

THE OMAN EXPERIENCE



General information

Hotels

Oman boasts several world class hotels where the discerning traveller can relax and unwind in great comfort and luxury.

Hospitality is a tradition in Oman. Many of the luxurious hotels offer private beaches, aquatic sports and excellent restaurants.

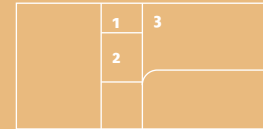
We only deal with hotels that offer the highest standard of service our clients expect – and we personally vet each hotel before we recommend it to you.

Nightlife and Dining

The nightlife in Oman centers on the hotels which have international standard restaurants to choose from as well as numerous bars and nightclubs. Muscat also has many independent restaurants to choose from and we would be happy to recommend.

Shopping in Style

As well as the Souqs, Oman boasts many exclusive boutiques and galleries, where you can buy local art, textiles, jewelry and furniture.



- 1 Dine in a Bedouin tent under the stars**
- 2 Fine dining by the sea - Al Bustan Palace**
- 3 The Grand Mosque - a breathtaking example of Islamic architecture**

“Oman’s rich cultural, historical and geological backdrop, its pristine beaches washed by the waters of the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf, offer an unparalleled canvas of potential”

Dear discerning traveller,

'Marhaba' Welcome to Oman



The Sultanate of Oman is an awe inspiring and special place to visit and its people are some of the friendliest, most welcoming I have encountered anywhere in the world.

My long association with Oman started when I lived and worked there for several years. On returning to the UK I found myself constantly being asked about Oman – how, where, what and when to visit.

This ultimately led me to form The Shaw Travel Company, which has one simple aim – to offer you the ultimate Oman experience.

There is so much to see and do in this stunning and unusual country and this brochure can only give a flavour and outline the possibilities. All I can say is that if you do decide to visit Oman, I'm sure you will never forget the experience.

Sonia Shaw

P.S. If you want to see or do something that doesn't appear in this brochure – call us, because if it's in Oman, we can organise it for you.



The Shaw Travel Company

About Us

Shaw Travel specialises in bespoke luxury adventure holidays and guided interest tours to The Sultanate of Oman. Our staff know Oman intimately and are therefore well acquainted with the culture and the way of life to ensure your visit is stress-free and enjoyable as possible.

Our business partners

We partner with select international airlines and local tour operating specialists who have superior knowledge and can provide our clients with the highest levels of service.

Your choice

We develop individual itineraries that can be as busy and adventurous or relaxed and luxurious as you want. Customising your vacation in this way means that you have the option to relax in a single location or visit various locations scattered around the country. Whatever your choice, a wide range of activities and sight seeing opportunities is always available.

What to do next

If you wish to discuss any aspect of Oman or would like us to create a travel itinerary for you, then please call us on +44 (0)1635 47055, fax +44 (0)1635 47058 or email sonia@shawtravel.co.uk

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has successfully harmonised Oman's proud cultural heritage with its modern development.

- 1 Musandam Peninsular** Here the mountains drop as vertical walls into the sea. A dhow trip through the fjords is a must! Visitors are often lucky enough to see dolphins. Khasab is the main coastal town of Musandam; the harbour is alive with fishing boats bringing in goods to trade.
- 2 Sohar** Reputed to be the birthplace of Sinbad the Sailor. The Sohar Fort, built in about the 1st century A.D, is an important landmark. The area is fertile and date plantations abound.

- 3 Jebel Akhdar** meaning Green Mountain. One of the most picturesque areas of Oman with a pleasant climate. A variety of fruit and herbs are grown on the mountain terraces as well as roses which are used for the production of rose water.
- 4 Nizwa** Formerly the capital of Oman during the 6th and 7th centuries. The city is famous for its 17th century fort and popular souq. The forts of Jabrin and Bahla are nearby. This makes Nizwa a good base from which to see the interior.

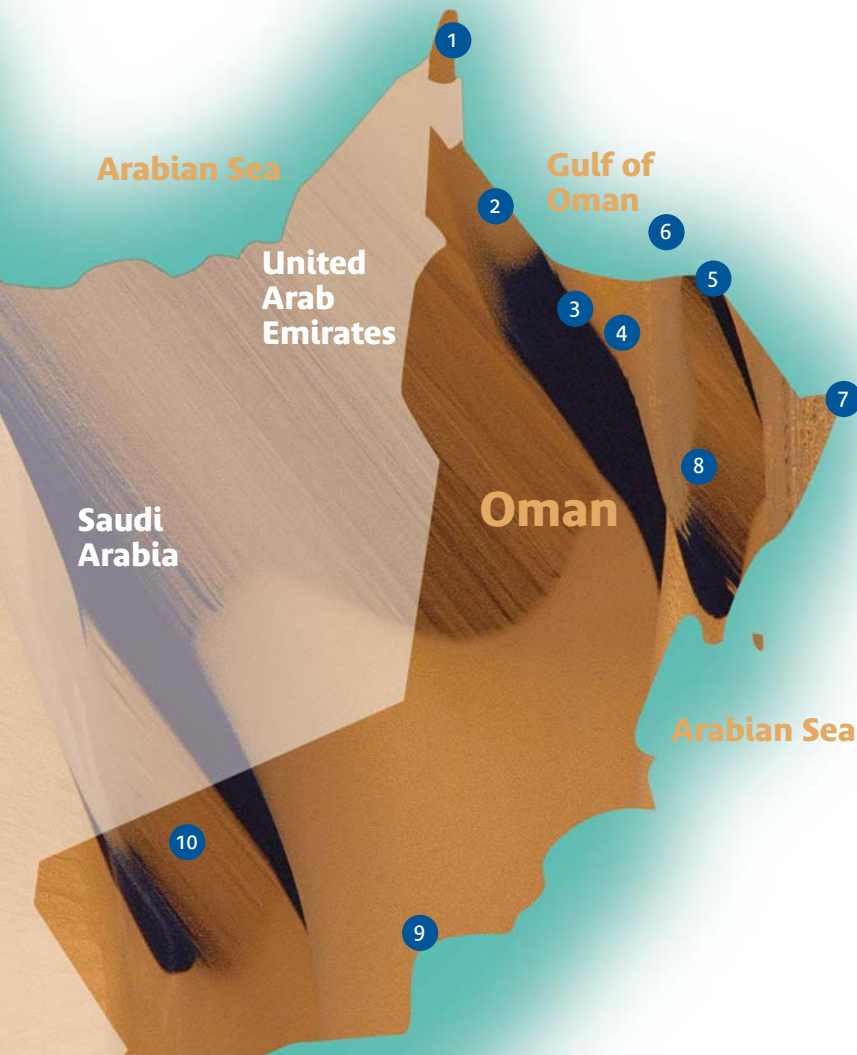
- 5 Muscat** The Capital of Oman. "Muscat is a port, the like of which cannot be found in the whole world" an Omani navigator was quoted as saying. The souq, museums, beaches and world class hotels are a few of the many attractions on offer in Muscat.
- 6 Damaniyat Islands** These form an archipelago of nine islands about 16 kilometres off the coast and can only be reached by boat. The islands are an important area of conservation for marine and wild life. Snorkelling, scuba diving and bird watching activities are popular here.

- 7 Ras Al Hadd** This peninsular is of great importance for its turtle nesting beaches. It attracts one of the largest concentrations of green turtles in the world, nesting along 23 miles of coastline.

- 8 Wahiba Sands** Described as a "perfect specimen of sea sand." A must if you're interested in desert camping, dune bashing in 4x4s, meeting the Bedouin, seeing and riding camels.

- 9 Salalah** Nestled in the southern region of Oman, Salalah benefits from the annual monsoon or 'Khareef'. The area is steeped in myths and legends that dating back to biblical times. There are also miles of unspoilt beaches, bird sanctuaries and, of course it is the area famed for the Frankincense tree. Camels can also be seen in abundance!

- 10 The Empty Quarter 'Rub al Khali'** Famously written about by Wilfred Thesiger in his book *Arabian Sands* after his crossing of the desert.





A proud cultural heritage

You will find Omanis are genuinely friendly and welcoming to visitors. This outward looking nature stems from Oman's renowned maritime history. Centuries of trade with countries as diverse as China, Portugal and India have influenced Omani culture, craftsmanship and cuisine – which are still evident today.

Further proof of these cultural influences can be seen in the architecture of Oman's ancient villages, magnificent forts, castles and towers.

A respect for the environment
Oman's development has also been influenced by respect for its ecological environment – and they are rightly proud of their track record of conservation of indigenous flora and fauna. This ensures it is a clean and colourful land that is a pleasure to visit.

A proud cultural heritage,
ancient villages, magnificent
forts and people famous for
their hospitality

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- 1 An example of a 'hirz' – an Omani necklace
- 2 Omanis brewing arabic coffee, usually served with dates
- 3 One of the numerous forts scattered around the interior
- 4 Hoopoe can be seen along the Batinah coast
- 5 Omani girl in traditional costume
- 6 Wadi Shab





A word about our adventure tours

Discover Oman for yourself

On the following pages you will see examples of some of the many activities you can do in Oman. It would take more than a simple brochure to do Oman justice. The best way to find out about it is to travel there and discover it for yourself.

In safe hands

Transport is in luxurious 4x4 air-conditioned vehicles, dhows and boats. The English speaking local guides have extensive expertise in their respective fields.

Variety of terrain

The tours cover the different terrains of Oman including the peaceful coastline, Wahiba Sands and Rub al Khali deserts, the southern monsoon region of Dhofar, the mountain range of the Jebel Akhdar and the Musandam.

Bird and Wildlife Tours

Oman is located at the hub of three different geographical land masses, which provides it with a rich and diverse bird life. Over 480 species of bird have been recorded, making it an idea area for the keen twitcher to visit.

Muscat is one of the best places to start bird watching. Year round you can find Bulbul, Graceful Warbler, Little Green Bee-Eater and Purple sunbird to name a few.

The Batinah Coast. Ras as Sawadi is good for waders, gulls, terns and in summer Sooty Falcons.

Musandam. The many birds found here include the Socotra Cormorants.

Dhofar. A visit to Salalah us a must for the serious bird watcher. The many coastal lagoons will hold Greater Flamingoes, Spoonbills and Glossy Ibises. Seabirds can be observed from Mirbat.

Turtle Watching

The beaches of Ras al Hadd (the eastern most point of the Arabian Peninsular) and Ras al Junayz are areas where several species of marine turtles such as Hawksbill, Olive Ridley, Green and Loggerheads arrive to nest. Over 20,000 green turtles lay approximately 60,000 egg clutches each year. The best time to visit the Turtle reserve is from July to September.

Dolphin Watching

Early morning trips off the Muscat coast are arranged to view Common, Spinner and Bottle nose dolphins as well as other marine life including game fish, whales and sea birds that abound in the Arabian Ocean.

Scuba Diving and Snorkelling

The abundant variety of diving presents a limitless choice for the advanced open water diver as well as the beginner. The options include reefs, wrecks, and drifts, drop offs and open sea dives. While the Sultanate's waters may not be as clear (ranging on average 10-15 meters to 25-30 meters) as the Red Sea, the size and sheer quality of marine life is without equal.

Boat Trips & Dolphin Watching

The waters surrounding Muscat provide fine tropical coral sea diving and the nutrient-rich water attracts a wide variety and quantity of marine life: 85 genera of hard and soft corals are found here, huge table corals, beautiful black coral, colourful whip and teddy-bear corals. The sea is abundant with 900 species of fish ranging from the little cleaner wrasse to the enormous whale shark. So numerous and varied is the fish population in the waters of Oman that new species are still being discovered and identified.

There are no strong currents in these parts of the Arabian Sea and as such diving and snorkelling is both fun and easy for the beginner and experienced divers and snorkellers. The diving is based on rock and coral sites with a few coral-covered wrecks. All dive sites are all within easy reach of the Dive Centre, the closest being a mere three minutes away. The custom made boats leave every morning for a two tank dive towards one of the beautiful dive locations around Muscat and every afternoon for a one tank dive. Twice a week, a night dive is organised. Full equipment can be hired at

the Centre. PADI courses are run, ranging from Bubble making (from 8 years old) to Dive Master.

The top dive sites include **Fahal Island** which hosts beautiful corals and fish. **Al Munassir**, an 84-meter-long wreck sunk by the Oman Royal Navy. **Purple Haze and Wall Street**, drop-offs covered with pink soft corals, coral fish and one of the best places to see eagle rays.

The **Damaniyat Islands** offer experienced divers a number of world-class drift dives along walls and drop offs, where one can view multi-coloured tropical fish amongst the hard soft corals.

Diving in the Musandam is more challenging and only for advanced divers who require Advanced Open Water certification.





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- 1 An Arabian Oryx in the Jiddat
- 2 **Traditional Omani Dhow**
- 3 A turtle on the beach
- 4 **Hire a jetski**
- 5 Dolphins race the boat
- 6 and 7 **Scuba diving in the Arabian Sea**







Things to do by the sea

Warm seas and golden beaches

With mile upon mile of pristine, unspoilt coastline, Oman is a haven for beachcombers and mariners alike. Whether you're into soaking up the sun on golden beaches, or prefer more active pursuits, there are endless possibilities to while away the hours.

Here are some of the activities in which you could indulge.

Snorkelling

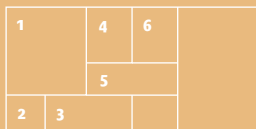
The Daymaniyat Islands are a cluster of nine islands off the coast of Seeb. The islands are surrounded by rocks and shallow seas, and they can only be reached by boat. They are of great environmental significance as they are home to some endangered species of marine life and the nesting sites for several species of migratory birds. The shallow waters surrounding the islands are tailor made for 'Discover Scuba' beginners as well as snorkellers.

Game Fishing

For the game fishing enthusiast, charter a licensed boat with crew for the day with the latest equipment including GPS electronic fish finders, down-and-out-trigger, Penn and Crowder rods and Penn Tournament reels. Black Marlin, Kingfish, Barracuda and Yellow Fin Tuna, as well as several species of shark can be found in the deeper waters.

Evening Sundown Cruises

Unwind at the end of the day. Witness the magnificent coastline that Portuguese, British and African ships have surveyed for many centuries. A cruise past old Muscat offers an historic view of where Omani dhows set sail to establish their trading empire, the harbour is flanked by the Portuguese forts and cannon batteries.



- 1 Turtles at Ras al Hadd
- 2 **The rugged beauty of The Musandam**
- 3 Fishermen 'catching the tide' in Dhofar
- 2 **An Omani dhow near Musandam**
- 5 Charter a boat with all the latest equipment for that fishing trip of a lifetime
- 6 **Warm blue seas clash with rugged mountains in spectacular style**

Breathe the fresh mountain air

Captivating Vistas

Oman boasts a variety of spectacular landscapes including range upon range of majestic mountains and spectacular canyons. Standing atop a mountain promises a stunning view of tiny villages, each with its own watchtower of baked clay, often nestling in the protective shadow of an impressive fortress; or sit amongst craggy peaks overlooking terraced fields, palm groves and lush wadis.

Mountain Safaris

The mountains of the Eastern Hajar and Jebel Akhdar offer opportunities for botanists, geologists and mountain enthusiasts. Both ranges are rugged, stark, beautiful and geologically fascinating. Amongst a maze of untouched spurs, deep canyons and towering cliffs, both offer walks, serious hiking, and expeditions and climbing for all levels of fitness and expertise.

A Desert Experience

The beautifully stark desertscape alternates between extensive 'oceans' of vast dunes, over 200m high in places, and seemingly endless expanses of flat, stony sands concealing exotic wadis and sunken watercourses where you can take a refreshing dip.

A "must visit" for enthusiasts is Jebel Shams - at 3,000m, it is the highest peak in the Jebel Akhdar range.



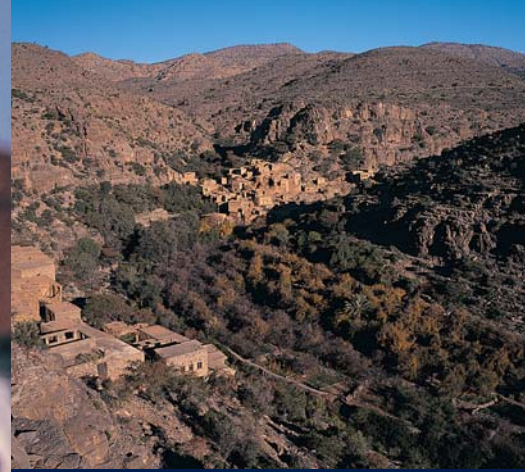
Desert Safari

Desert safaris can vary in length from one over night stay to living out the 'Lawrence of Arabia' and fantasy on a longer tour into the Wahiba Sands. Modes of transport can be camels, luxurious air-conditioned 4x4 off-road vehicles or both. Overnight camps are in the sands, creating a unique desert feeling. The comfortable standards of accommodation include mosquito sealed tents, snug beds, sheets and pillows and basic washing facilities. Meals are taken around a campfire.

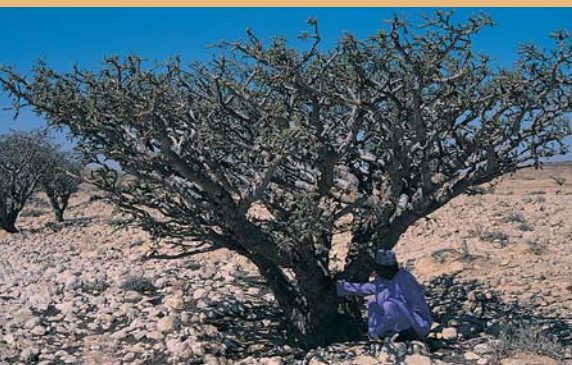
Camel Racing

This exciting sport is a regular but low profile event where local knowledge is key. Many of the camels are highly valuable. The mounts make their professional debuts from as young as 5 years old. It is an entertaining and sometimes chaotic sport, definitely worth experiencing!





- 1 One of the many watchtowers that pepper the landscape
- 2 **The only way to silence a camel**
- 3 Camel racing in Northern Oman
- 4 **Desert Safari**
- 5 A Bedouin with his camels
- 6 **Collecting resin from a Francincense tree**
- 7 Rub al Khali, *The Empty Quarter*
- 8 **Village in the Jebel Akhdar range**
- 9 Bibi Miriam's tomb at Qalhat







Suggested tours from Muscat

Wahiba Wilderness

Visit the Wahiba Sands, a vast mass of undulating sand dunes rising up to 200 meters. Shaw Travel can arrange overnight accommodation in a permanent camp in the Wahiba Sands with camel rides or for those wanting more comfort, a night in a nearby hotel within reach of the Desert. Dune buggies are also available on request. Camel Safaris can be arranged for a small group with a moveable camp and the support of an expert guide and back up vehicles.

Turtle Watching

From July to November, witness the spectacle of Loggerhead, Hawksbill and Green turtles arriving on the beaches to lay their eggs at Ras al Hadd and Ras al Junayz. Throughout the season the sand erupts and thousands of tiny turtles emerge and head out to sea, to begin the cycle again.

Discover Dhofar

Fly down to Salalah, the southern capital of Oman. The area is steeped in myths and legends dating back to biblical times. Explore the Empty Quarter, and visit the frankincense markets in Salalah. After the Khareef, from June to August, the area transforms itself into a lush green landscape.

The Musandam Peninsula

Situated at the most northern point of Oman, the area is separated from the rest of the country by the United Arab Emirates. Its rocky headland juts out into the Straits of Hormuz. The magnificent Hajar mountain range dominates the landscape, with Jebel Harim at 2,087 metres. The highlight of a visit to this remote area must be a dhow cruise around the 'fjords.' Diving and Snorkelling around the coral reefs surrounding the Musandam is spectacular!

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- 1 Khasab Fort at the entrance to the harbour, built by the Portuguese in the 17th century
- 2 **Shop at a Souq**
- 3 Sumhura, an ancient port on the banks of Khor Rawri, a 'must see' for twitchers
- 4 **Goat market in Nizwa**
- 5 Ibra – women's souq – women gather here every week
- 6 **A Hawksbill Turtle**





Facts

Location Situated on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman is bordered by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the west, and the Republic of Yemen to the south. The United Arab Emirates lies to the north-west, with the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman to the east.

Population 2.4 million

Area 309,500 Square kilometres
Language Arabic is the official language, English is widely spoken.

Local time GMT + 4 Hours.

Climate The best time to visit Oman is from September to April.

Currency Omani Rial, this is tied to the US dollar.

Getting there Gulf Air operates a daily non-stop service to Muscat. The flight time 7 hours.

Visas Can be bought on arrival at Muscat Seeb Airport. Your passport must be valid for six months.

Vaccinations No compulsory vaccinations required.

Ramadan The timing of Ramadan moves from year to year. It lasts for a calendar month, and during this time no alcohol is served in public, whether in hotel restaurants or elsewhere. It may only be consumed in the privacy of your hotel room.

Ramadan is the fasting period, and for this reason dining in restaurants is limited between dawn and dusk.

THE OMAN EXPERIENCE

“The more time you spend in Oman, the more it sneaks up on you and draws you in. Even as we were leaving, we were planning to go back.”

Anthony Horowitz

After travelling to Oman with The Shaw Travel Company



Shaw
travel

The Shaw Travel Company
Pigeon Farmhouse, Greenham
Newbury, Berkshire RG19 8SP,
United Kingdom

tel +44 (0)1635 47055
fax +44 (0)1635 47058

www.shawtravel.co.uk

