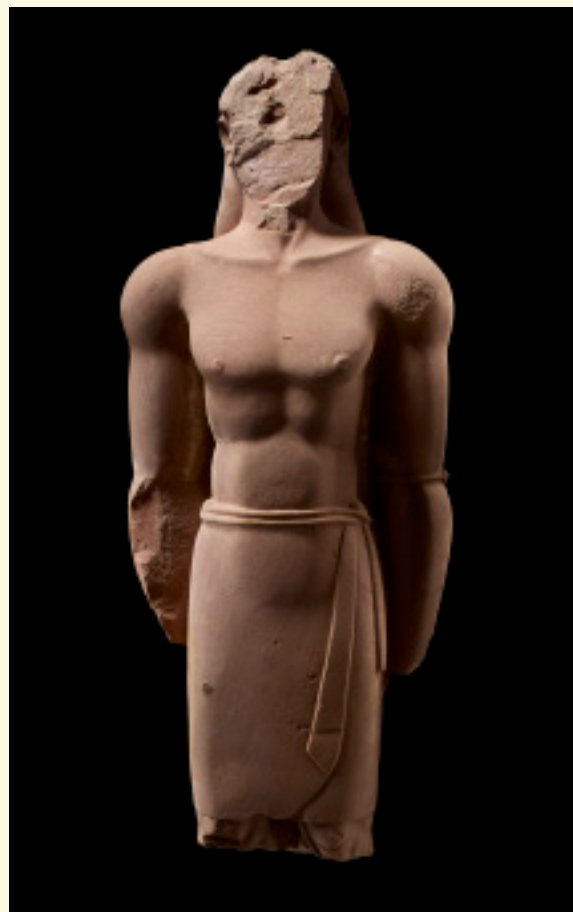
**Decorate the different shapes of vases in your booklet with your own special motifs.**



## CHAPTER 3: THE INCENSE ROADS

This is the third chapter dedicated to caravans. Get your steed ready, as we take off to visit the caravan kingdoms and ancient towns in the Arabian Peninsula.

The kingdoms were essential stops on the incense road.



© Musée du Louvre - Thierry Olivier

### *Monumental statue*

400-100 BCE

Saudi Arabia, Al-Ula

Red sandstone

Riyadh, Archaeology Department Museum, King Saud University

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## THE ARTWORK

This statue represents king of the Kingdom of Lihyan of Al-'Ula region in Saudi Arabia. The head of the statue, which is covered by a turban is separate from the body, and the face is hammered away. The lower part of his legs are also missing. His arms are close to the sides of his body, and his right hand is broken at the wrist. The short **tunic\*** and ornament on the left arm indicate the figure's nobility and are unique to Lihyan sculpture. The statue still retains traces of its several colours.

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## SMART FACTS

From the 5th century BCE, the Kingdom of the Lihyanites was very important to the caravan trade, as it was the meeting-point of several trade routes. Caravans had to pay a tax to pass through the kingdom, and in return, they were provided with food, water and protection. These factors contributed to the richness of the kingdom for nearly 500 years.

## KEYWORDS

**Tunic:** A piece of clothing that fits loosely over a person's body, reaching to below the waist or the knees and often worn with a belt.



## LET'S PLAY

As you now know, this statue was found with its face hammered away.

- Imagine if you lived in the Lihyanite Kingdom; what would the king's face look like?
- Use your pencil to draw his face here. You can find some heads of Lihyanite statues in the exhibition to help you out.
- Now imitate the king's posture and ask someone to take a photo of you!



# THE ARTWORK

Now we stop in the Emirate of Umm al-Quwain, in the coastal site of Ed-Dur: one of the largest archaeological sites found in 1987 in the UAE. It was an important port during the first century CE, used for maritime exchanges in the Gulf region. This headless eagle was found midway between the entrance of a small fort. It is suggested that it was associated to a nearby temple dedicated to the Mesopotamian Sun-god Shamash. The statue is made of limestone and carved in a simplified manner. The body of the eagle is depicted standing on a bull's head and with wings attached to its body.

# SMART FACTS

The eagle is one of the most ancient symbols used in many civilizations and cultures to symbolize power and strength. The two statues found in Ed-Dur may have been used as decoration for the main entrance gate or as protectors of the temple. Can you think of other animal sculptures that were used to protect or decorate ancient buildings?

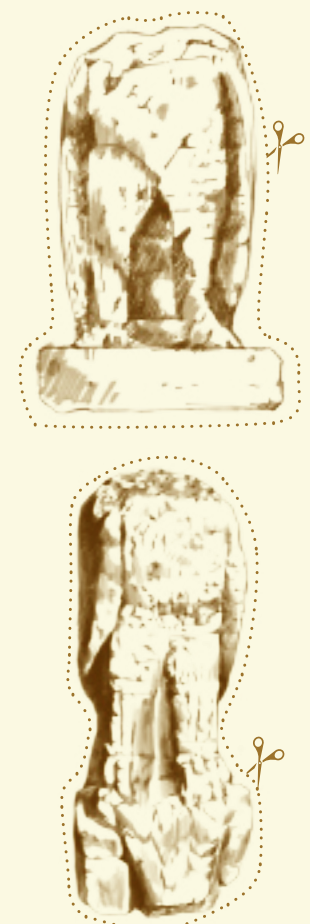
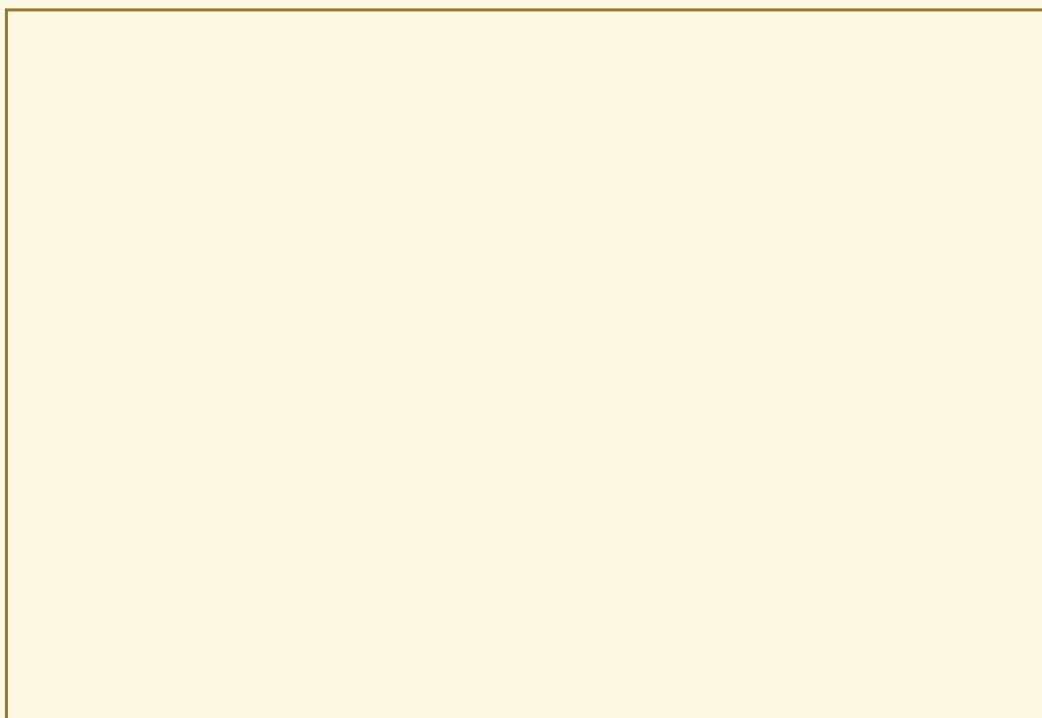


© Department of Archaeology and Tourism - Umm Al Quwain

*Statue of an eagle*  
1-100 CE  
United Arab Emirates, Ed-Dur  
Stone  
Umm Al Quwain, Department of Archaeology and Tourism

# LET'S PLAY

If you were to use the eagle statues to decorate or protect a space of your own, what would it be? Sketch a location, cut out the two statues, and imagine where you would place them.



## CHAPTER 4: THE PILGRIMAGE ROADS

We have made a leap in time. Here we are in the 7th century of the Common Era. With the birth of Islam, pilgrims began to follow the trade routes heading towards the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina.



### THE ARTWORK

This tombstone commemorates/honours two people: On one side, an inscription refers to a young woman (al-Ghaliya, daughter of 'Abd al-Jabbar) who died in the 9th century. On the back of the tombstone, another inscription mentions a religious man who was buried in 1275.

The front of this tombstone is written in **Kufic script\***, a geometric form of Arabic writing. The inscription proceeds as follows: The Bismillāh (an opening prayer from the Quran), then a prayer for the young woman in the following set phrase:

“Place [name] among the companions of Muhammad in Paradise”.



*Tombstone of al-Ghaliya, daughter of 'Abd al-Jabbar*  
800-900  
Saudi Arabia, Mecca,  
Al-Ma'la cemetery  
Basalt  
Riyadh, National Museum

## SMART FACTS

Important individuals were buried during the early years of Islam in Al-Ma'la cemetery. Hundreds of tombstones like this one have been found there. On the tombstones, we find names of people from all around the world, they provide evidence of the diversity of the people who were buried in the holy cities.

## KEYWORDS

**Kufic script:** One of the earliest forms of Islamic calligraphy that was developed in the city of Kufa (Iraq).

## LET'S PLAY

Look at the following Arabic name:

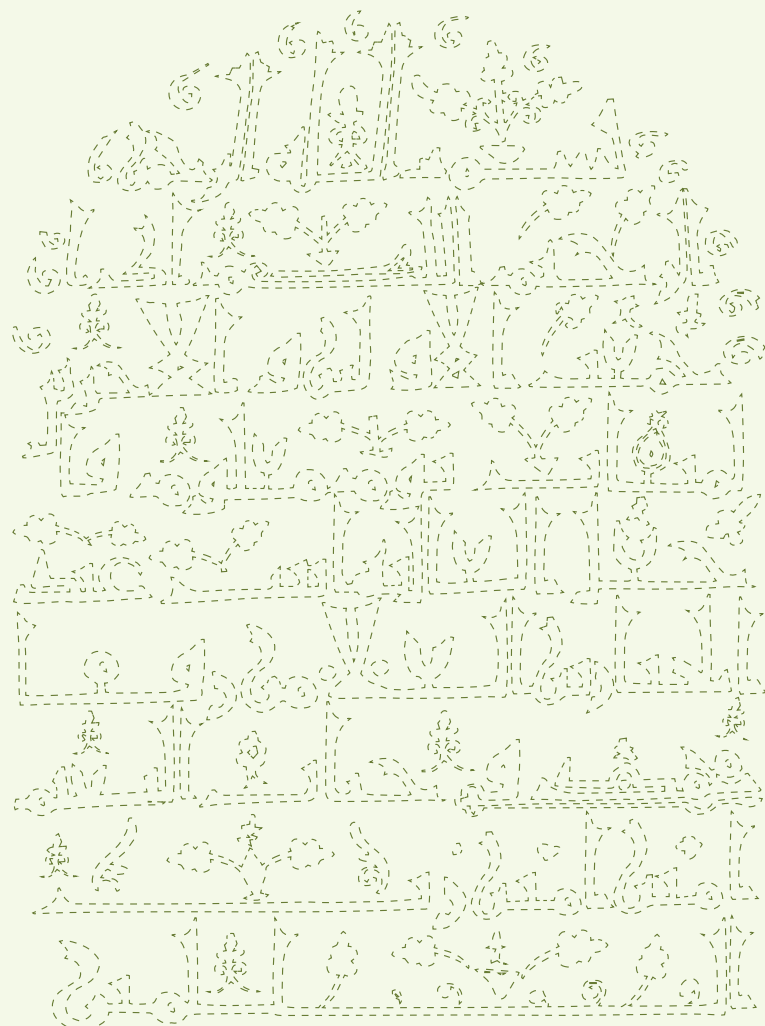
الغالية بنت عبد الجبار

(Al-Ghaliya Bint Abd Al-Jabbar)

This is the girl's name written on the tombstone in early Kufic writing. Now observe the tombstone closely.

Compare her name to the shapes of the words you see. Try to find the full name with your family or friends.

Finally, trace the inscription in Kufic and embellish it with your own designs.



# THE ARTWORK

These door panels come from the Ka'ba, it remained in it until it was replaced in the 1940s. Although the door is made of wood, the decoration on the front is covered with decorated and gilded silver leaf. We see a lot of decorations made of a network of frames, vegetal motifs and text, which is commonly seen in Islamic art, like in books and carpets.

There are two bands of text / calligraphy in the upper section: one is a passage from the Quran and the other is a prayer and dedicatory text to Sultan Murad IV, who commissioned the renewal and maintenance of this Ka'ba door.

# SMART FACTS

The Ka'ba is a large pre-Islamic cubic construction at the centre of the Holy Mosque (al-Masjid al-Haram) in Mecca. All the world's Muslims turn to face the Ka'ba direction during their daily prayers. This is where all the long and arduous pilgrimage routes lead us to. During the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), Muslims from around the world in their spiritual journey begin by walking around the Ka'ba seven times (called the circumambulation).



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

*Door of the Ka'ba*  
1045 AH/1635-36  
Saudi Arabia, Sanctuary of Mecca  
Wood, engraved and gilded silver lining on a wooden core  
Riyadh, National Museum

# LET'S PLAY

Let us embark on a scavenger hunt together! Use these hints to find **three artworks** in this room linked to the Ka'ba and the Holy Cities:

**Hint 1:** I am unusually big and decorated.  
The holy house opens thanks to me.

**Hint 2:** You hold on to me, and I hold on to light.  
Use me to look at the Ka'ba in the dark.

**Hint 3:** I am red and embellished with letters.  
Unlike the black one, I was placed inside!

## CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS MODERNITY

Our journey is coming to an end. Now you are in the last chapter of the exhibition.

Today, there is no need to travel by camels or ships. You can simply get on a plane or take a car. But the way we travel is continually changing and the possibility exists that tomorrow you will be using the Hyperloop.

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## THE ARTWORK

This **Nautical Atlas\*** of the World was drawn around 1640 by Joao Teixeira Albernaz, a Portuguese mapmaker. It contains 20 portolan maps (sea maps) showing the different ports and coastlines known in the 17th century. Here, the coasts are marked in green, large islands in red, and small ones in pale colours and gold. The scale of each map tells you the ratio between the distance on the map and the distance in the real world, and it is given in a blue and red rectangle.



*Nautical Atlas of the World*  
João Teixeira Albernaz, d. 1662  
About 1640  
Portugal  
Ink, pigments and gold on vellum  
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department

© Bibliothèque nationale de France

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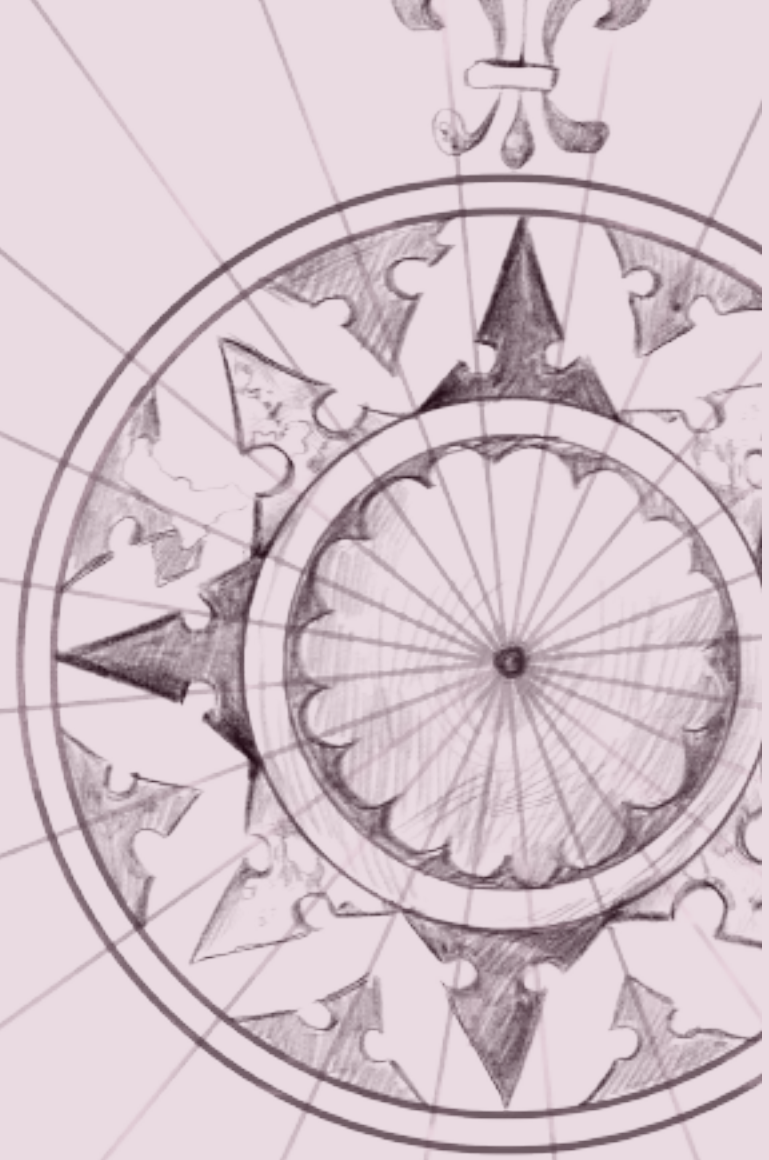
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# SMART FACTS

Born in the port town of Julfar, Ibn Majid (1418/32–1500) was an Arab poet, navigator and mapmaker, and an expert on the Indian Ocean. His most important book was an encyclopaedia that described the history and principles of navigation. He also wrote a piece on sailing in the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Arabian Gulf and South China Sea. Navigation in the Indian Ocean was made easier by the knowledge passed on by Arab explorers like Ibn Majid and Portuguese navigators during exchanges on the Arabian Peninsula.

## KEYWORDS

**Nautical Atlas:** a book of maps related to the sea.



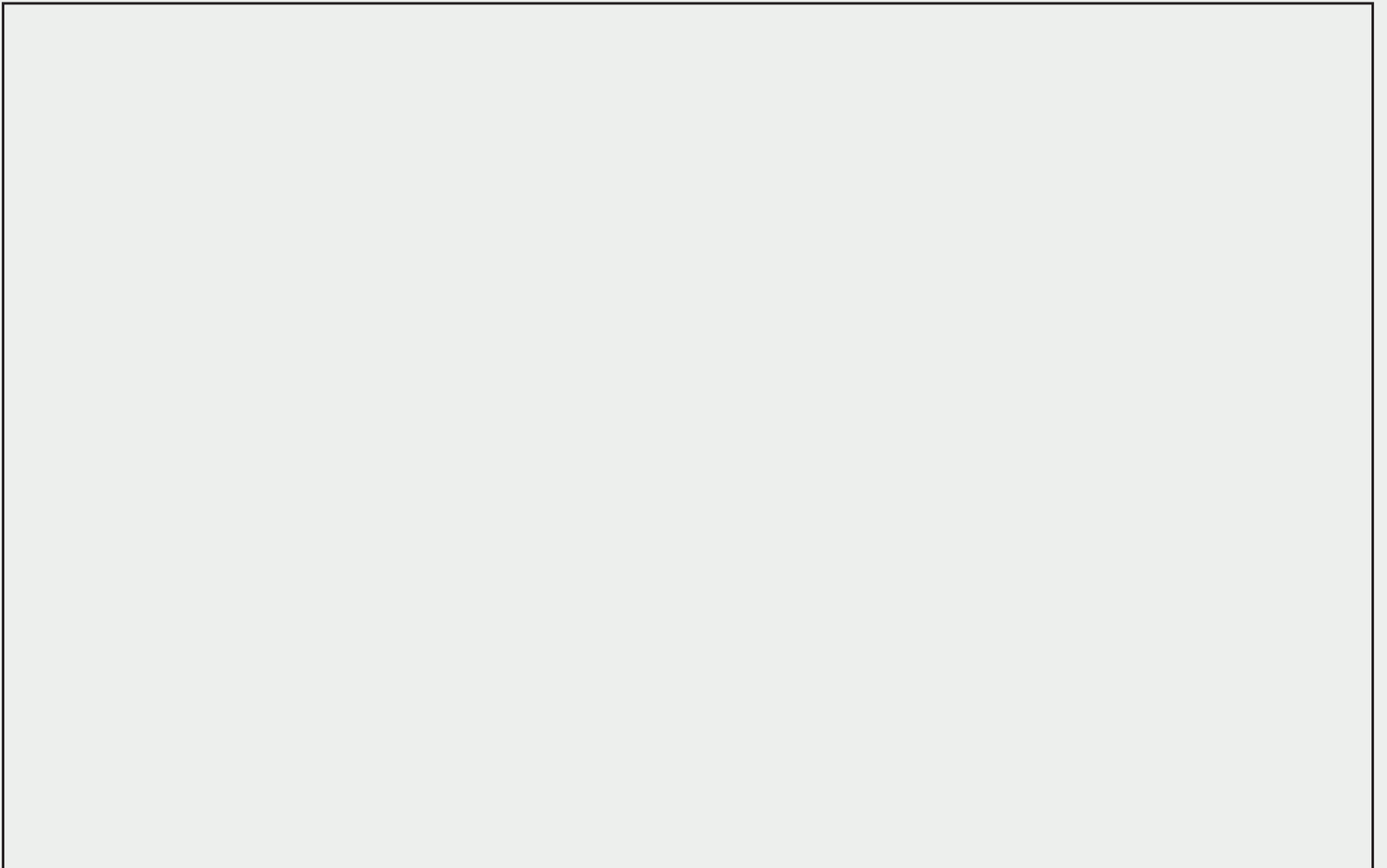
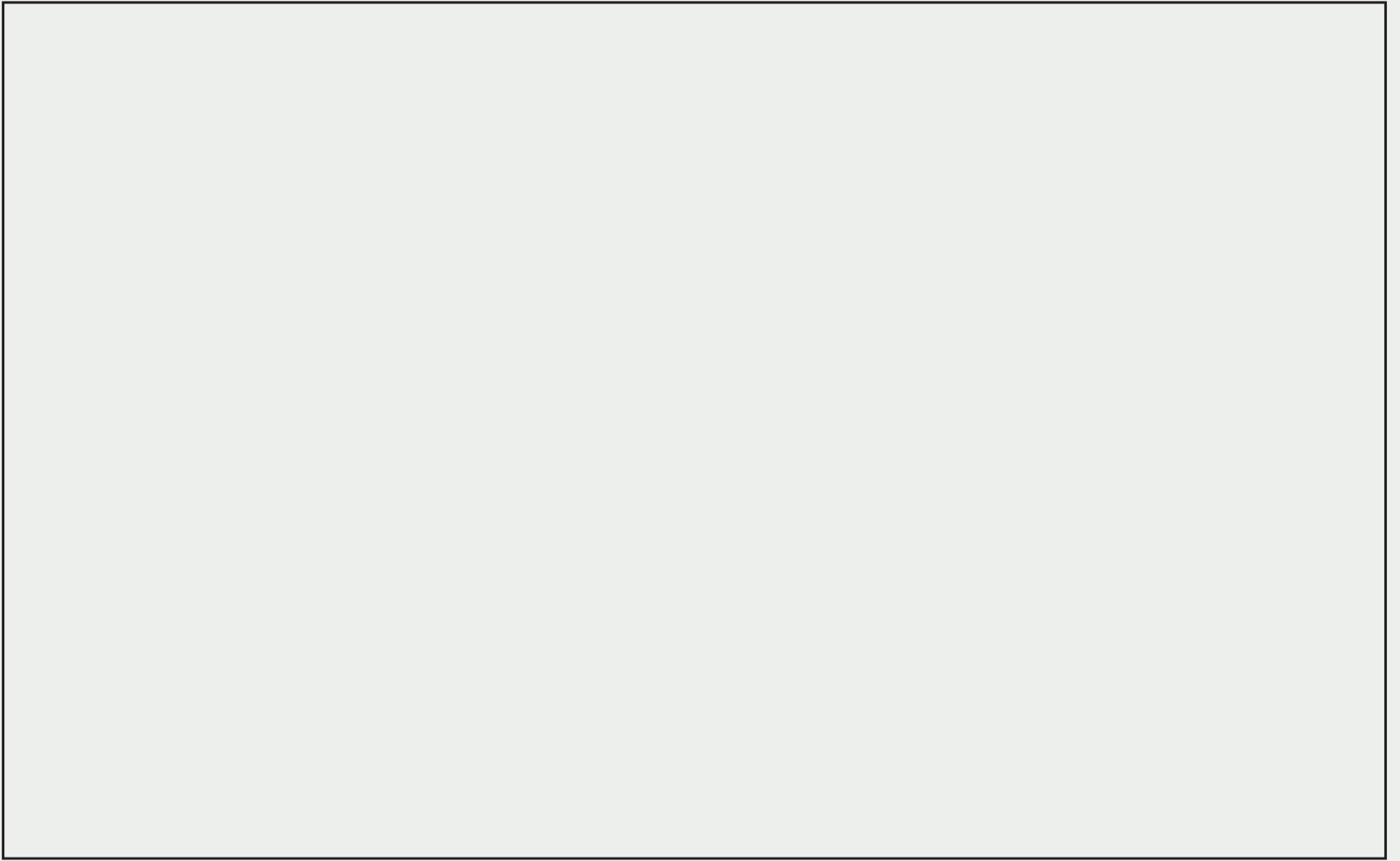
# LET'S PLAY

Take a moment and think of yourself as a traveller!  
Reflect on all the journeys and travels you have made so far and discuss them with your family.

1. **Use** the map below to mark the destinations of your journey.
2. **Trace** all of your destinations and create your own road.
3. **What** would you name your road? Write it as a title for your map.
4. **At home**, use different colours to mark special parts of your road.



**SKETCH AND WRITE ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE WORKS FROM THE EXHIBITION**





## GENERAL INFORMATION

Educational activities are offered in **Arabic, English and French.**  
**Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, starting at 9:30am**

Museum is **closed on Mondays.**

**Guided Tours:** 60 minutes

**Workshops:** 90 minutes

## CONTACT US

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