



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, quiet date gardens and secret wadi oases. 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 explore, 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 between a stylish Muscat beach hotel, a sophisticated seaside resort with spoiling spa, dramatic by nights perched high in the Jebel mountains to the true desert, silent and vast at a comfortable desert-camp under the myriad stars of the deep Arabian night.

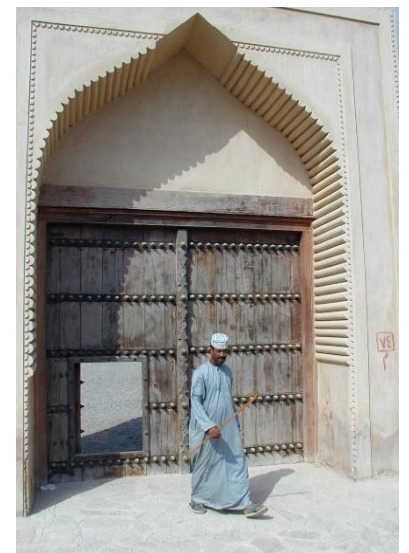


**Escape winter's chill to bask in bright sunshine
and dry warmth in a fascinating country.**

Saturday 17th – Tuesday 27th FEBRUARY 2024

Saturday 17th February 2024: DAY 0

Depart London Heathrow into the warmth of **MUSCAT** for our specially designed unique itinerary.





Sunday 18th Feb: Transfer* to the Kempinski Hotel: remainder of the day at leisure to swim and relax. 3 nights, (Superior rooms). Dinner this evening at the Zale Beach Club.

Monday 19th Feb: we start our tour in the ancient trading port of **MUSCAT**. Surrounded by inhospitable mountains, this historic town was once almost inaccessible. Trading with India and conquered by the Portuguese, the port became the focus of the country's seafaring empire during the 18th and 19th centuries. After a brief visit to the colourful **fish market**, we continue to **MUTRAH SOUQ**. Retaining its ancient charms, this lively market, under a modern timber roof, sells everything, from saucepans to spices, jewellery and antiques. Next we visit the **NATIONAL OMAN MUSEUM** to learn of Omani culture, we see the Sultan's colourful **PALACE** before lunch Bait Al Luban. Afternoon and evening are free to relax.



(B & L)

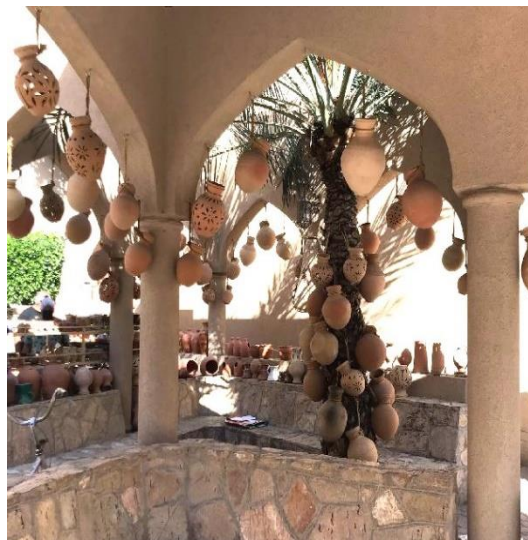
Tuesday 20th Feb: Our day begins at the elegant calm of the striking modern **SULTAN QABOOS MOSQUE** with its soaring architecture, beautiful prayer hall, breathtaking chandeliers and vast Persian carpet. Next we visit the amazing sumptuous **OPERA HOUSE**, built in 2011 the auditorium is made from Indian mahogany. We lunch in town before we call at the **BAIT AL ZUBIAR MUSUEM**, to see the superb privately-owned collection of Oman artefacts, maps, jewellery and costumes. We return to the Kempinski for a relaxing afternoon and evening. (B & L)



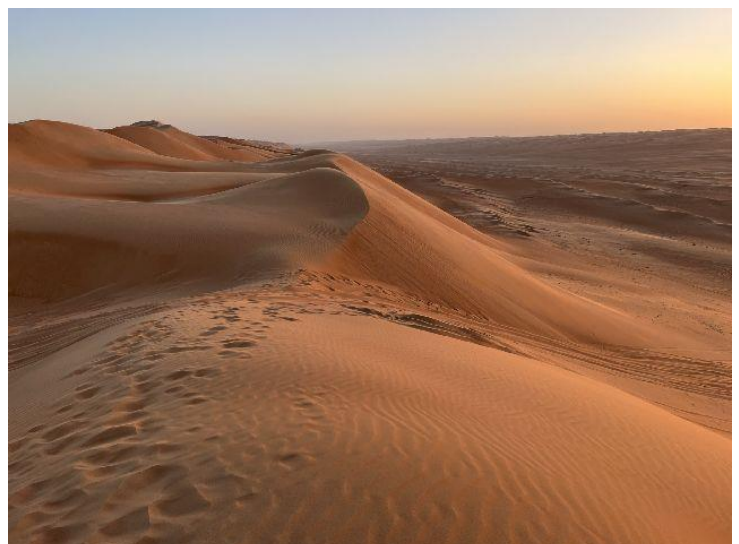
Wednesday 21st Feb: driving (approx. 1 hr) into the foothills of the **HAJAR MOUNTAINS** we stroll through the village of **NAKHAL** where hot spring water is channelled to irrigate the surrounding date gardens. Moving on we have a picnic lunch in dramatic **WADI BANI AWF**, before a spectacular drive through mountain passes brings us to the simple village of **BILAT SAYT**. Continuing through this breathtaking scenery we arrive at the **Anantara Jabal Akhdar Hotel**. Dinner at the hotel with its sensational views, pool and dramatic setting. Premier Canyon View Room 3 nights: (B, L & D).



Thursday 22nd Feb: dropping down from our mountain top, we visit **JABREEN FORT**. Built as a centre of knowledge rather than defensively, there are towers, dining rooms, a courtroom and library and is richly decorated with spectacular ceilings, balconies and arches engraved with Arabic calligraphy. Next we visit one of my favourite places in Oman – **BAHLA**, a UNESCO site, now open after over 15 years of restorations, it is an incredible walled city, with walls over 7k long, a 12th century fort, a souq and a traditional un-glazed pottery. We explore on foot the ancient mud village of **AL HAMRA**, now virtually abandoned, see a small local museum and have lunch in a local house. Our afternoon visits will include **MISFAT AL ABRIYEEN**, an agricultural mountain village with old houses built on the solid rock and the breathtaking views from the **JEBEL SHAMS (Mountain of Sun)**, Oman's **GRAND CANYON**, over 1kilometer deep, depending on timing, before we return to our mountain top hotel to enjoy a spectacular sunset. (B, L & D)



Friday 23rd Feb: today we catch the Friday market at the oasis town of **NIZWA**. Dominated by a spectacular 17th century fort built over a stream, it has long been a local centre. The colourful goat market buzzes with transactions, while the **SOUQ** is famous for silver, especially the curved *khanjar* daggers depicted on Oman's flag and currency. Next to **WADI BANI KHALID** with shallow pools, ending at the village where we can stroll the wadi or take a dip in one of the pools. From here we head into the **WAHIBA SANDS**, a vast area of desert and scrub woodland stretching over 100 miles with dunes over 300 feet high in places. A night under the Arabian stars with the deep indigo heavens above is unforgettable. Desert Camp, deluxe villa. B&D



Saturday 24th Feb: Returning to Muscat we take our short early afternoon flight to **DOHFAR** flying over sensational mountain scenery, to arrive in **SALALAH**, to stay at the luxurious AL Baled by Anantara. (3 nights deluxe room. (B)



Sun: 25th 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 visit the **FRANKINCENSE MUSEUM**, see some of the peeling-barked, wizened frankincense trees, famed since ancient times for being the most fragrant and of the highest quality, 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, dramatic scenery, birdlife and seaweed-eating camels. (B & L)



Monday 26th Feb; this fascinating day takes us north to visit **KHOR RORI**, once the frankincense trading port for the Queen of Sheba, the excavated archaeological site looks over the estuary with its flocks of flamingos. We continue past the 300-foot cliff into **WADI DARBAT**, where we will have a picnic lunch. The wadi with its rockpools and vegetation is home to rock hyrax, chameleons and ancient bulbous rockrose 'trees', as well as many bird species and is a fascinating hidden world. (B & L)



Tuesday 27th Feb: Return UK flights from Salalah via Muscat to London Heathrow. Luggage can be checked through to London from Salalah.

All the photos above were taken by me on our 2022 tour.



Kempinski, Muscat: a spa, two outdoor pools and immediately on the beach, this modern, Arabic style hotel will banish winter chills. Superior rooms. 3 nights



Anantara Jebel al Akhdar perched high on a slab of rock with stunning views of the surrounding mountain scenery from the infinity pool, this newly built hotel is an exciting place to stay. Premier Canyon View rooms 3 nights

Desert Nights Camp, each Bedouin-style villa tent has proper beds, colourful textiles and its own bathroom accommodation: 1 night, alcohol available.



Al Baleed by Anantara an indulgent end to our tour, directly on the beach, this new hotel has a sophisticated air, a wonderful spa, good restaurants with a great breakfast and bar by the beach. Deluxe rooms 2 nights

Dress Code: 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 February; 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: fleece or puffa jacket advised.

TOUR COST: £5,995.00 per person, based on two sharing a room/tent

Flight COST: London – Muscat & return Salalah – Muscat – London

OMAN AIR Economy £1,400pp / Single Supplement £1,750.00

COST includes:

- Itinerary as described (subject to alteration if circumstances dictate)
- Oman internal flight Muscat - Salalah (economy).
- Group Transfers* There may be a supplement if you arrive/depart at a different time from the group.
- Accommodation with breakfast daily and meals as mentioned.
- Transport as described, 4x4 where necessary.
- Local guides, tour leader Amelia Dalton, entrance fees
- Gratuities for local guides & drivers.
- Hotels as described, or similar if circumstances dictate

Cost does NOT include:

- International Flights to / from Sultanate of Oman.
- Oman Visa (currently USD 52.00) Can be applied for online before departure: <https://e-visa.co.uk/oman>
- Alcohol & items of a personal nature.
- Travel insurance

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