

YEMEN

Ancient Land of Sheba

Tour Code YE
2008 Departure – 20 December

Day 1

Saturday 20 December

Fly UK to Sana'a

Evening flight direct from Heathrow with Yemenia Airways with a following morning arrival into Sana'a. Transfer to the Mercure hotel for three nights

Day 2

PM Old City tour

Morning at leisure. In the afternoon we have a tour through the capital's enchanting old city medina. The medieval stone tower-houses are an architectural gem, and the smells and sounds of the old souk recount a biblical scene. Welcome dinner in a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 3

Visit Shibam, Thulla and Kawkaban

We start today with a visit to the village of ancient Thulla, an excellent example of Yemeni architecture in rock and stone. We continue to the great mosque of Shibam before driving up a spectacular approach to the dramatic cliff-top town of

Kawkaban. We return to Sana'a in the late afternoon. (B,D)

Day 4

Fly to Aden. City tour

This morning we visit Aden, an important trading port for many centuries, linking Europe with the East. Many different peoples have ruled the city over the years, including the British who held Aden for 130 years following the construction of the Suez Canal. Despite its long history, the majority of Aden is modern, with one or two exceptions. The Aldarus Mosque was originally built in the 14th century, and the Cisterns of Tawila, which date back to the 1st century AD. Overnight with dinner at the Mercure hotel (B,D)

Day 5

Drive to Taiz. Old City tour

We continue north, climbing inland to the mountainous province of Taiz. Located at an altitude of 1400m Taiz enjoys a favourable climate. It was an important trade centre in medieval times linking caravans from Mokha

to Sana'a. Superb mosques and palaces were constructed and water was brought from Mount Saber by aqueduct. This afternoon we visit the old walled quarter of Taiz, including the Al Ashrafiya mosque dating from the 13th century. Also the former Palace of Imam Ahmed, now housing an impressive museum crammed with memorabilia. Two nights at the Sofitel hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 6

Visit Jibla, Ibb and Al Janad

This morning we visit Al Janad, the site of Yemen's oldest mosque and the mountain village of Jibla with its narrow streets and busy souk. We also stop to see the granary town of Ibb located on a hilltop at over 1800m. We return to Taiz in the afternoon with free time to wander around the old city and explore the fascinating souk area. Dinner in the hotel (B,D)

Day 7
Visit Mokka and Zabid.
Drive to Al Hodeidah

This morning we visit Mokka, an old coffee port that grew in importance during the 17th century, when fashionable coffee houses sprang up over Europe. At that time, Yemen had a virtual monopoly over coffee trade. Since Aden became the main port and other countries began to grow coffee, Mokka fell into decline and is now a bleak reminder of its former glory. Heading north we reach Zabid, an important centre for Islamic teaching with a remarkable past. Continuing via the market town of Beit al Faqih we reach Hodeida, Yemen's main fish port and capital of the coastal Tihama region. Overnight at the Taj Awsan hotel. Dinner at a local fish restaurant (B,D)

Day 8
Drive to Sana'a via
Manahka and Al Hajjarah

Heading into the Haraz mountains, winding steeply through the hills and valleys we reach the hilltop town of Manahka at 2150m. The whole Haraz area is a beautiful example of rural Yemeni terrace culture. We walk to the nearby-fortified

village of Al Hajjarah, its tightly packed houses literally clinging to the rock. Later we continue to Sana'a for our final evening to enjoy a folkloric show with dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Mercure hotel (B,D)

Day 9
Visit Wadi Dahr .
Drive to Al Mahweet

This morning we drive the short distance to Wadi Dahr to view the towering old palace of Imam Yahya, built on an isolated rock, with spectacular views across the plateau. Heading west we drive via At-Tawila village into the Al Mahweet region known for its natural scenic beauty. We arrive at Al Mahweet hotel wonderfully situated overlooking the rugged mountain ranges of the region. Two nights with dinner (B,D)

Day 10
Walking in Al Mahweet region

There will be the option to join a walk this morning to explore the surrounding villages and countryside with its lush green terracing. After lunch we will drive a short distance to the wonderfully located village of Beit Showta for a guided afternoon walk (B,D)

Day 11
Drive Sana'a. At leisure in Sana'a

We return to Sana'a in the morning and enjoy time at leisure in the old city before our farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Mercure hotel (B,D)

Day 12
Wednesday 31 December
Fly to London

We depart Sana'a after breakfast for our direct flight with Yemenia Airways arriving back into Heathrow at Terminal 3 in the mid afternoon

Included meals indicated as (B) Breakfast and (D) Dinner

This detailed 12 day tour offers a rich and varied insight into the culture, history and scenic beauty of Yemen. Known to the Romans as Arabia Felix (fortunate Arabia), Yemen is the most fertile region of the Arabian Peninsula. The ancient land of the Queen of Sheba lay on the great trade routes from the East and grew wealthy trading frankincense and myrrh. Yemen today remains one of the world's most mysterious places and the tour concentrates on its varying architectural, cultural and scenic wonders. From the unique stone-tower houses of Sana'a, the awesome hilltop mountain villages of the Haraz range and the colour of the Red Sea fishing ports, Yemen never fails to awe inspire even the most seasoned traveller, past and present

What the tour cost of £1795-00 includes:

- ❖ **Accompanied from London by Patrick Syder.** Patrick has led previous trips to Yemen and has previously worked alongside your Yemen guide. Patrick has a degree in Geology and is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London. He is also a renowned travel photographer
- ❖ **Specialist Yemeni guide for the duration of the tour**
- ❖ Scheduled international flights from Heathrow with Yemenia Airways
- ❖ Scheduled internal flight with Yemenia Airways
- ❖ A/C quality 4WD Toyota Land cruisers and A/C minibus
- ❖ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ❖ Local four star hotels on a half board basis and some dinners at quality restaurants
- ❖ All departure and government taxes
- ❖ All airport transfers
- ❖ Porter, hotel, restaurant staff gratuities

Please also note:

- ❖ The international Yemenia Airways flight is purchased through an ATOL bonded agent
- ❖ The following are excluded from the tour price – visa fee, gratuities (guide and driver) and items of a personal nature
- ❖ There is a single room supplement charge of £200.00