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I recently got back from an amazing trip to AlUla and I'm excited to share what I learned about the Old Town, which I think is often overlooked despite its rich history and unique charm. Unlike the nearby Nabataean tombs of Hegra and prehistoric rock art of Jabal Ikmaḥ, AlUla's Old Town has a more recent past, dating back to the 12th century as a bustling trading center on incense and pilgrimage routes. The town itself is filled with old mudbrick houses that are connected by narrow alleys, giving it a very special character. One of the best things about AlUla Old Town is that it's a treasure trove of history and culture waiting to be discovered. In fact, it was a thriving trading center until the 1980s, leaving behind over 900 abandoned mudbrick houses, more than 500 shops, mosques, and five public squares today. Visitors can explore an old fortress, an ancient sundial known as Tantora, and even a labyrinthine network of alleys that keep the sun out in harsh desert climes, similar to those found in Old Dubai. The area also has a significant Islamic history and was once an important stop for pilgrims from Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Today, it's turned into a thriving art and design district with galleries, cafes, restaurants, and handicraft stores. To truly experience the essence of AlUla Old Town, take a guided tour led by a knowledgeable Rawi guide who will walk you through its history, pointing out key landmarks, sharing cultural insights, and telling stories about the people who once called this place home. The fort dating back to the 10th century offers stunning views of the town and beyond, making it another must-visit spot during your trip. Nussair, the Arab military general who conquered Spain and Morocco, left his mark on the region. Today, visitors can explore the old fort, which offers breathtaking views of the ancient village and surrounding desert landscapes. The AlUla Old Town is a must-visit destination for its rich cultural heritage, with numerous boutique shops selling local handicrafts such as palm frond souvenirs, carpets, and jewelry featuring ancient rock art motifs. For those looking to immerse themselves in the local culture, staying in a restored mudbrick house or hotel is an ideal experience. The Dar Tantora hotel offers quaint accommodations that blend ancient architecture with modern comfort. Alternatively, guests can choose to stay closer to nature at Habitas or Banyan Tree resorts in Ashar Valley. The AlUla Old Town comes alive during its seasonal festivals, including the Winter at Tantora Festival, Ancient Kingdoms Festival, and AlUla Arts Festival. These events celebrate the region's rich history and vibrant culture with live performances, art exhibitions, and culinary delights. Foodies will love exploring the market street lined with quaint restaurants and atmospheric cafes serving traditional Saudi food and delicious fusion dishes. Must-try dishes include chicken madfoon with raisins rice and the traditional dish cooked underground at the Habitas Hotel restaurant. Overall, AlUla Old Town is an ideal destination for those seeking to experience the rich heritage of Saudi Arabia, with its unique historical and cultural charm attracting visitors from around the world. ancient mudbrick houses and narrow alleys, a testament to the town's rich past. The old town is steeped in cultural significance, having served as a crucial stop for pilgrims and traders, highlighting the region's diverse cultural heritage. Visitors are drawn to its picturesque natural surroundings and profound historical legacy, creating an atmosphere that transports them back in time. AlUla Old Town stands out as an unparalleled destination, offering an immersive experience into the Arabian Peninsula's storied history, making it a must-visit destination.