



Trip Dossier for Oman – Dolphins & Dunes

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Oman contains amazing variety and interest but has luckily been overlooked by mainstream tourism. You'll travel by 4WD to explore dramatic canyons and the huge dunes of the Wahiba Sands where you will camp out in the desert. Discover the variety of local culture, and the hugely welcoming people – from the traditional capital of Nizwa with its enormous fort, a traditional fishing village where dhows are still made by hand and have dinner in a Bedouin camp in the desert. There'll be time to relax on white sandy beaches, enjoy a boat trip in search of dolphins and snorkel in warm tropical waters. The highlight may well be the night-time visit to see the turtles coming ashore at Ras al Had.

Day 1 Fly to Muscat

Depart from London to fly to Muscat. On arrival you will be met by our local guide and transferred to your hotel (approx 15 mins drive). **Hotel 2 nights, swimming pool (Breakfast)**

Day 2 Tour of Muscat and dolphin watching

Morning pick-up for dolphin watching trip, returning to the hotel at lunch-time. Twenty-two species of dolphin and whales have been identified along the Omani coastline, these include the common dolphin, the bottle nose dolphin, spinner dolphins, false killer whales, humpback whales, sperm whales and the blue whales to name a few. When your boat returns you can relax at the marina, have lunch and use the swimming pool or take an optional (extra cost) sail on a traditional dhow and go snorkelling. In the afternoon, join an optional city tour to see the highlights of this coastal city with precipitous forts and craggy bays. This tour will finish up at historic Muttrah souk, a veritable Aladdin's Cave.

Day 3 Drive to Nizwa (1½ hours) and visit Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain)

After breakfast we set off along the coast and then inland, heading for Oman's 'green mountain' Jebel Akhdar. After a truly dramatic ascending road trip we reach the high plateau, a favoured escape from the heat of the coastal plains. Here among the scattered villages we can walk through the rose and fruit plantations along the working falaj (irrigation) system. Visit the abandoned village of Wadi Bani Habib or perhaps a formerly inhabited cave, then enjoy a picnic lunch at Diana's View overlooking the terraced farming villages. In the afternoon walk through 3 of the villages and their farms before travelling back down to Nizwa and checking into your hotel. **Hotel 2 nights, with swimming pool (2 breakfasts & 2 picnic lunches)**

Day 4 Grand Canyon

This morning you will head for Oman's Grand Canyon (45 mins drive) and its breathtaking views at 2000m. Setting off from Al Kateen village, you'll follow the balcony trail along the mountain edge to an abandoned village which clings to the rocks completely hidden from view from above and below. Just beyond the village you can see traditional farm terracing where local inhabitants used to produce their food. A further walk further takes us to the small lake that feeds the terracing. The walk back along the balcony trail and a picnic lunch offers more breathtaking views of the canyon. We then set off in 4WD vehicles down the mountain and if time permits, enter Wadi Ghul and Nakhr village to view the canyon in reverse – from the bottom up, which is equally dramatic, as our journey takes us through more than half a billion years of geological time. En route we'll stop for coffee and dates with the people of Nakhr village and see goat hair carpets being woven and dyed (approx 1 ½ hours driving time). Then return to Nizwa where an evening stroll through the souk could be in order.

Day 5 Nizwa Dive to Wahiba Sands (2 hours)

Explore Nizwa, the former capital of Oman. Positioned alongside two wadis, Nizwa is a fertile sea of green with an oasis of date plantations stretching 8kms from the town. Long regarded as the cultural capital and heart of Oman, today Nizwa is still the largest and most important town in this area of the interior. Set right in the centre is the immense 17th century fort, just right for kids to explore, with great views over the Oasis and a fascinating museum attached. The nearby atmospheric souks are full of silversmiths' art, especially ornately engraved khanjars. We then have plenty of time to explore the fort and the rest of the city and surrounding area before setting off south-east for the rolling red dunes of the Wahiba (Sharqiyah) Sands. Climb a dune to watch sunset, before enjoying a night of traditional Bedu hospitality.

Desert Camp (breakfast and dinner)

Day 6 Wahiba Sands, drive to Ras al Had (3 hours drive), Turtle Watch.

After a leisurely morning either in the desert or at the refreshing waterpools of nearby Wadi Bani Khalid we head on to the fishing town of Sur where we explore the traditional working dhow yard and have lunch.

We then make our way to Ras al Had Beach Hotel to relax and have dinner before setting off around 9pm to see the turtles laying their eggs on the beach. An estimated 20,000 female turtles return to Ras al Jinz - the beach of their own birth to lay their eggs. Often swimming thousands of miles to their natal beach the female turtle crawls up the moonlit beach sometimes up to 100 – 150 metres from the shore where using her flippers she burrows deep into the sand. On average she lays 100 eggs at a time, covering the eggs with sand she makes her way back to the shallows. During the nesting season a female can lay up to eight times, in two week intervals, but she only lays eggs once every four years. The eggs take 60 days to hatch and their sex is determined by the temperature of the sand. Once hatched the hatchlings make the hazardous journey to the sea, trying to avoid seagulls, foxes and ghost crabs. Sadly, only one in a fifty reaches adulthood. During your visit the experienced warden will show you the protected sites of this breeding ritual. **Hotel 1 night (Breakfast and dinner).**

Day 7 Sur, Wadi Shab & dhow cruise.

For early risers you can head back to the beach and catch the dawn light to see the last of the baby turtles heading out to sea before returning to the hotel for breakfast. We then head north up the coast road stopping at Wadi Shab for a leisurely walk through the lush green, palm-lined wadi with dramatic rock formations and swimming pools. Here we can relax and enjoy our picnic lunch before taking a swim and 'discovering' the hidden cave. We return to Muscat and board a Dhow about 4pm ready for sunset. Just imagine, your very own, fully-crewed traditional Omani wood dhow, with a lush Arabian feel and soft carpets. Since time immemorial, Oman has been a seafaring nation, in fact, as far back as the 8th century, an Omani vessel reached Canton in China. The traditional dhow, their different varieties include Al Boum, Al Ghanjah, Shu'i, Al Badan, were used in trading, weathering the oceans to reach ports in Iran, India, South-East Asia and further down the African coast in Zanzibar. Outside of tourism, even today, the smaller varieties are used along Oman's coastline for fishing. The dhow we usually use, the Adhari, is a traditional wood Omani dhow lovingly restored in the dhow yard of fishing village Sur to meet today's safety needs and keeping the Omani sea traditions alive. Adhari is an Al Boum dhow, easily distinguishable by its high, straight stem-post set at 45°, typically used for transporting passengers and goods.

Adhari is 60+ft long and has a draft of 3mtrs, she is made from hard wood timber corked treated below the water line.

Before the sun sets and the warmth of her rays are lost, enjoy an hour cruise along Oman's dramatic coast line into the protection of the fjords for the night. There's even time for a snorkel or a paddle in one of the kayaks around the secluded bays before dinner. You will have a sleeping area on the raised back deck, the flowing thick drapes will provide privacy from the deck below and you can relax on the big majlis style cushions enjoying the tranquil sounds of the sea. Your bed is covered in rich coloured rugs and soft pillows for a sensual Queen of Sheba style night under the stars with fragrances of the Orient filling the night air. **Dhow 1 night (breakfast, lunch and Arabic dinner)**

Day 8 Dhow, return to Muscat

As the night breaks and the light wakes you naturally with the rise of the sun, the crew will be preparing your breakfast on the foredeck. You may wish to enjoy a quick dip in the sea before breakfast. Whilst having your breakfast the crew will way anchor and set sail around the bays on our relaxing return journey back to Muscat. Rest of day at leisure. **Hotel 1 night, swimming pool (breakfast)**

Day 9 A day at leisure and fly to London

A much deserved day of leisure – although it can be as busy and active as you want it to be! Take your pick from the vast range of activities on offer, such as the Optional visit to the massive Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, or simply chill out by the pool or on the beach. Later this evening it's sadly time to return home. Transfer to Muscat Airport (approx 15 mins drive) for your return flight to London.

Day 10 Home

Arrive back in London early morning.

Extension to Musandam

Day 9 Day at leisure, ferry to Khasab

Day at leisure before transferring to the Sultan Qaboos Port for the 3pm ferry along the Oman coast and round into the Persian Gulf. This state of the art catamaran has been in service a couple of years now and whisks you northwards in airline type seats. Arriving at 9pm for the short transfer to the Golden Tulip hotel. **Hotel 3 nights, swimming pool (3 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 2 dinners)**



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Day 10 Musandam Fjord cruise by Dhow

Transfer to Khasab harbour to join a dhow cruise to the fjords of Musandam, passing small fishing villages, famous Telegraph Island, swim and snorkel in clear waters, possible to see dolphins. Drinks, refreshment & lunch provided on board

Day 11 4WD excursion

Depart for full day by 4WD car to see this rugged land and reach Jebel Harim, the highest mountain in Musandam (2087m) spectacular for its incredible view points and landscapes. On the way to Jebel Harim, stop at Sayah village, one of the beautiful Bedouin villages and drive further on to fossil sights which are millions of year old. Continue to Wadi Rowdah and the pre-islamic graveyard. A picnic lunch will be provided en-route. Continue drive towards Khawr Najid, a stunning sea view point overlooking to Indian Ocean. Then onto Birkhat Khalididya Park, a natural park with lot of acacia trees and home for birds and butterflies.

Day 12 Return to London via Dubai or Muscat

After breakfast either transfer to Dubai airport (3 hours) or return by ferry to Muscat and fly back from there.

Day 13 Home

Arrive back in London early morning.

Extension to Salalah

Day 9 Fly to Salalah

Morning airport transfer. Approximately midday arrive in Salalah, on the edge of the Arabian Sea, and an ideal place to base yourselves for a few days. Swathes of tall coconut palms along the coast and extensive drought-deciduous forest on the nearby mountain slopes are indicators of monsoon rainfall influence in this region in the summer months. This is an area very unlike the rest of Oman that you have left behind and has, at times, almost a tropical or Caribbean air about it. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before perhaps taking yourselves off for an insight into the region and its history and people by visiting the fascinating national history museum of Dhofar on an optional visit. Alternatively enjoy the beach, pools, gardens and sport facilities of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. **Hotel for 3 nights, with swimming pools (3 breakfasts, 2 lunches and 2 dinners).**

Days 10 & 11 Salalah at leisure, Mughasyil blow holes

The arrangements these days are pretty relaxed and we have included one excursion along the coast towards the Yemen border. You should see frankincense trees and stunning coastal cliffs. Mughasyil is home for an abundance of bird life, including flamingos, pelicans and storks and has a series of famous blow holes (40 kms from Salalah). The drive along the coast is interesting to say the least as the road winds up and over the mountains with, at times, a staggering number of hair-pin bends and immense vertical sections— feel free to miss this section if you prefer. As some stage a stop will be made overlooking the sea with dramatic cliff top views, the perfect place for a picnic lunch. Optional trips include the chance to visit Mirbat, the Queen of Sheba's home at Khor Rawri and the edge of the escarpment which, at certain times of year, has immense waterfalls. For those who fancy a longer optional trip head past Job's Tomb up from the coastal plain towards the Empty Quarter and the lost city of Ubar.

The time is yours to plan as you will but we would certainly recommend dragging yourself away from the beach to explore at least some of this fascinating area.

Day 12 At leisure then return to Muscat

Morning to relax by the beach or venture back into town for some last minute shopping, perhaps at the big frankincense souk, before transferring to the airport and catching the early evening flight back to Muscat. This will connect with your international flight back to UK.

Day 13 Home

Arrive back in London early morning.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your

Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international

flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets. Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight



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schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

These excursions, if available, can be arranged through your tour leader and paid locally (per person cost shown below).

Quad biking at the camel farm	£50.00
Camel trekking	£30.00
Muscat – sailing or windsurfing	£40.00
Muscat – sea kayaking (full day)	£65.00
Muscat – scuba diving	From £50.00
Muscat – City tour or Grand Mosque	£90 per vehicle
Salalah – Mirbat & Khor Rawi (with lunch)	£50.00
Salalah – Empty Quarter and Job’s Tomb (with lunch)	£50.00

Prices are subject to change.

Is this right for your family? Although there’s adventure and activity, travel in Oman is comfortable and accommodation is of a good standard. So it makes a great family destination. The people are said to be the friendliest in all of Arabia – their warmth and hospitality is evident, from the moment you arrive as a guest, to the moment you leave as a friend.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Climate Oman is predominately arid. The coastal regions are very hot and humid in the summer, while the interior is hot and dry. In the winter months both the coastal area and the interior are pleasantly warm and dry. There is little rainfall in the country and this is always irregular.

Average monthly temperatures in Muscat

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	25	25	28	32	37	38	36	33	34	34	30	20
Min °C	19	19	22	26	30	31	31	29	28	27	23	20
Rainfall (mm)	28	18	10	10	0	3	0	0	0	3	10	18

Accommodation The hotels used throughout this trip are of 3 or 4 star standard, and are booked on twin share basis. All are modern, clean and comfortable and offer friendly service and rooms with private facilities. The desert camp is more basic but still offers clean, well-maintained and comfortable accommodation. The mention of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

Food and Drink While travelling around Oman you will find plenty of coffee-shop style restaurants. Although basic they are good and cheap places to eat. Chicken, mutton and fish are popular dishes as are the Omani curries. All meals are prepared and cooked while camping but there will be an opportunity to try the local Omani cuisine. Please remember to drink plenty of bottled or pre-boiled water during your trip.

Currency The unit of currency is the Omani Rial (RO). At the time of writing UK £1 = RO0.65 and US \$1 = RO0.38 (Aug 2009). US Dollar Traveller’s cheques and credit cards are readily accepted in banks and larger hotels, and some souvenir shops, but not in the desert camp. We recommend that you change at least some money at the airport.

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.30
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.60
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.30



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A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.20	
A bottle of beer	£3.50	
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£2.75	
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£6.00	
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£15.00	*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and, although at your discretion, you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousy in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. Tipping in restaurants is usually 15% of the total of your bill.

Please also remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person, per day. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Language The official language is Arabic, although English is quite widely spoken.

Time Oman is GMT +4 hours

Passports and Visas

British passport holders can obtain an entry visa upon arrival at any land, sea or air entry port in Oman. A one-month combined tourist/business visa costs 6 Omani Rials (Approx £5) You should carry some form of identity, such as your passport or a photocopy of it, on your person at all times in Oman.

Travelling with medication

Some prescription medicines common in the United Kingdom are banned in Oman. If you are travelling to Oman with prescription drugs you should carry a copy of the prescription. Not to do so can be an offence if the drugs are on the banned list, and the penalties, including prison, can be severe. If you have any queries, you are advised to check well in advance with Oman's Ministry of Health.

Culture and Laws

Local laws reflect the fact that Oman is a Muslim country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they do not offend other cultures or religious beliefs, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas, your tour guide will be able to offer guidance on this. In public, general modesty of behaviour and dress is expected. Women who wear shorts or tight-fitting clothes, in

particular in downtown areas, are likely to attract unwelcome attention. The import and use of narcotics and obscene material are forbidden and can lead to imprisonment. Non-Muslims can import alcohol, to a maximum of 2 litres per family. It can be bought at a duty free shop at the airport on arrival, but within Oman, alcohol can be purchased only by personal licence or at licensed hotels and restaurants. Pork products are available at specially licensed food outlets.

RAMADAN 2010 - 11th August to 8th September (dates not fixed but dependent on the lunar calendar): Please note that Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world, during which time the followers of Islam should not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. There may be some limitations to services and disruptions to schedules during Ramadan, but generally our tours still operate effectively during this period and food is available to non-Muslims throughout the day in most countries. Please be aware of the local sensitivities during the day and bear in mind that the evening breaking of the fast is usually an exciting and celebratory period! (1st to 29th August 2011).

Clothing & Equipment List for Oman – Dolphins & Dunes

Although Western clothing is quite acceptable, Omanis are generally more traditional in the way they dress. Out of respect for local culture please dress conservatively i.e. no sleeveless or low cut tops etc. Although shorts are accepted in main tourist areas, they (and skirts) should reach at least to the knee. Women should cover their heads, arms and legs when entering religious buildings.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking shoes	1 pair		Soft-sided Bag – 50-80 litres	
Trainers or strong sandals	1 pair – all purpose wear		Lightweight daypack – 25 litres	
Socks	3+		Sleeping bag 3-4 seasons - optional	
Windproof jacket	1		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3+		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long trousers or skirt	2+		Large water bottle	
Short trousers	2		Torch and batteries	
Long sleeve shirt	2+		Guide book & map	
Thin fleece or sweatshirt	1		Camera, film and accessories – please ask permission before photographing local people	
Swimwear	1		Reading material	
Towel or sarong	1		Loo kit (in small bag) loo paper/ tissues	
Sunhat / baseball cap /	Essential (styled to shade face, ears& neck)		Washing kit – inc “dry” hand-wash & wet wipes	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa		Insect Repellent	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Cash Cards/Visa			
Insurance Documents			
Trip Information & Itinerary			
Money security belt/pouch			

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com



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