

OMAN'S PRECIOUS WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE - RA'S AL HADD



During the summer months, Oman comes into the focus of environmentalists, researchers, biologists and even curious tourists; and for a good reason, too. Ra's Al Hadd and Ras Al Junayz, which are located in the Sharqiya region, become the sites of one of nature's most fascinating rituals. It is here, where up to 13.000 sea turtles come to lay their eggs.

During the breeding season, the 275 beaches along the Omani coastline become fully controlled by these precious animals; in fact, five out of seven known species of sea turtles (green, olive ridley, leatherback, hawksbill and loggerhead) are to be spotted here between June and August each year.

Initially they breed and subsequently, they carefully lay their eggs in the sand. The whole process is very exhausting for the mother turtles. In order to divert the predators, they build several fake holes using their flippers until they finally choose the final nesting ground. They lay about 100 eggs and for the following two weeks they remain in the shallow waters nearby on guard. Two months later, the babies are ready to hatch. Unfortunately, only 20 per cent of the newly hatched turtles make it to the safety of water and only half of these subsequently survive.

Visitors are welcome, yet many restrictions need to be carefully followed in order to help protect the unique creatures and the whole area. Also, whoever wishes to observe the turtles needs to acquire a special permit from the local Regional Municipalities. Accompanied by a park ranger, small groups are quietly guided closer to view the nesting miracle. The first is a night trip to observe the laying off eggs and the other visit takes place before sunrise. The whole spectacle is complemented by the ranger's interesting presentation on all the details and thus the experience is a spectacle incomparable to any other.

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