

Trip Dossier for Oman – Dolphins & Dunes

Trip Code: FODD Issue date: 6 Dec 2007 Valid from: 01 January 2008

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. **Hotel**

Day 2 Tour of Muscat and walk along the balcony trail

This morning you'll start the day with a tour of Muscat's spectacular Grand Mosque before heading for Oman's Grand Canyon 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. **Hotel (breakfast & lunch)**

Day 3 Visit Wadi Shab

Today you'll set off in 4WD vehicle to discover the beauty of Wadi Shab. There is a leisurely walk through the lush green, palm-lined wadi with dramatic rock formations taking you to swimming pools. Here you can relax and enjoy a picnic lunch before taking a swim and 'discovering' the hidden cave. Tonight we make camp on the stunning, powder-soft sands of White Beach. **Camp (breakfast, picnic lunch & dinner)**

Day 4 Visit Selma Plateau Caves

After an early morning swim we drive (1hr) up to Selma Plateau. Today's walk offers panoramic views out over the stunning Eastern Hajar mountain range and down onto the distant wadi below. Walking along the mountain edge after 2 hrs we reach an impressive cave entrance and delve up to 500 metres inside to explore. This huge cavern is the outlet for the Selma Plateau caving system and those brave enough can dip their toes in the chilly waters. Picnic lunch at cave and walk back (moderate terrain) to the vehicles and back down to the beach camp. **Camp (breakfast, picnic lunch & dinner)**

Day 5 Visit the fishing town of Sur and evening turtle watching

After a leisurely morning snorkelling and simply enjoying being on the beach, we have lunch before breaking camp and heading to the fishing town of Sur explore a traditional working dhow yard. Then, making our way back to the hotel to relax and have dinner before we set 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 (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 6 Drive to Wahiba Sands; explore the sand dunes and stay with the Bedouins

For early risers you can head back to the beach to see the last of the baby turtles heading out to sea before returning to the hotel for breakfast. You will drive south to the Wahiba Sands (also known as Sharqiyah Sands) to explore the dunes on camel back and meet your Bedouin hosts. **Bedouin Camp (breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 7 Visit Nizwa's 17th century fort and haggle in the souks; return to Muscat

After breakfast we head to Nizwa, the former capital of Oman. Positioned alongside two wadis Nizwa is a fertile sea of green with an oasis of date plantations stretching eight kilometres from the town. Nizwa is the largest town in this part of the interior; famed for its 17th century fort and atmospheric souks full of silversmiths' art; especially ornately engraved khanjars. During a cattle market day you can experience the atmospheric hustle and bustle at its best. You will have plenty of time to explore the fort and the rest of the city before enjoying a traditional Omani lunch at a local restaurant. Then its back to your vehicle for the drive to Muscat. **Hotel (breakfast & lunch)**



Day 8 Dolphin watching and visit to an ostrich farm

Today is a day for action and adventure. After an early breakfast you'll head out dolphin-watching and snorkelling returning to the marina by lunchtime. 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. In the afternoon, you'll visit an ostrich farm and camel farm where you have an option to go on a camel trek or quad biking before returning to Muscat for the evening. **Hotel (breakfast & lunch)**

Day 9 A day at leisure.

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 or simply chill out by the pool or on the beach. **Hotel (breakfast)**

Day 10 Fly to London

Sadly it is time to return home. Transfer to Muscat Airport for your return flight to London.

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 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. Consequently there are factors over which we have no control and which could make changes necessary. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes in advance.

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

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.

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 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.

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 = RO0.79 and US \$1 = RO0.39 (Dec 2007). 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.



0845 051 4567
0845 130 6984
info@familiesworldwide.co.uk
www.familiesworldwide.co.uk



Families Worldwide Ltd
The Old Cattle Shed
Sutton Manor Farm
Bishop's Sutton
Alresford
Hampshire SO24 0AA

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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
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	£9.00

*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. As a guideline each traveller should allow £3-4 per day to cover tips to local staff. Tipping in restaurants is usually 15% of the total of your bill.

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

Time Oman is GMT +4 hours

Packing List Please refer to our separate "packing list"



Clothing & Equipment List for Oman – Dolphins & Dunes

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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.

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend

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		Binoculars	
Air Tickets		Small sewing kit & safety pins	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Universal travelling adapter	
Cash Cards/Visa		Sweets & snacks for the journey	
Insurance Documents		Cold water detergent	
Trip Information & Itinerary		Biodegradable soap	
Money security belt/pouch		Small calculator	
Spectacles/contact lenses		Notebook/diary/pen	
Sunscreen – lots of it		Scissors/mirror/nail clippers – not in hand luggage	
Moisturising cream & lip salve – not in hand luggage		Toothpaste/dental floss	
Insect Repellent		Small toys & books for your children	

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

