

EXPLORE!

NEW

Arabian Sands Eclipse

8 days

Oman - Trip code OME



Arabian Sands Eclipse

Witness a spectacular annular eclipse in the Wahiba Sands on this adventure through the diverse landscapes of this fascinating country. Discover the contrasts of modern day and ancient Omani life by visiting colourful souks, observing traditional dhow shipbuilding techniques and exploring the contemporary Grand Mosque in Muscat. Stay on the highest mountain in the country and peer down echoing fissures at Oman's grand canyon. Sleep out under a bed of stars in a true wilderness camp in the desert and swim in turquoise waters at Wadi Arbayeen.

Trip highlights

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.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Explore Muscat

Arrive in Muscat and join the tour at the hotel. Muscat is an old walled town, surrounded by a horseshoe ring of mountains that naturally restricts its growth. This afternoon we will take an orientation tour of the city. Muscat displays intermingling ancient cultural heritage and modern style; we will see houses, gates, old markets, small shops and winding roads evocative of authentic history, side by side with busy markets, shops, buildings and streets stamped with modern architecture. On our tour we will visit Bait Al Zubair Museum, which is a centre of Omani art and cultural heritage. We will also have the chance to take a stroll along the waterfront of Mutrah, Muscat's oldest quarter and onto the souk.



Accommodation: Al Falaj Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Visit the Grand Mosque and cross the Hajar Mountains to Jebel Shams

This morning we visit the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque; the largest mosque in the country with space for up to 20,000 worshippers. This sandstone-made building features a huge Iranian made prayer map which took 600 women 4 years to make! After exploring the mosque we will head out of Muscat in our 4WD and enter the Hajar Mountain range. This is one of the most beautiful drives in the country; we climb on steep bendy roads with views over ravines, mountains and fertile valleys. We stop at Bilad Sayt, a small village in the mountains surrounded by a patchwork of green irrigated fields. This village is so remote it can only be reached by 4WD, this means it has kept a traditional feel and is a stark contrast to how developed Muscat is. Our destination is Jebel Shams, the highest mountain in Oman with a summit of just over 3000 metres, though we will be sleeping below that altitude.



Accommodation: Jebel Shams Resort (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 3 - Visit castles, forts and a date plantation. Explore Oman's Grand Canyon

After breakfast we drive out of the mountains and head to the 17th century Jabreen castle. Jabreen is different to the other forts we will see on this trip as it was originally built as a palace during a peaceful time. This means the castle is designed to be aesthetically beautiful with decorated wooden windows and balconies, but the reason that most visitors come here is the intricate and colourful ceiling artwork. We move on to Bahla to see its imposing fort, one of the oldest in Oman and a UNESCO World Heritage site. The fort is made from mud bricks with rounded turrets and has battlements and walls that stretch for 7km around the town. Aside from

the impressive fort, Bahla is also known for its pottery and we will make a quick stop at a potter to learn about their craft and a chance to buy some gifts. Driving back to the mountains we stop at the village of Al Hamra to visit the Bait al Safeh living museum, this community project shows Omani traditions such as bread making, oil extraction and coffee bean roasting. Al Hamra is well known for its vast date plantations and we will meet a date farmer who will show us around a plantation. We make our way back to Jebel Shams to walk to the view point of Wadi Ghul, also known as the Grand Canyon of Arabia. At some parts of the ridge there are vertigo-inducing views of 1000 metre deep fissures; we will be here late afternoon as the last light of the day disappears down the canyon.



Accommodation: **Jebel Shams Resort** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 4 - Drive into the vast desert and enter Wahiba Sands

Our first stop is Nizwa and we will visit the 17th century Nizwa fort, to climb the 40 metre tower and look out over the forest of date palms that circle the city. We leave the mountains 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 the Wahiba Sands, our campsite for the night. We aim to arrive in to our wild camp mid-afternoon and there will be time to explore the huge dunes before we settle down to a dinner cooked by our chef. This is a wild campsite in the desert. There are no showers or toilet blocks. These basic facilities ensure a true wilderness experience. Camping equipment is provided locally including a mattress, bed sheet, sleeping bag and pillow. Your tents will be erected by our camp crew on arrival to camp and our camp chef will provide all meals.



Accommodation: **Basic Desert Camp** (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 5 - Witness the annular solar eclipse in the desert; drive to the Arabian Sea

An annular eclipse occurs this morning, 26th December 2019; this phenomenon occurs when the moon and sun are directly in line, but it appears that the size of moon is smaller than that of the Sun, this then creates a bright ring, surrounding the dark circle of the moon. Weather conditions cannot be guaranteed, but the chance of clear, mostly clear or partly cloudy skies is around 82%. Eclipse glasses will be provided to allow you to view this natural wonder safely and we will be accompanied by an expert astronomer to provide more information and answer any questions you may have. After we have witnessed the eclipse we will break camp and drive to the Arabian Sea and the town of Ras Al Hadd and check in to our hotel. After dinner we take a short drive down to Ras Al Hadd beach which features a turtle conservation reserve. A local naturalist will lead us down to the beach where we will hopefully see turtles nesting. We are not in the high season for turtle sighting but there is generally nesting here year round.



Accommodation: **Holiday Hotel - Ras Al Hadd** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 6 - Follow the coastal road to Wadi Tiwi, walk amongst rock pools and banana trees

This morning we drive north along the coastal road, pausing at 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, however as it is a Friday we cannot guarantee we will see dhows being built today, though either way we will have a wander around the yard. Our destination today is Wadi Tiwi, a narrow yet deep gorge carved out of the mountains; the valley floor is punctuated with crystal clear rock pools and banana plantations. Upon arrival our leader will take us on a 2 hour round trip to the old stone houses of Harat Bidah, the walk to the village is fairly easy, with only some small inclines. We are wild camping at Wadi Tiwi and those that do not want to walk can relax around camp. This is a wild campsite. There are no showers or toilet blocks. These basic facilities ensure a true wilderness experience. Camping equipment is provided locally including a mattress, bed sheet, sleeping bag and pillow. Your tents will be erected by our camp crew on arrival to camp and our camp chef will provide all meals.



Accommodation: Basic Desert Camp (or similar)



Simple Camping



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 7 - Swim in the Bimah sinkhole and Wadi Arbayeen, return to Muscat

Continuing north we stop at the spectacular Bimah sinkhole, a huge limestone crater with blue green water at the bottom there is time for a swim here before we move on to Wadi Arbayeen. This Wadi has a deep pool of water, set amongst date palms and a rugged rocky backdrop. There is another opportunity for a swim here and a short walk around the area. We will then continue on our way to back to Muscat, we aim to arrive mid-afternoon so there will be some time to do some shopping and exploring on arrival.



Accommodation: Al Falaj Hotel (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Muscat

Trip ends this morning after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Why book this trip

Imagine spending the night in the desert, sleeping under the most incredible starlit sky and then waking up and seeing a solar eclipse whilst having your morning coffee. That is why Oman has to be the best place to view the annular eclipse in 2019.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 5



Transport

4WD



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Camp Crew
Driver(s)



Accommodation

2 nights simple camping
2 nights premium hotel
3 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

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 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

A personal water bottle is useful and a small torch essential. A sleeping bag is provided, but if you would like to bring your own then we recommend a 2/3 season.

Tipping

Explore 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

4WD

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The campsites on this trip are wild camps in the desert. There are no showers or toilet blocks. These basic facilities ensure a true wilderness experience in the desert. Camping equipment is provided locally including a mattress, bed sheet, sleeping bag and pillow. Your tents will be erected by our camp crew on arrival to camp and our camp chef will provide all meals.

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 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.

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.