



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Traditional Arabia at its very best

8 DAYS - STARTING MUSCAT 21 OCTOBER 2019





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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 to return to Muscat stopping off at the spectacularly deep and narrow carved Wadi Tiwi and the must-see Bimmah sinkhole.

Tour Host – Steve Mortimer

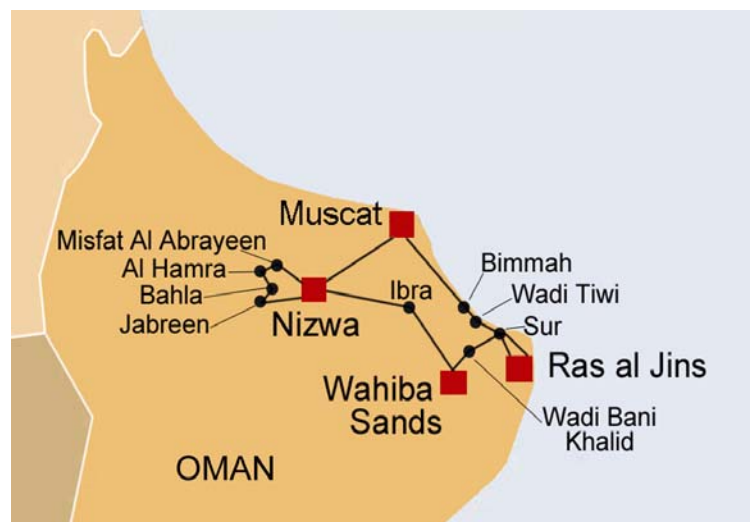


Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies including 13 years as a Product Manager and Operations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



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

Please indicate if you wish to remain on our mailing list: ☐ Yes ☐ No

BOOKING FORM

Byroads Travel is the operator of your tour. Byroads Travel (henceforth referred to as Byroads) is a registered trading name of Byroads Pty Ltd (ABN 88 615 738 746). It is a travel agent with Travel on Q (Bonard Pty Ltd, ABN 40 059 566 184) acts as the sole booking agent for Byroads.

RESERVATION AND DEPOSIT

A deposit is payable on all tours. The amount payable is stated in the Byroads brochure. This deposit must be paid to Travel on Q and accompanied by a signed booking form. When paying a deposit for your tour and signing the Booking Form you accept these conditions.

Your Byroads tour will only be confirmed once the deposit and signed booking form have been received. This Booking Form forms the basis of your contract between you and Byroads. Travel on Q is an agent of Byroads.

PAYMENT

Payments may be made to Travel on Q by direct deposit or by credit card. If paying by credit card the following surcharges will be applied to the cost of your tour arrangements: 1.65% for Visa and MasterCard, 2.26% for American Express, and 3.85 % for Diners Club.

FINAL BALANCE

The balance of your tour payment is due 60 days prior to the start of your tour. If, for any reason, the balance payment is not received by the due date, Byroads reserves the right to treat such failure to pay the balance as a cancellation and to apply the appropriate cancellation charges.

CANCELLATION BY YOU

If, for any reason, you cancel your tour booking, Byroads shall apply the following cancellation penalties. Charges are per person:

- *Cancellation up to 60 days prior to departure, forfeiture of the total deposit
- *from 59 to 45 days prior to departure, 30% of the tour price shall be retained
- * from 44 to 15 days prior to departure, 50% of the tour price shall be retained
- *within 14 days prior to departure, no refund will be made.

In addition to the above charges, cancellation fees may also apply to any domestic airfare component of your tour. No refund will be made after your tour has commenced or in respect of lost or unused tickets, hotel coupons, meals or any other services not utilised.

AMENDMENTS

Up to 60 days prior to the departure of your tour, any amendment to a confirmed reservation will incur a fee of \$50 per change per file, in addition to any change fees levied by Travel on Q, airlines, or any other service provider. From 59 to 30 days prior to departure, any amendment to confirmed travel arrangements will incur a fee, of \$100 per change per file. Once documents have been dispatched,

any amendment will incur a fee of \$150 per change per file.

TOUR PRICES

Byroads tour prices and provisional tour prices are based on tariffs and prevailing rates of exchange when tours were costed. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. In the event of fluctuations in currency exchange rates, service providers' tariffs, fuel prices or any other cost that affects the price of your tour, Byroads reserves the right to adjust tour prices at any time up to the day of departure.

TOUR OPERATION

Although Byroads will endeavour to ensure that tours are operated as advertised, an express condition of making a reservation is the acceptance by you that the tour itineraries, schedules, advertised accommodation, sightseeing and mode of transportation as outlined in the Byroads brochure and/or supplied in the pre-departure information are subject to change without prior notice. If for any reason Byroads is forced to cancel a tour before it commences, all monies paid in respect of the tour will be refunded in full less any credit card fees collected.

Unforeseeable circumstances such as force majeure, adverse weather conditions such as floods or earthquakes, airline flight rescheduling, technical faults with transportation and road conditions may also have a consequential effect on the content of your tour after it has commenced. Any decision made in respect of tour services provided by Byroads to reroute or amend the itinerary due to the above or similar circumstances shall be at the sole discretion of Byroads. Byroads and Travel on Q shall not be liable for any claim whatsoever arising from such events that affect the schedule and content of your tour

HEALTH AND FITNESS

Byroads operates soft adventure tours. All participants are required to be fit and healthy. Some of the hotels used by Byroads may not have lifts or porters so you must be prepared at times to carry your own suitcase. Before travelling with Byroads, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with any health requirements applicable to areas through which you will be travelling.

ACCEPTANCE OF RISK

You acknowledge that the nature of the trip is adventurous and participation involves a degree of personal risk. You will be visiting places where the political, cultural and geographical attributes present dangers and physical challenges greater than those present in our daily lives. We use information from government foreign departments and reports from our own contacts in assessing whether the itinerary should operate. However it is also your own responsibility to acquaint yourself with all relevant travel information and the nature of your itinerary. You acknowledge that your decision to travel is made in light of consideration of this information and you accept that you are aware of the personal risks attendant upon such travel.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Australian passport holders must have at least 6 months validity on their passport after the date of return to Australia. Visas are

required for a number of our tours and it is your responsibility to obtain them. Travel on Q can assist with this process. Non Australian passport holders are asked to check passport and visa requirements at the time of booking.

ITEMS NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR COST

The cost of your Byroads tour includes hotel accommodation, transportation, transfers as specified, sightseeing and meals as indicated in the tour brochure. It does not include international airfares, airport departure taxes, unspecified meals, optional sightseeing, additional transfers, gratuities for hotel staff, guides and tour leaders, items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls etc. or any other incidental expenses.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is an express condition of travelling with Byroads that you have comprehensive travel insurance including full cover for repatriation. It is highly recommended that you take out travel insurance at the time you pay the deposit to guard against any unforeseen circumstances. If on the first day of your tour you cannot provide evidence that you have purchased comprehensive travel insurance you will be required to purchase a policy before proceeding with your tour.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

We contract with a network of companies, government agencies and individuals to assist in the running of our trips as agent for these third parties. We are not responsible for the acts and omissions of these third parties. To the fullest extent permitted by law:

(i) any liability for any loss, death, injury or damage which you may suffer (directly or indirectly) in connection with or arising out of your participation in a trip, or any breach of the Booking Conditions, is excluded;

(ii) Travel on Q acts only as agent for Byroads and accepts no responsibility for the acts and omissions of Byroads or any of its associated service providers for any inaccuracies in information provided, negligence, loss, damage, omission, accident, detention, diversion or theft in regard to luggage or any personal belongings whatsoever.

(iii) you release Byroads and its officers, employees, agents and representatives from any liability and expressly waive any claims you may have against us arising out of or in connection with your participation in a trip; and.

(iv) any condition or warranty which would otherwise be implied by law into these Booking Conditions (Implied Warranty), is excluded

To the extent an Implied Warranty cannot be excluded, our liability in respect of the Implied Warranty is limited to (in our absolute discretion): (a) the provision of a similar trip to an equivalent value; or (b) a refund of the total amount received by us from you in connection with your booking.

Any claim by you is excluded to the extent that it is for indirect or consequential loss, loss of profits or economic loss, however it arises, or for indirect, special, punitive or exemplary damages.

APPLICABLE LAW

The laws of Victoria, Australia govern these Booking Conditions to the fullest extent allowable. Any disputes in connection with a trip or these Booking Conditions must be initiated in the courts Victoria, Australia.