

The Ancient & the New - Oman Is Full of Surprises



Culture enthusiasts and lovers of historical treasures will find Oman a real treat. This Arabic country is rich in heritage, and archeological sites may be found all around the Sultanate. They are easily accessible and the government takes great care to maintain the sites. These include over 500 forts, historic mosques and walls and countless religious shrines. Oman is a diverse country and provides an ideal opportunity to combine educationally attractive trips with adventurous hikes and visits to vast sandy areas and mountain gorges.

The best way to get to Oman is by plane. Seeb International Airport is located in Musqat, the capital. Here, tourists can admire a charming blend of the old and the new. Well-kept roads and strikingly green parks contrast with the Old Musqat. There are many forts, castles, mosques and towers to visit. Among the city highlights are the souqs, or markets. The old souq of Muttrah is a must-see spot, where tourists will find basically everything that embodies the local culture.

Sur is a sympathetic coast town with remarkable traditional dwellings. It lies about 300 km from Oman, in the Eastern region of the country. It is easily accessible by bus or coach, although a better way is hiring a car and taking either the charming coastal track or driving on the interior paved road through the wadis and passes of the Hajar Mountains. While on the way, tourists should stop at the little fishing village of Quriyat, which once used to be a major port.

The ancient city of Nizwa was the capital during the 6th and 7th century AD. It is one of the oldest cities of the Sultanate and since it was an important education and art centre, there are many sites to visit. The Nizwa fort, completed in 1650 is now Oman's most visited National monument. Near Nizwa lies the mythical and legendary town of Bahla. It is famous for its pottery and its ancient fort, believed to be built in pre-Islamic times. It is the oldest fort in Oman and is currently undergoing conservation sponsored by UNESCO.

The panoramic Western Hajar Mountains are within driving distance of Nizwa. They rise to over 200 metres and are rugged with intricate networks of dramatic canyons and caves. A one day driving trip combined with a little bit of hiking and maybe a picnic with breathtaking views of the mountain gorges is an ideal way of exploring the natural beauty of Oman

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