

Yemen – Ancient Land of Sheba

Tour Code YM

Departure 12 February 2011

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 and this 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 hilltop mountain villages of the Haraz range, the mud brick architecture of the Hadhramaut and the colour of the Red Sea fishing ports, Yemen never fails to awe inspire even the most seasoned traveller, past and present



Old city, Sana'a
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ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Sana'a *Saturday 12 February*

Day 2 In Sana'a *Sunday 13 February*

Morning arrival and transfers to our hotel. In the afternoon we have an orientation tour by foot 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. Three nights at the Mercure hotel (B,D)

Day 3 In Sana'a *Monday 14 February*

We start the morning at the National Museum housing a wealth of Yemen's treasures before walking the short distance into the capital's walled old city. A walking tour reveals the fabulous architectural treasures found within it from tower houses and mosques to khans, caravanserais and hidden gardens. The afternoon is left free to wander and shop at leisure in this ancient place. Dinner at a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 4 Visit Wadi Dahr, Shibam, Thulla and Kawkaban *Tuesday 15 February*

We start today with a visit to the wonderful Dar Al Hajjar at Wadi Dahr; the towering old palace of Imam Yahya, built on an isolated rock, with spectacular views across the plateau. We continue to the village of ancient Thulla, an excellent example of Yemeni architecture in rock and stone. We have a sumptuous home-cooked lunch in a typical Yemeni *funduq* in Shibam and then drive up a spectacular approach to the dramatic cliff-top town of Kawkaban with far-reaching views across the plains. We return to Sana'a in the late afternoon (B,L)

Day 5 Fly to Hadhramaut Valley. Visit Seiyun and Shibam *Wednesday 16 February*

Early morning flight across the Empty Quarter to the dramatic Wadi Hadhramaut, a fascinating region of Yemeni culture and tribal history. Seiyun is a fascinating place with stunning mud brick architecture, old mosques and a thriving souk area. We visit the former Sultan's Palace with its excellent museum. In the afternoon we visit the 300 year old mud skyscrapers of Shibam, a listed UNESCO world heritage site. We return to Seiyun for two nights stay at the Al Howta Hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 6 Visit Tarim *Thursday 17 February*

Heading east along the Hadhramaut Valley we arrive at Tarim, the spiritual centre of the south. Over three hundred mosques and many libraries of great importance were here. Surrounding the Muhdar Mosque are the great houses of wealthy traders of the last century who made their fortunes in Indonesia. We return to Seiyun in the afternoon. Dinner in the hotel (B,D)

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Day 7 Drive to Al Mukulla via Al Hajarain and Wadi Doan *Friday 18 February*

Driving south today we head for the coastal town of Al Mukulla. We stop at the mud house village of Al Hajjarain along the old trading route from the coast to the Hadhramaut. In the afternoon we visit Al Mukulla with its mixed architectural styles of Yemeni, Arab and Indian. Overnight at the Holiday Inn with dinner (B,D)

Day 8 Drive to Aden *Saturday 19 February*

We have a full day drive along the coast through dramatic volcanic landscapes past Bir Ali, once the site of the ancient harbour of Qena, the first port of the incense-trading route. We pause to visit the area before continuing to Aden. Overnight at the Mercure hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 9 Visit Aden. Drive to Taiz *Sunday 20 February*

This morning we visit Aden, an important trading port for many centuries, linking Europe with the East. We see the Aldarus Mosque, originally built in the 14th century, and the Cisterns of Tawila. After lunch we continue north, climbing inland to the mountainous province of Taiz, an important trade centre in medieval times linking caravans from Mokha to Sana'a. Two nights at the Sofitel hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 10 Taiz old city tour. Visit Jibla and Al Janad *Monday 21 February*

This morning we visit the old walled quarter of Taiz, including the 13th century Al Ashrafiya mosque and the former Palace of Imam Ahmed, now housing an impressive museum crammed with memorabilia. In the afternoon 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 return to Taiz in the late afternoon (B,D)

Day 11 Visit Mokka and Zabid. Drive to Al Hodeidah *Tuesday 22 February*

This morning we visit Mokka, an old coffee port that grew in importance during the 17th century. 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. We visit some of its remarkably preserved old houses before reaching Hodeida, Yemen's main fish port and capital of the coastal Tihama region. Overnight at the Taj Awsan hotel with dinner (B,D)

Day 12 Drive to Sana'a via Manahka and Al Hajjarah *Wednesday 23 February*

Heading into the Haraz mountains, winding steeply through the hills and valleys we reach the hilltop town of Manahka. The whole Haraz area is a beautiful example of rural Yemeni terrace culture. After a traditional Yemeni lunch 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. Overnight at the Mercure hotel (B,L)

Day 13 Drive to Al Mahweet *Thursday 24 February*

Heading west we drive via At-Tawila village into the Al Mahweet region known for its natural scenic beauty. There will be the option to join a walk in the afternoon to explore the surrounding villages and countryside. Our base is the Al Mahweet hotel wonderfully situated overlooking the rugged mountain ranges of the region (B,D)

Day 14 In Al Mahweet. Drive to Sana'a *Friday 25 February*

An early start on foot allows us to enjoy a wonderful walk following the terraced hillsides with dramatic views across the Haraz mountains. We will stop at one of the villages to get a better insight into the villagers way of life in this isolated but beautiful region of Yemen. We return to Sana'a in the afternoon and transfer to the Mercure hotel. Farewell dinner of traditional Yemeni cuisine (B,D)

Day 15 In Sana'a. Fly to London *Saturday 26 February*

Tour finishes in Sana'a after breakfast. Transfers to airport for return flights to London (B)

Cost £1995.00 per person in twin room (excludes international flight)

Single supplement charge £300.00



Terraced landscape around Mahweet

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Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Specialist Yemeni guide for the duration of the tour
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c minibus in Sana'a and Toyota Land Cruiser outside Sana'a
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality four star hotels on half board basis (best available in Hodeidah and Mahweet)
- ▶ All departure taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, visa fees, drinks, lunches guide and driver gratuities, international flight (booking option with Opodo UK from £400.00)

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