



The Sultanate of OMAN

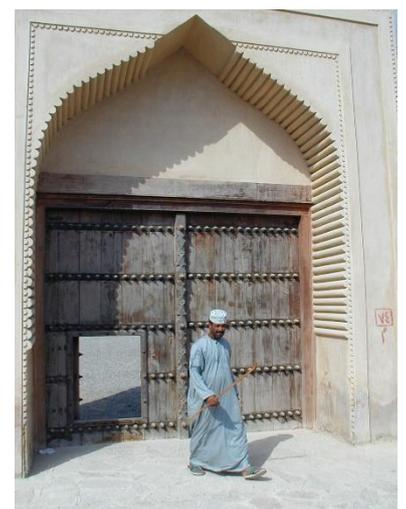
**Forts & Frankincense, Sands & Souqs, Beaches & Birds,
Mountains & Mystery.**

Oman is a richly diverse and surprising country. Landscapes vary from harsh, jagged mountain ranges to lush, scented date gardens, with a long open coastline. The frankincense trade from the sub-tropical south dates from 5,000 BC whilst the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is elegantly 21st century. Less oil-rich than its neighbours, traditional markets flourish, there are remarkable forts to visit, well organized informative museums, striking mountain scenery - wadis and peaks plus highly adapted wildlife and plants. With local guides, we explore this huge variety, sometimes using 4x4s, to reach mountain villages and sandy dunes. Our accommodation varies from a smart Muscat hotel on arrival, ending with a beach-front sophisticated resort with luxurious spa, interspersed by nights perched high in the mountains. We also experience the true desert, silent and vast in our own comfortable 'wild-camp' under the Arabian Stars.



**Escape winter's chill, to bask in bright sunshine
and dry warmth in a fascinating country.**

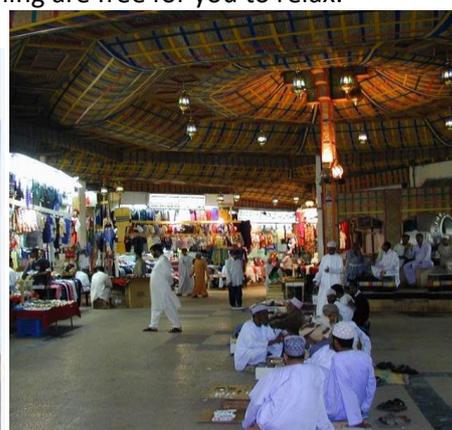
Sunday 19th FEBRUARY 2023 TBC shortly



Depart London Heathrow at 20:05 on Oman Air, flight WY102 (7hrs/10mins). Arrive 07.15 into the warmth of **MUSCAT** for our specially designed unique itinerary. Transfer to the Kempinski Hotel (3 nights, Superior rooms)



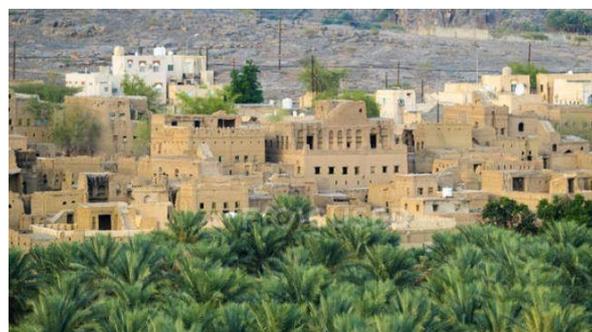
Monday 20th Feb: we start our tour in the historic trading port of Muscat, once almost inaccessible due to the hostile surrounding high mountains. Trading with India and conquered by the Portuguese, the town became the focus of the country's seafaring empire during the 18th and 19th centuries. At the **Bait Zubair Museum**, housed in a beautifully restored old mansion, we will see a superb privately-owned collection of Omani artefacts, maps, jewellery and costumes before we return to the Kempinski for lunch. The afternoon and evening are free for you to relax.



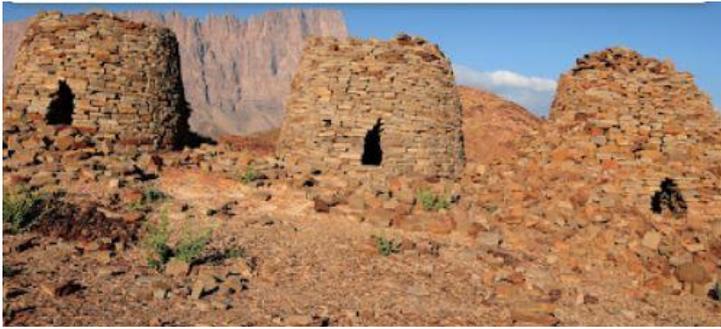
Tues. 21st Feb: today we start at the bustling market of **Muttrah Souk** which retains its lively market charm. Under the modern timber roof, stalls sell everything, from saucepans and textiles to jewellery and antiques. Next, we move on to the elegant calm of the striking modern Sultan Qaboos Mosque with its beautiful prayer hall and vast Iranian carpet before we join the one of Oman's internationally recognised women's groups for lunch. A restful afternoon at the Kempinski precedes an Omani dinner at Bait Al Luban.



Wed. 22nd Feb: after checking out, we drive (approx. 1 hr) into the foothills of the **Hajar Mountains** to the fort at **Nakhal**. Highly defensive, the round towers deflected cannon balls whilst slits above the spiked doors enabled boiling hot honey to be poured onto invaders. Moving on we have a picnic lunch in dramatic **Wadi Bani Awf**, before a spectacular drive through the mountain passes brings us to the mud-brick village of **Al Hamra**, one of the oldest in Oman. 3 nights at The View (Superior Rooms)



Thurs. 23rd Feb: today we explore this mountain area further with its ancient villages and intricate *falaj* water channels providing irrigation from the mountains to date gardens on the plains below. We visit the UNESCO site of **Bat** and **Al-Ayn** with their curious tombs dating from 2000 to 3000 BC: there is barely a hilltop without its crowning beehive structure. Tonight we dine at The View to enjoy the mountain air and spectacular sunset.



Fri. 24th Feb: our time today will be amongst the high mountains of **Jabal Shams** as well as a visit to one of my favourite places in Oman – **Bahla**. This UNESCO site, now open after over 15 years of restorations, is one of the world's most incredible walled cities, with walls over 7k long, a 12th century fort, a souq and a traditional un-glazed pottery.



Sat 25th Feb: we check out early to catch the Friday market at the oasis town of **Nizwa**. Dominated again by a spectacular fort, dating from the 17th century, the market is famous for silver craftsmanship, especially the curved *khanjar* daggers depicted on Oman's flag and currency. Leaving the bustle of Nizwa we head into the **Sharqiya (Wahiba)** desert and dunes for 2 nights at our own, private tented camping.



Sun 26th Feb: a full day amongst the **Sharqiya Sands**, an area of sand and wide-open landscapes. A true desert and home to the Bedu, some of whom still practice the traditional way of life herding goats and raising camels, especially for racing. We may visit one of the nearby *wadis*, lush with abundant vegetation and a natural spring pool where we can take a dip, or simply enjoy the quiet of the Sands at our tented camp.

Mon 27th Feb: Returning to Muscat we take our mid-afternoon short flight south, to **Dohfar** where we stay at the luxurious AL Baled by Anantara near **Salalah** (3 nights deluxe garden view rooms)



Tues 28th Feb: today we begin to experience the totally different environment of **Dohfar**, a semi-tropical coastal region which catches the south westerly monsoon in the European summer. We check out the diverse species in the fish market and aromatics in the Souq before a simple lunch in town. In the afternoon we continue south along the coast, backed by high mountains, to **Mughsail beach** with its famous blowholes. There remain some of the peeling-barked, wizened frankincense trees, famed since ancient times for being the most fragrant and of the highest quality for us to see.





Wed 1st March: a fascinating day takes us to north to visit **Khor Rori**, once the frankincense trading port for the Queen of Sheba, now the estuary hosts grazing camels and flocks of flamingos. We continue past the 300-foot cliff into **Wadi Darbat**, where we will have a picnic lunch. The wadi is home to rock hyrax, chameleons and ancient bulbous rockrose ‘trees’, as well as many bird species and is a fascinating world of its own.

Thurs 2nd March: leaving Salalah at 11:30, (ETA Muscat 13:05) Depart Muscat 14:10 / ETA 18.25 Heathrow. Luggage can be checked through to London from Salalah.

HOTELS: Kempinski, Muscat:

with two outdoor pools and immediately on the beach, this modern, Arabic style hotel will banish any winter chills. Superior rooms. 3 nights



Anantara Jebel al Akhdar

perched high on a slab of rock with stunning views of the surrounding mountains, this newly built hotel is truly breath taking, and exciting place to stay. Premier Canyon View rooms 3 nights

‘Wild’ Camping: Sharqiya (Wahiba) Sands: simple, but comfortable, our private camps has a tent for each couple with raised beds, towels, etc. and loo/shower tent. 2 nights



Al Baleed by Anantara, Dohar;

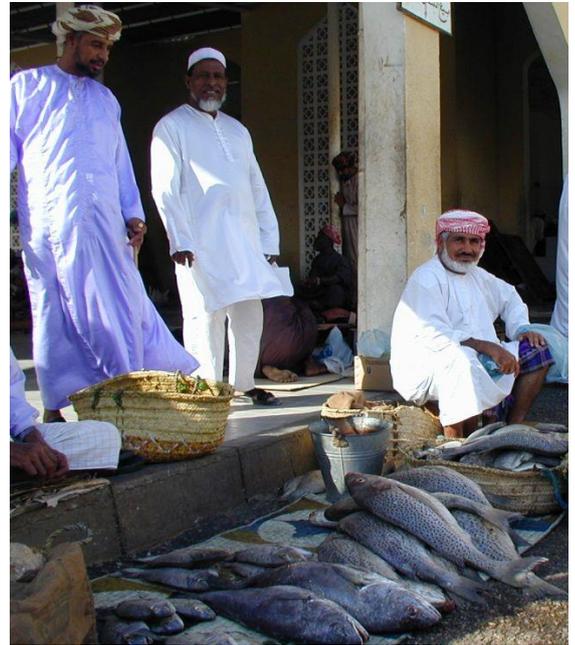
an indulgent end to our tour, directly on the beach, this new hotel has a sophisticated air, a wonderful spa and good restaurants. Sea view rooms 2 nights





Dress Code in Oman is conservative, with loose clothing and below-the-knee skirts for women, and longer shorts for men. A shawl is needed for head-covering in mosques.

Weather in March; Muscat. Daily high between **76°F to 79°F**, rarely falling below 71°F or exceeding 86°F. Daily low between 64°F to 67°F, rarely falling below 60°F or exceeding 71°F. It will be cooler in the mountains.



COST: TBA but in 2022 it was £6,435.00 per person, based on two sharing a room/tent
Single Supplement £2,535.00 (this is on account of a tent for 1)
EXACT DATES TBC.

COST will include:

- Flights (economy) as mentioned.
- Accommodation with breakfast daily, plus 6 lunches & 7 Dinners
- All transport as described, with 4x4 where necessary with 3 people per vehicle.
- Local guides and entrance fees
- Kempinski & The View; 3 nights in Superior rooms
- Private tented Camp
- Al Baleed Resort: 3 nights, Deluxe Garden View rooms

Cost will NOT include:

- Oman Visa (currently £45.00) Can be applied for online before departure: <https://e-visa.co.uk/oman>
- Gratuities
- Travel insurance
- PCR tests if relevant at the time of travel.

Please contact:

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