

# EXPLORE!



## Why book this trip?

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.



**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 5

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour  
Leader  
Camp Crew  
Driver(s)

**TRANSPORT**

4WD

**ACCOMMODATION**

2 nights simple  
camping  
5 nights  
comfortable hotel

**TRIP PACE:**

Moderate

## 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:**

Tulip Inn Downtown Muscat (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**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)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

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### **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)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

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#### **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)



**Grade: Simple Camping**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

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

An annular eclipse occurs this morning, at 7:36am on 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 port town of Sur. After an early dinner we take a 45 minute drive 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. We'll drive back to our hotel later this evening.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Sur Plaza (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

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

This morning we'll explore 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)



**Grade: Simple Camping**





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER

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### **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:

Tulip Inn Downtown Muscat (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

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### **DAY 8 - Trip ends in Muscat**

Trip ends this morning after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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## Country information

### Oman

#### 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 Square Pin (as in the UK)

#### Religion

Badi Islam, Sunni Islam, Shiite Islam, Hindu.

#### Language

Arabic, English, Farsi, Baluchi, Urdu.

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## 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.

Please note that flying drones or remote controlled flying devices without a valid licence is against the law. Further information can be found at [www.paca.gov.om](http://www.paca.gov.om)

Please note it is illegal to import and/or use E-cigarettes in Oman. Please do not travel with your vape or e-cigarette as this may lead to being fined and/or detained.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow £25.00 per person for group tipping

## Oman

### 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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£4.5	£10	£3.5	£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.



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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

4WD

### Accommodation notes

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.

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## 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.

### Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

Oman: Citizens from the UK, New Zealand, Australia, US and Canada require a visa; this must be arranged prior to arrival. You can apply online via: <https://evisa.rop.gov.om/en/home> for a 10 day unsponsored visa, which currently costs 5 Omani Rials per person (approximately £11.00, US\$13.00 - subject to exchange rates). New Zealand citizens can apply for a free unsponsored visa valid for 3 months. You will need a digital photograph of each applicant and a copy of the photo/data page of each passport to apply.

Once approved all unsponsored visas must be used within 1 month from the approval date for entry into Oman or it will expire. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

Please note your passport must have a minimum of 6 months validity from your entry date into Oman.

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 be able to apply 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## **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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against 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. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. 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 [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### **Viewing the eclipse**



Although subject to change depending on weather and viewing conditions, all three Explore groups will come together for the eclipse viewing on 26th December 2019, and the location coordinates are Lat : 21.2281 N, Lon : 58.2776 E.

## 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.

# Reviews

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 <p>AWARD WINNING EXPLORE LEADERS</p>	 <p>PRICE GUARANTEE PROMISE</p>	 <p>AIRPORT TRANSFERS</p>
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