

# EXPLORE!

## BEST SELLER

**Arabian Sands**  
8 days

Oman - Trip code OM



## Arabian Sands

On this exciting journey in Oman, we discover diverse landscapes; from the majestic Green Mountains of Jebel Akhdar to the soaring dunes of the Wahiba Sands. We experience the wilderness of the desert, visit spectacular beaches and swim in the turquoise waters of the Gulf of Oman. We camp under the stars, have a chance to sail on a traditional dhow and experience Oman's rich culture with visits to Muscat and Nizwa.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Muscat** - See the impressive Forts, Royal Palace and Corniche of the capital
- ★ **Finns Beach** - Take a walk from Wadi Shab and relax on the sandy beach
- ★ **Sur** - Learn about Dhow building at the Ayega village and boat yard
- ★ **Wahiba Sands** - 4WD exploration and camp among spectacular sand dunes
- ★ **Nizwa** - Visit the impressive Jebel Shams 'Grand Canyon'
- ★ **Dhow** - Take an optional trip on a traditional wooden boat, enjoy great snorkelling opportunities

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:****10 - 15**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join tour in Muscat; afternoon sightseeing tour

Arrive in Muscat and join the tour at the hotel. Muscat is an old walled town, arguably the Gulf's most attractive city, surrounded by a horseshoe ring of mountains that naturally restricts its growth. The seaward face of Muscat is dominated by the Portuguese fortresses of Merani and Jalali (built in 1587) with their crenelated parapets. The city displays intermingling ancient cultural heritage and modern style; you will see houses, gates, old markets, small shops and winding roads redolent of authentic history, side by side with modern markets, shops, buildings and streets stamped with modern architecture. This allows Oman to preserve its historic character and at the same time enjoy its contemporary spirit. In the afternoon we will take a guided tour of the city including visiting the Bait Baranda Museum. We will also have the chance to take a stroll along the waterfront of Mutrah, Muscat's oldest quarter and onto the bustling souk.



**Accommodation: Tulip Inn Downtown Muscat** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Drive to Finns Beach via Wadi Tiwi

Before leaving Muscat we will visit the Grand Mosque. We then follow the coast down to Wadi Shab and Wadi Tiwi, stopping along the way to view the natural beauty of the Bimah Sinkhole. A beautiful oasis of freshwater pools, Wadi Shab is an ideal place for a photo opportunity. We will then visit Wadi Tiwi where there is the option to walk in the wadi, following the pools up through a haven of lush vegetation and palms, before heading to our camp at Finns Beach. Upon arrival there should be time for a swim before spending a memorable night under the clear Arabian sky.



**Accommodation: Igloo Mobile Tents** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## DAY 3 - Drive to Qahid via Sur

Continuing along the rugged coastline we head for Qahid, pausing en-route to visit the Port of Sur. Once a major trading port with East Africa, Sur represents the seafaring origins of Oman. We will visit the dhow shipbuilding yard where traditional dhow boats, used throughout the 19th century, are still built today. We also visit the nearby small fishing village at Ayega, now a quiet community of old merchant houses, but once a stronghold of rebellious sheikhs. The desert coast of Oman is wild, rugged and beautiful; a place where deserted white beaches are interspersed with small, traditional villages. As we journey along here, the Wahiba Sands begin to rise before us, a vast sea of sand covering about 15,000 square kilometres.



**Accommodation: Igloo Mobile Tents** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## DAY 4 - Drive into Wahiba Sands

Breaking camp this morning we leave the coast behind and drive deep into the heart of the shifting sands of Wahiba. Laid out like a great ocean of sand the endless dunes are generally rusty red at the base and honey coloured on the top - an alluring landscape of changing contours and colours. The sands are home to the Bedu, nomadic tribesmen who roam the land with goats and camels, or live in small fishing villages. An exhilarating drive across the dunes brings us to our nightstop in the Wahiba Sands. Sunset promises stunning photo opportunities amidst the spectacular dunes, before we settle down for another night under the desert sky.



**Accommodation: Igloo Mobile Tents** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## DAY 5 - Drive across Wahiba Sands and onto Nizwa

Early mornings in the desert are a time of activity. Mists are a curious phenomena of the sands, spreading across the dunes and wadis at night, to disappear in the early mornings. The remarkable dew drinking beetle, living just below the surface of the normally scorching sands, utilizes this time to gain valuable sustenance. We continue through the desert this morning. In spite of its barren feel the sands contain a phenomenal amount of life. As well as the Bedu they are home to an exotic diversity of fauna including dragonflies, wolf, two species of Ruppell's fox, wild cats and white-tailed mongooses. Some 115 species of birds have also been recorded here and it is one of the few remaining refuges for the elusive Arabian and Sand Gazelles. Once out of the sands we continue through a market town that is a meeting point for Bedouin for miles around. From here it is a fairly easy drive along tarmac roads to Nizwa, the capital of Oman from 751 to 1154 AD and still regarded as the cultural capital.



**Accommodation: Al Diyar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - In Nizwa; visit Nizwa Fort and Jebel Shams viewpoint

We spend a full day exploring some of the many highlights of the surrounding area. We begin in Nizwa itself, visiting the traditional and modern souk. We continue onto the 17th century fort, built to guard the Sumail Gap during the struggle between the Sultan and the radical Imams. Nizwa was the centre of Imam resistance right up until the 1950s when the Sultan had to call upon the help of the British to quell the rebels. Heading north we travel through the mountains, passing the dramatic craggy peaks of the Jebel Akhdar ('Green Mountain') range, the highest mountain range in Oman. Despite its desolate and barren nature, small settlements cling to the plateau areas, nestling in the lunar like landscape. For thousands of years self-sufficient oases have flourished in the folds of rocks, using an ancient irrigation system known as falaj. These are water channels that never dry up, often contoured round wadis or tunneled through the cliffs in order to tap the water table. Upkeep of the life-giving falaj is a community responsibility and contributes to maintaining harmony within a village. We stop en route to view the Al Hamra mountain range; at 3,000m, Jebel Shams (Mountain of the Sun) is the highest peak in Oman. Along the track to the summit of Jebel Shams, we encounter an astonishing view down a sheer drop of 1000m to the bottom of the 'Grand Canyon', Oman's very own (and equally spectacular) version of its American counterpart. At the bottom of this vast void, a wadi winds peacefully through the landscape. According to one theory, the canyon was once a huge cave and evidence of fossils and shells suggests that the canyon base was at one time covered by a shallow sea. Finally we call in for a photo stop at the eerie ruined village of Tanuf, destroyed during the Jabal war and where a famous brand of mineral water is now drawn and bottled. We return to Nizwa late in the afternoon.



**Accommodation: Al Diyar Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Drive via Wadi Bani Awf to Muscat; optional Dhow trip

Our route back to Muscat is through the stunning Wadi Bani Awf. We once again leave the smooth roads behind, and head into a narrow canyon with steep sided cliffs. The palm trees, scattered dwellings and interrupted streams create a peaceful atmosphere. In the afternoon we have the opportunity to take an optional trip on a timeless Dhow vessel, before returning to Muscat, where we overnight.



**Accommodation: Tulip Inn Downtown Muscat** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

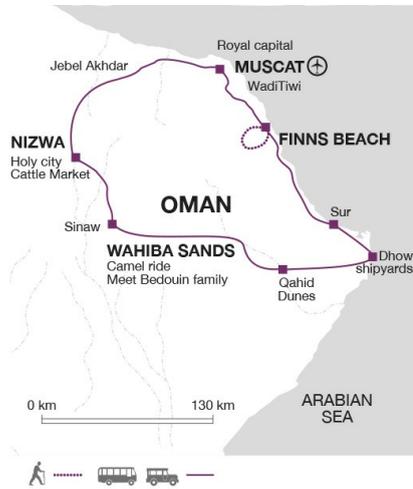


Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Tour ends Muscat

The trip ends today in Muscat.

**IOF** Meals Provided: Breakfast



## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 3  
Dinner: 3



### Transport

Bus  
4WD  
Boat



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Boat Crew  
Camp Crew  
Cook  
Driver(s)



### Accommodation

3 nights simple camping  
4 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

### Oman Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

The annual rainfall in most parts of Oman does not usually exceed 125mm, although in the north (the Jebel Akhdar mountain area),

it can exceed 20-25mm per month in the December to February period. The coastal areas have a hot and humid season from May to September (up to 38 degrees C), although temperatures remain high throughout the year. Inland the humidity is lower, and nights are cooler in winter when there can be frost in the desert. There is perpetual sunshine throughout the year.

**Time difference to GMT**

+4

**Plugs**

3 Pin Round

**Religion**

Badi Islam, Sunni Islam, Shiite Islam, Hindu.

**Language**

Arabic, English, Farsi, Baluchi, Urdu.

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Dhow trip - 70USD

### Clothing

You will need lightweight clothing for sunny days, with a sunhat and neck protection. You will also need some warmer clothing for the evenings. Nights camping in the desert and along the Arabian coast can be cold in winter, so please bring a warm jacket or fleece. Bare shoulders and legs cause offence outside main cities and hotels. Therefore women should cover up when visiting villages. At our wild camping spots shorts are fine. Women are advised not to wear shorts or dresses that are too revealing as this can attract unwelcome attention in the streets of Muslim towns - loose fitting trousers are ideal. Women should also cover their head and shoulders when entering a mosque and men should wear long trousers.

### Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes or boots, trainers (that you don't mind getting wet) and sandals.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack. Dust-proof bags will be needed for luggage whilst travelling through the desert.

### Equipment

Camping equipment is provided locally including a mattress, bed sheet, sleeping bag and pillow. However if you prefer you can bring your own sleeping bag (we suggest a 2-3 season). A personal water bottle is useful and a small torch essential. Please note during the camping nights there are no showers or toilets.

### Tipping

**Explore leader**

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

**Local crew**

You should allow approximately £25 for gratuities for local staff.

**Country Information**

## Oman Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£4.5

**Dinner price**

£10

**Beer price**

£3.5

**Water price**

£1

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Omani Riyal.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Sterling and US\$ are widely accepted. It is worth taking some money in cash. You can get local currency from exchange offices at home.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities

**ATM Availability**

ATMs are widely available in major towns/cities.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

In hotels and some larger shops/restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can be cashed in Oman, but banks and exchange offices do tend to charge a high exchange rate.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Boat

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Oman: Citizens from the UK, New Zealand, Australia, US and Canada require a visa, this can be arranged on arrival for the current cost of 20 Omani Rials per person, approximately 43GBP, 55USD for a 1 month visa. This can be paid in British Sterling or US Dollars. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Non refundable permits

## Oman Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Malaria, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. Please note that all travellers aged over 9 months old will be required to supply a yellow fever certificate if you have travelled from or have transited via a country with a risk of yellow fever transmission. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health

advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

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