

# OMAN

Beauty has an address!



Muscat Cityscape



Muttrah Souk

ANANYA BAHL DRAWS OUT A LIST OF MUST-DOS IN OMAN FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO REVEL IN ARABIAN LUXURY



Kahwa Coffee



Omani Halwa

**W**e are pretty sure that the first thing that comes to mind when someone mentions Oman is unending desert landscape. Fret not, though, this is common for most people. So, here's a listing of things to see and do in this beautiful nation that will not only reinforce that image but also add to it adorable creatures of the sea, azure beaches,

in a divine way at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque and you will be blown away not just by the peace that envelopes it but also its beauty—archways, courtyards, chandeliers, ornate doors, white marble floors and manicured lawns are abound here. Say a prayer in its ethereal main prayer hall—done up in white, blue and gold. Don't forget to look up when you do because a grand Swarovski crystal chandelier



The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat

lofty mountains, enigmatic historical Arab towns and yes, did we mention, complete, uber and irresistible luxury?

#### MUSCAT DIARIES

The best way to begin experiencing all that Oman has on offer is in Muscat, it's capital. Lavishly exhibiting Oman's history and culture, the city demands your attention – it's more than just a landing base into the country. Start

awaits you, and when you look down, you will find that you've been standing on a handmade Persian carpet spanning 4,263 square metres! Make a quick stopover at the Amouage Factory which produces the "most valued perfumes in the world". Their most popular scent is a combination of frankincense, roses, saffron and spice, and is a must-buy. You can even sign up for a walking tour of the factory.



Ras Al Jinz - One of the largest nesting areas for the endangered green turtle

Evenings must be reserved for the vibrant Corniche: a 3-km long promenade in the harbour that includes gardens, parks, waterfalls and statues.

**Check-in:** The Grand Millennium Muscat for a slick city hotel and the Sheraton Oman Hotel for classic luxury.

**Shop:** The Muttrah Souq is a must-visit. Buy frankincense, Omani Dates, honey and a traditional sesame-based sweet called *Halwa*, handcrafted silver jewellery, Omani woven baskets, mats, carpets, and souvenirs like *khanjar* replicas, scarves and shawls.

**Eat:** Traditional Omani food at Kargeen and fusion fare at Al-Loomie.

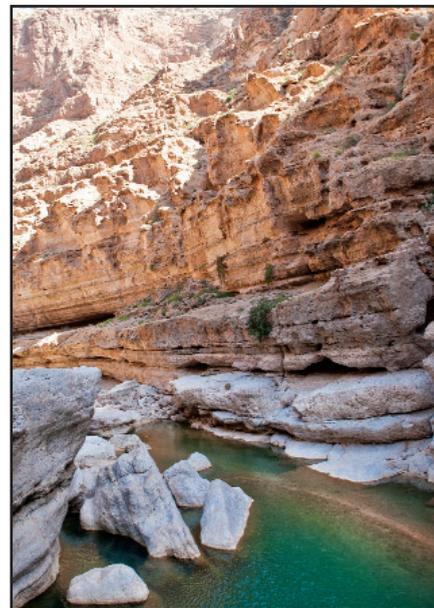
**Do Not Miss:** For those who love the performing arts, a visit to Muscat's Royal Opera House is mandatory! Reserve a seat and treat yourself to an opulent theatrical and musical show!

**TURTLE TALES**

Who would have thought that thousands of turtles migrate to—and nest in—Oman? Located at the headland of the Arabian Peninsula, Ras al Jinz houses one of the largest nesting areas for endangered green turtles in the Indian Ocean. Here, visitors can watch the turtles' natural process of nesting and hatching at close quarters without disturbing them. Not only this, the turtle sanctuary also includes an

interactive museum and research laboratories where you can learn more about these ancient creatures. The area is a hub for eco-tourism and also offers luxurious accommodation facilities for those wishing to stay longer than a day. Tours are organized at dawn as well as at night-time. Considered to be the only place in the world where visitors can watch this live, it truly offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to wildlife lovers and a total different take on Oman's "great outdoors" which, as per most people, starts and ends with the desert.

**Water World:** There are various other places where you can enjoy the



The spectacular Wadi Shab

waterfront and aquatic world in Oman: these include the gorgeous Finns Beach near Muscat, dolphin watching, snorkelling and diving at the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, the turquoise-coloured Bimmah Sinkhole formed in a limestone gorge, spectacular Wadi Shab where you can camp by the beach, and the coral haven that are the Daymaniyat Islands.

**LAND OF THE RISING SUN**

Oman has a topography that's dotted with majestic mountains. Nicknamed the 'Grand Canyon of

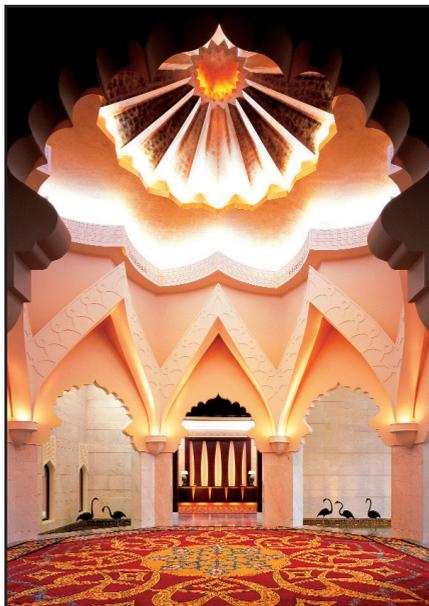


Wadi Bani Khalid

Arabia', Jebel Shams or 'Mountain of the Sun', at 3,005 metres above sea level, is the country's highest mountain, providing much needed respite from the Omani heat. For those with an outdoorsy spirit, the Balcony Walk or An Nakhr Balcony is a distinct trail that runs along the edge of the canyon. It takes a total of four hours to complete and on the way, trekkers are treated to secret waterfalls and isolated villages. With a vertical drop of 2,100 metres from the summit to the base and spectacular views of Wadi Ghul, Jebel Shams is a haven for photography enthusiasts who will find that every corner makes for the perfect frame. For those



Desert Nights Camp, Wahiba Sands



Shangrila - The lobby at Al Husn



Wahiba Sands - Desert Nights Camp



Outdoor Dining at Dunes by Al Nahda

seeking even more adventure, the terrain is famous for off-roading activities, too.

**Old-world Charm:** Visit the Nizwa Fort, built in the 9th century by Imam Al Sult bin Malik Al Kharusi, for a glimpse of traditional, ancient Omani life and times.

**GLAMPING GALORE**

Sharqiyah Sands, Oman's longitudinal dunes that are 200 km long and 100 km wide, provide dynamic patterns in their form, making them every shutterbug's

dream! Here you can indulge in sand-boarding, dune-bashing, quad-biking, camel safaris, stargazing, and visit the Bedouin camps that line the desert. Opt for the Canvas Club Glamping company for their luxurious tents and service.

**Fly In Style:** For those looking for extra indulgence, Oman Air's first and business class guarantee luxurious service and are well-connected to Muscat via Mumbai, New Delhi and Bengaluru.

