

Byroads
Inspiring Escorted Journeys

OMAN & JORDAN

History and beauty abound in these two desert nations

15 DAYS - STARTING MUSCAT 21 OCTOBER 2019





Trip Outline

This fantastic trip through two of the Arab world's friendliest and most hospitable nations includes stunning desert landscapes, amazing world heritage listed sites, a plethora of ancient towns and a fascinating insight into arabic culture. It is a comfortable, safe and welcoming trip. The local culture of hospitality stems from both countries deep roots in its Bedouin history.

Starting in the Omani capital of Muscat we visit the magnificent Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the Bait al Zubair Museum and the historic quarter of Old Muscat where we take lunch with a local family and wander through the local souq. Inland we climb into the spectacular Western Hajar mountains to historic Nizwa our base for exploring the local area including the mudbrick town of Al Hamra. We view the giant Bahla Fort and the nearby Jabreen Castle which offers a fascinating insight into life in old Oman. We'll also take a village walk in picture perfect Misfat Al Abyeen.

Heading south we reach the Wahiba Sands where we dine in Bedouin style and enjoy the beautiful desert sunset from our comfortable campsite. Over on the e Arabian Sea coast to we stopo to visit the Ras Al Jinz turtle reserve and to witness the age old craft of traditional Dhow boat building. It's then time return to Muscat stopping off at the spectacularly deep and narrow carved Wadi Tiwi and the must-see Bimmah sinkhole.

From Muscat it's a short flight to Amman in Jordan. We travel north to the ancient city of Jerash, continuously inhabited for 6500 years. Even today the greco-roman ruins are impressive. Later we descend to the Dead Sea before turning southward to Aqaba on the Red Sea. There's time here to swim before moving on to Wadi Rum, one of the most spectacuar desert valleys in the Middle East. Here We stay in a luxurious bedouin style encampment, climb sand dunes, and enjoy a camel ride at sunset.

Further on is magnificent Petra, one of the most celebrated sites in the region. The view of the ancient Treasury building is breath taking. Enroute back to Amman we stop at the Shoback Crusader castle and take a stroll through the ancient villages of Dana and Madaba.

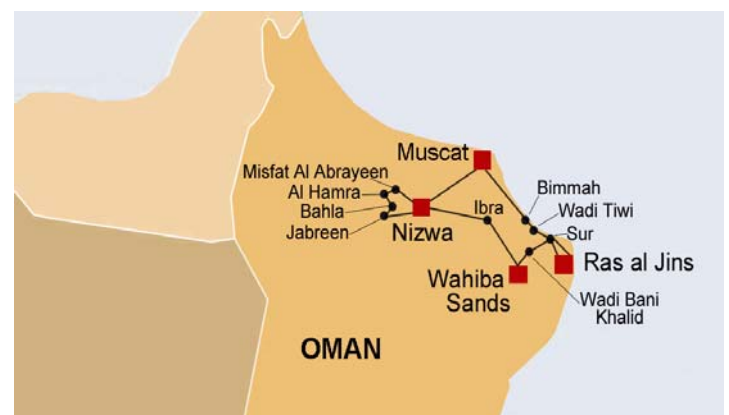
Tour Host – Steve Mortimer



Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies including 13 years as a Product Manager and Operations Director for Peregrine Adventures.

Most recently he has been involved in researching and developing holidays in several different regions of the world, including Latin America and the Middle East where he has lived.

Steve likes nothing better than getting out and about with like-minded travellers, sharing his knowledge and introducing them to some of the world's most interesting places. As a Middle East Destination Manager for several years he has made many trips to Jordan and finds the country one of the friendliest in the Arab world.



2019 ITINERARY - STARTS IN MUSCAT

MON 21 OCT: MUSCAT – Upon arrival at the Muscat International Airport you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the city. The balance of the day is at your leisure and we will plan to hold a short meeting in the evening before going out for an optional dinner.

TUE 22 OCT: MUSCAT – Following breakfast this morning we enjoy a half day tour of Muscat. First stop is the enormous Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the largest mosque in Oman. It blends Islamic, Middle Eastern and Omani architectural styles and is famous for its enormous rugs and its giant chandelier. The Bait al Zubair Museum is housed in a beautifully restored house and exhibits Omani heritage including handicrafts of silver, copper, clay, leather and textiles, historic photos, stamps and traditional daggers. Later there's time for a photostop at the Al Alam Palace before visiting the famous Muttrah Souk where you can haggle over anything from rugs, frankincense and jewellery. After lunch with an Omani family you are free to make your own discoveries. (B, L)

WED 23 OCT: MUSCAT-NIZWA – Today we head inland to the historic city of Nizwa. Set at the foot of some of Oman's highest mountains it is our base for 2 nights to explore the city and the surrounding historic sites including the forts of Jabrin and Bahla. On arrival we set off to experience the Souq, one of the oldest markets in Oman. It is renowned for its fine fruits, meats, sweets and vegetables but there is also an opportunity to shop for souvenirs and antiques and the silvercraft is considered amongst the best in the country. We will also visit the Nizwa Fort, a great example of old Omani architecture. It is a combination of a castle, a museum and a fort and for those who wish, you can make the climb the circular shape towers. Later there is free time to explore. (B)

THU 24 OCT: NIZWA-AL HAMRA-NIZWA – We have a busy day planned. First of all we have a photo stop at the ruins of the immense Bahla fort, with its stone foundations and walls and towers of unbaked brick. In contrast is nearby 17th century Jabreen Castle, perhaps the most beautiful historic castle in all of Oman with its well preserved interiors. Unlike other similar structures it was never constructed as a fortification but more as a palace. We have lunch in the lovely traditional mudbrick town of Al Hamra and then travel on to Misfat Al Abraeyen Village where a walk shows the amazing agricultural terraces, beautiful alleys and old houses built on solid rock. We return in the afternoon to Nizwa. (B)

FRI 25 OCT: NIZWA-IBRA-WAHIBA SANDS – This morning we are off to the desert but not before a stop at the old town of Ibra. The principal town of the region it grew rich due to its location on the trade route between Muscat, Sur on the coast and Zanzibar. Continuing south we come into the rolling dunes of the Wahiba Sands where we spend our night at a comfortable permanent desert camp. We enjoy a meal with our Bedouin hosts and watch the magnificent sunset over the sand dunes and the rolling desert landscape. The stay offers a glimpse of a traditional way of life of the Bedouin that is fast disappearing. (B)

SAT 26 OCT: WAHIBA SANDS-RAS AL JINZ – Leaving our desert camp behind us we head down towards the coast stopping at magnificent Wadi Bani Khalid, a true paradise in the desert with its natural clear blue pools, intricate eroded rocks and beautiful waterfalls. We spend some time here to relax before continuing to the sea at Sur. One of the famous cities in the Persian Gulf for building wooden ships we watch craftsmen at work building the traditional sailing dhows. Our final stop for the day is at Ras al Jinz where we visit the Turtle Reserve. The reserve is world renowned for the nesting of the endangered green turtle and is considered one of the most important nesting concentrations on the Indian Ocean. This is one of the few places where you can watch these amazing sea-giants during nesting. (B,L)

SUN 27 OCT: RAS AL JINZ-MUSCAT – On our drive back to Muscat today we take a break at Wadi Tiw, a truly beautiful wadi with the lush plantations giving it a different feel to most wadis. We also stop at the Bimmah Sinkhole and can take a swim in the beautiful clear turquoise waters before continuing back to Oman for our final overnight stay. (B)

MON 28 OCT: FLY TO AMMAN – Today you will be transferred to the Muscat airport for your flight to Amman where on arrival you will be met and transferred to our hotel in the heart of the city. The balance of the day is at your leisure and we will plan to hold a short meeting in the evening before going out for an optional dinner. (B)





TUE 29 OCT: AMMAN-JERASH-DEAD SEA-AMMAN – Following breakfast this morning we will drive north to the ruins of Jerash located just over an hour away. These imposing Greco-Roman ruins were once home to approximately 35000 inhabitants and the area abounds with the remains of temples, churches, an amphitheatre, ancient water systems and detailed friezes and mosaics. The site has been occupied continuously for 6500 years. Later in the morning we drive to the Dead Sea. This is the deepest, non submerged point on earth and it's a unique sensation to float in the Sea's extremely salty waters. We enjoy lunch here before returning to Amman for the evening. (B, L)



WED 30 OCT: AMMAN-AQABA – This morning we enjoy a walk downtown to visit the Jordan Museum followed by a visit to Darat al Funun, a foundation for the arts and artists from the Arab world. Jordan is a small country and its only a 5 hour drive south to the port of Aqaba located at the top of the Red Sea and opposite to the Israeli city of Eilat. We will visit the historical Aqaba Fort, once the scene of a great Arab victory in 1916 over the Turks when the stronghold fell to a daring Arab camel charge. Later we have time to enjoy a swim and relax and to get ready for our desert adventure. (B)



THU 31 OCT: AQABA-WADI RUM Just over an hour away from Aqaba, Wadi Rum is one of the most spectacular natural environments in the Middle East. The wadi itself is one of a sequence of parallel faults forming valleys in the sandy desert south of the Shara mountains. The desert scenery found at Wadi Rum is a major highlight of our tour and our overnight stay in a comfortable Bedouin style camp only adds to the specialness of the experience. Today we will enjoy a jeep ride through the wadi and at sunset we will take a camel ride through the desert. This is Lawrence of Arabia country. (B, D)



FRI 1 NOV: WADI RUM-PETRA – Arising early we take our breakfast and set out with our Bedouin guide to visit the sand dunes. After preparing a Bedouin tea for us our guide then takes us to meet our 4WD team who transfer us to the Wadi Rum Visitors Center from where we rejoin our vehicle for the drive to Petra. On arrival in Petra we check into our hotel and the rest of the afternoon and the evening is free at our leisure. (B)



SAT 2 NOV: PETRA – Following breakfast the gates of the past open up to one of the world's most famous wonders; the ancient city of Petra. Experience the magic of this ancient site as you are guided through the architectural and spiritual wonders of the Rose City. Entering through the long, narrow canyon you come face to face with the magnificent Treasury building which has come to symbolise the city. Like the other buildings at Petra it has been carved from the pink-strewn rock. The site has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was described as "one of the most precious cultural properties of man's cultural heritage". Following our visit to the site there is time for your own discoveries or you can decide to return to the hotel to relax, or to wander the shops and bazaar of the town. (B)



SUN 3 NOV: PETRA-SHOBACK-DANA-MADABA-AMMAN – Our drive back to Amman today is packed with interesting sites. First stop is the 12th Century Shoback Crusader Castle. Perched atop a rocky conical mountain it is an imposing site even today. Following on from Shoback we explore with a guide the village of Dana, a picturesque cluster of stone cottages huddled together on a cliffside outcrop. Abandoned in the middle of the last century the village is being restored and revitalised as part of a hub for sustainable, eco tourism. Further on is the market town of Madaba. Located only 30km southwest of Amman the town is famous for its Byzantine mosaics found in the churches and museums of the town. Of particular interest is the 6th Century mosaic map of the Holy Land. The mosaic at the Church of the Apostles should not be missed and the town itself is definitely worth a wander along its narrow streets with its fine Ottoman stone houses. We arrive back in Amman in the late afternoon and check into our hotel for our last night of the tour. (B)



MON 4 NOV: END AMMAN – Our journey through Oman and Jordan comes to an end today after breakfast. Additional accommodation can be arranged for those who would like to stay on in Amman. (B)

Prices & Inclusions

15 Days – Oman & Jordan

Provisional price: USD \$4580 (per person twin-share)

Single Supplement: USD \$900

Price includes: Steve Mortimer as Tour Escort, local driver and tour guide throughout, all transfers and transportation, 14 nights accommodation, meals as indicated.

Not Included: Visa fees, travel insurance (compulsory), flights, additional meals, drinks, optional tours, spending of a personal nature, laundry and tips, departure transfer. **The flight from Muscat to Amman is not included and should be booked in conjunction with your international ticket.**

Transportation: We travel in comfortable air-conditioned mini-coaches and 4WD's in the desert.

Accommodation: Hotels in Oman and Jordan tend to be quite new and modern in their design with few boutique style hotels available. What you can be assured of is that they will be clean, comfortable and well run. In Muscat and Niwas we stay in quality 3+ and 4 star hotels and at the Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve we have comfortable seaside cabins. Our comfortable Bedouin Camps in Wahiba Sands and Wadi Rum are set amongst stunning desert scenery and are an unforgettable experience. During our stay in Petra our top rating hotel is just 100m from the entrance to the Heritage site. It's renowned for its friendly staff and excellent service.



Quality 4 Star, Muscat



Seaside Comfort at Ras al Jinz



Atmospheric Tented Campsites in Wahiba Sands and Wadi Rum



Comfort at the Gates of Petra



Eco Friendly 3+ Star, Amman

Food and drink: Breakfast is provided each day, along with 3 lunches and 1 dinner. Beer, wine & spirits are available at selected locations whilst soft drinks, juices and bottled water are available throughout.

Group size: Maximum 16 guests

Additional Expenses: Sampling the food in both Oman and Jordan is, for most, one of the highlights of the trip, and it is generally pretty good value. Expect to pay around US\$10-\$20 for lunches and US\$20-\$30 for dinners. In addition you should budget for any personal shopping you may wish to do. Please also allow extra funds to tip your local tour leader, driver, local guides and porters (full details will be provided in the pre-trip Field Guide).

Bookings: Travel on Q (Sydney) is the sole booking agent for this tour. Please register your interest ASAP in order to secure your place and note there are a limited number of single rooms available. A non-refundable deposit of AUD \$1500 per person is required, to secure your place, with final payment due 60 days prior to tour commencement.

Travel on Q (Carole Grassby and Tina Briggs)

Tel: (02) 9357 6800

Email: travel@travelonq.com.au

Currency: Due to the volatility of global currencies the tour price has been quoted in United States Dollars (USD) however you will pay for your tour in Australian dollars based on the buying rate set by Westpac Banking Corporation on the due date of your final balance.

Flights and Transfers: Various airlines fly from Australia to Muscat and Amman including Emirates, Etihad and Qatar. Arrival flights in Muscat and Amman will be met, however the final departure is not included. The flight between Muscat and Amman is also not included and should be booked as part of your international ticket.

Extra nights in Muscat & Amman: Extra nights can be booked pre and post tour but you must advise Travel on Q well in advance to ensure availability.

Visa for Oman & Jordan: Australian and New Zealand passport holders require a visa to visit Oman & Jordan. These are available on arrival at both airports.

Documentation: Upon receipt of your final payment, a comprehensive field guide will be mailed to you and you will be sent the relevant tour and accommodation vouchers prior to departure.

What next? Contact Travel on Q to discuss your travel plans and to make your booking. Further information is also available at www.byroads.com.au.

Byroads
www.byroads.com.au



