

Byroads
Inspiring Escorted Journeys

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Traditional Arabia at its very best

8 DAYS - STARTING MUSCAT 21 OCTOBER 2019





THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Trip Outline

The Sultanate of Oman lies nestled into the south east corner of the Arabian Peninsula. The country has a rich history dating back over 100,000 years and in its more recent history has seen occupation by various foreign powers including the Persians, the Portuguese, the Ottomans and the British. Today the country is taking steady steps at modernising its economy whilst, at the same time remaining fiercely proud of its heritage. It's still one of the best places in the Gulf to experience traditional Arabia. Outside the larger more developed cities you will find mud brick villages surrounded by enormous date plantations. Traditional souks are busy with shoppers bargaining for jewellery, frankincense and other commodities. The country is rugged and beautiful with its towering mountains, rugged canyons and wadis, and its seemingly endless dunes. Crumbling forts stand guard over ancient towns and watch over long coastal stretches where, as in centuries past colourful fishing boats bob around in the blue waters of the Arabian Sea.

Our trip through the Sultanate starts in the sprawling modern capital of Muscat and will include the magnificent Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the Bait al Zubair Museum and the historic quarter of Old Muscat where we visit a local family for lunch and take a wander through the local souq. Inland we climb into the spectacular Western Hajar mountains and 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 intimate Jabreen Castle which offers a fascinating insight into life in old Oman. We'll also take a village walk in picture perfect Misfat Al Abrayeen.

After admiring some of Oman's finest mudbrick architecture in the village of Ibra we turn south to the magnificent Wahiba Sands where, out amongst the dunes, we dine with a Bedouin family and enjoy the beautiful desert sunset from our comfortable campsite. The following morning we leave the dunes behind and head to the Arabian Sea coast 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.

Tour Host – Steve Mortimer

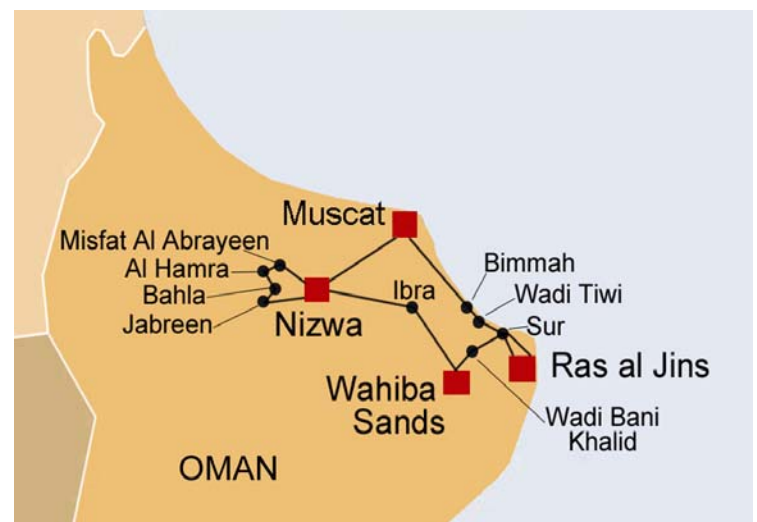


Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies including 13 years as a Product Manager and Operations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

With our Byroads itineraries you can be confident you'll visit all the 'must see' attractions – and much more, however there are some days when you'll have time to wander and make some of your own discoveries. Throughout the tour local guides are employed to provide a wealth of background information and share their extensive local knowledge.



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, L)

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,L)

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)

SUN 27 OCT: RAS AL JINZ-MUSCAT – On our drive back to Muscat today we take a break at Wadi Tiwi, 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: END MUSCAT – Our tour to Oman comes to an end today after breakfast. Additional accommodation is available for those who would like to stay on in Muscat. (B)

***** This trip combines perfectly with our 8 Day tour of Jordan commencing in Amman on the 28th of October 2019, requiring a short flight between Muscat and Amman on the last day of the Omani tour. Please view or download our 'Oman & Jordan – 15 Days' tour brochure.**



Prices & Inclusions

8 Days – The Sultanate of Oman

Provisional price: USD \$2795 (per person twin-share)

Single Supplement: USD \$600

Price includes: Steve Mortimer as Tour Escort, local driver and tour guide throughout, all transfers and transportation, 7 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.

Transportation: We travel in a comfortable air-conditioned mini-coach in Muscat and 4WD's outside of Muscat.

Accommodation: Hotels in Oman tend to be reasonably new and modern in their design with almost no boutique style hotels available. What you can be assured of is that they will be clean, comfortable and well run. In Muscat and in Niwas we stay in quality 4 star hotels, both with swimming pools. Our comfortable tented desert camp in the Wahiba Sands is set amongst stunning desert scenery and is an unforgettable experience whilst over on the Arabian Sea at the Ras al Jinz Turtle Reserve we have comfortable seaside cabins that make for a relaxing stay.

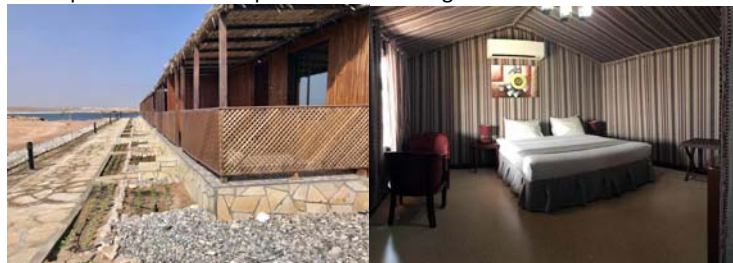


Quality 4 Star, Muscat

Hotel Pool, Niwas



Atmospheric Tented Campsite in the stunning Wahiba Sands



Seaside Comfort & Charm at the Turtle Reserve, Ras al Jinz

Food and drink: Breakfast is provided each day, along with 2 lunches. Beer, wine & spirits are available at selected locations whilst soft drinks, juices and bottled water are readily available.

Group size: Maximum 16 guests

Additional Expenses: Sampling the food in Oman is, like so many Byroads trips, one of the highlights of the tour, 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 750 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 Oman including Emirates, Etihad and Qatar. All arrival flights will be met, however the final departure transfer is not included and can be booked separately.

Extra nights in Muscat: 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: Australian and New Zealand passport holders require a tourist visa which can be issued on arrival at the airport in Muscat.

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

Travel on Q
Independent travel specialists