

January 4, 2011

The tallest building in the world, Dubai's own Burj Khalifa, opened on this day last year



Food, fashion, movies and more...

Stylish swap shop

Who can seriously claim to know how many dresses they have in their wardrobe - even roughly?

A friend of mine recently counted all the frocks dangling from her rails. Estimating between 30 and 40 she was stunned to find she actually had 81 pleated, printed, pastel and puffy party dresses. For the record, this girl moved here from England just two years ago with only four dresses in her suitcase and has amassed the following 77 since then. In maths terms that's 3.2 dresses every month.

It sounds pretty extreme when put down in black and white, but it's a similar case for most women in the UAE - a land where we're fond of looking good.

Those who enjoy socialising may justify their stylish stockpiling as completely necessary, but the thing that shamed my friend the most was that seven of the dresses in her wardrobe had never even been worn.

In a mission to curb spending and encourage us girls to reserve space in our wardrobe solely for dresses we want to wear, one woman has decided to set up Dubai Frock Exchange. Unlike the sassy swap shops seen before in the UAE, Maria Conte's Frock Exchange won't be label prejudiced. Whether it's New Look, French Connection, Karen Millen or Gucci, so long as it's 'in fabulous condition and worth trading' it'll be up for grabs.

British expat and stay-at-home mum

Don't cast out - trade up at Dubai's new 'Frock Exchange'

Maria says she was inspired to set up the exchange by the success of similar initiatives closer to her homeland - and by her friends and their hoardes of goodies.

"Frock Exchange in Europe is huge - a great way to get something new for yourself and also help to save the planet.

"In the UK alone 900,000 tonnes of shoes and clothes are thrown away, I guess even more so in the expatriate world we live in," she explains.

"I needed a project to work on from home to get my creative side in action again. Myself and friends have a wardrobe of great items - dresses, suits jackets, hats, bags etc.

Things which are fabulous but we don't want to wear again and again."

The event will work on the premise of each lady bringing five items along to

exchange. She'll be assigned a 'station' where she can arrange her wares and others can browse her offerings. Negotiation is purely private between each lady so ensure your bargaining skills are up to scratch!

And for women who may not enjoy going out to bars and clubs, Maria thinks it will also be a good chance to make friends.

"It's a nice way to mingle for ladies as there is a mission which will allow them to interact. The event will probably be the most interactive event Dubai has seen. I have been to yoga classes, exercise classes, expat woman mornings, kids play groups and no one stops to chat. Even in the bars on ladies evenings not many ladies interact out of the group they know or arrived with. With this event there is a need to interact," she explains.

"Whether you're a stay-at-home mum, an editor or lawyer, we all have great dress sense and attend the same events."

And don't be deceived by the name - it won't just be frocks being swapped at Dubai Frock Exchange. Women are welcome to bring any item of clothing from boots, hats, gowns and bags. Maria also believes the event will be therapeutic for all, as she says: "There are a lot of woman who have gained a dress size or two and want to exchange their fabulous garments rather than



just trashing them.

A good clear-out is refreshing for anyone. If you sell or exchange it's up to you!"

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Maria's first Dubai Frock Exchange event will take place on Saturday at Premier Inn, Dubai Investment Park. It's Dhs50, which includes refreshments and the event runs from 3pm - 5pm.

Register your attendance by emailing info@dubaifrockexchange.net where you will be automatically entered into a draw to win prizes too. For more details, visit the site www.dubaifrockexchange.net



BE BRUTAL: Go on a clothing cull and exchange your unwanted items for something new

What's the best 'swap' you ever made? Letters@7days.ae