

CLASSIC OMAN



ITINERARY:

Meet on arrival at airport in Muscat



Day 1

After a morning meeting at Muscat Airport we transfer onto a domestic flight to Salalah, the subtropical 'capital' of southern Oman (This domestic flight is included in Trip Price; Anthony will have the tickets).

PM On arrival we drive north along the coast, visiting Al Baleed archaeological site, the ancient port city of Zofar. Frankincense was shipped from here all over Africa, Asia and Europe. Visit the excellent Baleed Park Frankincense Museum on site. We then continue along the coast to our hotel, Souly Eco Lodge for 2 nights. Here we occupy sea-facing bungalows in a large sandy bay setting. Time for a swim or a stroll on the beach. Dinner at the lodge.

Day 2

AM A short drive along the coast takes us to Sumharum, a fortified trading post built in C10th BC by the Queen of Sheba to supply Frankincense to Salomon's Great Temple in Jerusalem. Excavations are being carried out by the University of Florence. We visit the site, the excellent

small museum, and walk along the enclosed estuary, a great place to spot for birds. We then drive inland following the river into the lush Wadi Darbat.

PM Picnic lunch under a huge tamarind tree and then stroll along the wadi, past grazing camels. Return to our lodge for a mid-afternoon swim.

Day 3

AM Today is a long but interesting drive day taking us into the sand dunes of the Empty Quarter. We check out (Store luggage at the lodge) and drive in 4x4 vehicles across the coastal plain and up the escarpment into increasingly arid landscape. Lunch on the way.

PM Continue to the Ubar archaeological site on the edge of the desert. Sir Ranulph Fiennes led the expedition that rediscovered this 'lost' city mentioned in the Old Testament. Arrive in Rub al Khali (The 'Empty Quarter', the world's largest expanse of sand) and climb among its huge dunes to watch the sunset. Overnight at the simple but comfortable Souly Empty Quarter camp (1 night), the desert's starry skies are unforgettable!



Day 4

AM Rise early to watch the sunrise over the enormous surrounding dunes and chance to climb one. After breakfast we explore the desert in our 4x4 vehicles.

PM Lunch back in Salalah town and a further night at Souly Eco Lodge (1 night). Opportunity to swim in the Indian Ocean in the late afternoon, if we are lucky we may even spot the pod of resident dolphins.

Day 5

Mid morning flight to Muscat, on arrival lunch and drive 1.5h to Nizwa, Oman's largest inland town, where we lodge in an old traditional mansion for the night. In Nizwa we visit the extensive fort, one of the biggest in the country, and the bustling spice bazaar.

Day 6

AM Drive to Jabal Shams (1.5h). On the way visit the walled village of Al Hamra, where we stroll through palm groves producing more than 40 varieties of dates, to visit a typical trader's mansion now a small private museum. We lodge 1 night at Sama Heights Resort in Mountain View rooms.

PM Chance to walk on a narrow path, contouring at an altitude of 1,800m, along Oman's deepest canyon (2nd only to America's Grand Canyon), the views are stunning! Evening traditional dinner catered especially for us.

Day 7

Today we drive to Jabal Akhdar (Oman's tallest mountain), visiting the village of Birkat Al Mouz en route to the unique Hanging Terraces Hotel (**2 nights**). Located at 2,000m above sea level, this boutique hotel started in 2021 when a group of local family members and friends decided to embark on a project to renovate three traditional houses in the village of Al Aqer. They have preserved the old designs and traditional architecture of the buildings.
Dinner at hotel.

Day 8

AM Morning walk (2h) along stepped paths and irrigation channels through the terraced fruit orchards of three villages on Jabal Akhdar. Here the dog rose is still cultivated for the making of rose water and scent.

PM Lunch at a local house hosted by the charming owner and his family. Afternoon at leisure.

Day 9

AM After a leisurely start we drive (2h) to Muscat, Oman's capital. Check in at the superb Chedi Hotel (3 nights), a member of The Leading Hotels of the World. The hotel is renowned for its design, service, and extensive beach front, palm-shaded grounds strewn with various swimming pools.

PM Early evening visit of the labyrinthine Muttrah Souk before returning to our hotel for dinner.
All our dinners will be at The Chedi simply because the food is considered the best in Muscat.

Day 10

AM Morning spent visiting Muscat town: the bustling fish market; the stunning, modern Grand Mosque; a stroll along Qurum Beach (Tide permitting).

PM Lunch at Kargeen Restaurant. Afternoon at leisure at hotel.

Day 11

AM Early morning departure (07:00h) for a 4h private charter boat trip to dolphin watch, explore the 'Omani fjords', and swim and snorkel on coral reefs.
(The very comfortable speedboat has shade awnings, padded seating, toilet and easy access in and out of the water).

PM Lunch at a restaurant, in Muscat, before returning to our hotel. Late afternoon at leisure. Our last trip meal together is at The Chedi's speciality fish restaurant on the beach.

Day 12

Transfers to Muscat's Airport for our flights back home

