

Oman – Jewel of Arabia

Tour Code OM

Departing 20 December 2008

This fascinating in-depth tour combines breathtaking natural beauty with a well-preserved cultural heritage of one of the least known, yet most exciting tourist destinations of the Middle East. The Sultanate of Oman tour focuses on magnificent forts and palaces, the rolling dunes of the Wahiba Sands, the stunning spectacles of mountain oases and deep canyons as well as pristine white sand beaches and so discovering one of the region's best-kept secrets. We travel the region in the comfort of air conditioned 4WD Toyota Landcruisers allowing for a more flexible and personalised trip.



Bedouin woman in birqa mask, Wahiba Sands © www.syderimages.com

ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Muscat – Saturday 20 December

Evening departure from Heathrow Terminal 3 on Gulf Air via Bahrain arriving into Muscat on the following morning

Day 2 Afternoon City Tour of Muscat – Sunday 21 December

We transfer to the centrally located Sheraton hotel on arrival and spend the afternoon in Muscat sightseeing, including Muttrah, a delightful quarter of Muscat, complete with a traditional souq with narrow alleys and the aromas of incense plus the old town of Muscat that houses the Palace of Sultan Qaboos and the Portugese fortresses of Jabali and Merani. We also visit the Bait Al Zubhair museum, which houses a fine collection of Omani artefacts. Welcome dinner in the hotel (B,D)

Day 3 Drive to Nizwa. Visit Bahla Fort and Jabrin Castle – Monday 22 December

We drive to Nizwa with a spectacular drive through the Hajar Mountains via the oases of Fanjah and Birkat Al Mauz. We visit the Nizwa souk, famous for its Bedouin silver jewellery. We also see the impressive 17th century fort. We stop in Bahla to view the UNESCO listed Fort before reaching Jabrin with its fine castle. Two nights at the Falaj Daris hotel in Nizwa (B,D)

Day 4 Day excursion to Jebel Shams – Tuesday 23 December

Boarding comfortable 4WD vehicles and taking a picnic lunch with us, we head north through the mountains under the craggy peaks of the Jebel Akhdar to the village of Misfah set into the mountainside where houses cling to the rocky escarpment. Our journey ends at Jebel Shams (Mountain of the Sun) at 3,000 m, the country's highest peak, with astonishing views down Oman's very own 'Grand Canyon'. We return to Nizwa in the late afternoon (B,L,D)

Day 5 Visit Wadi Bani Khaled and the Wahiba Sands – Wednesday 24 December

This morning we continue in our 4WD's via Sinaw, a market town with a thriving souq and camel market and the village of Mudairib to see its traditional watchtowers. We continue to the beautiful green oasis of Wadi Bani Khalid, and have a picnic lunch around its clear green

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natural spring water pools. From here we drive into a vast sea of sand covering about 15,000 square kilometres, the Wahiba Sands. These great dunes rise to 100 metres in height with a red base and a honey coloured top creating an alluring landscape of changing contours and colours. We enjoy an exhilarating drive across these vast dunes before arriving at our night stop, a Bedouin encampment, where we have an unforgettable night under the stars enjoying traditional Arabic and Omani cuisine and hospitality in comfortable surroundings (B,L,D)

Day 6 Coastal drive to Sur. Visit dhow boat yard and old town – Thursday 25 December

We continue through the desert this morning, heading north. In spite of its barren feel the sands contain a phenomenal amount of life. As well as the Bedouin, they are home to wolf, fox, wild cats and white-tailed mongooses. Some 115 species of birds have been recorded here and its one of the few refuges for the elusive Arabian and Sand Gazelles. From the Wahiba, we enter Sur, a picturesque fishing town famous for its traditional Dhow boat building. Overnight at the Sur Plaza with dinner (B,D)

Day 7 Visit Qalhat, Finns Beach and walk in Wadi Shaab – Friday 26 December

Leaving Sur behind, we drive north in our 4WD vehicles following the coastal road north to Muscat. We stop at the archaeological site at Qalhat before we reach Wadi Shaab, a beautiful oasis of freshwater pools. After an option to walk in the wadi, we continue to Quriyat a picturesque fishing village with beautiful white sand beach and providing the perfect picnic stop with a chance for a swim. Arriving into Muscat in the late afternoon we transfer to the Sheraton hotel for two nights. Dinner at the hotel (B,L,D)

Day 8 Visit Sultan Qaboos Mosque and Nakhl Fort – Saturday 27 December

We start the day with a visit to the newly built Sultan Qaboos mosque, a splendour of Islamic architecture. We then have a day excursion outside the capital stopping at Barka to visit a fish market and the Palace of the Imams, continuing through the Batinah Plains, the main agricultural area of Oman. We stop at Nakhl oasis to visit its impressive fort and at the natural warm springs of Thowarah. A farewell dinner has been arranged at a smart Muscat restaurant (B,D)

Day 9 Fly to London – Sunday 28 December

A leisurely morning start before our transfer to Muscat airport for our afternoon flight with Gulf Air via Bahrain arriving into London Heathrow in the evening (B)

Cost £1995.00 per person in a twin room (single supplement additional £200)



Fish market, Muttrah
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Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Specialist Omani guide/driver for the duration of the tour
- ▶ Scheduled international flights from Heathrow with Gulf Air via Bahrain
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c bus in Muscat and luxury a/c 4WD Land cruisers exclusive to the group
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality local four hotels on a half board basis plus three picnic lunches and three restaurant dinners in Muscat
- ▶ All UK and Omani departure and government taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, visa fees, some lunches, drinks, guide and driver gratuities

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