

OMAN PLANS TO LURE 12 MILLION VISITORS BY 2020



Sultanate of Oman plans to lure 12 million visitors by 2020. Various tourism projects are under way to achieve this goal. Among them is e.g. the upgrading of the country's transport infrastructure.

The economy of the Sultanate of Oman is largely dependent on oil production with other sectors playing a minor role. The Oman Ministry of Tourism, however, intends to increase the tourism sector contribution to the GDP. The plan is to **attract 12 million visitors by the year 2020**. The government supports the plan whose objectives are described in 'Vision 2020' charter.

Except the rise in number of visitors the officials want to **increase the number of Omani nationals working in the sector** from the current 37 per cent to 80 per cent by the year 2010. The Vision also speaks about achieving an average annual growth rate for the tourist income by 7 per cent during the 2005-2010 period. The plan also mentions the need to conserve and protect environment as well as Oman's customs, traditions and cultural heritage.

The Omani government already cooperates with the private sector to achieve the above mentioned goals. Numerous projects have been started. There is for example the upgrade and expansion of the Muscat International Airport. Last year **3.2 million international visitors** arrived at the airport. To cope with the planned increase in the number of visitors, the airport needs to be expanded. There will be a new terminal building, new runway and the old one will be upgraded so that it can handle the super-sized Airbus A380. Transport infrastructure will be upgraded for example in Nizwa, Duqm and Salalah. There is also the project for a 6000-seat Convention Centre close to Muscat International Airport.

Not only construction should help the Omani tourism industry. Administrative issues are also important. Oman has for example made it possible for nationals of up to 60 countries to receive entry visas on arrival at the airport.

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